

ENRICHMENT

SUMMER 2000

Single-Adult Ministry

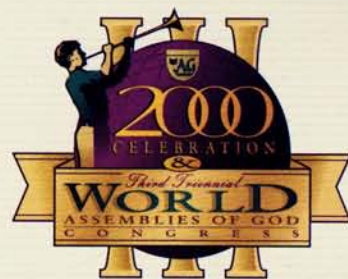
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A JOURNAL FOR PENTECOSTAL MINISTRY



WORLD A/G CONGRESS • AUGUST 7-8, 2000
2000 CELEBRATION • AUGUST 8-10, 2000
Indianapolis
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USA

Ministry Matters

BY WAYDE I. GOODALL

After concluding the Wednesday night service in prayer, I opened my eyes and saw a young mother with her 7-year-old daughter kneeling in front of the pulpit. I quickly went to the mother and asked if I could pray with her and her little girl. She said she was new to the community and lived in the apartments across the street from the church. She explained that she had recently gone through a divorce, was frightened about the future, wounded by the past, and nervous about raising her daughter alone. She did not attend church anywhere, but saw the cars in our parking lot and decided to come and see what was going on. After that night they regularly attended our church, and Jesus began to heal her heartache and show her answers to her various fears.

I've often thought, *What if we hadn't been there? What if we hadn't provided programs for her daughter and a class for those who have gone through divorce? Would she have gone to the neighborhood bar or community singles club?*

The church can be an oasis for those in the desert of pain; it can address the concerns of singles and give answers to those who have experienced devastation. In this issue of *Enrichment*, we explore these areas. Hopefully, you will be encouraged to minister to this ever-growing multitude and the many diverse groups within it.

As we begin a new millennium, we have a tremendous opportunity with singles. Never before have unmarried people composed over 40 percent of the adult population. A high percentage of them are unchurched. Not all of our churches have a singles ministry, but we have a responsibility to find ways to reach this group for Christ.

One issue pastors are concerned about is the high percentage of single people who cohabit before marriage. We are not only troubled by the fact this is morally

wrong (sinful), but we understand that cohabiting couples have an 80 percent greater chance of divorce. Women who cohabit are twice as likely to experience domestic violence compared to married women. These women also suffer four times more depression than married women and two times more than unmarried, noncohabiting women do. In one survey of 100 couples who lived together, 71 percent of the women said they wouldn't "live in" again.¹ Living together before marriage isn't all that our media and society make it out to be.

In *Christian Single*, Ben Young addresses the real motives for men and women to "shack up."² Some do it because of fear. They choose to live together before marriage because they fear divorce. As ironic as this might seem, many feel that if things don't work out, they can just move out. They rationalize that this is less painful than divorce. The second reason is a sexual relationship. Most men who cohabit have what they view as the best of all situations—sex without commitment. Third is manipulation. Many women try to catch a husband by becoming involved in a cohabiting relationship. And fourth is immaturity. People are unwilling to delay gratification. Sadly, couples who are undisciplined and immature in this area before marriage lack the discipline and maturity to work through the struggles that come after they are married.

What can we do about the problem of cohabitation? We can address the real motives for cohabiting and provide answers for those who are involved in this behavior, and for those who are considering it. Premarital counseling is one of the most successful activities a couple can do to radically lower the possibility of divorce. We can attack their "fear of divorce" by developing a premarital counseling program in our churches. We can develop

singles classes, singles activities, and programs that focus on the unique concerns of singles (in a Christian setting). In these programs we can address loneliness and abstinence. We can talk about why men and women often cohabit and how this behavior is not only sinful but will likely bring them pain. We can help singles mature in Christ by helping them understand that Christ will supply all their needs and that they can take advantage of this time by getting involved in ministry.

Paul (who was single) wrote about the advantages for ministry by single men and women (1 Corinthians 7:32–35). He addressed the sinfulness of sex before marriage (1 Corinthians 6:12–20; Colossians 3:5–10). He instructed the married and the single person, "Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Colossians 3:17).^{*} He also reminded believers that the church is "God's household...the pillar and foundation of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15). This truth is what we offer all people in our community.

Singles have unique needs, and they have issues ministers need to be aware of. However, the truth we offer through the gospel of Jesus Christ is the only way single adults will have the peace and security for which they are searching. **E**

**All Scripture quotations are from the New International Version.*

ENDNOTES

1. Ben Young, "Playing Spouse," *Christian Single*, 21, No. 6: 25–29.
2. Ibid.

Wayde I. Goodall, D.Min., is executive editor of *Enrichment Journal* and national coordinator of the Ministerial Enrichment Office, Springfield, Missouri.



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Executive Editor

Wayde I. Goodall

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Advertising/Promotion

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INTERVIEW WITH THOMAS E. TRASK

I Ask the Superintendent— Reaching and Serving Single Adults Through the Local Church

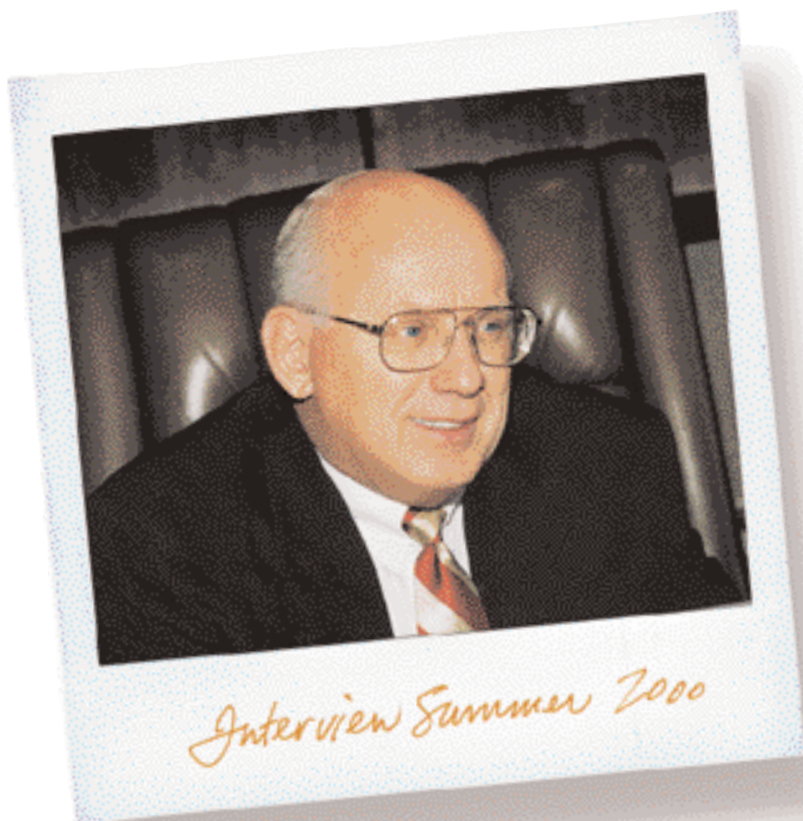
The number of unmarried adult Americans is on the rise.

Currently, singles comprise about 40 percent of the adult population. They are the

fastest-growing marital demographic in America—equivalent in number to the

14th largest nation on earth. At the same time, they are one of the most

under-represented groups in our churches.



Many of today's fastest-growing congregations have seen the need and have become intentional about reaching single America. This issue's interview with Thomas E. Trask, Assemblies of God general superintendent, focuses on this and other important issues related to single-adult ministry.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR THE CHURCH TO DEVELOP MINISTRIES THAT FOCUS SPECIFICALLY ON SINGLE ADULTS IN THE CONGREGATION AND IN THE COMMUNITY?

TRASK: The church must minister to the entire body of believers. When you have a group such as single adults, their needs are unique. Some are single because they have never married—even by choice. Others are single not by their own choice, but as the result of a tragedy in a marriage—a divorce or the death of a spouse. Consequently, the needs of single adults are unique.

There are many single adults in our churches who can give more energy and time for the work of the ministry than a married couple. They need to be given opportunity for that to happen.

We had an active singles ministry in our church. At times single adults would say to me, “Pastor, we just don’t fit with other groups.” The church, then, needs to develop ministries to strengthen, encourage, and provide single adults opportunities for ministry.

HOW DID YOU SHOW THE SINGLES IN YOUR CHURCH YOU WERE CONCERNED ABOUT THEIR NEEDS?

TRASK: At Brightmoor Tabernacle in Southfield, Michigan, we hired an associate pastor who was responsible for the singles ministry. He had a large group of people within the church, and he became their pastor. Creating this staff position showed the single adults in our church that we were concerned for them.

Singles also need to have fellowship. If they don’t find it in the church, they will find it someplace else. Our church had home fellowship groups and some of these groups were for the singles, so

they could gather for fellowship, prayer, and teaching.

SINGLE ADULTS FALL INTO SEVERAL SUBGROUPS, EACH WITH ITS OWN UNIQUE SET OF NEEDS. WHAT ARE SOME WAYS THE CHURCH CAN ADDRESS THESE SPECIFIC NEEDS?

TRASK: The needs of single adults vary, depending on their particular situation in life. For instance, younger singles are probably more interested in dating, pre-marriage preparation, and career and educational development. Older adults are facing retirement, living alone after the death of a spouse, in declining health. It is important that the church offer classes and workshops that provide teaching and support during these phases of life.

Many single adults will marry. Where better to find a mate than within the local church? The church should provide opportunities for them to fellowship together so they become acquainted with one another.

Statistics show that people are remaining single longer—into their late 20s. The longer a person is single, the more adjustments they will have to make when they marry. Counseling sessions in preparation for marriage would help prepare singles for those adjustments.

Businessmen in the church who are successful in their careers can meet with young people who want to go into business and mentor them.

Helping young single adults grow in their Christian walk is an important ministry of the local church. The church can become vital to a single person’s spiritual development and growth.

WHAT MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES IN THE LOCAL CHURCH SHOULD BE MADE AVAILABLE TO SINGLE ADULTS?

TRASK: First Corinthians 7 says it well: Singles can give of themselves because they do not have the concern for a spouse or family. There are many single adults in our churches who can give more energy and time for the work of the ministry than a married couple. They need to be


given opportunity for that to happen.

Sometimes churches only use singles to teach children; but single adults can teach other age groups, including other adults. Pastors should encourage singles adults to become involved in short-term missions trips. They will come back invigorated. Single adults can be a rich resource for the church. They are one of the untapped groups within the body of Christ that can be of great assistance to the ministry of the local church.

Single adults can be a rich resource for the church. They are one of the untapped groups within the body of Christ that can be of great assistance to the ministry of the local church.

Single adults are gifted, qualified people. Many of them are college educated and some even have masters degrees. A church may have several single adults who have graduated from a Christian college. Because they are single doesn’t mean they shouldn’t be given opportunity for ministry.

MANY OF THE FASTEST-GROWING CHURCHES IN THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD HAVE SINGLE-ADULT MINISTRIES.

TRASK: This is true. I’d like to encourage pastors who don’t have a ministry to singles in their church, to consider starting one. Churches don’t need a singles pastor to start a single-adult ministry. God will use someone within the congregation who understands and has a burden for single adults. With guidance, coaching, and encouragement that person can become the leader who can develop a single-adult ministry. This not only will minister to single adults; it will take a tremendous load off the pastor. Single-adult ministry doesn’t have to be done by the pastor; it can be done by a layperson who has that burden. God can bring someone into the forefront that has these leadership qualities. 

I INTERVIEW WITH THOMAS E. TRASK 2000 Celebration—A Fresh Pentecost for the 21st Century

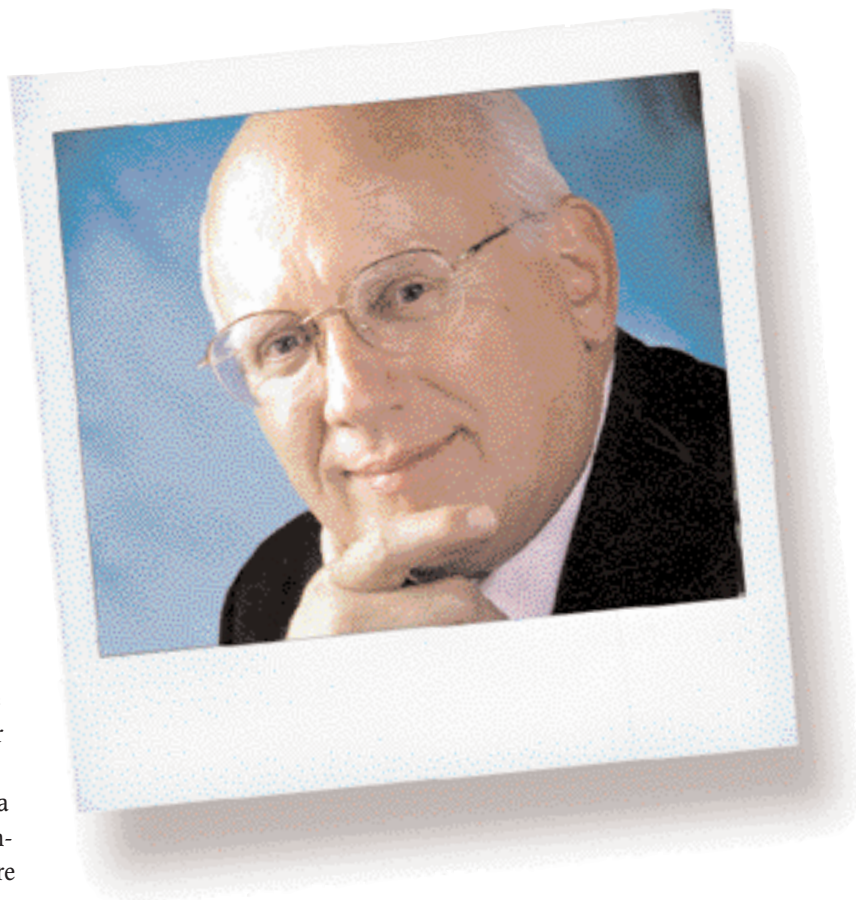
For the first time the Assemblies of God family from around the world is coming to the U.S. The 2000 Celebration will be an unprecedented, once-in-a-lifetime gathering of foreign representatives, missionaries, ministers, laity, and youth and children from America. Collectively, it will be a time of seeking God's face and believing for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit as we enter the 21st century. General Superintendent Thomas E. Trask visited with Wayde I. Goodall, executive editor of Enrichment, to discuss the upcoming 2000 Celebration.

WHY ARE YOU ENCOURAGING EVERY ASSEMBLIES OF GOD MINISTER AND THE LAITY OF OUR CHURCHES TO ATTEND THE 2000 CELEBRATION?

TRASK: Never in the history of the U.S. Assemblies of God have we gathered at one place, at one time, for one purpose. Never in the history of this Fellowship has there been a gathering of this magnitude. Many have commented that the meetings in Indianapolis may well be the most significant since our founding General Council in Hot Springs, Arkansas, in 1914.

First, this meeting will provide opportunity for those who are a part of the Assemblies of God to see this church through a new window. They are going to hear what God is doing around the world. Attendees will gain a vital perspective of the church. It will lift their vision and faith to believe that if God can do it in this magnitude for the Assemblies of God in other places, He can do it for their church.

Second, the Assemblies of God was born in a Pentecostal revival. We must move into the 21st century with a fresh dynamic of Pentecost. This is more



than a celebration—we need to hear from God. We need a visitation and a mandate from Him. Every pastor and minister, every deacon and layperson, and every worker in this Fellowship needs to hear and experience this.

For many months we have been praying, “God visit us so we are empowered by the Spirit to accomplish our mission.” Our mission is not complete. We cannot be satisfied with the grain that is in the barn. We need to look in the fields that still need to be harvested. There are millions upon millions who need to know the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

As the Early Church tarried in Jerusalem, we are asking our pastors and laity to come to Indianapolis, Indiana, August 8-10, and wait upon God for a fresh visitation of His Spirit.

WE ARE LIVING IN SOME OF THE MOST EXCITING DAYS OF THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH. HOW WILL 2000 CELEBRATION CAPTURE WHAT GOD IS DOING IN THE WORLD TODAY?

TRASK: Around the world about 178,000 people are saved each day. Through the various ministries of the Assemblies of God, about 10,000 people a day are accepting Christ as Savior. We are humbled that the Lord is using us in a significant way. This sacred gathering is not only to hear from God, but it is like a last-minute huddle. We are about ready to win the game. Jesus is getting ready to come back for His church. The task of reaching the lost is doable, and it is close to being finished. We need to come together to be energized, to hear from God, and to be motivated to finish the task. That’s our challenge. God wants to empower us anew and afresh. We have to make ourselves available.

HOW WILL 2000 CELEBRATION CONNECT WITH THE THIRD TRIENNIAL ASSEMBLIES OF GOD CONGRESS?

TRASK: The third triennial Assemblies

of God Congress will be held just prior to 2000 Celebration on August 7 and 8 at the Hyatt Regency hotel. Under the leadership of Dr. David Yonggi Cho, chairman of the World Assemblies of God Fellowship, the Congress will deal with issues affecting the international church, including partnering in world missions. Over 100 general superintendents from around the world have already registered to come. Delegates from many foreign countries are coming. All missionaries are being given opportunity to attend. It’s going to be a phenomenal international family gathering.

WHO WILL BE SOME OF THE FEATURED SPEAKERS?

TRASK: One of the speakers will be Dr. David Yonggi Cho, chairman of the World Assemblies of God Fellowship. Dr. Peter Kuzmic, cofounder and director of the Biblical Theological Institute of Croatia; Hector Hunter, general superintendent of the Assemblies of God in Cuba; Lazarus Chakwera, general superintendent of the Assemblies of God in Malawi, and others will be speaking. We will also have several smaller gatherings during the day that will have dynamic speakers.

SOME ARE ASKING WHAT WILL ACTUALLY TRANSPIRE AT THE 2000 CELEBRATION.

TRASK: The power-packed program will feature fast-paced worship, testimonies, brief messages, drama, and videos. As we hear and view through video what God is doing, we will be humbled. The format will be much like the Sacred Assemblies, with time to seek God around the altars. We are believing that every person who comes to 2000 Celebration will have a fresh encounter with God and lives will be changed.

There will be times of divine response within the hearts of God’s people. People are going to be called—even young people—to the ministry out of this meeting.

We are going to pray for the sick, and they are going to be healed. We are going to pray for those to be baptized in the Holy Spirit and for others to be refilled. My prayer and desire is, “Lord, let us experience what the Early Church experienced so we will be changed by the power of God.”

The first and only time this entire Fellowship came together was in 1914. Significant leaders gathered because they had one purpose in their hearts—to reach the world for Christ. They realized they couldn’t do it alone. At that time over 300 people humbly came together to hear from God.


Now we’re 30 million strong. The only thing that has changed is the numbers. The mission and message of this church is the same, the Messenger—the person of Jesus Christ—is the same, and the endowment of power is the same. The only thing that has changed is that we have more people, more resources, but we also have more people to reach with the gospel.

Not only has the church grown, the world has grown. The opportunities have multiplied so significantly that opportunities unparalleled foreshadow the days of the past completely.

DO YOU HAVE ANY FINAL WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT?

TRASK: This is not just another preachers’ event. This is a meeting for the entire Assemblies of God family. Every layperson, teen, Sunday school teacher, and church member needs to be a part of this event.

It is incumbent for pastors to bring their people to 2000 Celebration. If I were pastoring, I would tell my people, “I want you to be there to experience and to see the church you are a part of. I would make every effort to come and bring my people.”

If a pastor has not yet registered, it is not too late. The registration information is in the Spring 2000 *Enrichment*. Pastors and their leaders can also register online at: 2000.agcongress.org. 



Building a “Call-Driven” Singles Ministry

BY
RICH
HURST

Have you heard the concern in the missions world about the 10/40 window? No, it's not a special tax form for missionaries. It is a rectangle-shaped belt that extends from West Africa across Asia—between 10 and 40 degrees north of the equator—where most of the world's unreached people live. Missiologists believe that if we are serious about giving every person an opportunity to respond to the love of Christ, we must concentrate on this region of the world.

There is an equally strategic window in America; it is the 20/50 window and includes the single adults in their twenties through fifties. Just as the 10/40 window is strategically important to cross-cultural evangelism, the 20/50 window is key to reaching the most unreached group in North America.

SINGLE ADULTS ON THE RISE

Single adults continue to be the fastest-growing marital demographic in America. At the same time, they are under-represented in our churches. In the last 20 years, overall church attendance is down 35 percent. During the same period, the number of singles in this country has increased dramatically. The decline in the numbers attending churches may have come from a failure to reach single adults rather than a massive desertion of church members.

