

Finding Peace in Your Status as a Single Woman

As a 45-year-old single woman, I have had my share of surprises and struggles. In my late 20s, I was surprised by how few resources there were to help me maneuver through the challenges I was experiencing as a single adult.

I discovered there were numerous books on dating and books that centered on contentment as a single, but I couldn't find much that addressed the tough things I faced day to day. More importantly, I couldn't find any books that simply validated what I was feeling.

There are many misconceptions about singleness held by those who are married and by singles themselves. If you are plagued by any of the questions singles commonly ask, I encourage you to read on. If you're married, the answers may help you know how to respond to your single friends.

WHAT IF I AM ANGRY WITH GOD?

Even though we know it is sinful and makes no sense, some of us become angry with God because He hasn't given us a mate. We know the Bible says He is good, loving and kind. He's perfect!

Our head may agree with what the Bible tells us, but there is a proverbial "12-inch drop" between our heads and our hearts. That's where the problem lies.

One of the reasons it is so hard to win this battle to keep a pure heart toward God is that everywhere we turn, there are reminders of what we want but don't have. These incessant reminders continually fuel our longings and desires, day after day, year after year. Each season carries a reminder that time is passing and we are still alone.

It is the constancy of facing frustrated longings that fuels

the temptation to be angry with God. Your anger can be fueled by plaguing, unanswered questions such as, "Why must I wait so long?" or, "Why have You blessed my friends with a family but not me?"

Anger about your situation can build inside you, and you want to blame somebody. In His sovereignty, God has chosen or allowed singlehood for you, and you disdain it.

The good news is that because God is merciful, patient, compassionate and understanding, He beckons you to get your pain out in the open, even though you have no right to be angry with Him. He knows what is in your heart, so hiding it is futile.

The Lord began to deal with me about my anger toward Him. I knew I had to admit it, but I was reverentially fearful to do so.

Then one day several things went wrong in rapid succession, and I blew up. I was driving to a church seminar, of all things, and started to yell at God.

Interspersed in my yelling were all kinds of apologies, such as, "I'm sorry I feel this way. I know You are God, and I'm afraid to be telling You this because You have every right to strike me dead, but this is how I feel."

I was telling God the truth about how I felt and what I thought. But my thoughts were wrong. And my feelings were the direct result of my wrong thinking.

However, God was the only One equipped with what I needed to help me out of that dark place. I had to start by being honest. At least then I was connecting with God instead of turning my back on Him in hostility and fear.

By acknowledging my anger, I opened an entry point for God to straighten out my thinking. I'm not condoning being angry with

God; it's sin. But we can't pretend the anger isn't there, and we can't make it go away by a sheer act of our will.

Acknowledgement is the starting point. Confession follows. Then God forgives and cleanses us (see 1 John 1:9).

Things really began to change for me after I acknowledged my anger. I believe this was chiefly because I personally and tangibly experienced God's kindness as He permitted me to vent (see Rom. 2:4). The sin I was spewing out on Him, He was putting on Jesus instead of turning on me with righteous wrath.

God softened my heart and caused me to see His true character again. I had lost sight of it because I had fallen prey to deception—thinking that God was cruel because He was putting me through or allowing me to go through so much pain.

Moses, Job and David all became angry with God (see Num. 11:11-15; Job 10; Ps. 73:21-22). I believe God recorded these examples to illustrate that although we may encounter things in life that provoke us to anger, He understands our humanity, and He is merciful to us when we come to Him.

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

All of us, married and single, have haunting questions that may not be resolved on this side of heaven.

Many times God gives us specific replies, but sometimes He does not. In either case, we must exercise faith to deal with our questions.

If we don't get a specific answer from God, we must exercise our faith to believe that:

- * God has His reasons for not answering us directly.
- * God is good even if His seeming lack of response to us makes it appear as though He is not.
- * God will tell us more at a later time if He truly does want

us to know the answer to our questions.

Believing what is true about God's character and nature ultimately resolves all our questions, even when we don't get specific answers about why we are single. For example, if you are concerned that your current single state has to do with past mistakes, you can rest in knowing God can use those mistakes and turn them into something good.

The answer to another commonly asked question, "Is there something wrong with me?" does not matter. There's something wrong with everyone, which includes those who are married!

Scripture says, "For all have sinned" (Rom. 3:23, NKJV). Obviously people's flaws don't always hinder marriage.

However, even if there is something about you that is hindering marriage, God can take care of it. Ask Him to address any issue that may be standing in the way. Focus your attention on God's ability to resolve the problem more than on the problem itself.

IS GOD ALL WE NEED?

Often, when single adults admit their longings for relationship, people respond by advising them to deepen their relationship with God. This bad theology has made the lives of singles more challenging by setting forth the false notion that we should derive all relational satisfaction solely from our relationship with Jesus.

Though it certainly is true that Jesus is the ultimate source through which all our needs, relational and otherwise, are met, He meets those needs in diverse ways. Sometimes He does so directly, but often He does so through people or circumstances.

We have to gain a new perspective on what happens when singles are constantly directed to seek relational fulfillment in Jesus when admitting their longings for a spouse, family or

just companionship. Although well-intentioned, this advice often implies that our primary problem is that we are not close enough to God.

Though exhortations to grow closer to Jesus are good for all of us, this counsel, so often shared with singles, can be interpreted to mean: "It is wrong to look for relational satisfaction through people; look for it only in God Himself. He is enough." A single person who loves God but still yearns for more can come under false guilt because he or she can't say, "No, God is not enough."

Let's sort out this twisted truth. Many Scriptures point to the actual necessity of human companionship.

Genesis 2:18 says, "It is not good that man should be alone." Ecclesiastes 4:9 reads, "Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor."

In the Epistles alone there are more than 50 references to "one another." "Love one another" (John 13:34), "forgiving one another" (Col. 3:13), "serve one another" (Gal. 5:13).

These verses illustrate the value God places on our relationships. Our lives were not meant to be lived with God alone.

We are made in His image—an image that deeply desires relationship. Although our relationship with God is primary, we need each other, too.

In *Single, Not Separate* (Charisma House), I share my belief that God is bringing about significant changes in His church so that singles will become more integrated and included. This will serve to eliminate much needless isolation in the future.

REAL PEACE FOR REAL STRUGGLES

Today, you may be surprised by the things you are dealing with as a single. You may choose to avoid admitting your struggles

because you think you should just “get over it.” Or perhaps you feel that experiencing pain means you are an immature Christian.

Jesus said that in this world, we would experience tribulation. But He also added, “Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

As singles, we, too, want to overcome through Him. And we can learn how to live well in the midst of our struggles. Remember the words of Paul, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13).

When you have exhausted all your energy struggling to understand the answers to questions that are beyond you, it really is OK to give up the fight. It is not a sign of weakness to lower your head and say, “God, I just don’t understand.”

Neither are you a “bad” Christian for vigorously asking these hard questions and seeking answers in the first place. God does not despise you for asking, and you should not despise yourself for quitting the quest, as long as you end your quest in trust, not defeat.

The greatest peace comes not in understanding the answers to our plaguing questions but in having a submitted heart that rests in the knowledge of God’s goodness despite everything that may argue to the contrary. God will help you to surrender if you let Him.

Virginia McInerney is the author of *Single, Not Separate*, a sensible application of God’s Word on the single life, published by Charisma House.