

7 Ways to Tell Whether God Has Called You to Permanent Singleness

It's that time of year when single adults begin to feel left out, rejected, lonely or unlovable. They sometimes question God (for the hundredth time) as to whether or not He has called them to remain single for their entire life. Like Jesus, Paul and others, they want to know if they were created to be a eunuch for the kingdom of God or if they should wait for His "perfect timing." The holidays are indeed a difficult time for them on so many levels.

It can be a time when some relinquish their hope for marriage to a misinterpretation of what a call from God looks like.

We're all called to be single for some part of our lives, whether it is before marriage, after a divorce or upon the death of our spouse. But the question remains, "Am I called to remain single for the rest of my life?"

Below are a few reasons why some people believe they have such a call when they haven't and why some who have the call just don't know it yet.

God Heals You First So That the Call Is Not Received in the Confusion of Brokenness

Many people who are *not* called to be permanently single need to ask the Lord if their perceived call to singleness is actually a manifestation of unhealed brokenness. Such areas can include:

- unresolved anger at parents who keep pressuring them to marry. It's a passive-aggressive form of revenge—meaning that their desire to remain single is actually a way of

getting back at parents they still don't like or trust. Unrenounced vows and unforgiveness toward such parent(s) play a large part in such cases.

- fear, hatred or anger toward the opposite sex (for whatever reason)
- fear of marriage itself and the commitment that it demands of each partner
- the kind of fear and unbelief that creates self-doubt
- unhealed narcissism
- unrestrained romanticism (often intertwined with narcissism) that demands perfection from their intended spouse due to romantic notions that do not reflect reality

Even though God called me to the gift of singleness, before doing so, He healed me of many broken areas, so that later in life, I would not have doubts that my "yes" to Him had been uttered from brokenness rather than out of a true call.

God Does Not Impose a Call to Singleness

He works within the heart and mind so that the person gracefully embraces the honor that is being offered. The option to decline the offer is always on the table.

This was how God approached me when He called me to stay single. He offered it as a grace, an honor and a blessing, while making it clear that there would be no remonstration or disappointment on His part should I say no. The unexpected result was that it actually freed me to say yes.

Do not let the eunuch say, "I am only a dry tree." For thus says the Lord: To the eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths, and choose the things that please Me, and take hold of My covenant, to them I will give in My house and within My walls a memorial, and a name better than that of sons and of daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off (Isa. 56:3b-5).

To illustrate the point, when a parent is trying to persuade a toddler to eat their food, rather than forcing it on them, they will sometimes make eating attractive by making an airplane out of the spoon, which then comes in for a landing in the mouth of the now delighted child. Though an imperfect analogy, it illustrates the fact that God sometimes orchestrates events in order to persuade us to choose something that we actually *would* choose if we were mature enough, wise enough or if we had His eternal perspective.

God Works a Physical Miracle in a Person's Body so He or She can Physically and Emotionally Endure the Peculiar Nature of a Call to Singleness

For those who will eventually marry, this miracle is of course, temporary. Most refuse to ask for such a miracle because they fear that this quenching of sexual desire will be permanent. However, God is God and can bring those passions back in the same manner He took them away, and at the right time.

For the person called to be permanently single, however, this is a great grace that most definitely should be sought. For them, God brings about a mystical completion of their sexuality whereby they are espoused to God and completed (or integrated) by Him in the way that healthy married couples complete one another.

One caveat, however, is that such a miracle must be sought persistently and with faith. It doesn't happen automatically.

God Gives the 'Called' Person a Supernatural Revelation Wherein They Become Wed to Him and Thereby Receive Into Themselves the Completion of His Image Normally Achieved in Holy Matrimony with a Spouse

To further the last point and begin this one, God gave me a two-part revelation that brought with it a knowing or certainty of its special meaning. The initial revelation was

not sufficient for such a major life decision, however, so I asked for additional confirmation. Here's how it all came down:

One night, as I lay sleeping, God gave me a dream wherein I was in attendance at a wedding in heaven. Suddenly, I realized that I was the one getting married. A beat later, I realized I was marrying God. It floored me. because I had never considered that such a thing would happen until the summing up of all things in heaven when we, the body of Christ, are wed to our Lord and Savior. Later, I was to learn that such a dream or vision is quite common among Catholic priests and nuns who sense a call to permanent chastity and celibacy.

Upon asking the late Leanne Payne about my dream, she replied that everyone should have such a vision, even before marrying an earthly spouse, because understanding their marriage with God is what makes for a healthy marriage on earth.

Still needing further confirmation that this was a call to marry God alone, I sought Him further. I was grateful that He had first healed me of the many broken places that would have created havoc in any marriage. But now I needed more.

Several weeks later, I was flipping through a Judaica catalog and came across a ring. Thinking nothing of it, I kept flipping through the catalog, when the voice of the Lord spoke to my spirit saying, "Go back. It's our wedding ring!" I returned to the picture of the ring and noticed that it said in Hebrew letters, "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine." (Song 6:3). Then I remembered that the word "beloved" in Hebrew is "David" –my name! God's confirmations are always so unexpectedly perfect. And so, the confirmation of my permanent call carried with it a knowing and certainty because of the manner in which it came.

God Provides Multiple Confirmations of the Call

Sometimes God will use a prophetic word from one or more

Christian leaders, independent of each other.