According to the *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 1998, the largest group of single adults (24 percent) is the never-married. This is compared to widows (7 percent) and the divorced (9 percent). Most unmarried are between 25 and 44 years of age. With singles representing 41 percent of the entire adult population, vast numbers are in this group.

CALL-DRIVEN MINISTRY

Carl George believes that if the church is going to grow in the next century, it must be serious about reaching single adults. The key to this is building a "call-driven" singles ministry. I recently

had a chance to witness the birth of such a ministry.

Michael, a singles pastor, had invited me to join him for lunch with a parishioner named Sarah. He mentioned his concern that he was not addressing the needs of all the single adults at his church. He had two groups of single adults: those in their early twenties, called Singles One, and those in their late forties, called Singles Two. But the church had many singles in an age bracket between these two groups. Michael referred to them as the Singles 1.5. Sarah fit into this group. He had been trying for months to get Sarah and her friends to start a class for their group, but they wouldn't do it, and he was frustrated. My job at lunch was to convince her to start a class for the 1.5ers at their church.

I asked, "Sarah, Michael tells me there are a good number of 1.5ers at the church. Is that true?"

She laughed at the label and said, "Yes, there are."

I said, "Well, why don't you start a class for singles that age?"

She said, "We don't want to." I could tell she was not happy about my questions, so I dropped the subject.

A few minutes later I asked, "Sarah, if you could do anything for God in your church or community, what would you do?"

She replied, "What are you talking about?"

I said, "If you could get involved in some ministry, what would it be?"

She told me that she and some of her friends had been talking about getting involved in a literacy program down the street from the church.

I interrupted, "You and some of your friends. What friends?"

She said, "You know, the 1.5ers."

I blurted out, "That's great. On Monday Michael will call them and set up an appointment for you all to go there and discuss getting involved."

She was delighted. Michael, however, looked confused. A few minutes later, I again asked Sarah, "If you could do anything for God in the whole world, what would you do? What would you do

if money, education, or time weren't issues? What is your dream?"

She began to talk about the desire she and some of her friends had to go on a short-term missions trip to Romania to work with babies who have AIDS.

I said, "Sarah, get your friends together for a meeting to begin planning for that trip."

She laughed and said, "I like this kind of ministry."

I looked at Michael and said, "I guess you have your Singles 1.5er's ministry."

Michael and Sarah took our meeting seriously. Within the next year, over 20 singles became involved in a literacy ministry, plus they went on their missions trip. Michael wanted a class because he thought that's what real ministry is. But Sarah didn't feel called to start a class. She was, however, primed to live out her dream for God. We just needed to ask the right question and create the right environment.

One year later I again visited with Michael and Sarah. She laughed when she told me they had indeed started a class for the 1.5ers in their church.¹

THE THEOLOGY OF SINGLENESS

Not every church needs a program for single adults, but every church needs a ministry to and with single adults. In creating a call-driven singles ministry, you must begin with a foundation that has an adequate theology. Good programming cannot overcome bad theology.

We must believe that single adults are full members of the family of God. We must learn to accept singles regardless of how they got there. I'm not talking about acceptance of ongoing destructive choices; I am talking about believing that we are all sinners, and we start on level ground.

Our vision will have to overcome the stereotypes we have of single adults. Singles are not all just looking to get married. And when or if they become married, they will not be more whole.

Our vision will need to be for people, community-building relationships, and helping people become all they can be for

Single-Adult Ministry Resources

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Smith, Harold Ivan. *Positively Single*. Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1983.

MAGAZINES

Single Adult Ministries Journal
P.O. Box 36670
Colorado Springs, CO 80936
1-800-487-4726

Single Parent Family (a magazine for single parents)
Focus on the Family
8605 Explorer Dr.
Colorado Springs, CO 80920-1051
1-719-531-5181

Christian Single (a magazine for successful single living)
127 North Avenue
Nashville, TN 37324-0140
1-888-467-3967
www.christiansingle.com

SINGLE ADULT MINISTRIES

Network of Single Adult Leaders
P.O. Box 1600
Grand Rapids, MI 49501
www2.gospelcom.net/nsl/

Single Life Resources
P.O. Box 1166
Casy, NC 27512
www.slr.org

Kids Hope
Gary Sprague
189 Illini Dr.
Woodland Park, CO 80666
www.kidshope.org

National GenX Postmodern
Younger Single-Adult Ministry Convention
1-800-708-5550, ext. 3438

SINGLES MINISTRY INTERNET SITES

www.lifeway.com/discipleplus/samindex.htm

www.divorcecare.com

www.planetconnection.com/friendgrief

U. S. Census Bureau, Internet; <http://www.Census.Gov/population>

(Once into this Web site, go to sosdemo, then to ms-la, and finally to tabms-1.txt and 2.txt.)

Secular site with divorce-related issues:
www.divorcesupport.com

Christian Single Parent Network
www.cspn.org

Information for single parents
www.fsministries.org

Link to single-adult ministry resources:
www.flash.net/~unclhwr/sam.htm

Christ, not just programs or organizations. Our vision must integrate single adults into the whole life of the church and provide structures that emphasize this integration. One way to effectively do this is with small groups. Allow single adults to exercise leadership within the church body. I often ask churches whether they have singles on their deacon or elder board. That is usually a test of how

single adults are seen in the life of the Body. Our vision has to begin at the top. To have an effective singles ministry in a church, you should have the total support of the senior pastor. However, the absence of pastoral support should not be a cop-out.

Have a vision that is based on serving, not sitting. Singles ministry is not just parties and socials; it is equipping single

adults to be world changers. It includes a vision that sees the whole community and singles ministry as a service to the community, inside and outside of the walls of the church. Singles are ambassadors for Christ in the marketplace.

THE PLAN

How do you develop a plan? Many times prayer is not the first thing people do

when they want to start a ministry. Usually they start a program and then ask God why it is not working. Start with prayer. Ask God if He wants you to start a program or ministry with singles.

Second, choose your objectives. Some objectives may include:

- Discipleship versus entertainment
- Christ-centered
- Helping singles to be the people of God before they do the work of God
- Finding needs and meeting them
- Start small, slow, and solid
- Minister *with* singles and *not to* them

Next, develop core values. The basic three are: worship, edification (fellowship and Bible study), and mission. One program can't meet the needs of all single adults.

You must also be intentional about who you are trying to reach and how. There are five subgroups to reach:

- Potential (Evangelism)
- Newcomers

- Leaders
- Discipleship/Equipping
- Attendees

Help single adults gain ownership of their ministry. Have them take responsibility for leadership, keeping in mind that very rarely in a church can an effective ministry with single adults happen without paid staff. Our structures are not set up to succeed without a pastor to equip and release people to minister.

LEADERSHIP

Leadership will be key in starting and growing a single-adult ministry. Here are several things you need to take into account.

- *Establish your theology of leadership.* Volunteers are great, but this is not a biblical model for choosing leaders. All have gifts (Romans 12), but be selective. Before you choose a leader, have a list of qualifications for that leader. Singles ministry best happens by spending time with a few potential leaders before you start a program.

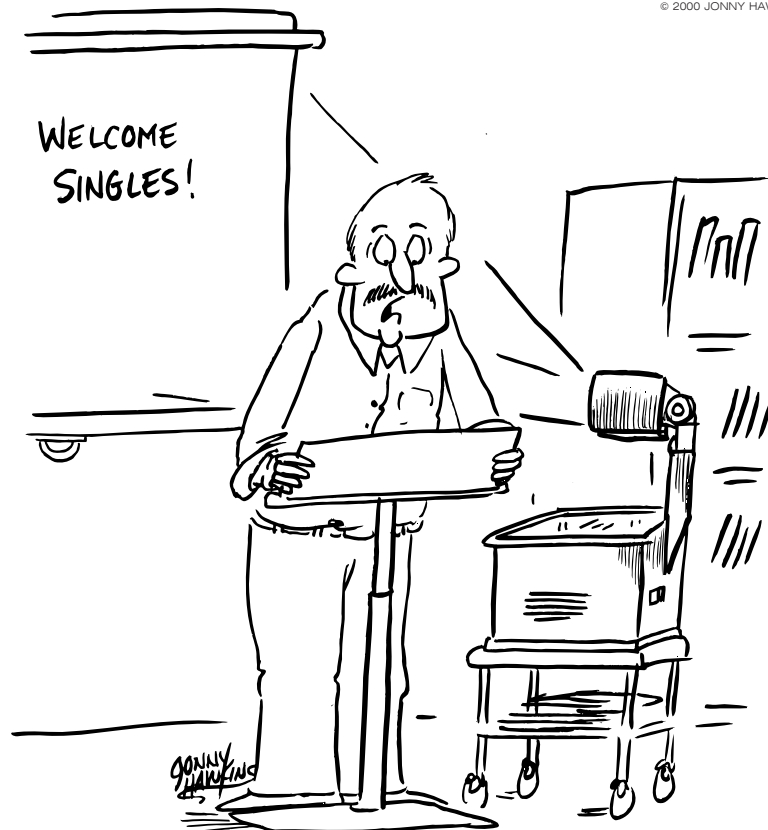
• *Focus on each person's calling as opposed to what you can get each to do.* Are you building a health club, hospital, or emergency room ministry? Leadership that understands we are not just taking care of those poor singles, but equipping them for ministry, will build a health club to train healthy singles.

• *Have job descriptions so singles know what they are agreeing to do.* One thing that will make a difference is ongoing training for your leaders. In my book, *Giving the Ministry Away*,² we offer a training course for your leaders.

• *Develop a small group of singles to investigate starting a singles ministry.* Meet with the senior pastor to get his support. Effective ministry begins with homework, not a program. Do some research—who are the singles in the church and community? Host a dream session and ask, “What kind of single adults do we want to produce?” That is the place where your assumptions come to the surface. Do you want to produce a social club for singles, an emergency room for singles, or singles that are fully participating in the life of the body of Christ and in the mission of Christ?

Begin by sponsoring a missions project, or consider a special worship service to reach single adults. Create a market plan. Start slow, small, and solid. As you begin, stay flexible and committed. No matter the size of your church, you may or may not have a program for single adults. But all churches, of all sizes, if they take evangelism seriously, will take seriously reaching single adults. **E**

Rich Hurst is singles ministry resource director for David C. Cook, Colorado Springs, Colorado.



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“And finally, we request that you exercise discernment by only engaging in ‘group hugs’ ”

ENDNOTES

1. Rich Hurst and Frank Tillapaugh *Calling* (Dreamtime Publishing, 19), 10.
2. Terry Hershey, Rich Hurst, and Karen Butler, *Giving the Ministry Away* (Colorado Springs: Cook Publishing, 1993).

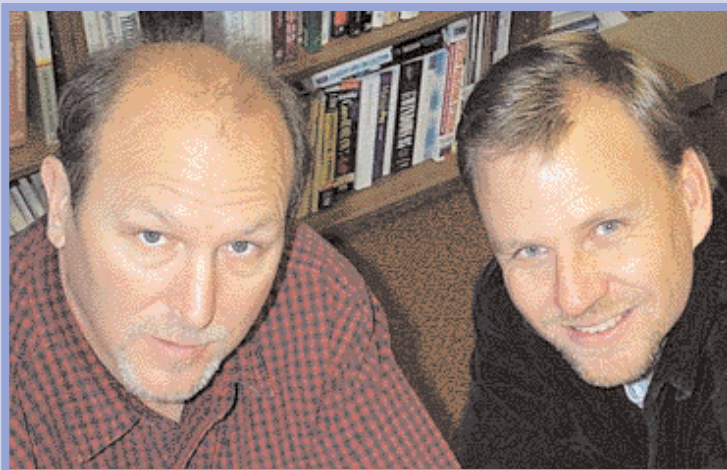
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INTERVIEW WITH RICH HURST AND KEN BAUGH

Keys to an Effective Single-Adult Ministry

Because of the rapid growth in the single-adult population, many churches and Christian organizations are focusing on this segment of society for ministry resource and evangelism. Two individuals who are involved in single-adult ministry are Rich Hurst, director of singles ministry resources with David C. Cook, Colorado Springs, Colorado, and Ken Baugh, director of Frontline, a young adult ministry of McLean Bible Church, McLean, Virginia.

Enrichment Journal asked these two men to share their insights into single-adult ministry. They also provide practical advice on how the church can effectively minister to this growing segment of society.



RICH HURST

KEN BAUGH

HOW DO YOU DEFINE SINGLE ADULTS AND WHAT ARE THEIR UNIQUE NEEDS?

HURST: There are basically four groups of single adults: the never married, the divorced, the separated, and the widowed. Yet there are vast differences in these four groups. Approximately 50 percent of unmarried single adults over the age of 20 have never been married; yet, ministry to single adults in the church has predominantly focused on the divorced. Churches need to look at all dimensions of single adults.

Single adults have unique needs. Singles under age 30 predominantly have intimacy and career needs. Their intimacy needs are primarily wrapped up in who they will marry. Over age 30, their needs are transitional needs. Some of them have gone through a relationship that has ended, and some of them are coming to terms with the fact they may never marry.

BAUGH: Single-adult ministry today is more than encapsulating four generations into one ministry. It is targeting specific generations of single adults. That helps us be more effective.

THE CULTURAL DIFFERENCES OF POSTMODERN

YOUNG ADULTS IMPACT HOW WE REACH THEM FOR CHRIST. EXPLAIN.

BAUGH: The church believes that

postmodernism is an enemy because of its relativism of truth. However, postmodern adults have an intense need for relationships. Single-adult ministry today is moving back to a first-century church model where relationships were the

boomers, your approach is a pragmatic, how-to model. When I started Frontline, that is what I did. Now I'm using a narrative and experiential approach. For example, some churches tack Communion onto the end of a service.

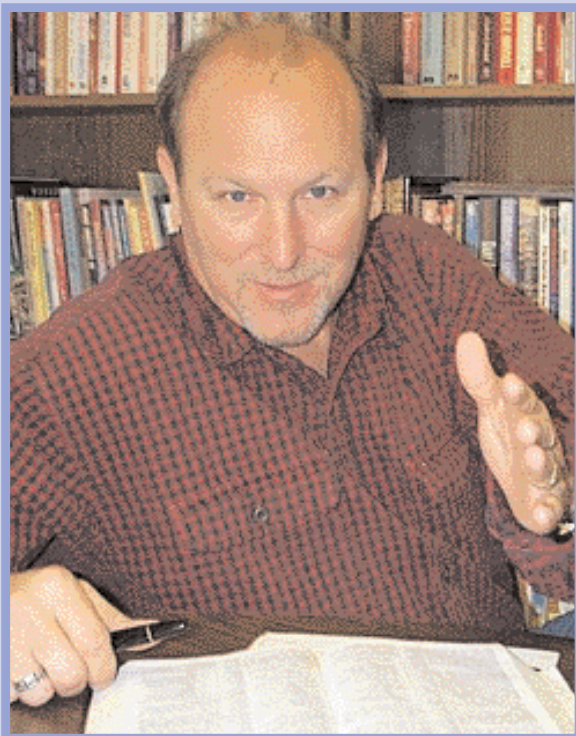
But postmodern Christians want to experience Communion. So we have celebrated Communion by candlelight. We have instructed the people to go to different tables in the auditorium to take Communion individually. We have also shown clips of Jesus' crucifixion from the film, *Jesus of Nazareth*. My message then focused on what Christ has done for us and how we can respond to Him. Communion does not simply become an interaction with propositional truth; it becomes an experience.

HURST: This generation does not believe the Bible as the standard of truth. My generation looks at truth as a concept and explains how to live it out. For this generation truth is not a concept, truth is a person—Jesus Christ. He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." So we teach people to say yes to a relationship with Jesus Christ, who is the Truth, and then lead them into responding to the truth of God's Word.

WHAT OTHER AREAS ARE DIFFERENT FOR POSTMODERN YOUNG PEOPLE?

BAUGH: Identifying yourself as a Christian today has a derogatory connotation. Instead of calling ourselves Christians, we call ourselves followers of

As a whole, single adults between the ages of 20 and 50 are the most unreached group in America.—Hurst



primary factor. How that plays out in the day-to-day affects the way you teach single adults.

When you're working with older

Christ, because that's what we are. Postmoderns don't have a problem with Jesus; it's His friends they don't like. They have seen inconsistencies in the church over the last 20 years.

HURST: In many ways, singles over 30 were the pregroup of postmoderns. In the seventies, when the crisis of divorce happened, they saw their parents reject the standards for marriage. The thing that makes single adults over 30 interesting is they were the first tribe to come back to the church. They huddled together, busted their way into the church, and said look at who we are. We have needs. We're not pretty, but here we are.

Unfortunately, even though the over-30 group is returning to church, it is not returning in droves. As a whole, single adults between the ages of 20 and 50 are the most unreached group in America.

DISCUSS THE NEEDS OF THE OVER-30 GROUP AND THE UNDER-30 GROUP? WHY DO THEY ATTEND CHURCH?

HURST: Many post-modern single adults want to be part of the body of Christ, but their transitional needs must be met first. One transition need is being 40 years old and never married. At McLean Bible Church, a group of the over-30, never-married professionals

said, "We are the most ignored group in this church." They felt a huge void. There's a need to address the specific issues of divorce and remarriage, widowhood, and the single adults' desire for community.

their parents more than any other generation in history, and it has created in them a sense of abandonment and the need for family. They are looking for parental figures. We will see an explosion in the area of discipleship and mentoring

because they're hungry for that.

In the late sixties and early seventies, Paul Urlik, a biologist from Stanford, wrote *The Population Bomb*. Urlik believed overpopulation was public enemy number one and children were a threat to our national security because they were a drain on our natural resources and food supply. Some organizations during that time discriminated against children. The movies produced during those times—*Children of the Corn*, *Rosemary's Baby*, and *The Exorcist*—were a result of this belief. Today this generation needs healing from the brokenness of abandonment.

Other key issues include the breakdown of the traditional family, the lack of a father in the home, and latchkey kids. Many of these adults project their lack of a father figure onto God. When you talk to them about God the Father, they wonder, *If my earthly father abandoned me, will my Heavenly Father also abandon me?*

WHAT IS NEEDED FOR A CHURCH TO HAVE AN EFFECTIVE

SINGLES MINISTRY?

HURST: Every church, regardless of its size, is called to minister to single adults. To have an effective singles ministry, you

Relationships drive our generation, and that's where the greatest damage has been done. It's where the greatest healing needs to take place.—Baugh



BAUGH: One of the chapters in our book discusses the sociological implications unique to GenXers (people up to their mid-30s). They experienced the divorce of

need six things: (1) A program designed specifically for single adults that provides them a time when they can build relationships with each other. (2) Since everything rises and falls on leadership, good leadership is important. (3) A teacher who can lead single adults into the truths of God's Word and help them apply them to their lives. (4) Activities that give single adults a chance to interact with each other. (5) Bonding experiences, through small groups or retreats. (6) A positive identity for singles in the church.

BAUGH: Vision and core values are important because when they are in place, you can help your single adults identify what part of a program they should be involved in, and help them see how that part of the program is helping to accomplish the overall vision of the ministry. It gives them motivation and empowers them. Keeping everything aligned with vision and your core values is key to effective ministry.

Small groups are important for the under-30 crowd because they provide a sense of family. We have same-sex small groups because people will open up in these types of groups. In small groups, lives are changed and spiritual growth takes place.

If the senior pastor and elders are not sold on reaching single adults, especially younger adults, "it ain't gonna happen." When you start working with the postmodern crowd, you need leadership who trust each other. They must be totally sold out to Christ,

not compromising the gospel, but have the freedom to be creative.

WHAT ARE SOME POPULAR PARADIGMS BEING USED IN SINGLE-ADULT MINISTRY?

Many postmodern single adults want to be part of the body of Christ, but their transitional needs must be met first.—Hurst



HURST: Single-adult ministry can be done effectively with a hierarchical system, where the pastor is the keeper of the flock. Some feel we need to move away

from that style of leadership.

A current paradigm is the relational model. This is a team approach where single adults decide what they want to produce out of the ministry, and they work as a team to accomplish this.

In developing single-adult leadership, spend time with your leaders. Are you doing program ministry or people ministry? When you have program ministry, you recruit volunteers; and when they burn out, you recruit more volunteers. People-oriented ministry involves recruiting people, spending time with them, and empowering them to do the ministry God called them to do.

BAUGH: Frontline uses a relational paradigm of ministry. Frontline is based on Luke 10:27, "‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’" (NIV). Relationships drive our generation, and that's where the greatest damage has been done. It's where the greatest healing needs to take place.

