

Aren't You Married Yet?

✖ *I'm not about to start singing the blues over being single. Neither should you.*

"Why aren't you married?" has to be the single most asked question I get at this point in my life. What does a person mean when he poses this question?

Is he really asking me, "What is wrong with you?" It sure feels like it!

Although I usually give a polite response such as, "I am just waiting on God," what I really want to shout at the top of my lungs is: "To tell you the truth—I don't know. But I am not really worried about it. I am happy just the way I am. Now leave me alone!"

Singleness, first of all, is not a sickness to be cured, a disease to rid the world of or a plague that threatens the very fabric of our culture. There is absolutely nothing wrong with being single.

I don't need deliverance from singlehood. I don't need healing from it. I am just fine. I'm normal, healthy and whole.

When David wrote, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works" (Ps. 139:14), he wasn't talking about being paired in a perfect union with another person. He meant that he was fabulous exactly the way God made him.

For the record: Yes, I want to get married one day. Yes, I want to have children.

Yes, I know I am 36. But I also know that God has a divine and awesome plan for my life. He has started a good work in me and will be faithful to complete it (see Phil. 1:6).

At the right time He will reveal the right person, and I will

no longer be single. But in the meantime—and I want to be very clear about this—I am single. I am not impaired, and neither are you!

ALONE DOESN'T MEAN LONELY

You don't have a close friend to hang out with, talk to, confide in? Then be a close friend to someone.

Invite the person to hang out with you. Listen to her. For that matter, get involved, work in the church or volunteer.

Go to movies, art galleries, plays, musicals and new restaurants. Find a hobby you enjoy, or travel. In other words, have a life!

The easiest way for Satan to convince you that you are unfulfilled is for you to isolate yourself. Staying inside the "four walls of your own life" is the fastest route to loneliness, depression and despair.

My mother was a counselor by profession and a minister of the gospel. Often people called and came by for prayer, words of advice and encouragement.

I will never forget the many women who sat in our living room crying, pleading and begging for a husband. Single woman after single woman would say: "Sister Turner, please pray that God will send me a husband. I *neeeed* a husband."

My mother would always tell them to wait on God, trust in the Lord and be about His work at this stage in their lives. Then she would pray for them, and they would be on their way, only to return a few months later—if that elusive "man of God" hadn't yet appeared—making the same request, in the same desperate fashion.

As a little girl I was not allowed to stay in the living room for these prayer sessions. But I would, more often than not, sit just outside the door and listen to what was going on.

I remember thinking: These women are just pathetic. I don't ever want to be like that. As a little girl I prayed: "God, please help me always to be content with You. Don't ever let me feel like I have to have a husband in order to be happy."

You know, God honored that little girl's prayer. Although I had a high school sweetheart and a few other casual dates, I've always known that my identity is in Christ.

KNOW WHO YOU ARE

Who I am with has nothing to do with who I am. I've had lots of friends, both female and male. I went through my 20s pursuing my education, career and ministry.

When I won the Miss America pageant my life went into warp speed. I traveled all over the country speaking, signing autographs, giving TV interviews and meeting some of the most exciting people of the time.

After that whirlwind year I returned to school, finished my doctorate in veterinary medicine and started a career of motivational speaking and Christian ministry.

It was great! I loved God. I loved my job. I loved life.

But when I hit my mid-30s, all of a sudden my ovaries became very noisy. The ticking of my womb was deafening. My biological clock was about to strike midnight.

One day I looked around me and realized that most of my friends were married (many were divorced, too). Many of them had kids, houses, sport utility vehicles and retirement plans.

I thought: *Man, what is wrong with me? Why am I not married?* (Even if I weren't wondering that, most of my friends and family were asking me that question.) I began saying to the Lord, "Father, I want to get married."

One year everybody seemed to be in a relationship but me. As the Thanksgiving holiday was approaching, I decided that I

would just wait and see who would invite me over for Thanksgiving dinner.

Little did I know that I was setting myself up for a huge disappointment. As the weeks went by, no one asked me over. Not my friends. Not my sister. Not even my father.

With only a week before Thanksgiving, I was distraught. No one really loves me! No one really cares!

At least, that is what Satan wanted me to think. I started spiraling into a real depression. All the decorations were in place for an all-out pity party.

Then God spoke to my heart. He said, "Are you the only person on earth with no plans for Thanksgiving?"

Instantly, I thought of a dozen single women who probably didn't have anywhere to go on that day. So instead of feeling sorry for myself, pining for a blessing from God, I decided I would be a blessing from God.

I invited co-workers over for dinner who I knew would not get to go home for the holiday. I cooked a huge meal, and we had a grand time.

When the last guest left, I realized that I was not lonely or forlorn once all day. God taught me a critical lesson for single folks: As we reach out to others to bless them, we get blessed in the process.

EMBRACE THIS SEASON

In Philippians 4:11, Paul wrote, "For I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content." This passage can easily be misinterpreted. Most people think that "content" means being happy, satisfied or fulfilled.

Actually, one definition for content in Webster's dictionary is "to wait quietly." You may not be happy with being single, but the key is to learn to wait quietly.

Paul goes on to say: "I know how to be abased, and I know how to have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need" (v. 12).

But he puts it all in perspective by concluding, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (v. 13). I have heard this verse misapplied time after time.

We use it for accomplishing our goals. But in truth, Paul is talking about enduring the many different phases of life.

As a single, you can be single through Christ who strengthens you. Allow God to show you His purpose for your life.

Be open to God's timing and seasons. Seek His face. Pursue His heart. Really, only God's love can fill the void in your life.

If you are miserable alone, I guarantee you, you will be more miserable with someone. No person can complete you; only God can.

So why are you still single? Because "to everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven" (Eccl. 3:1).

This is your season of singleness. And no, it is not the "winter of your discontent." It is a time to know God intimately, to enjoy the freedom of singlehood and to prepare for the rigors of marriage.

Yes, we are fine. We are not married, but that is OK. We are content, and for now, that is enough.

Read a companion devotional.

This article originally appeared in the February/March 2002 issue of Spirited Woman. Debbye Turner married her husband, Gerald Bell, in July 2008.

Debbye Turner Bell, ., was crowned Miss America 1990. Now Dr. Turner divides her time between Christian and youth

motivational speaking, veterinary public relations and her work as a correspondent to CBS News. She resides in the New York City area with her husband and daughter.