

Why Families Need to Include Singles

When I was a young adult, my brother and his wife called me into their bedroom during a family gathering. They had never done this before, so I knew something was up.

Both Dave and Debbie spoke, but my brother took the lead. They just wanted me to know that if I remained single, they would always be my family. They'd remember my birthday and invite me for all holidays. If I needed something, they'd do everything possible to help.

Until they loved me with these statements, I didn't know how badly I needed to hear them.

Our parents were still alive and in good health. I still had my old bedroom to stay in when visiting for holidays. But Dave and Deb were correct—there would be a time when our parents wouldn't be alive.

Debbie and Dave opened their home to several single women who needed a place to stay for various reasons. Getting to know them and their concerns prompted their declaration to me. They came to appreciate the very real issue for many singles—where will I go when my parents die and will anyone remember me on my birthday?

I'm grateful to God for how comfortable I am being single. I don't take it lightly. I know many single adults who would prefer to be married and some who are angry at God that they aren't. I've met parents whose greatest concern seems to be whether their children will get married. In those cases, I'm happy to model contentment and fulfillment as a single.

In addition to Dave and Deb's welcoming statement, what has contributed to my contentment?

- Jesus was single. If there was anything wrong with this choice, God's only Son would have been married. Jesus understands my temptations, fears, anxieties, confusion, lack of support and so on. If the single life was good enough for God's only child, it must be good enough for me!
- Marriage is not a cure for loneliness or any other thing. Jesus completes us (Col. 2:10) and people complement us. Expecting one person on earth to do what Jesus came to do is dangerous and will lead to deep disappointments. Marriage is hard work, and I know it doesn't come with guarantees.
- I've cultivated a dynamic relationship with God and expect Him to meet my needs.
- I've become comfortable with who I am so I can be content alone. I accept what aren't my favorite qualities that can't be changed and I work on the others. I humbly celebrate successes.
- I know the difference between being alone and being lonely and use the words carefully and accurately.
- I don't allow myself to isolate, but rather I spend time with friends. I have several activities I enjoy and things I do to relax.
- I've learned to ask for help because there are many things I can't do by myself and other things I don't know how to do. Asking doesn't make me weak.
- I enjoy the freedom I have to spend my money the way I want, eat what I want and where, decorate the way I want, make decisions in the way I think is best, ...
- I pamper myself. I cook good food and sometimes buy myself flowers. I own beautiful china and many other nice things. (I tell young people not to get married for the party and the gifts! Buy what you want.)

Does anything in my list help you think through your situation and contentment? Do you know singles you could share it with? Or do you know youth who are not dating but think they must?

There's one more thing that's significant to anyone's contentment and life satisfaction. Obedience.

Whether single or married, the bottom line is obedience. Singles may not be single forever, but the key is contentment and acceptance for what the Lord has for each of us at any given time in our lives. We must make the most of every opportunity (Eph. 5:15-17).

If I don't believe my current situation is God's best for me, what makes me think I'll trust Him in my next phase? Living with a "grass is greener on the other side of the fence" thinking pattern dishonors God and isn't appealing to me at all. Is it to you?

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