We focus on four major areas of relationship. First, we focus on growing in our relationship with God. Second, we have relationships with one another. There

are over 50 "one another" commands in the New Testament—love one another, encourage one another, support one another. We need a context where we can

live out and be obedient to those commands. This happens in our small groups.

Third is our relationship with ourselves (spiritual maturity, emotional maturity, identifying our calling, receiving emotional and spiritual healing). We have been broken by sin and need to be healed. That's part of the sanctification process—it's holistic in the sense that God is putting us back together. We won't be fully mature in this life, but there should be genuine progress in maturity.

Fourth is our relationship with the world (outreach). This includes global missions, but it must begin in our communities. We do service projects in our community. We have also sent 10 teams throughout the world during the last 2 years, and our goal in the next 5 years is to send all 1,300 Frontline members on short-term missions trips.

WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO DO SINGLE-ADULT MINISTRY IN THE SMALLER CHURCH?

HURST: In a smaller church, you begin with only one singles group. The younger singles need to take the lead. If the 50-plus-year-old singles are the leaders, the 20-year-olds will not come. Try to get the

20-year-olds to reach out to the 40- and 50-year-olds. Get them to do some things socially, and then give them opportunities to do things separately—a Sunday school class is a good way to

start. Even in a church of 100 or 200, you may have 25 or 30 single adults; and at some point, you can have two classes of 15 each, one for the under 35 and one for the over 35.

single adults. Several smaller churches there wanted to help. Now they are working together to reach unchurched people in their community. Networking is important. Churches that network can share ideas and resources.

HURST: Denominations can be a resource for their local churches. The denominational headquarters could network local churches, especially smaller churches with single-adult ministry. In a smaller church it's easier to get to know each other and you don't have some of the barriers you might have in a large church. There are benefits to being in a small church, and there are lots of smaller Assemblies of God churches around the country that can benefit from networking.

SEXUALITY IS A MAJOR ISSUE IN SINGLE-ADULT MINISTRY. HOW ARE YOU ADDRESSING THIS IN YOUR MINISTRY?

BAUGH: Sexual intimacy indicates that there is something deeper. A person is looking for a relationship—not just satisfying a drive or desire. We need to help young adults connect in healthy ways and let them know who they are in Christ without rejecting, condemning, or ridiculing them. We cannot condone sin, but we

need to love and affirm one another. That does something to the heart.

I'm not saying that once we do affirm them, every single adult will stop having premarital sex. But the root issues are

If a church in the 21st century is going to grow, it will grow through ministry to single adults. —Baugh



HOW DOES NETWORKING BENEFIT THE SMALLER CHURCH?

BAUGH: A volunteer in Frontline moved to North Carolina about a year ago. He started a metro—a mid-week meeting for

key. We must do more. We must tell them that premarital sex is sin, stop doing it. However, we will not motivate all singles to stop by simply shaming them. We must also help them understand and change their belief system. Help them understand why they are looking for sex. Let them know it's a counterfeit, and it will not fill the void. Give them something to fill that void—a new relationship with Christ and healthy relationships with others.

HURST: The church has traditionally addressed sexuality on a behavioral level. We've said, "This is what your sexual behavior should be; and if it's not that, there are serious consequences." But we've missed an important point.

If a church is serious about growth, it needs to be serious about single-adult ministry. —Baugh



We need to look at behaviors in terms of levels—the top level is our belief system, the next level is our thought processes about our belief system, the third level is our behavior about our belief system, and the fourth level is the consequences.

We must begin with a person's belief system. If a belief system teaches that God has a great plan for your life and part of that plan includes life-giving relationships, then single adults will see how their thought processes, behavior, and consequences should be in line with their belief system. The issue is not behavior; it is what single adults believe.

Helping singles learn healthy premarital relationships means there will be more sexual abstinence. If we

Understanding the Five Core Values of Generation X

1. Relationships. Relationships are their greatest fear and their greatest need. They have a deep yearning to know and be known, but they are afraid. They are afraid of letting their real self out for fear of being rejected so they maintain the ideal self, the self that others accept—leading to deadly isolation.

2. Fun. From computer games to bungee jumping, Xers are into fun. One Xer said: "You think money is the basis for our existence when it's really much simpler: fun is." Most Xers work to live. They are waiting for the weekend. (Note: Most ESPN "Extreme Games" feature Xers.)

3. Experience. Subjective experience validates if something is real and good. They want to enjoy life, make a difference, and do something meaningful besides just punching a clock from 9 to 5.

4. Freedom. They don't like to be labeled and put in a box. They want to be seen as unique individuals able to make a valuable contribution to society. They are very creative and independent and struggle with limits and rules. They value flexibility and spontaneity.

5. Family. If Xers have children, they don't want to make the same mistakes their parents did. They will spend time with their kids. Xer parents, especially dads, seem to be incredibly committed to their children.

—Adapted from *A Guide To Understanding Generation X Sub-Cultures* by Ken Baugh.
Information supplied by Wayne Wilson, senior pastor, Faith Assembly of God, Hazleton, Pennsylvania.

create an environment where singles can be honest about their struggles—both with their successes and failures—and not be criticized for their honesty, then it will be easier for them to be open because they won't be crucified. James wrote about confessing your sins and restoring your brothers. The church seems to view premarital sex as the unpardonable sin. If the ultimate goal is restoration, then we need to create an environment where people can talk about their struggles.

MENTION A FEW RESOURCES FOR SINGLE-ADULT MINISTRY.

HURST: We have the *SAM Journal* that comes out six times a year. Every year we provide statistics and research regarding singles in the State of the Singles Report. (To subscribe to *SAM Journal*, call 1-800-487-4726.)

A couple of other resources, especially for smaller churches wanting to start a single-adult ministry, are *Starting Single Adult Ministry* and *Giving the Ministry Away*, a how-to leadership book. Ken and I are involved in a SAM convention. Once a year a thousand single-adult leaders from all over the world gather to talk about single-adult ministry.

The National GenX Postmodern for Younger Single Adult Ministry Convention takes place each year in February. Our seminars include consultations on how to do single-adult ministry. You can get information about these national events by calling 1-800-708-5550, extension 3438.

The book, *Calling*, published by Dreamtime, helps single-adult leaders think through the philosophical ideas of leadership and how to involve people in ministry. It has been foundational

Generation, published by Navpress. It looks at postmodern generations. It includes Generation X, and what we call the "Net-Gen," (sometimes defined as the Y-Gen), and the Millennial

Generation. The book establishes one of the most effective paradigms for ministry in our postmodern context. It is unique to any other book on single-adult ministry. I do consultation and seminars. My organization is called Frontline Ministry Resources. The phone number is 703-421-8108; web site: www.frontline.to.

A FINAL CHALLENGE, PLEASE.

BAUGH: If a church in the 21st century is going to grow, it will grow through ministry to single adults. When we see a 35-percent decline in attendance in churches, we want to know why. Yet 40 percent of today's population is single adults. It is easy to figure out where we're losing people. If a church is serious about growth, it needs to be serious about single-adult ministry.


HURST: Every major awakening or revival in history has been initiated in some way by young

Every major awakening or revival in history has been initiated in some way by young adults. —Hurst



not only in my ministry and our church but in a number of the GenX ministries across the country. The number for that book is 888-60DREAM.

BAUGH: Rich and I wrote the book, *Getting Real: An Interactive Guide to Relational Ministry*, formerly titled *Young Adult Ministry: The Next*

adults. That's the hope of our country. We are praying for a revival and awakening, and young adults will be at the forefront. We can't afford to lose a generation. We have to reach this generation for Christ—it's not an option. God will use them to take us into this millennium and to set the tone for the next thousand years of the church. 

Emerging Themes Among Xers

1. The foundation for ministry to and with Gen X is authenticity. Xers have little use for hype. What they look for in a person and a leader is authenticity. The most authentic leaders will come from within Gen X, not be imposed from the outside.

2. Ministry to Gen Xers looks different than ministry to boomers. You cannot take a boomer model and “tweak it” to work with Xers. Xer ministry is different. While boomers focus on a high-quality performance, Xers focus more on providing an authentic experience. Boomers focus more on the structure of the small group while Xers focus more on the relationships within the group.

3. The importance of music to Gen X and its integration into a new style of worship cannot be underestimated. Xer music is simple; it uses more guitars and fewer keyboards. The words to the songs often have an edge to them and are more honest. Xer worship is more interactive and experiential. It involves sharing your own stories, asking questions, drawing people in. It is a shift from simply presentation of the gospel, to one of experiencing God rather than observing worship at a distance.

4. The stereotypes of Gen X should be dispelled and, instead, recognize the diversity of the generation and its alignment with biblical values. Not all Xers are slackers and associated with grunge (a music form). Many Xers exhibit values that are more aligned with the teaching of Scripture than other generations. Some of these include the importance of relationships, the emphasis on family and community, authenticity, servanthood, helping the poor, the homeless, and disenfranchised.

5. Use narrative stories to communicate with Gen X. Tell your story. Tell God’s story. Listen to the other person’s story. Tell the biblical story and then tell the point of the story...don’t explain it and be condescending.

6. Go beyond the intellectual to a hands-on presentation of the gospel. This generation wants to connect to society and see that the gospel is practical and makes a difference in people’s everyday lives. Building houses through Habitat for Humanity or providing after-school programs for children in an inner-city neighborhood are the kind of things Xers are into—community service that results in evangelism.

7. The most effective Gen X evangelism will be process evangelism. Process evangelism is something that happens over a long period of time...over perhaps years of frustration, pain, and praying for someone. It is not an “evangelistic project” to see someone come to know Christ.

8. The leadership paradigm for Gen X is a team, not a hierarchy or superstar. This is a collaborative generation. There are no superstars. Spending time together and being transparent with one another is what builds trust.

9. Leadership development is defined as the development of lay leaders, not staff, and the pastor’s role is primarily one of an equipper and coach. Xer pastors emphasize the role of staff as equippers of laypeople to do the ministry. Quality programming is important, but the first emphasis is on healthy teams of lay leaders who understand their gifts and are serving in a healthy community.

10. There are no easy answers, few models, little resources, and no single place that equip people for ministry to and with Gen X. Ministering to Xers is a learn-as-you-go process. There isn’t a workshop, seminar, or a catalog of resources to learn how to do Xer ministry. It is a trial and error, learn by doing, look for resources anywhere, and share-what-you-learn kind of ministry.

*—Information supplied by Wayne Wilson, senior pastor, Faith Assembly of God, Hazleton, Pennsylvania.
Adapted from a recent Gen X forum sponsored by Leadership Network.*

D E N N I S F R A N C K

Single Adults-A Population

*Churches that do not choose to have a single-
adult ministry still need to understand the issues
singles face and have open, accepting, and
informed attitudes towards them.*

Group Too Large To Ignore

According to David Reddout, senior pastor, First Assembly of God, Leesville, Louisiana,

“Every group in the church has unique needs and gifts...children, youth, men, women, and marrieds. But we have put emphasis on these groups and have inadvertently forgotten the singles and have led them to believe we don’t expect them to be involved in ministry.

But the purpose of ministry to singles is to help them see they are the church and to help them come to a place of ministry.”



The U.S. church must be aware of and involved with the needs and issues of single and single-again persons. They represent an ever-increasing segment of society. Now is the time for the church to be bold and creative in reaching out to an increasingly "nonfamily community."

Most single adults feel like a fifth wheel in a class composed mainly of married adults.

I define single adults as unmarried adults, 18 years of age or older, who happen to be single by chance, change, or choice (whether theirs or someone else's). They fall into one or more of the following categories:

- Never married
- Formerly married (divorced)
- Widowed
- Single parent
- Separated—(the separated person is legally married but living a single lifestyle).

Five perspectives should form the church's basis for ministry to single adults.

FIVE PERSPECTIVES OF SINGLE-ADULT MINISTRY

The Educational Need

Both single and married adults grow and

mature in many areas. Singles, however, have unique challenges. Some of these include: identity as a single adult, dating, sexuality, finances, career direction, relating to parents, forgiveness (self and former spouse), grief recovery, loneliness, single parenting, marriage preparation, divorce recovery, and dealing with change. Unless a church has an ongoing ministry to singles, these topics are not usually addressed from a single-adult perspective. A singles ministry is an ideal setting for these topics to be discussed. Smaller churches without many single adults can network with other churches to offer workshops and classes that address these and other specific topics.

The Emotional Need

Some people ask, "Why do we need a specific class or group for single adults? Can't they be a part of our church's married adult classes?" Most single adults feel like a fifth wheel in a class composed mainly of married adults. This leaves a single person feeling left out, misunderstood, and in some cases lonely. A church that is intentional about singles ministry will design its classes so they relate to issues important to singles.

Pastors and church leaders do not

intentionally leave singles out of their planning. For many, however, it's simply a lack of understanding and/or experience with the single or single-again person. Experience is gained quickly when a pastor or church leader's family member goes through a divorce. When issues surrounding singleness hit close to home, our attention is not far away.

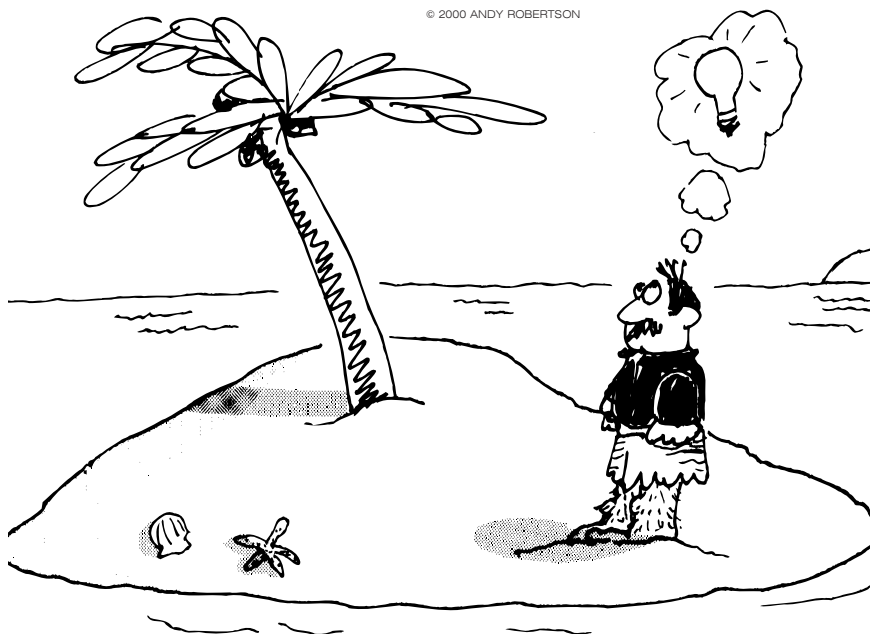
The Numerical Need

Author and speaker Carolyn Koons said, "The church needs to expand its term 'family,' moving from a traditional family definition to one that includes singles, widows, single-parent families, extended families, expanded families, stepfamilies, and blended families. We must become the family we are—the family of God."¹ Statistics on single adults in America are growing rapidly and affecting lifestyles and family types. (See sidebar: "Which Are the Largest Single Adult Groups?") These statistics show the vast number of single adults in today's society.

A ministry to single adults provides an atmosphere of acceptance and openness where people can discover others with the same experiences, hopes, and hurts and establish relationships that are nurtured in a Christian context.

The *Washington Post* reported that Americans are less likely to marry than ever before. A Rutgers University National Marriage Project report found that the nation's "marriage rate has dipped by 43 percent in the past four decades. Americans still cherish the ideal of marriage but are pessimistic about finding a lasting marriage partner and are more accepting of alternatives to marriage, including living together and single parenting with a partner outside of marriage."²

While marriage's front door has been



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**"With nothing better to do,
Felton Franks decides to start a singles ministry."**

WHICH ARE THE LARGEST SINGLE-ADULT GROUPS?

TAKE NOTE: Currently, from ages 18 to 44, men represent the largest segment of the single-adult population. Beginning at age 45, women become the largest single-adult group in America. (Largest group in each category indicated by bold.)

	MARRIED	NEVER MARRIED	DIVORCED	WIDOWED
AGE 18–24				
-Male	11.5	87.3	1.0	.01
-Female	21.1	76.8	1.7	0.1
AGE 25–34				
-Male	52.9	40.4	6.4	1.5
-Female	63.0	28.5	7.9	0.3
AGE 35–44				
-Male	70.6	17.3	11.7	2.6
-Female	72.1	11.9	14.7	1.2
AGE 45–54				
-Male	76.2	8.6	14.2	1.0
-Female	71.6	7.1	17.5	3.8
AGE 55–64				
-Male	79.9	5.8	11.0	3.2
-Female	67.1	4.7	15.0	13.2
AGE 65–74				
-Male	79.1	4.3	7.3	9.4
-Female	53.5	4.2	9.2	33.2
AGE 75+				
-Male	66.7	3.7	4.2	25.4
-Female	28.8	4.5	5.3	61.5

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, the *Official Statistics* (™)
Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1998. Page 58.

Reprinted from Kim Hurst, "State of the Singles Report," *Single Adult Ministry Journal*, Issue 130: 7. Used with permission.

closing slowly, its back door has been widening fast. Thirty years ago, 35 in 1,000 Americans were divorced. In 1993, the figure was 148 in 1,000—four times its previous size."³ Recent statistics from the Barna Research Group indicate that in 1999, 240 in 1,000 have been divorced. Even more alarming is the fact the chance of divorce increases with the number of marriages a person has.⁴ Consider the following statistics:

- 41 percent of first marriages end in divorce.
- 60 percent of second marriages end in divorce.
- 73 percent of third marriages end in divorce.

The church must maintain a high standard concerning divorce. God hates divorce because of the brokenness that comes to a family. Many singles ministries address this need by providing divorce recovery workshops to help a person sort through the confusion that results from a divorce and begin the healing process.

Now is the time for the church to be bold and creative in reaching out to an increasingly "nonfamily community."

We need to have an equally high standard on marriage, though. We would not think twice about allowing a circus into our sanctuary. However, many weddings take place in our churches that are like a circus to God because some couples are not ready for the responsibilities of marriage.

The Relational Need

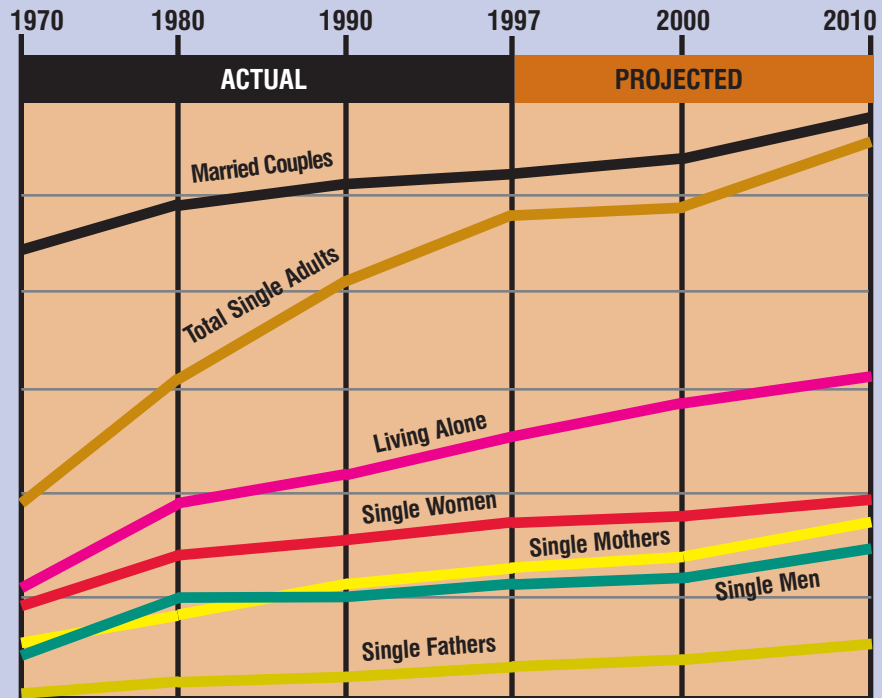
One of the biggest desires of a single adult of any age is to have quality friendships with others. A ministry to single adults provides an atmosphere of acceptance and openness where people can discover others with the same experiences, hopes, and hurts and establish relationships that are nurtured in a Christian context. Many have come from the bar scene, tired of the "give-me," selfish attitudes they have experienced

U.S. HOUSEHOLD TRENDS SINCE 1970...TO THE YEAR 2010

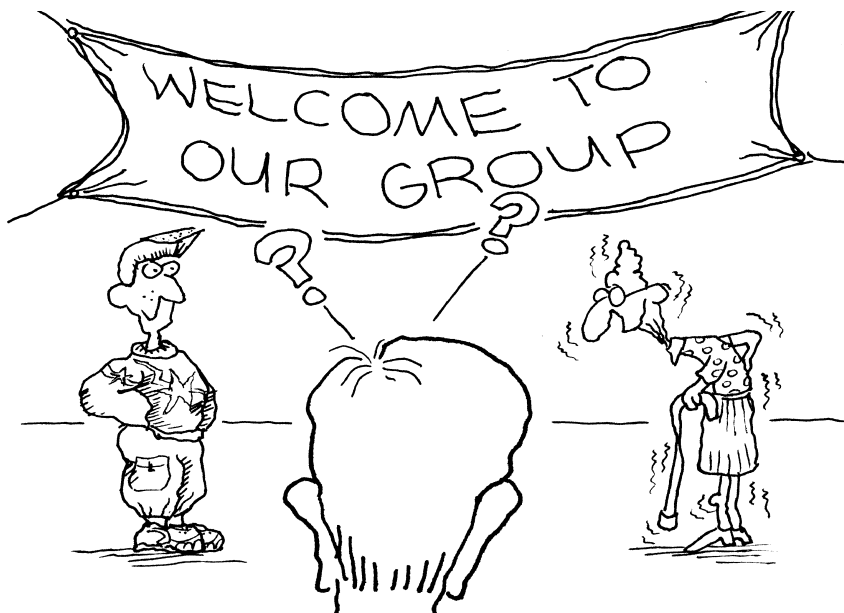
Single adults and single parents continue to be the fastest-growing household types in America. For example, since 1980, single fathers have increased 99 percent and single mothers, 42 percent. And people living alone have increased 36 percent. During that same time period, married-couple households increased by only 9 percent.