He also orchestrates divine appointments in Scripture, speaking to you through various related and seemingly unrelated portions.

Additionally, God might engineer comments from strangers, friends or in sermons that gently bear a consistent message on the matter.

He may arrange for unexpected meetings with those already called to permanent celibacy in order to alleviate the fears and concerns about how it works and what it will mean for your life.

God will also speak to you in your prayers, during your worship and as you meditate on His Word. Remember, God *wants* you to know when He has given you this gift. The only delay in communicating that to you will involve your readiness and His perfect timing. And as stated previously, it is always an invitation, not an imposition.

God Provides the Grace Necessary to Withstand Opposition from Well-Intentioned Parents, Friends and Church Leaders Who Do Not Understand This Call on Your Life

Singles of every kind are often treated as though something must be wrong with them—especially as they advance into their 30s and 40s. It's the stares, the looks and sometimes the well-intentioned church lady who repeatedly inquires whether or not you have a girl or guy yet.

Many, such as this church lady, exert pressure to date and to marry before you are ready, or before God's timing. Perhaps you still need healing in vital areas. Perhaps your future spouse also needs healing (or salvation for that matter) before they can be a healthy mate.

Then there are the parents, whose hopes of your getting

married and having children have become an obsessive desire. First, they want assurance that you are normal (in other words, not gay). Then, they want grandchildren. Such desires can also get tangled up in a need to be seen by their peers as good, competent and successful parents.

On occasion, it may seem as though those mentioned above would rather see you being promiscuous than remaining single—the fruit of a church that knows nothing about, nor values, a call from God to remain single.

Through all of this, however, God will give you the grace to endure and to wait for the fruits of your marital union with Him.

How to Distinguish a Temporary Call to Singleness from a Permanent One

As previously mentioned, everyone has a call to singleness for some period of their life.

Even a supernatural diminishment of sexual drive may only be a temporary grace.

One way of seeking God's will in the matter is to set out a fleece (read about Gideon's fleece in Judg. 6:37-40). But do not count on that alone. We are all capable of "imagining" a result that really isn't there. Neither is God obliged to submit to such a fleece.

Look for a multiplicity of signs, such as those mentioned in this article, or others. Look for unexpected signs—things you never would have thought up or arranged on your own.

Don't even think about it until you have sought and received extensive healing from any area of brokenness in your life that might impinge on having a healthy marriage.

Consider how God has led you thus far in your life's work. Is it one that a marriage could withstand? Has He called you into

a ministry, for example, that requires 60-80 hour work weeks, as He did me? Have you thereby been invited to be a eunuch for the sake of the kingdom of God? Although not conclusive by itself, that is one element that might speak to a divine call to singleness.

On Loneliness

Loneliness should be a rarity for the believer, although it is epidemic among both singles and married people today. Its antidote is a deep, abiding, intimate relationship with God—especially God the Father. You may recall that Jesus was continually pointing His disciples to a pursuit of the Father (John 15 and following).

The problem is, most of us do not pursue such a relationship with the Father. We mistakenly think He is mad at us, doesn't love us or may ask something of us that we don't want to do. So we stay at arm's length. The result, chronic feelings of loneliness, whether married or not.

On Sensual Passions

God will reduce them temporarily or permanently, according to one's call, provided the person seeks and values such a gift. This does not mean that all sensual passions will be eliminated. But it does mean that God will reduce them below the threshold of our capacity to resist, if we really want Him to. That means, our will needs to have been submitted to God's, out of love for Him and a desire not to hurt Him any further. Victory also assumes we have learned how to resist temptation by appropriating God's power rather than trying to battle it out on our own.

However, God will give us over to idolatry if we pursue it. (Note that idolatry and sexual immorality are equated in Eph. 5:5 and Col. 3:5). That means, if instead of pursuing holiness and chastity, we pursue the modern idols of self, materialism, pornographic images and so on, God will give us over to their

power (Rom. 1:18-32). He says in Ezekiel 16:39b ((NIV) that He will give us into the hands of our lovers “and they will burn your houses and inflict punishment on you.”

On Finding a Wife

“Whoever finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor of the Lord” (Prov. 18:22, MEV).

Are our spouses hand-picked for us by God?

I believe that God does have a specific person in mind for us to marry, but when flawed human decision-making results in our marrying a different person, it is the grace and genius of God to turn Plan B into Plan A if the person earnestly, diligently and with great longsuffering, seeks God to do so.

One variable that God does not abrogate, however, is man’s free will. If we will not earnestly seek Him, or if one or both parties will not live in communion and obedience with Him, then He will leave us to our poor choices—hopefully so that we will learn to make better, God-led choices the next time.

So, how then shall we live?

Marry God first. Mary to give, not to use.

Learn the full spectrum of what brings pleasure in the marriage bed (not just the physical, but the spiritual as well).

Understand that holy matrimony is a picture of the re-integration of woman into man in a one-flesh union. It is also a part of God’s image that has been stamped into our very beings and a prefigurement of the marriage between Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:25-32).

Finally, here are some Scriptures to read that have a direct application to the question of singleness, celibacy and

chastity: Matthew 19:9-12; 1 Corinthians 7:1-9; 1 Corinthians 7:17, 19b; 1 Corinthians 7:32-35; 1 Corinthians 7:36-38. {eo}

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