THE FOUR BIGGEST CHANGES IN U.S. HOUSEHOLDS SINCE 1990

1. Single fathers ("Male householders, no spouse present") increased 33 percent.
2. Single men ("Nonfamily male householders") increased 18 percent.
3. Single mothers ("Female householders, no spouse present") increased 17 percent.
4. People living alone increased 10 percent.



SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, the *Official Statistics* (™) *Statistical Abstract of the United States*: 1998, page 61. Reprinted from Kim Hurst, "State of the Singles Report," *Single Adult Ministry Journal*, Issue 130: 7. Used with permission.



Call it presumptuous, but when Ed heard the singles group was from 17 to 70, he thought there would be something in between.

and open to the grace and love of God through others.

Lisa Stevko from Castro Valley, California, says, "I don't feel like I'm just 'waiting to be married' anymore. The singles ministry has provided me with a circle of friends. I have others I can talk to who are being stretched by God in the same ways I am."

Greg Davis, Castro Valley, California, states, "Because of common experiences, there is a greater understanding of the struggles, as well as help and encouragement. People without common experiences may sympathize (feel *for* you), but cannot empathize (feel *with* you), because they do not have similar experiences (2 Corinthians 1:4). Because of this commonality, there is a dynamic that fosters spiritual, emotional, and relational growth."

MEETING THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF SINGLE SENIOR ADULTS

At the turn of the century, life expectancy was 37 years, and there were only 3 million people who were 65 years of age and older. Today, life expectancy is 75 years, and there are over 35 million who are 65 years of age and older. One person out of five in America is over the age of 65. Older adults are part of the fastest-growing segment of our society. The senior population is growing three times faster than the national population. Experts refer to this senior boom as the “Age Wave.”

What is the church doing to minister to single senior adults? Many single senior adults feel they are invisible to their marriage-and-family-oriented pastor and church. The church can make an eternal difference in the lives of single senior adults. To do this, we need to respond, as did the Early Church, with a special sensitivity from the Holy Spirit to meet their unique needs.

Single senior adults face many of the same challenges as do other seniors. They may have chronic illness and live on fixed incomes, but they desire meaningful activities after retirement, want to age gracefully, and want to have continued involvement in social and civic responsibilities. Many, though, feel left out, ignored, rejected, and often misunderstood. And they may have feelings of inferiority, isolationism, and loneliness. The church must provide fellowship and activities for seniors.

Three out of four wives in America will be widowed at the median age of 56, for an average length of 18 years. For many widows, their spouse’s death means the loss of their very best friend. This time of loneliness provides an opportunity for the church to minister to their needs. Widows can minister to other widows. The church can also establish a team of capable individuals to help with practical, financial, physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. Those qualified can provide counseling and instruction for specific needs. Support groups can provide long-term ministry and fellowship.

Senior adults who have experienced the hurt of divorce need the church to minister to them as well. They may feel lonely, guilty, frustrated, rejected, and fearful. The church needs to bring the message of God’s forgiveness, healing, and restoration. Jesus had compassion on those who were hurting; we need to do the same, while providing support for their lives. We have been called to be a hospital where the hurting and the wounded can find help.

The church needs to recognize that although single senior adults may face unique challenges, they are part of the church family. The church must provide alternative activities from what the world has to offer. We must also involve them in various opportunities for ministry and evangelism, allowing them to fulfill God’s call on their lives.

Senior single adults are a very important part of what God is doing in His church. They are a mighty army serving the Lord and His people. They are no longer content in just being served; they are looking to the church for creative ways to minister both in the church and community. Single seniors are a reservoir of resources, providing wisdom, experience, dedication, time, commitment, and capability. They are an invaluable part of His great church. We need to equip them with the necessary tools to fulfill His Great Commission.

—Stephen B. Sparks, director of Senior Adult Ministries, Springfield, Missouri.

The Spiritual Need

Single and married adults have the same basic spiritual needs. However, because of feeling uncomfortable in many of the church’s family-oriented programs, some single adults do not stay long enough for these needs to be met. Also, because of not having a spouse to provide encouragement and spiritual support, Christian singles may become undisciplined in their spiritual lives. A specialized ministry provides a

place where singles can identify with others; and in this atmosphere, spiritual needs such as self-esteem and commitment to God can be nurtured.

Cathy Roth from Hayward, California, comments, “Just getting the opportunity to observe and get to know other single Christians has at times challenged and humbled me spiritually. It has helped me to value others for the gifts God has given them, and it has increased my tolerance and patience.”

Helen Marispini from Livermore, California, writes, “Being a part of the singles ministry has given me a place where I can come and find friendship, encouragement, and support. My friends hold me accountable to my commitment to the Lord as we share in each others’ lives.”

DEVELOPING SINGLE-ADULT MINISTRY

Single adults cover a wide age range. It would be unwise for a church to try to

minister to singles of all ages in one group. Different age groupings represent different interests, needs, and physical abilities. Each age group may have several types of single adults. The basic age groups to consider are:

- Young adults 18–24 years old
- Generation X 25–35 years old
- Boomers 36–55 years old
- Builders 56+ years old

Other interest/need groups include:

- Single parents
- Divorce recovery
- Widowed
- Children of single parents
- Single senior adults

Large churches can reach single adults in several of the groups listed above, but may need to develop the various ministries over a period of time. A small church, and even some mid-sized churches, will have difficulty effectively reaching all ages of single adults due to a lack of staff, resources, or enough singles in each age category.

Because of the transient nature of

singles, single-adult groups need a continuous flow of new people coming into the group. Small churches can design an ongoing ministry to single adults as an outreach, possibly as an off-campus ministry. This will attract people whose church does not have a singles ministry, some who do not go to church, and it can also provide enough single adults to sustain an ongoing group.


We would not think twice about allowing a circus into our sanctuary. However, many weddings take place in our churches that are like a circus to God because some couples are not ready for the responsibilities of marriage.

Churches that do not choose to have a single-adult ministry still need to understand the issues singles face and have

open, accepting, and informed attitudes towards them. Helping a single-parent mom with occasional home or car repairs, free childcare, or financial help to attend a church event shows Christ's love in practical ways.

Senior pastors can also encourage single adults from their congregation to attend another church's singles ministry for fellowship, but return to their home church for Sunday worship.

Single and single-again people are here to stay. America has become a nation of many family types. If the church is to be effective in reaching, nurturing, discipling, and training adults, the single adult warrants our best efforts of time, prayer, and resources. The singles population is too large to ignore, and the abilities and talents of single adults are too valuable to waste.


A church of any size can minister to single adults, whether through an established group or individually. Most churches could establish a group to reach at least one age segment of singles. Through prayerful consideration, and church and community demographic surveys, single adults can become a force in your church. More individuals in your church would be emulating the greatest single adult—Jesus. 

Dennis Franck is associate pastor, Valley Christian Center, Dublin, California.



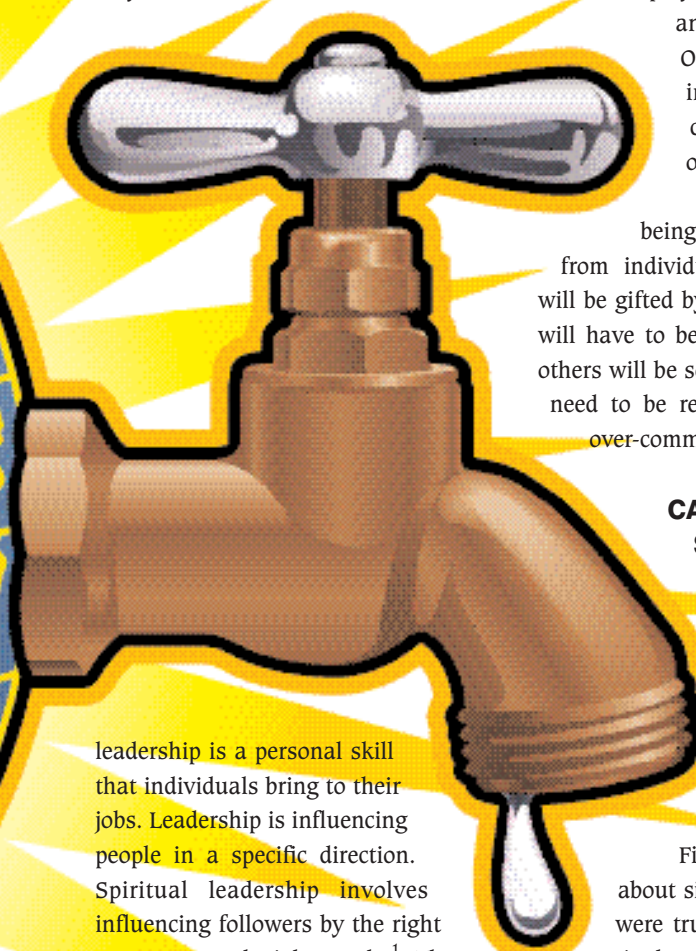
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The Untapped Leadership Pool

B Y B O B B I E R E E D



John, the church janitor, has a special relationship with the young people who use the church gymnasium. Often one of the boys asks for advice or help with a problem. John is a leader, though his job is not typically classified as a leadership position.

Any member of your congregation may be a leader, because

may be single. Are they being used in positions of leadership? If not, you may be overlooking a rich pool of resources for spiritual ministry.

WHO ARE SINGLE ADULTS?

Single adults represent all age groups: some are divorced, others widowed, and an increasing number have never been married. Some are still in college, most are employed outside of the home, and several are retired. Others are single parents, including those with full custody, shared custody, or noncustodial status.

Their available time for being a volunteer will vary from individual to individual. Each will be gifted by God for ministry. Some will have to be coaxed into leadership; others will be so eager to serve they will need to be restrained from becoming over-committed.

CAN SINGLE ADULTS SERVE AS CHURCH LEADERS?

Some people argue against giving single adults positions of leadership in the local church. They generally cite the following reasons.

First, there are myths about single adults. If the myths were true, they might disqualify single adults from consideration.

(See sidebar: Myths About Single Adults.) Since these myths are not true of all single adults, we must not exclude an entire group of people from leadership.

Second, is a belief that putting single adults in leadership positions would be perceived as a failure to emphasize the importance of family and family values. This belief tends to be especially strong if the person is single again through divorce. However, God forgives divorce, heals wounded hearts, and does not withdraw ministry gifts from those who are divorced. We must forgive and allow

single adults opportunities to use their God-given gifts. The spiritual family includes both single and married adults. Spiritual family values are demonstrated by living in agape love one with another (John 13:34,35).

Third, a church might have a policy against having single adults in positions of authority. Such policies need to be revisited, particularly when you consider that this policy would preclude Jesus and the apostle Paul from serving if they were members of your congregation.

Fourth, opposition from church leaders or the congregation may preclude using single adults in leadership.

Fifth, a temporary waiting period may be imposed because a person's divorce or grief over the loss of a spouse is too recent. A time of waiting for personal healing should be encouraged, but serving sometimes brings healing.

Finally, some pastors may not have realized that singles are a resource for ministry.

We must not view singleness as a waiting room for marriage. Some people will never marry. However, not being married does not relieve singles of the responsibility to answer the call of God and to use their spiritual gifts. Neither should it be a reason for us to exclude them from ministry in the church.

Often single adults excel in their careers because they can focus time, attention, and energy on their work. But single adults must be taught to alert themselves to the danger of "unproductive spiritual lives."³ If our goal is to build up individuals in leadership positions so the Holy Spirit can work through them, we will include single adults in the process.

There are many reasons to include single adults in leadership positions in the church. Single adults are members of the body of Christ and are gifted by God for service. Considering single adults as a resource gives a pastor more people from which to draw. Placing single adults in leadership positions demonstrates acceptance and validation

leadership is a personal skill that individuals bring to their jobs. Leadership is influencing people in a specific direction. Spiritual leadership involves influencing followers by the right means toward right goals.¹ The skills necessary to be a godly leader can be learned and developed. One of a pastor's responsibilities is to look for leadership potential in members, help them develop that potential, and then provide opportunities for those skills to be employed in the kingdom of God.

Every member of a congregation should be considered for a position of leadership. This includes single and single-again adults. Over 40 percent of the adult population of the United States is single.² Consequently, a large segment of the adult congregation in your church

as valuable members of the body of Christ and the local congregation.

WHO BENEFITS WHEN SINGLE ADULTS ARE RECRUITED INTO SERVICE?

First, the church benefits. When people make a commitment to serve in the local church, there is an increased commitment to faithful attendance and a reduction in the revolving-door syndrome. There is an increased sense of ownership. Also, there is a tendency for leaders to give more financially. The church's ministry to single adults is increased because single adults usually respond to other single adults. Outreach is increased to a population that might not otherwise be targeted, because leaders tend to invite their unchurched friends. Finally, as single adults are placed in positions of leadership, there is a restoration of the body of Christ; for when one member is hurt, wounded, or excluded, the entire Body experiences the pain and alienation (1 Corinthians 12:25,26).

Second, single adults benefit. There is a personal validation of worth. They develop a new identity in the church and experience hope as they realize their purpose in the Kingdom. Their leadership experience provides

opportunities for personal and spiritual growth and for making an increased personal investment in their local church. Another benefit is having the opportunity to respond in obedience to the call of God.

The personal and spiritual needs of single adults are met by being included in leadership. These needs include: being involved in the mainstream of the church, making a contribution, being recognized as having valuable gifts and abilities, making a commitment to the kingdom of God, giving back, serving God, using one's gifts, and fellowshiping with other leaders who are committed to God. And for some, there is personal healing from past hurts as they focus on God and serve others.

James wrote that we need to act on our faith, to demonstrate our faith by our works—that includes serving God in the local church (James 2:14–20).

Paul Ford states, "Single Christians are instrumental to God's purpose—not because they're single, but because they are Christians...crucial players in the church."⁴

HOW TO RECRUIT SINGLE-ADULT LEADERS

The most critical step in recruiting new single-adult leaders is to pray that God

Myths About Single Adults

Certain myths surround almost every phase of singleness. What makes myths believable is that some of them are true some of the time about some single adults. When people see something about a single adult that reinforces a myth, it is perpetuated. Myths about single adults include:

- All single adults...
- are sexually active.
- are desperate to get married.
- are unhappy with being single.
- have never grown up.
- are not whole people.
- need to get married.
- have more fun than married people.
- are a threat to marriages.
- have a lot of freedom.
- have a lot of free time.
- have an easy life.
- like being alone.
- are selfish.
- have major personal and emotional problems.
- are irresponsible.
- are transient.
- are lonely.
- cannot be good parents.
- cannot provide a good home.
- do not have good relational skills.
- need to be mentored/adopted by married couples.
- are afraid of commitment.
- are not dependable.

—Bobbie Reed, Ph.D., D.Min.,
Lemon Grove, California.

will lead you to the right people for the positions that need filling, and pray that God will prepare their hearts to give a positive response to your recruitment efforts.

Here are two ways to recruit single-adult leadership. First, recruit specific

How To Retain Single Adults in Leadership Positions

Here are several keys to retaining single adults in leadership positions after they make an initial commitment to serve.

- 1. Empower.** Allow the Holy Spirit to guide their ministry. Delegate the responsibility and authority commensurate with the task. Let leaders feel free to risk, to try new strategies, and even sometimes to fail.
- 2. Equip.** Ensure that leaders have the necessary skills, knowledge, and the proper funding, supplies, and equipment to do their assigned task.
- 3. Encourage.** Affirm your leaders. Let them know what they are doing well. When things don't go right, share an experience when you failed and reassure them that failure is something everyone experiences. Help them learn from failures.
- 4. Recognize.** Be creative in the ways you recognize your leaders. Be quick to praise their successes. Give all due credit. Recognize them in public.
- 5. Reward.** Find ways to reward your leaders. Give them tickets to a ball game or gift certificates for dinner at a restaurant. The rewards need not be expensive; the thought is what counts.
- 6. Relieve.** Don't recruit a leader for an indeterminate period of time. Be clear when you first discuss the position that the commitment time is limited. Start with a short commitment—3 to 6 months or a year at the most. They can reenlist at the end of the initial commitment.
- 7. Listen.** Talk with your leaders frequently. Ask how things are going. Follow through on issues and concerns.
- 8. Love.** People respond to love. If you truly care for your leaders as individuals, they will sense your concern and will consider you their friend in ministry.
- 9. Learn.** Be willing to learn from those you recruit. Don't miss out on an idea simply because you are the pastor.
- 10. Lead.** A genuine leader is more concerned with developing people than developing programs. A leader is a guide, a model, an encourager, and a supporter who helps strong people become true leaders.

—Bobbie Reed, Ph.D., D.Min., Lemon Grove, California.

individuals because of their talents, gifts, personalities, expertise, or reputation. In some cases, you may know exactly where you would like to see these individuals. In other cases, you may ask individuals where they would like to minister. You can also administer a spiritual gifts test to determine in what ways God has prepared them for ministry.

Second, recruit for a specific position. Prepare a job description with expectations and standards for the job. Without this, the single adults you recruit may not have a clear picture of what you are asking them to do.

One of your tasks is to describe how you see that person being successful in ministry. Ask questions that allow the individual to begin filling in the details of the dream/vision/picture for himself or herself. For example, ask, "If you took over this function, what would it look like?" Or, "How would you measure your success in this position?"

Some single adults will respond eagerly. Others may initially respond that they are not interested. If you


encounter this response, gently probe to determine what is behind the "no." There may be fear of failure because of past failures or because of lack of experience. You can help overcome these fears by assuring the person that you will ensure success through guidance, training, assistance, and support. (See sidebar: How To Retain Single Adults in Leadership Positions.)

Some people fear making a commitment and being held accountable. You can help overcome this fear by offering the chance to make a limited commitment and/or to serve as a coleader at first.

Sometimes people feel incompetent. When you express your belief that they are competent and can be successful, often people agree to serve, based on your trust. People tend to rise to the expectations others have of them.

Often a lack of desire to become involved is simply the lack of a vision of a ministry or how a specific need could be met in the church. As pastor you can cast the vision for the person and encourage him/her to dream with you

about how God could work in that particular area.

Single adults are a great resource for leadership positions in your church. A wise pastor will not overlook them. 

Bobbie Reed, Ph.D., D.Min., is an author, consultant, ministry director for the Network of Single Adult Leaders, and a minister with single adults at Skyline Church, Lemon Grove, California.



ENDNOTES

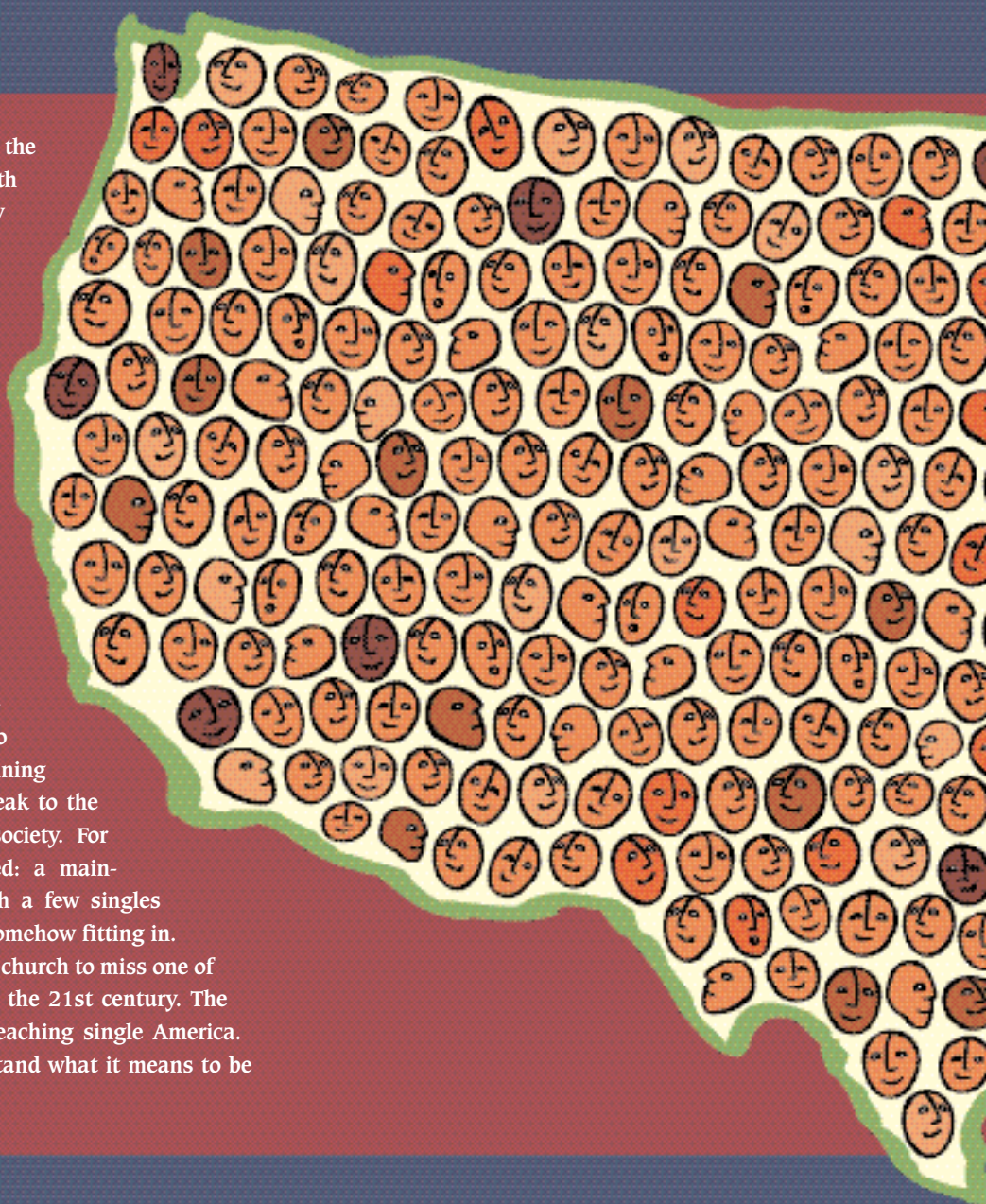
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SINGULAR OPPORTUNIT

Unmarried adult Americans are the population equivalent of the 14th largest nation on earth. They comprise 40 percent of adults. If they were overseas, we would be sending missionaries (probably married) to bring them the good news about Jesus. However, because this development has taken place at home over a couple of decades, the response of the American church has been less than radical. It can be difficult for middle-aged, married pastors and their congregations to understand this demographic tidal wave.

Some want this tidal wave to go away; it will not. Others feel so overwhelmed they do not know how to respond effectively. Conventional training has done little to prepare them to speak to the issues faced by singles in today's society. For some, things seem pretty much fixed: a mainstream church of married people with a few singles hanging onto the fringes in hopes of somehow fitting in.

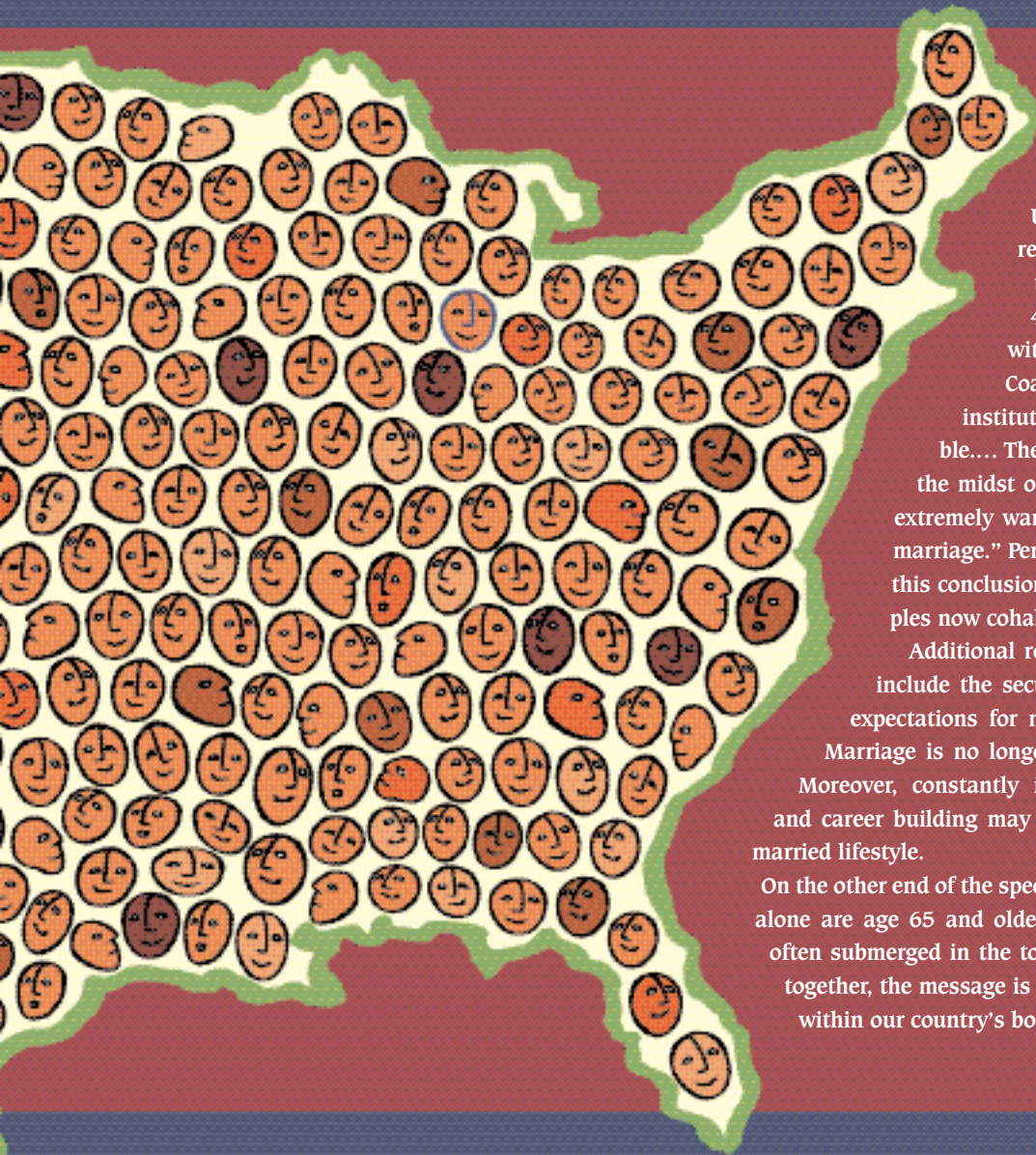
This passive approach will cause the church to miss one of the great missionary opportunities of the 21st century. The key is to become intentional about reaching single America. The first step is for pastors to understand what it means to be single in today's society.



B Y E A R L

AME

Y: REACHING UNMARRIED



RECOGNIZING UNMARRIED AMERICA

A recent study by the Rutgers University National Marriage Project reports that the number of adults getting married has dropped to a 40-year low. “I do” has been replaced with, “I won’t.”

Coauthor David Popenoe states, “The institution of marriage is in serious trouble.... The current generation has grown up in the midst of the divorce revolution so they are extremely wary and cautious about entering into marriage.” Perhaps the most concrete evidence for this conclusion is that 4.2 million unmarried couples now cohabit, a 10-fold increase since 1960.

Additional reasons for the recoil from marriage include the secularization of our values, changing expectations for marriage, and expanding affluence. Marriage is no longer necessary for economic survival. Moreover, constantly increasing demands for education and career building may temporarily be inconsistent with a married lifestyle.

On the other end of the spectrum, 50 percent of women who live alone are age 65 and older—most are widows. This group is often submerged in the torrent of aggregate statistics. Taken together, the message is clear: a single nation has developed within our country’s borders. Consider these statistics:

C R E P S

RICA

- 25 percent of households are made up of married couples with children.
- 25 percent of households are people now living alone.
- 51 percent of households have no children at home under 18.
- 32 percent of all family groups with children are single-parent situations. Almost 12 million white children live with one parent, nearly twice the number of African-American children, and four times the number of Hispanic children in single-parent households.

The *Single Adult Ministry Journal* has identified three major trends that will affect this growing population in the years ahead:

(1) *A rapid growth in the number of single fathers with custody.* There are currently 3.2 million households maintained by men with no wife present; about 1.7 million of these are unmarried dads.

(2) *A surge in middle-aged single adults.* Unmarrieds between age 45 and 64 will grow in numbers at a rate that far surpasses the expansion of other singles subgroups.

(3) *A growth in cohabitation.* Almost half of adults under 40 have lived with someone outside of marriage. With small percentages of younger people feeling that sex outside of marriage is wrong, the rate of cohabitation is likely to grow as the 20-somethings age.

Reaching out to unmarried people begins with recognizing their existence. The reason singles have not found their way into a church may result from the fact they have not been acknowledged. Many singles are positively disposed toward having a spiritual life; they simply have never had a chance. So how do we connect with them?

RELATING TO UNMARRIED AMERICA

Once singles have been recognized, they need to be understood. Having statistical data about them is important, but not the same as being literate about their culture. The wrong assumptions can ruin even the best information.

Give up false assumptions about singles.

The first of these is the idea that all singles are divorced. Many pastors keep a polite distance from the unmarried because they fear entanglement in the issues surrounding divorce. But only 18 percent of the single population are divorced. More than half (54 percent) have never married, and the remainder are widowed (22 percent) or separated (5 percent).

Unmarried adult Americans are the population equivalent of the 14th largest nation on earth.

These statistics reveal the second false assumption—single adults are all the same. Not only do they have several groupings, they also span several generations. For the first time in history, there are simultaneously four generations of adults in the church. There are singles in each group carrying the cultural traits of their cohort.

A third false assumption is that marital status is always the most important thing to single people. Single adults are human beings first—children of God. They have many of the issues and concerns of any other person. For many, the likelihood of marriage is not the number one issue in their lives. Some even resent being approached in this way.

Rejecting these assumptions means understanding singles as a highly diverse population that needs ministry to the whole person—spiritual, relational, and emotional. There are simply no easy, cookie-cutter answers for this group. Understanding this is the difference between starting a ministry and being a true missionary to single adults.

Single adults, however, do have certain traits that are unique. Several observers have noted that adults without partners experience their lives differently than do married people.

Much of this culture has its roots in secular society, but has crept into the church as well:

- *We/they attitude toward marrieds.* A sharp sense of division from couples

accompanied by a lack of “fit” into social networks can grow into a root of bitterness. The fruit of this sees married couples and the church that caters to them as enemies (Hebrews 12:15). Churches that fail to reach out to singles have fanned the flames on this issue. Forgiveness and love toward others is the answer (Matthew 5:23,24).

- *Singles go where singles are.* The vast majority of unmarried adults attend larger churches in urban areas that have singles ministries. (Approximately 2,000 Assemblies of God churches have SAMs.) Having only a few singles is perhaps the biggest barrier to reaching more. This is a significant barrier for smaller churches. Networking can be an answer (Ephesians 4:15,16).

- *Unique rules for dating and sex.* In secular culture (and sometimes in the church), the competition for mates can be intense, leading to hyperaggressive dating and permissive attitudes toward sex. Some singles believe the pool of high-quality candidates is relatively small, so extreme measures may be called for to connect with “Mr./Ms. Right” before someone else does. Unfortunately, this trait often becomes a stereotype for the whole singles population. It is no more typical of all singles than adultery is typical of all marrieds. As with all lifestyles, contentment is the best defense (1 Corinthians 7:17–24).

- *Conflicting needs.* Like every human, singles can have a difficult time knowing what they want on a consistent basis. Researchers have noted that the desire for nurture and growth sometimes conflicts with the longing for independence. While singles often feel no more independent than married people (just try raising a child on one income in a two-income economy), they may be reluctant to give up what they do have. This can lead to weeks of absence from various functions. At other times, the isolation they may feel can motivate them to want a strong attachment to a group. Compassion and commitment are called for on all counts (Romans 12:9,10).

The single population needs to be met

Models of Singles Ministry

Model #1: The Sunday School Hub

- Core: a singles Sunday school class
- Fellowship meal or activity afterward
- Occasional outside activities

Model #2: The Three-Generation Breakout

- Core: combined session for worship
- Age-level breakout electives:
 - Young Adult Bible study
 - Boomer group/divorce recovery
 - Seniors study
- Combined closing and fellowship time

Model #3: The Topical Breakout

- Core: combined Sunday school class
- Off-night worship event with breakout groups:
 - Divorce Recovery
 - Leadership Training
 - Children's Ministry
- Monthly fellowships

Model #4: The Way-Cool GenX Thing

- Core: midweek worship event in GenX style:
 - Postmodern orientation
 - Music/teaching highly experiential

- Cool off-night activities, like a Christian Comedy Club
- Married couples are included
- Lots of direct mail promotion
- Small groups for discipleship

Model #5: The Inter-SAM

- Core: multiple-church coalition
- Monthly seeker-sensitive outreach dinner at a neutral site
- Quarterly fellowship activities
- Semi-annual missions trips and outreaches
- Joint newsletter and promotion

Model #6: The Targeted Group

- Core: define one specific type of single to reach and go after them
- Uses a specific ministry method such as Divorce Recovery
- Offers parallel children's programming
- Doesn't worry about the groups outside the target

Model #7: Mainstreaming

- Core: "we're not married...so what?"
- Ministry to singles is to prepare them for leadership
- Singles are dispersed into ministry positions
- Singles and couples combined in all activities
- No formal SAM

where they are, rather than where married people think singles should be. In truth, singles often do better with the issues cited above than their married counterparts, especially since they cope with these issues unassisted. A ministry that provides assistance will win their hearts.

Many singles are positively disposed toward having a spiritual life; they simply have never had a chance.

Give up Old Models for Ministry

There are several ideas lingering around singles ministry that need to be abandoned. They are old wineskins that will not hold what God wants to do today.

The first concept is the leper colony. Popular in the 1970s, this model assumes that singles are misfits, refugees from couples culture who have contracted the disease of being unmarried. The core emotion is not love, but pity. The church's responsibility was to quarantine these poor creatures from the mainstream population so no one else was infected. This is usually done by way of a small Sunday school class at the far end of the hall, with an occasional potluck dinner tacked on. Such isolation had the additional fringe benefit of sheltering married women from perceived competition from single females.

Another concept is the hospital model of the 1980s. Singles were seen largely as trauma victims in need of healing. Divorce and desertion were thought to be

almost universal experiences. This ministry made use of all the tools of the leper colony, but added more fellowship time and support groups. Many times the core emotion was an alloy of compassion and condescension.

While many well-meaning people have done a fine job of touching the single population using elements of both models, neither adds up to the missionary enterprise that single America needs today. Both were based on a provider theory of church ministry where leadership delivers services to an audience that cannot help itself. This thinking is both unbiblical and impractical. It robs singles of their potential in the kingdom of God by making them a permanent underclass in the church.

REACHING SINGLE AMERICA

A fresh wind is blowing in the church today. The time is here for a missionary outreach to single America. New wine-skins are needed. Defining them will require asking the right questions and the humility to learn from other models. Any breakthrough outreach will require thinking through questions like these:

How Can We Network?

The best singles ministries of the 21st century will not operate in isolation. Their most effective tool will not be stand-alone events or classes, but relationships with other churches and groups. This is the ideal growth pathway for smaller and/or rural congregations who may not have the number of singles necessary to create critical mass. Singles leaders can contact evangelical churches in their communities, develop a database of other groups, and gather interested leaders for fellowship. If the chemistry is right, an informal network can be formed that becomes the vehicle for joint activities, concerts, community projects, and outreaches.

Many singles ministries today are built around interchurch and even citywide coalitions. These confederations can engage in missionary activity to singles that few individual churches can match.

Connecting new believers with churches can be done with ease. Moreover, networking itself has a unifying effect on the body of Christ, providing a powerful witness to the community. The crucial principle here is that Christians are not meant to go it alone (John 17:21).

What's Going on in Cyberspace?

The Internet and World Wide Web have created an entirely new ministry arena. The number of personal homepages is now doubling every 2 months. Web sites for singles abound for good reason—unmarried people spend significant amounts of time on the web. The chat room is the front porch of our era. The anonymity of cyberspace offers an appealing format for testing relationships without commitment, finding friends without sacrifice, and for generally exploring the world. We surf the web the way Magellan sailed the South Atlantic.

Rick Warren calls the Internet the Gutenberg press of the 21st century. Missionary activity to singles that lacks an Internet component will be hampered. It might be comparable to a church not having a telephone or photocopier. Without a presence there, a major opportunity for connecting with the unchurched single person will be missed. Many cities have companies that can assist churches

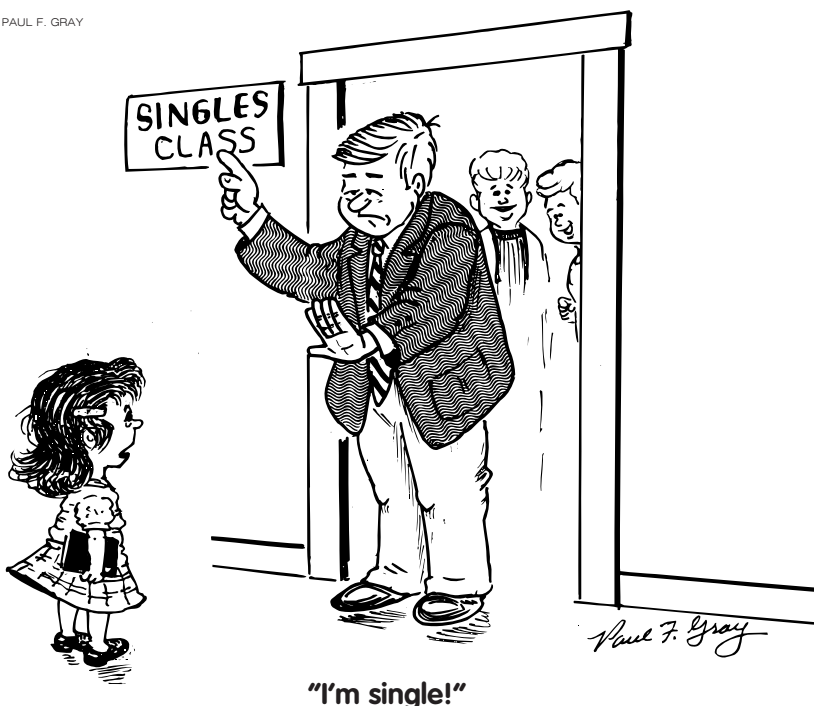
in setting up and managing an Internet presence. There are dangers, but that is a constant for missionaries.

What About Generational Issues?

The senior citizen living alone is totally different from the 19-year old-never-been-married. The fact neither has a spouse is hardly enough to bond them together. The diversity of the unmarried population presents great challenges, but also great opportunities. Leaders will have to become familiar with generational issues and develop ministry that each group finds culturally relevant. Sometimes this means that single people are best reached as part of a generation, rather than as a marital status group. The emergence of young adult ministry is an excellent example of this trend. At other times, a felt need may be the perfect platform for missionary activity. Divorce recovery programs have been very effective in this regard, especially when advertised to the community and hosted at neutral locations. Another example would be lifestyle ministry such as outreach to single parents through training or support. The effective ministry of the future will be based more on empathy than publicity. It all begins with adjusting the ministry to the traits of the population (1 Corinthians 9:19–22).

Single America is a whitened harvest field (John 4:35). The only question is whether we will enter the field to reap what has been sown (Matthew 9:37,38). There are few global solutions. The specific nature of the mission will have to be worked out in each local context. But every local leader must recognize, relate, and reach out to this unmarried nation. The single adult who gave us the Great Commission expects no less. **E**

Earl Creps, D.Min., former adult consultant for Sunday School Promotion and Training, is senior pastor of Calvary Temple Assembly of God, Springfield, Missouri.



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INTERVIEW WITH JIM SMOKE

I Helping the Divorced Find Hope and Healing

The breakup of the family is the central domestic problem of our day. Many individuals find it easy to walk away from their commitment to spouses and their children. For those left behind, the disgrace and pain of a failed marriage is sometimes more than they can bear.

The church is to be the vital agent in the restoration and healing of the divorced person. Unfortunately, many churches are ill-equipped to deal with the deep pain brought into a divorced person's life.

To talk about how the church can provide meaningful and effective ministry to the divorced and their children, *Enrichment's* managing editor, Rick Knoth, spoke with Jim Smoke. Smoke is an internationally known speaker and author of the best-selling book, *Growing Through Divorce*. The book is widely used today in Divorce Recovery seminars and counseling centers around the world. He is one of the creators of the National Association of Single Adult Leaders and also serves as adjunct professor at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. He currently serves as pastor of adult ministries at Grace Church in Cypress, California.

AFTER OVER 20 YEARS IN DIVORCE RECOVERY WORK, WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED ABOUT FAILED MARRIAGES?

SMOKE: When I started divorce recovery workshops in the early 70s, my own family questioned whether I was on the right track. I was trying to help the healing process, but they thought I was giving a vote for divorce.

Twenty-five to 35 years ago, people in the movie industry were the only ones getting divorces. Now, pastors and Christian workers are getting divorces—and that shouldn't happen. But we need to realize that some things in our culture are creeping into the church.

The first thing I learned is that many people did not receive any premarital counseling and they were ill-equipped for marriage. Second, many couples fail to get help when their marriage is in trouble. The church contributes to this because we tell people, "If you're a Christian, love God and follow Him closely; He will take care of your problems."

Third, marriages fail because couples grow apart rather than together. They haven't developed a nurturing marriage environment that allowed it to thrive and to grow.

Fourth, when the fabric of marriage weakens, couples become susceptible to an affair. About 68 to 70 percent of the people in our workshops have had a spouse leave them for somebody else. Affairs are not planned. They happen because a person finds someone with a warm heart who listens to his or her story.

Fifth, traditionally the church community has not shown kindness to divorced

people. We would rather judge them and toss a handful of Bible verses at them. People need healing, not judgment. It's easier to throw rocks than to help people rebuild their lives.

THE DIVORCE RATE FOR COUPLES WHO REGULARLY ATTEND CHURCH IS THE SAME AS, AND IN SOME CASES,

church doesn't have an emphasis on ministry to married people. We talk about family, but what is the church doing on a regular basis to strengthen, equip, and enable a husband and wife to have a strong marriage?

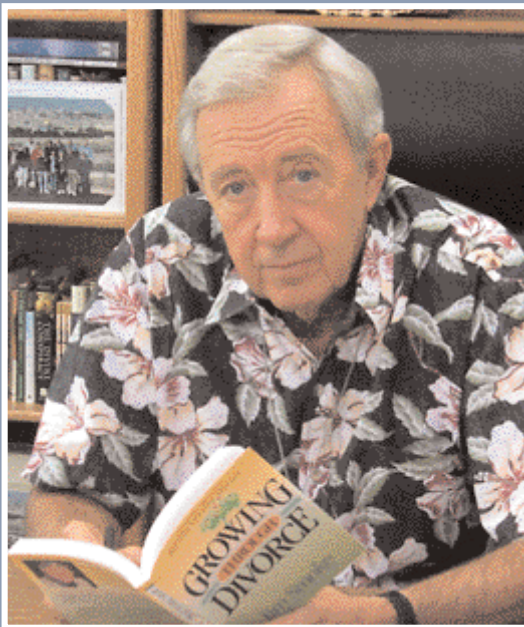
Pastors tell me, "The lowest-attended event in my church is a marriage seminar." This occurs because the church makes people feel guilty when they come to events geared to meet their needs.

Church people say, "Bill and Mary are going to the marriage seminar—they must have problems."

Pastors need to remind their people that Christians do have problems and struggles, and it's OK to acknowledge those problems. Christians do have marriage struggles. It's OK to gain the tools to help build a strong marriage.

Churches need to be proactive and start a program like Life Mates—a once-a-month date night where a couple in Christian work speaks on marriage issues. At our church, we have dessert, present a skit, have giveaways, and enjoy the evening. The people in our church are responding. It's not an all-day seminar to fix your marriage, but it gives marriage-building tools on an ongoing basis. It is led by a team of people that are excited about that ministry.

Accepting a divorced person doesn't mean you accept divorce. Jesus hates sin, but He loves people and sinners. Divorced people need to be accepted and loved.



HIGHER THAN THE DIVORCE RATE FOR UNCHURCHED COUPLES. WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF THAT?

SMOKE: The responsibility comes back to the church—we need to be in the preventive business by providing ministries that build healthy marriages. The local

WHAT ARE THE GREATEST NEEDS OF THE DIVORCED PERSON?

SMOKE: Divorced people need to be accepted and loved. Many of them have faced rejection in their marriages by mates who left them for someone else. They wonder if they can ever be loved by anybody. They lose their self-worth,

self-esteem, and self-values. Love and acceptance offset these feelings. Accepting a divorced person doesn't mean you accept divorce. Jesus hates sin, but He loves people and sinners. We must make this distinction as we work with divorced people.

Experiencing healing and hope is also important for divorced people. At our divorce recovery workshops, we talk about hope as a reality. And we often quote Jeremiah 29:11, " 'I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future' " (NIV).

People at my divorce recovery workshops have come up at the end and said they have received hope and some tools to grow through their divorce. People who go through that process need to know they are going to survive, and with the right tools, guidance, love, prayers, and concern, they're going to come out on the other side with a good life.

HOW CAN CHURCHES ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF THE DIVORCED?

SMOKE: Smaller churches assume that only mega churches can have specialized ministries. The answer lies in presenting the challenge to the laity. Pastors need to look for those who have gone through a divorce, have grown through that process, and are spiritually mature to head up this type of ministry.

Pastors can buy copies of my book, *Growing Through Divorce*, leave them on a table at church, and announce that people interested in attending a meeting about starting a support group can take a copy.

Ministry to the divorced will draw people into church, because we love them and care for them. That's the Jesus-style approach to people—He used different methods to attract people to Him. And when people came to Jesus, He presented the gospel to them in various ways and He talked in a language the people

singles are in their church because singles tend to hide. If people are single again because of a death, they share that with others and receive sympathy. If they are single again because of divorce, they probably don't want to share that because divorce has its stigma and some church people judge those who are divorced. If adults have never been married and are over 30, they don't want people to know because people wonder if something is wrong with them. There are sometimes strong prejudices in the church toward single people.

Pastors tell me they have a family church. I ask whether they have any single-parent families in their church. They say yes, but the single parent may be getting married and joining "the rest of us."

We are living in the age of the fractured family system. The statistics from the Census Bureau reveal there are thousands of single-parent families. (See the sidebar, "Singles: Still the Fastest Growing of All Groups: A Snapshot View of Who We Are by Marital Status.") Pastors need to ask schoolteachers how many kids they have in their classes from single-parent homes. In some schools, up to half of the kids are from single-parent homes.

A church with an active singles ministry will have to grapple with the issue of remarriage and develop ministries that meet the needs of the blended family.



understood. The church shortchanges itself when it doesn't think about community outreaches and touching people's lives.

Most pastors mistakenly think, *I have just three divorced people in my church; that's not a ministry*. Instead, they need to realize how many divorced people are in their community. Pastors may not be aware of how many divorced people or

HOW DO YOU INTEGRATE DIVORCED PEOPLE INTO THE MAINSTREAM OF CHURCH LIFE, MAKING THEM PRODUCTIVE, CONTRIBUTING MEMBERS TO THE BODY OF CHRIST?

SMOKE: After divorce, the majority of people will marry again and will create a

blended family. The blended family has challenges within its structure because people carry “stuff” from their former marriage. The new marriages have spouses that still have visitation rights with their children. There are a variety of things that don't go away. Many churches acknowledge the blended family with its special concerns and needs. They create a Sunday morning class or a once-a-month meeting for them to talk about the blended family structure.

If there is a singles group in your church and two divorced people in the group fall in love, they may come to you to be married. The church needs to know where it stands biblically on the issue of remarriage. I lovingly say to people in my workshops that I don't teach theology, because there are people in my workshops from all kinds of backgrounds. A church with an active singles ministry will have to grapple with the issue of remarriage and develop ministries that meet the needs of the blended family.

To assimilate singles, the remarried, and the divorced back into the broader church ministry, they need to have places of leadership in the church. While Scripture may prohibit those who are divorced and remarried from some places of leadership, singles need a place to serve. The single people in our church are involved in many different ministries. We teach in divorce recovery that it is not good to spend all your time healing your own wounds and never reaching out to anybody else. Part of the healing process is getting involved in ministry or a ministry team.

WITHIN THE DIVORCED COMMUNITY HOW DO YOU ADDRESS THE ISSUES OF SEX AND SINGLENESS?

SMOKE: After lunch at my workshops we have an open forum for questions and answers. If people don't ask the question, I usually ask, “Is anybody

And what if I never remarry?

There are three attitudes toward dealing with sexuality. The first attitude is that adults over 21 can have sex anytime, anywhere, anyplace, as long as they are consenting adults. I call this wanton sexuality. The second attitude believes, I will not have wanton sexuality, but if I have a

serious relationship with somebody, then I can have a sexual relationship with him or her. I call that selective sexuality. Both of these are not based on biblical standards. The third attitude (grounded in Scripture) believes that God gave humanity the gift of sexuality. He stamped that gift with the words, FRAGILE, HANDLE WITH CARE. The command of God is to enjoy that sexuality or sexual relationship exclusively and only within the bonds of a marriage relationship. I then tell people, “You have the choice to have any one of these three attitudes. When you're newly single again, you need to decide where you stand.” Single adults often struggle when they get in a situation where they need to decide quickly because they haven't thought through their stand ahead of time.

In our seminar we talk about “47 going on 17”—my book *Growing Through Divorce* has a chapter on this. This means people can be 47, start dating again, and feel like they are 17—all

the same issues are there except they are sexually experienced. Not knowing where they stand can leave them vulnerable. People need to set godly boundaries and standards, and then live out those standards.

ABOUT A THIRD OF THE CHILDREN BORN TO MARRIED PARENTS WILL EXPERIENCE

The church shortchanges itself when it doesn't think about community outreaches and touching people's lives.



concerned about sexual issues in single-ness?” Of course, hands go up. It's a basic struggle with most single-again people because they have been married and have had a sexual relationship.

Marriages crumble, but the people in those marriages still have sexual desires. They wonder, *What do I do now? Do I have a sexual relationship with somebody, or do I wait until I remarry?*

A Snapshot View of Who We Are by Marital Status

Here is the most recent data (1998) from the Census Bureau about the marital makeup of our nation—plus the children who live in nontraditional families.

DESCRIPTION	PERCENT OF ALL ADULTS 18+
-------------	---------------------------

TOTAL MARRIED	59.6
----------------------	------

117.8 million

Married—Spouse Present	56.0
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110.6 million

Married—Spouse Absent

(Includes Separated)

3.6

7.2 million

COHABITING	4.3
-------------------	-----

8.5 million (estimate)

TOTAL UNMARRIED	40.3
------------------------	------

79.5 million

Never Married	23.5
----------------------	------

46.5 million

Widowed	6.8
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13.5 million

Currently Divorced	9.8
---------------------------	-----

19.4 million

Ever Divorced*	25.0–30.0
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*estimate for adults ages 18–64

TOTAL UNMARRIED (ages 25–64)	22.5
-------------------------------------	------

44.4 million

Ages 25–34	8.3
-------------------	-----

16.4 million

Ages 35–44	6.6
-------------------	-----

13.1 million

Ages 45–64	7.5
-------------------	-----

14.8 million

TOTAL SINGLE PARENTS

(with children under age 18)	9.9
-------------------------------------	-----

19.7 million

Single Mothers

(with children under age 18)	8.4
-------------------------------------	-----

16.6 million


Single Fathers

(with children under age 18)	1.6
-------------------------------------	-----

3.1 million

THE DISRUPTION OF MARRIAGE. WHAT ARE THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF CHILDREN OF DIVORCE AND HOW CAN THE CHURCH MINISTER TO THEM?

SMOKE: Children experience anger, hurt, resentment, and feelings of abandonment when Mom and Dad get divorced. They are often asked to choose between Mom or Dad. Today there are a lot of resources to help children whose parents are going through divorce. Our church has done “Kids’ Hope,” created by a group from Colorado Springs, headed by Gary Sprague. (Pastors can contact Gary Sprague at: Kids’ Hope, 189 Illini Dr., Woodland Park, CO 80666.) Our divorce recovery leadership team does a unique 6- to 8-hour workshop for elementary children. The youth department handles the teens. We give children a forum to express their emotions about what’s going on as a result of Mom and Dad’s divorce. This is done through arts and crafts, videos, writing projects, and one-to-one communication. This program is unique because we have one adult worker for every two children for the whole 6 to 8 hours. At the end of that time, the kids have a chance to express what they’ve learned.

There are two gifts you can give your kids when you are going through divorce—the gift of time and the gift of love. Time is an investment in the children’s lives, being with them and doing things with them. Love is reassuring them constantly that you love them. Much of the time, adults are consumed with the legalities and property division of divorce and they forget about the children. Children don’t understand, so they feel isolated. Kids need to know they didn’t cause the divorce, and they need to know the adjustments they will have to make because of the divorce. Anybody who does divorce recovery knows that the prayer of most children is that Mom and Dad will get back together. Oftentimes, even if there has been a dysfunctional marriage relationship, a child still wants Mom and Dad back together. 

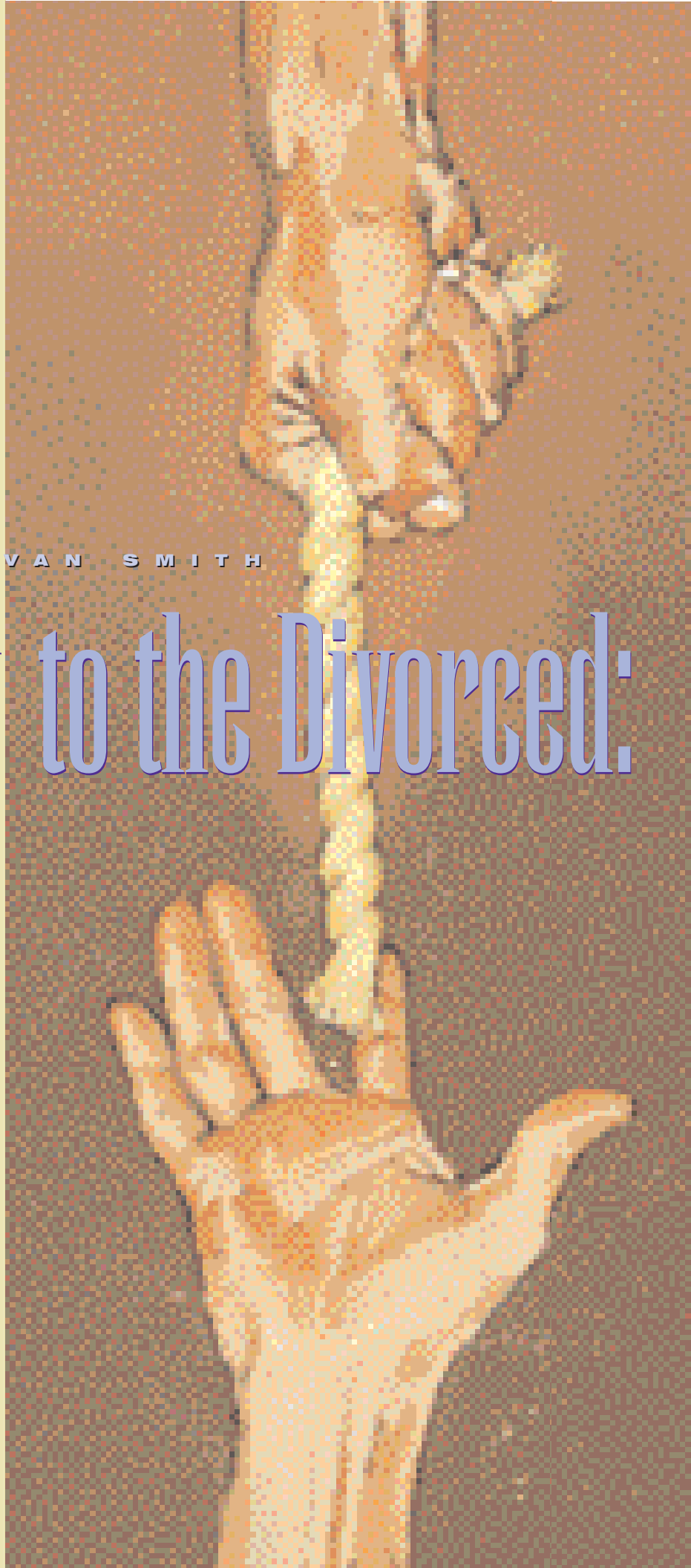
BY HAROLD IVAN SMITH

Ministry to the Divorced:

Becky wanted this to be not just another Sunday. She needed a break from the pain she was experiencing as a divorcee in a small, rural community. She was not prepared to hear her name called out or the pastor's stern declaration: "We do not need divorced women in this church. This is a holy place for God's people, people who live by the Book. Ushers, show her the door."

In Becky's day, the church had zero tolerance for divorce—even for the innocent party.

Times have changed. In 1999, there were 19.4 million divorced people in the United States—with 7.2 million in the married-spouse-absent category, which are de facto divorces. Over 25 percent of individuals 18 to 64 are estimated to have been divorced.¹ Moreover, an estimated 1.15 million divorces will be granted this year (multiplied by 2 equals 2.3 million new divorcees or redivorceses).²



ANOTHER BIBLICAL VIEW

Rather than cite the divorce passages in Mark, Matthew, and 1 Corinthians, I want to examine the heroics of Ebed-Melech. During the siege of Jerusalem, Jeremiah was placed in a cistern because he prophesied that the city would fall to the Babylonians. One single adult, a eunuch named Ebed-Melech, sought Jeremiah's release. The king ordered him to recruit 30 men and "lift Jeremiah the prophet out of the cistern before he dies" (Jeremiah 38:10, NIV). But first, Ebed-Melech detoured to the rag room for rags to pad the ropes so the prophet would not be injured with rope burns. A rope burn could be a significant risk for infection. Pulling Jeremiah

out with 30 men was easy. Pulling him out in a way that did not injure him was the challenge facing Ebed-Melech.

Today divorced people tell haunting stories about injustice, discrimination, and insensitivity they and their children have experienced. Somewhere individuals in ministry will "rope burn" already wounded divorcing/divorced people. This is the equivalent of policemen at a serious wreck giving lectures on safe driving instead of getting the injured to a hospital.

Points To Consider

Not every church can have a ministry with divorced people. Many churches settle for ministries to divorced people—an emergency room rather than long-term care. A church will have a difficult time reaching divorced people if the pastor does not have compassion for those who are divorced. Some pastors only gain this compassion after their daughter or son goes through a divorce. One pastor wept daily after his daughter's

divorce, but it was not her divorce that stimulated the tears. "I keep thinking of all the things I have said to divorcing and divorced women in three decades of ministry," he said, "and I just hope no one says those things to my daughter."

A Remote-Control Ministry

Some pastors struggle with stigma contamination and prefer the distanced approach to ministry—farm the divorced out to a compassionate couple. But effective divorce-recovery ministry must have the public support of the senior pastor. Ministry with divorced people will impact the pastor's counseling load and prayer life. The divorcee's questions beg response:

- Where is God in all of this?
- Does God still care for me?
- I took my vows seriously. Why am I the one living in near poverty while my ex is living it up?
- How do I teach my children when my ex is living a sinful lifestyle?

Your Ebed-Melech Opportunity

WHAT IS MINISTRY TO THE DIVORCED?

Ministry With the Divorced Is Evangelism

Many divorced people are spiritually hungry—divorce is a spiritual crisis. The rejection by a spouse and being ignored or rejected by a spiritual community are difficult situations. Some admit, “I was only a nominal churchgoer until my divorce. This has driven me to my knees.”

Others report, “I was so hurt by the judgmentalism, that I haven’t been in church in years.” Because of a few believers, some divorced people become suspicious. How do they know you won’t hurt them as well?

What about the sign on the church lawn, “Everyone Welcome.” Is it a slogan or a reality? Are you prepared to minister to divorcees with dilemmas that would make Solomon moan and whose children would have Dr. James Dobson shaking his head?

Some divorcees discover their acute need for God, and they discover a seeking God dropping a rope into the cistern of separation and divorce. But God also needs the pullers and the paddlers. How does God reach out? Through caring pastors and committed laypeople who love the divorced people God brings to them. Some contemporary

Ebed-Melechs have been there and survived. They have not just survived a divorce, but they have allowed God to turn the time in the cistern into a blessing, even when an ex intended it for evil.

Divorced people migrate across denominational and theological lines to find a safe, loving, spiritual environment. In numerous Assemblies of God churches, key lay leaders can trace their spiritual lives back to the devastation of divorce and encountering God through the loving, practical care of God’s rope-tuggers and rope-padders.

Some divorced people owe their recovery to the prayers and support of a loving pastor. Many pastors find no asterisks in God’s love and agree with writer Linda Quastrom: “There is no wound that Jesus cannot heal. There is no history that Jesus cannot redeem.”

Ministry With the Divorced Is Pastoral Care

The implications for pastoral care are far reaching. Divorce happens to two spouses (or more when affairs lead to divorces), their children, their parents, their siblings, and their friends. Like pebbles tossed into a lake, many people are affected by divorce. The children of divorce are not always toddlers or teens. Imagine the

shock to children of senior adults getting divorced. Over 10,000 divorces this year will be among individuals 65 and older.

During your church service do you see:

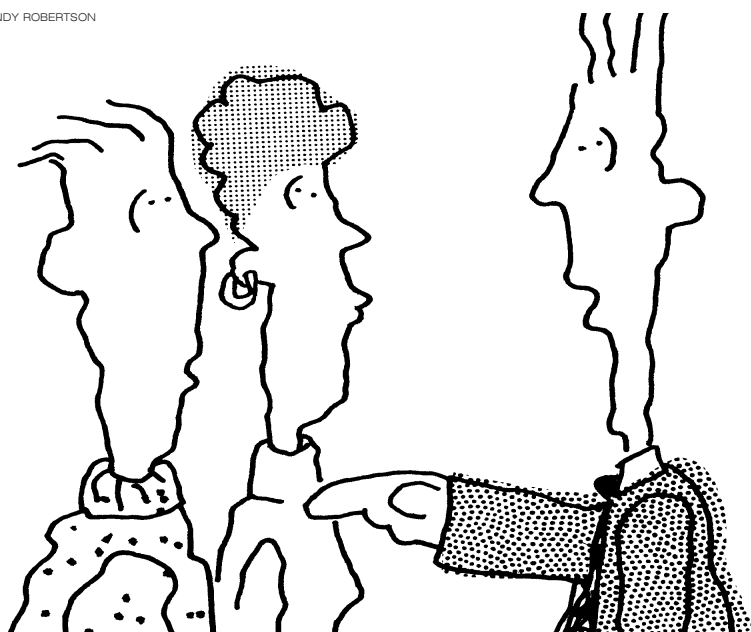
- Toddlers trying to adjust to two bedrooms under two roofs?
- Teens, already dealing with the storms of adolescence, having to juggle the reality that Mom and Dad are divorcing or still fighting and unavailable?
- Children becoming parents to their divorcing parents or to their siblings?
- Parents of adult children losing a son- or daughter-in-law, which hurts like losing a child?
- Parents grieving for a prodigal child or child-in-law?
- Adult children grieving over prodigal parents?

Do you see them as you break the Bread of Life? Do you see their eyes as you shake hands at the door? Do you hear their pain as they request, “Pastor, pray for me.” On any Sunday morning there is overwhelming evidence of an epidemic of divorce-linked grief, some of which is long unresolved. For some, the desire to worship will be sabotaged by their numbness, anguish, or hurt.

Ministry With the Divorced Is Youth Ministry

How trained is your youth minister to deal with family dysfunction and the teen who inherits the consequences of an affair, a divorce, or a second divorce? Your youth group’s missions trip may be a slight financial stretch for teens from traditional families, but a luxury for teens from divorced families.

Does God want to use that trip to make a lasting difference in a teen’s life? How does that teen acknowledge financial realities to a youth minister? Think of the teen trying to balance responsibilities to a mother and a father or wondering where an absentee parent is. How about the teen dealing with the Santa Daddy who wants to make up for all the pain he has caused or the teen that cannot afford the ski trip because she has to work or care for siblings. Does your youth leader notice these teens? Will your youth minister



“What do you mean you two are getting married. You’re the only singles we’ve got left.”

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MINISTERING TO DIVORCED PEOPLE

As the community of faith that proclaims Christ's redeeming love to the world, what specific things can a church do to meet the needs of its divorced members? Consider the following as points for developing a program that will nurture and support those who are hurting from the death of a relationship:

1. Start with comfort.

The newly divorced often feel unlovable. They need warmth and hugs. Often guilt and feelings of failure weigh them down, and their self-esteem plummets. They want to know that people still care. When others ignore what has happened, it only hurts more.

2. Give them assurance.

They need to know there is a silver lining somewhere in the dark cloud and that hope will return someday. Amidst varying moods that result in tears, depression, anger, and guilt, they need the stabilizing presence of caring fellow Christians and sensitive pastors who can assure them that their emotions are normal, and with God's help they can have productive lives again.

3. They need good ears and big shoulders.

Divorced people need others who will listen and let them cry. Divorced persons need understanding, not advice or quick solutions. They tend to cycle and recycle through many emotions and through it all, need to acknowledge their anger and pain. When caring people allow them to do this, it sets the stage for the healing process to take place.

4. They need offers of concrete help.

The church is often so couple-oriented that single people feel shut out. Don't say, "Call if you need something." That's too vague and gets us off the hook too easily. People need to be specific in their offers for help, and sometimes they just need to reach out and do things for others.

5. Show patience and persistence.

A Wisconsin woman noted that *Webster's* defines divorce as "to separate from one's spouse." Then she argued that what *Webster's* doesn't tell us is that divorce separates us from all that's familiar. Those who are recently divorced tend to withdraw to handle their losses. During grief, people need to heal and recover. This will require patience on our part in dealing with them. We must allow them their privacy and space and not allow their desire to be alone to be interpreted by us as rejection. In addition, the church needs to be there when people work through their grief and are ready to socialize again.

6. Cultivate sensitivity.

This means both pastor and church members need to be careful of the manner in which things are said and done. One woman recalls the hurt she and her son experienced when someone remarked at his father's remarriage, "How wonderful. You'll have a mother now."

The boy responded, "I already do."

Churches also need to be sensitive to the manner in which they characterize the divorced members and, for that matter, all singles. Names of groups like, Pairs and Spares, to describe groups that include marrieds and singles may sound clever, but often suggest a sense of uselessness or that persons are not whole because they are not part of a couple.

These points show there are enormous possibilities for ministry to the divorced members of our congregations. And often they are one of the prime groups that are receptive to ministry. Churches need to educate themselves about the needs of those undergoing the trauma of divorce. While divorce is a type of death, the corpse is still alive and in need of compassion.

—Charles Dickson, Ph.D., pastor, Hickory, North Carolina.

listen to them? And having listened, what will your youth leader say? Did you ask before you hired him or her?

Ministry With the Divorced Is Single Adult Ministry

Many congregations have programs for the divorced through single-adult ministries, ministries with single parents, divorce recovery, Bible study, and small groups—that meets for 60 minutes. If you are available when ministry is being dispensed, ministry is available. But what about those who work on Tuesday nights/Sunday mornings? If your church does not offer ministry to the divorced, where do the divorced in your community go? What are they experiencing in those settings?

A RESOURCE THAT IS INNOVATIVE

One resource I developed for churches that wish to minister with divorced people is called *A Time for Healing: Coming to Terms With Your Divorce*. Most Christian divorce recovery resources are based on the now disputed Kubler-Ross model of stages of grief—a model that is passive, like an individual in a canoe or raft without a paddle on a roaring river. The river determines the ride. “Get through it the best way you can,” we counsel.

Moses did not come down from the Mount carrying the Ten Commandments

in one hand and the Five Stages of Grief in the other. After working with thousands of divorcing/divorced individuals, I conclude that a decision-based response is essential. It is not so much what has happened, but how a divorced person, with God’s grace and the help of God’s rope-tuggers, responds. *A Time for Healing* focuses on these key decisions.

- *View divorce as a process.* Try to cheat the process or do “divorce-recovery lite,” and you volunteer as a prime candidate for divorce two. To get through it, you’ve got to go through it. No shortcuts.

- *Relinquish attachments to the past.* Why is the front windshield in a car larger than the rearview mirror? Because where you are going is more important than where you have been. Many divorced people (sometimes their leaders) have proportions reversed and are peeking into God’s future through a tiny windshield. When the rearview mirror is huge, divorce recovery becomes a gripe-and-pity party.

- *Revise the assumptive world.* This is not supposed to happen to me because I am Spirit-filled. No family or marriage is immune to divorce. Divorce does not always make sense; sometimes elements of explanation are unavailable.

- *Readjust to new realities.* The Psalmist asked, “How shall we sing the

Lord’s song in a strange land?” (Psalm 137:4). How do divorcees sing the Lord’s song while going through divorce? Some have flung down their harps and headed for the fast lane of the swinging-single scene—divorced-and-making-up-for-lost-time. In your community bars, organizations, and even religious groups catering to the divorced will not only impact their emotional lives but will ravage spiritual lives as well.

- *Resist discount relationships.* Not all divorcees will be tempted with liquor, sex, or drugs. The big temptation may be a premature romantic relationship offered by another cistern-dweller. Opportunists sometimes hang out in church ministries rather than in bars. Some divorced people are desperate for a rescuer and send out signals that attract an individual who promises to make it all better. Pastors, as shepherd of the sheep, must be alert to the wolf disguised in innocent party clothing.

- *Understand sexuality.* Rarely does the gift of celibacy come to an individual with a divorce decree. How do divorced persons survive in a sex-saturated society where they are constantly told that they need to feel sexy and attractive? For some divorced people, sexuality will be the arena for Satan’s sexually tinted lies that taunt and tempt the divorced. If they come to you, what advice will you offer?

WHO WILL TUG OR PAD THE ROPE?

Attractive divorcees may frighten pastors. Stories abound of the preacher who ran off with a divorcee he was counseling. This fear keeps many pastors from doing the task God has called them to do. Pastoral counseling must be done with caution, but it must be done. It is too easy to be judgmental toward a divorced person.

Other pastors do not get involved because they believe divorced people are time-consuming, spiritually bottomless cisterns, and losers—two steps forward, seven steps backward. Did Jesus entertain such thoughts when He encountered the woman at the well?

The Holy Spirit has lots of rope, but who will tug or pad it? Some individuals in your church have little strength to hold onto the rope. You will have to convince them to take hold of the rope. The Holy Spirit will empower you and will work through you. He will use you to lift someone out of the dark cistern, or He may use you to anchor the rope. But first you may need to find the rags.

I have been there—on both sides of the desk. When my wife left me, I found myself in the cistern. The devil repeatedly said, “If Jane stopped loving you, so will Jesus.” There were no divorce recovery programs. I did not have an Ebed-Melech-like pastor. He was, by his own admission, “from the old school.” (Ironically, he ran a salvage business before he went into the ministry.) He was so busy upholding the standards that he couldn’t step near the cistern. If I would have had an Ebed-Melech in those dark days, some spiritual scars would not have formed. I have never forgotten how hopeless and worthless I sometimes felt at noon on Sundays.


SHOW ME YOUR RAG PILE

If someone is in the cistern, will you be available? Will you offer raw rope? Ministry is risky. The same individuals who put Jeremiah into the cistern could have put Ebed-Melech into the cistern, too. But the servant did not let his fears of what could happen keep him from getting the rags or pulling. You say you have a heart for

ministry. Great, show me your rag pile.

Becky was my grandmother. I experienced her woundedness not only toward my grandfather but toward the church (and the denomination) that threw her out. My grandmother wasn’t like the grandmothers of my friends. I have often thought that my sister, who is considerably older than I am, had, at least for several years, a different grandmother. My grandmother never got over divorce number one that led to divorce number two. She never got over the walk out the aisle. Sometimes when I drive by that church, I wonder what might have happened in 1947 if that church had said, “Becky, we don’t go along with divorce, but we want to help you. Grab hold of the rope.” What kind of memories of a grandmother would I have?

Today we do not march people to the sidewalk; we just do not fellowship with them. We do not talk to them, invite them over for a meal, or to the Dairy Queen after church on Sunday night. When they come to us, we string clichés and say “God bless you,” and make short work of their questions and concerns.

Is it possible that 50 years from now, some grandson will mourn for a grandmother he never got to know because somehow you never made a difference in that woman’s life during or after her divorce? God wants to use Ebed-Melechs to make a difference, not just in this generation but in future generations. God is still looking for some Ebed-Melechs who know where the rags are kept. 

Harold Ivan Smith, D.Min., lives in Kansas City, Missouri. He is the author of A Time for Healing: Coming to Terms With Your Divorce, (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 1994).



ENDNOTES

1. “The U.S. Single Adult Population,” (1998) *SAM Journal*, 15 (November/December), 7.
2. *The New York Times 1998 Almanac* (New York: Penguin Putnam, Inc., 1997), 279.

B Y L O I S M O W D A Y R A B E Y

Helping Single-Parent Families Succeed

Success" is a relative term. But for most single-parent families success would mean that their family unit achieves a level of stability. This stability enables the parent and children to enjoy loving relationships in an environment of peace and security, and it enables the children to grow into healthy, responsible adults. Creating such an environment is a challenge for any of us; but for the single parent, it is especially taxing. Sometimes these parents need to recover from loss, redefine their family, supplement or provide an income, and help their children maneuver through the difficulties of life.

How can the church help? This article is based on my conversations with single parents and my own observations as a former single parent.

RECOGNIZING THE GAP

There is often a gap between the perceived needs of single parents and their children and their real needs. I remember from my own single days the countless times people told me what I needed. I would smile, nod, and sigh inwardly at how far off base they were. They were well-intended comments, but they lacked the insight that comes from taking the time and expending the energy to truly understand the complexities that exist in homes broken by loss.

One of the challenges the church faces

Practical Ways To Help Single Parents and Their Children

Financial Assistance

Establish a way for single parents to communicate serious financial needs and a budget category to help meet those needs. Make sure single parents understand that this is a limited resource and that all their needs will not be met through this fund.

Baby-sitting

Offer free baby-sitting to single parents for events that the church wants single parents to attend.

Services

Develop a directory of services available for single parents, such as home or car repair, that are donated by others in the church or in the community. If not donated, offer services at substantial savings.

Parenting Seminars

Provide information on parenting. Bring in women to talk to men about raising daughters and men to talk to women about raising sons.

Role Models

Invite single parents who are successfully parenting to speak to your group.

Church Grandparents

Establish a program where grandparent-age adults in the church who don't have grandchildren living in town can adopt children of single parents as their grandchildren.

—Lois Mowday Rabey, Colorado Springs, Colorado.

is the availability of staff to spend time investigating how people feel and what they need when they are past the initial trauma of loss due to death, divorce, unwed birth, or other circumstances that result in single parenting.

But there must be another answer other than hiring more staff, a solution that most churches can't afford. Recognizing that a gap exists between leadership's understanding of the needs of single-parent families and the reality of those needs is a good place to start.

IMPLEMENT HONEST COMMUNICATION

I have spoken to numerous groups of singles over the last 20 years and have interacted with their leaders. All of these leaders, without exception, have been devoted people who are committed to ministering to singles. They have asked me what they could do to

improve their programs, and I have almost always responded in the same way—meet with them and do the following:

- *Ask.* Provide a time for men and women together, a time for men only, and a time for women only, to voice their greatest challenges as single parents. Then ask them how the church can help meet those challenges. A skilled facilitator can prevent this from becoming a gripe session.

The goal is to give single parents a place to vent, but with a focus. The session is about parenting, not dating or anger at an ex-spouse.

- *Listen and take notes.* If other issues surface, like dating or anger, check later to determine if the church is addressing these aspects of singleness. If not, that is an area for the single ministry as a whole. As far as single parenting goes, listen for the specific challenges voiced by the participants.

- *Reflect.* Read the notes you made at the session and think about what these parents said. Talk with other leaders. Consider what the church can do right now and long term. Be open to new thoughts that come to you as you reflect on these concerns.

- *Reassemble your group.* Let the single parents know your plans, including those challenges for which you have no answer. Involving them in the process of helping themselves is positive and may generate resources from within the group.

- *Implement what you can.* Put into action those solutions you and the group can and then plan for the future. Continue to communicate. Keep communicating with them, giving



them ownership in their own problem solving, thereby, contributing to the church as a whole.

THE GREATEST NEED OF CHILDREN IN A SINGLE-PARENT HOME

While a healthy, two-parent home is the ideal, children can do very well in life and can be well adjusted if they live in a single-parent home with a stable, loving parent.

A stable, loving parent will inevitably have other adults in his or her life to help impact the children. A newspaper article reported on a program that identified assets for youth: "If one person will take interest in a child, it will save his or her life. If two or three adults take an interest, the child starts to prosper."

The church can help single parents succeed by integrating their children into the church. Don't just rely on Sunday school to express care. Provide events that help children interact with other adults and encourage adults to

talk with and interact with the children. The more individual care that can be shown, the greater the help for the child.

THE GREATEST NEED OF SINGLE PARENTS

"Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life" (Proverbs 13:12, NIV). Single parents need to believe they can positively impact their children and equip them for life. Their hope for a two-parent home is gone, and with it, the hope of parenting well often disappears.

The church can help by nurturing a longing in them to make that positive impact and by encouraging the belief that they can accomplish that task. Programs and seminars will help, but underlying those practical helps must be the grasp of supernatural coparenting with God that transcends difficult circumstances. This is the foundation for believers to appropriate what is available to them. An ongoing teaching that spiritually empowers single parents

will help them as they face some of the more practical issues of parenting.

THE NEED TO FEEL NORMAL

Many singles feel judged. There is a stigma on divorced people, and people in the church don't know how to relate to them. Even those who aren't divorced feel the strangeness of being a part of a body that defines the nuclear family as "normal." Children in single-parent homes experience this same uncomfortable identification by what they are not, instead of by what they are.

Churches, in general, try to help singles by segregating them into singles ministries. It might be more helpful to view singles ministries as one area in which a person participates, but not the only area. Isolation could be lessened if those involved in singles ministry were invited to other functions—such as parenting seminars. Single parents could help plan these events. This can also help other church members understand the needs of single parents. If the Body could truly become the extended family for single-parent homes, many of their challenges could be lessened.

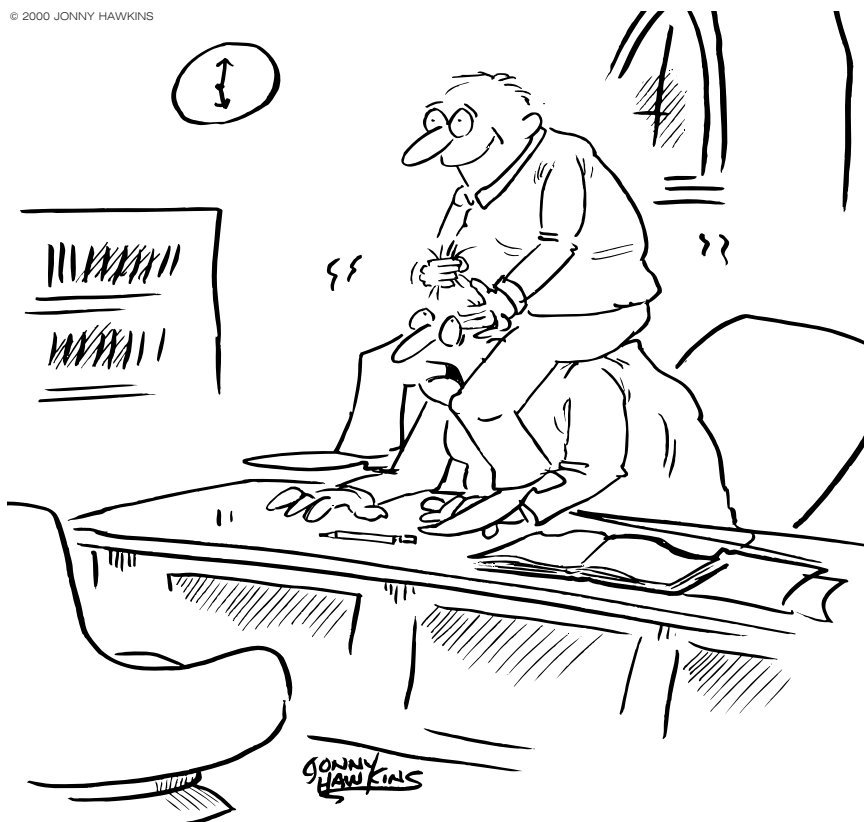
Most churches have excellent ministries for nuclear families, and many churches have good ministries for single adults. But many churches do not offer ministry to single parents. This adds to the feeling of being abnormal in both categories—married and single without children.

HELPING PARENTS PRIORITIZE THEIR LIVES

When I was single, I received a lot of advice about making sure my need for an active social life was met. There was always the underlying concern, often expressed as a matter of prayer on my behalf, that I find another man to marry.

My daughters were involved in sports all through their junior and senior years of high school, with games three nights a week for most of the year. If I attended all their games, I couldn't

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"So, do you think growing up in a single-parent home causes you to look elsewhere for a father figure?"

CHILDREN IN SINGLE-PARENT HOMES


DESCRIPTION	PERCENT OF ALL CHILDREN UNDER 18
Children under 18 not currently living in a two-parent married household 20 million	28 percent
Children under 18 who have ever lived in a one-parent household 40 million (estimate)	56 percent
Children under 18 currently living with grandparents 4 million	6 percent

Source: Kim Hurst, "State of the Singles Report," *Single Adult Ministry Journal*, Issue 130: 7. Used with permission.

squeeze much more into my schedule. I decided their schedules came first; I would go to all their games. This priority wasn't a sacrifice; I loved every minute of it. But throughout those

years I had to reassure well-meaning acquaintances that I was, indeed, a fulfilled person even though I wasn't involved in a lot of social activities.

Dating and remarrying is a complicated

and energy-draining aspect of single-adult life. One of the most helpful encouragements for single parents would be for church leadership to give them permission to put their social life on the back burner and focus on their children. Of course, they will need outlets for their own interests and places to just have fun with other adults. But a shift in the attitude of priorities from social to parental can give them the nudge they might need in the direction of understanding the importance of putting their children first. Success in parenting is the most lasting and significant help any ministry can offer to those who are facing the task of parenting alone. 

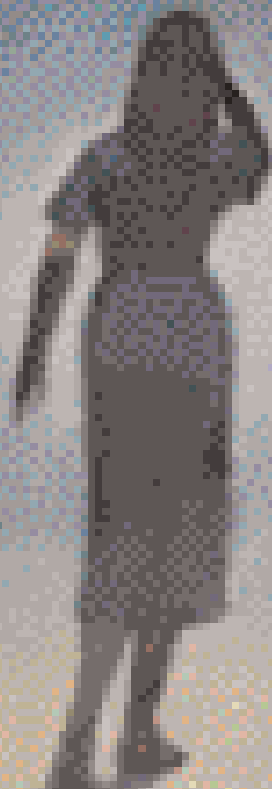
Lois Mowday Rabey is an author and speaker living in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Her most recent books are Women of a Generous Spirit and Growing Young, both published by WaterBrook Press.



Single-Adult
Ministry

WIDOWED Too YOUNG

BY RICHARD D. DOBBINS



*Ministry to
the spiritual
needs of the
surviving
spouse should
include helping
him* manage
feelings of
anger and
guilt.*

When the funeral service is over, your pastoral work with a grieving spouse is just beginning. No matter how many years a person has been married, when a beloved spouse dies, his* first reaction is most likely to be, “Not now; not yet. There are so many things we still planned to do together.” The younger one is and the more suddenly this happens, the more difficult it is to get through the death of a mate.

While believers do not grieve the same way as those who “have no hope” (1 Thessalonians 4:13), there is still a grieving process and an intense sense of aloneness when one loses a spouse. Believers are seldom more in need of pastoral care than during the first year after the loss of a spouse. During pastoral ministry with such people, look for appropriate opportunities to remind them that death is:

- The result of Adam’s sin (Romans 5:12).
- Man’s enemy, because of the pain and separation it brings (1 Corinthians 15:26).
- Something Jesus conquered for all humanity through His sinless life, vicarious death, and triumphant resurrection.
- Something over which believers do eventually triumph in the resurrection, but it is still normal and healthy for them to grieve the loss of a loved one (John 11:32–36, 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18).

For the believer, even though its sting at times seems unbearable, death is not a defeat of one’s faith. Rather, it is the gateway into an exciting new life. Death brings:

- An intensified consciousness (1 Corinthians 13:9–12).
- A “gain” and something “far better” than anything on this earth (Philippians 1:20–24).

• Far more than just being “absent from the body”; death means being “present with the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:8).

The surviving mate’s grieving process is seldom completed in less than 6 months, and may take up to 2 years. If prolonged illness is the precipitating factor in a spouse’s death, the survivor has probably already experienced some amount of anticipatory grief and has begun formulating some responses to the obvious questions: “How can I go on alone? How will I manage household chores/finances/raising our children (if there are children in the home)/get through special holiday times alone?”

These are issues you may wish to raise during times of prayer and encouragement with the spouse who is facing life without his partner. Gently ask for God’s guidance in these specific areas from time to time as you pray together. Locate reliable (preferably Christian) professionals and support groups in your community that specialize in care for the bereaved. Help the surviving spouse determine what tasks must be addressed both before and after a mate’s death and offer to put him in touch with appropriate service providers. Reassure any spouse caring for a dying mate that it is permissible and necessary for his own spiritual, physical, and emotional health to periodically escape from the “sick room” and go on with his normal routine—even his favorite entertainment. If he tries to spend every waking moment with his sick spouse, he will have no energy reserve for later, when all of his energies are needed during the difficult days as his spouse draws closer to death.

Ministry to the spiritual needs of the surviving spouse should include helping him manage feelings of anger and guilt. The most sincere believer can still experience anger at God for not healing his spouse, anger over being left alone to face the future, or

anger at unresolved marital or family issues—real or perceived—with his spouse.

Guilt may be rooted in missed opportunities in life or regrets over things real or imagined that were either done or left undone and now can never be made right. “Survivor guilt” stems from still being alive and healthy. This may come from the belief that the surviving spouse should have been more aggressive in seeking out medical care for his mate. Regardless of the source and whether the feelings are healthy or unhealthy, anger and guilt need to be surfaced and forgiveness needs to be experienced.

For the believer, one of the most critical spiritual aspects of a mate’s death is explaining to himself the “why” of this tragedy. Three kinds of “untimely” deaths require special attention and care on behalf of the surviving spouse, children, and other family members:

- Premature death—a person struck down in childhood, youth, or “the prime of life.” We can accept that aged family members are close to death. When death comes to someone considered “too young to die,” however, it seems tragic. It’s natural for children to bury their parents sooner or later. It is not natural for parents to bury their children.
- Unexpected death due to an undiagnosed/unrecognized health problem such as a bad heart or due to a traffic accident.
- Calamitous death not only unexpected, but very violent including an act of nature such as a flash flood, earthquake, or tornado. (When addressing the issue of death from an act of nature, emphasize that these are acts of nature behaving within God-given limits, not acts of God as news reporters often describe them.) Calamitous death also includes airplane crashes, drive-by shootings, hate crimes, and mass killings. The survivors of a person who dies in circumstances such as these will experience grief for many months. Among the worst parts of such tragedies are the fact families may have no physical body to bury and thus begin to put closure on that person’s life and/or no

supportive ministry to help them through the dark weeks and months.

When these kinds of tragedies strike, the first question believers and nonbelievers alike generally ask is, “Why my husband/wife? He or she did not deserve to die.” The answer to this question is what the survivor must live with. It is one of the most important questions any of us will ever ask because it brings us face to face with our theodicy of death and tragedy—our interpretation of the meaning of death. That’s why we must give grieving survivors an adequate theodicy to help them through this experience.

Here are five common ways people explain death and give meaning to their tragedies. Not all are spiritually and emotionally healthy, but all are common. One and two are negative responses; three and four are superficial and deny what has really happened; and five can be a spiritually and emotionally healthy way of explaining this kind of loss to oneself.

- Blaming or questioning the mercy of God. “He doesn’t really care for us or He wouldn’t have allowed that to happen.”
- Viewing the tragedy as a punishment for the wrongdoing of the survivor(s). “If only I had....” “If only I hadn’t....” These sentence stems probably have as many endings as there are widows and widowers.
- Seeing the suffering and loss as primarily a state of mind, which is influenced by how one defines the situation. This is an attempt to anesthetize oneself so that the pain doesn’t have to be felt or any explanation found. This is not helpful or healthy.
- Regarding the death as fatalistic, coincidental, or solely in cause-and-effect terms. “He was just in the wrong place at the wrong time.” “Her genetic inheritance left no room for anything else.” This response is inadequate because the death of a spouse should have some meaning for the survivor. And the meaning should be positive.
- Assuming this tragic loss is intended to somehow serve a good and useful purpose in God’s overall plan for His creation. “I can’t explain why a loving God

would allow this to happen. Even so, I still believe the truth of His Word when I read that, ‘all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose’ ” (Romans 8:28).

Your theology may not mesh with what the person sees as the “good” in what has happened. You may find it impossible to believe as the survivor does that a loving God would take a young husband or wife in the prime of life, leaving behind a grieving spouse and children, to keep them close to Him so they can eventually be reunited with the loved one in heaven. Remember, it is not your job to convert the grieving person to your theology. Your task is to help him find a theological meaning within the framework of his belief system that comforts him. And such ideas of eventual reunion in heaven will often bring that kind of comfort to people.

When you help the bereaved arrive at a “why” they can live with, more of their energies are freed to cope with the “how” of managing their tragedy: how they will manage financially, how they will see that the children are properly cared for, how they will begin to build a life that takes them into the future God has planned for them. Assure them that even though their future is going to be very different from what they had once planned, it will still be good when it is placed in God’s hands.

Extend your post-funeral care of the spouse and children to a minimum of 3 to 6 months. Few other forms of ministry hold more promise for helping people and building strong church loyalties than skilled and compassionate care for the dying and their survivors. **E**

**Even though the masculine gender is used throughout this article, the advice applies equally to women.*

Richard D. Dobbins, Ph.D., is a clinical psychologist and founder and clinical director of EMERGE Ministries, Akron, Ohio.



A stylized illustration of a hand holding a pendulum. The pendulum's bob is a yellow, bowl-like shape containing a 3D model of a church with a green roof and white walls. The pendulum is suspended by a silver ring and a vertical rod. The background is a solid red color with yellow and black curved lines suggesting motion. The text 'BY RICHARD' is in the upper right.

BY RICHARD

*In a healthy church the
pendulum is allowed to swing
within carefully defined biblical
and doctrinal limits. Extremes
are avoided, yet diversity is
both allowed and welcomed.*

L. DRESSELHAUS

The Crying Need for Balance

The church has never been so threatened by imbalance as today. Sadly, some churches are being torn to pieces over peripheral issues. For example, a pastor visits a conference where he is introduced to new methods, teachings, and experiences. To the dismay of some and the delight of others, those things are introduced at home. The result is division. The body of Christ is fractured.

No church's leadership is able to steer clear of all the diversity that relates to focus, style, temperament, and taste. My real concern is not to suggest that we reject diversity and require uniformity but that we learn how to live positively with our differences. Some sincere Spirit-filled believers in our churches do not have the relational skills and the attitudinal maturity to work through the maze of this ever-increasing diversity. When a new style is introduced or a change is proposed, they do not know how to deal with the inner conflict they feel. Sometimes, out of desperation, they just leave. Although they regret the decision, they choose it above staying in the church and continuing to feel the disaffection which those changes have produced. They do not know how to handle the pain they feel.

How can we keep people together who are not the same? How can people serve the Lord with joy in the midst of diversity?

A study of Acts 2:42-47, which describes the relational life of the Early Church, shows they faced some of the same challenges we face. By looking carefully, we can discover the critical balance points which, if properly understood, can move us toward unity in our churches.

Picture a pendulum. Its broad sweep represents extremes, but its more limited sweep represents acceptable parameters where we live as members together in the body of Christ.

That is, there is a swing in the relational

pendulum that is within biblical and doctrinal limits. If we face issues that relate to diversity with this understanding, we can avoid the harmful extremes and grant to our brothers and sisters in the church a measure of latitude. Comprehension of this allowable latitude is the key to unity in the church.

In fact, if the pendulum is not allowed any swing, the resulting attitude and spirit is one that is cultic. Cult leaders demand that everyone be like them. They allow no diversity, either in thought or conduct. Conversely, in a healthy church the pendulum is allowed to swing within carefully defined biblical and doctrinal limits. Extremes are avoided, yet diversity is both allowed and welcomed.

Here is how it works: If one brother feels he cannot really worship without standing, and another brother tires easily and wants to be seated, they meet in the middle—a little standing and a little sitting. Both are asked to yield their personal desires for the mutual benefit of each other. That is the spirit of the principle here.

Perhaps a more critical matter is holy laughter: Is it normative for the Spirit-filled believer and a verifiable mark of spiritual depth, or is it incidental and occasional? How is this difference to be resolved? What is being advocated here is that everyone be sensitive to others' well-being. Those who wish to laugh should seek for occasions when that release to God's presence in their lives will not be disruptive to others. On the other hand, those who at best only tolerate the practice should not allow their intolerance to be a discouragement and hindrance.

When this principle of tolerance within biblical and doctrinal limits is practiced, the church becomes healthy and strong in its life together. In fact, this presence of diversity moves the church toward balance. If dissenters leave the church, then imbalance is fostered by their absence. When we stay together in the face of our differences, we begin to deal with the real issues of our self-serving spirits.

Spare me from a church without diversity, where the pendulum is allowed no room to swing, where intolerance is absolute. This setting will stymie personal creativity, destroy initiative, and quench the Spirit of the Lord. Sadly, despite such dreadful consequences, some leaders make that demand and work toward its reality.

I have repeatedly reminded the church I pastor that we are a "general practitioner" church. We seek to have something for everyone but not everything for anybody. If you want a steady diet of highly expressive and protracted worship, you will not typically find it at our church. If you want a single emphasis on the miraculous, you may be disappointed at our church. If you want peak-level inspiration at every service, you will probably pass us by. But if you want a balance of all these good things, you may be willing to give us a try. This is God's will for us.

To appreciate a "general practitioner" church, you must make a strong commitment to your neighbors. Their spiritual welfare is critically important to you. You are willing to sacrifice some of your comfort and preference so they are served and feel good about their place in the church. It must grieve our Lord when we mix intolerance with love, judgmentalism with grace, and greed with mercy.

Consider the description of the relational life of the Early Church in Acts 2:42–47. By considering their life together, we can discover the critical balance points which, if properly observed, can contribute to greater unity in our churches.

LEGALISM AND ANTINOMIANISM (LAW AND GRACE)

This apostolic church "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching" (Acts 2:42*). What was this teaching? I suggest that it had to do primarily with the tension between law and grace. It was a transitional message intended to move Jewish people from the demands of the Law to the provisions of grace. Not an easy one. What about circumcision?

Sacred days? Jewish ceremonies? This was one big leap for devout Jews.

You can feel the tension when you read the Epistles. In Galatians, Paul contrasted Ishmael, the son of the flesh, and Isaac, the son of promise; or Mount Sinai in contrast to Mount Zion. Metaphors point to transition and change. The old must now yield to the new. Law must give way to grace. This was the apostles' teaching.

What do we learn from this? Let's go back to the pendulum. In the extremes of legalism you find rigid rules, a spirit of dogmatism, multiple demands, and a host of regulations. To the extreme of grace (antinomianism), you find an attitude of easy believism, cheap grace, indiscriminate tolerance, and a good deal of license.

This tension point is still present in the church. Some demonstrate a spirit of dogmatism and rigidity on everything from style of music to the way the parking lot is marked. Others go to the opposite extreme—tolerant to a fault. For them, expediency rules the day. Compromise is never a problem.

Follow carefully: The pendulum must not be allowed to swing beyond biblical and doctrinal limits. But within that allowable swing there can be acceptance of those with whom we disagree. In this environment of tolerance a church is able to find a wonderful balance. Legalistic people are drawn toward law. Antinomian people are drawn toward grace. In the balance the true spirit of fellowship is fostered and lived out.

EMOTIONALISM AND INTELLECTUALISM (MIND AND SPIRIT)

The Early Church (Acts 2:42–47) broke bread together, prayed together, experienced the miraculous, and ate with glad and sincere hearts—a blend of intellectualism and emotionalism. These same believers continued in the teaching of the apostles (mind), and they experienced this marvelous life together (emotion).

We see the same contrast in the teachings of both Jesus and Paul. Jesus said

that worship must be in spirit (emotion) and in truth (intellect) (John 4:23). Paul said that prayers are to be offered in spirit (emotion) and in truth (intellect) (1 Corinthians 14:15). On the emotional side of this tension point you will find high inspiration, the downplay of education, spirited preaching, great expression in worship, diminished emphasis on doctrine, and a commitment to spontaneity. On the intellectual end of the pendulum's swing you will find the highly predictable, the formal and dignified, tight controls in worship, strong emphasis on education, and little sense of spontaneity.

This tension point most frequently drives a wedge between the pews of our churches. Those who are more emotionally oriented view with a measure of suspicion those who are more formally trained. The well educated tend to look with a sense of condescension at those who are less educated. These attitudes have no place in the church.

Neither persuasion is wrong, and neither is right. The call is for balance. The lettered should regard themselves as unlettered, and the uneducated should regard themselves as educated. This spirit of humility, preferring others above ourselves, brings us all together to meet on the level ground in front of the cross.

This tension is felt strongly on a denominational level. Listen to the debate on the General Council floor when issues surface that have to do with education, and you will see how acute it really is. Does this mean that one emphasis is right and the other is wrong? Not at all. Jesus calls us all to bring our specific gifts and our particular backgrounds to Him for full utilization in His kingdom. We must not separate ourselves from one another, but instead, allow ourselves to be drawn toward a place of balance through others' influence.

It is sad when a narrow focus robs us of the richness that diversity can provide. You can count on it: Truth rests in balance—balance as in that territory between biblical and doctrinal parameters.

EVANGELISM AND SOCIETALISM (WINNING THE LOST AND CARING FOR THE NEEDY)

In the Early Church “all the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need” (Acts 2:44,45). This points to a specific response to pressing social needs. But the passage concludes, “And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved” (verse 47). Here was a specific response to the Great Commission—the focus was on evangelism.

The Early Church struck a balance between evangelism and societalism. They cared for the needy, yet they carried on the work of evangelism. This is the reason behind the incredible growth of the first-century church.

The same challenge is before us. If we as a Fellowship are going to discharge our divine call today, it is imperative that we strike a balance between these two competing poles. We must care for the needy and evangelize the world. Resources in personnel and finance must be expended in ways that we provide a proper focus on both. Imbalance will distort our vision and squander our resources.

On the societal side of the pendulum's swing you have an emphasis upon hospital construction, feeding programs, educational efforts, relief projects, and crusades for social justice. On the evangelism side you have a focus on citywide campaigns, literature penetration, media ministries, and a variety of training programs designed to equip people to win the lost.

Some have disapprovingly suggested that the Assemblies of God has historically been guilty of neglecting the needs of the poor and broken to maintain a narrow focus of evangelism. Further, they have seen in the Holiness movement, of which we are a part, a reaction against the social gospel to the exclusion of social action.

What are we to say in response to this charge? There should never be an apology

for the dynamic evangelistic thrust of the Assemblies of God. Rightly, we have seen evangelism as the supreme mission of the Church.

However, in recent years, a concerted effort has been made to move toward a proper response to human need without altering our focus on evangelism. HealthCare Ministries is a case in point. Responding to human need, teams of dedicated professionals go into needy areas where they dispense medicines, perform surgeries, and offer help for many physical needs. This opens the door for the gospel to be proclaimed and God's healing power to be displayed.

Here is the balance: We must respond to social need whenever and wherever it is found, but we must go on to see in that response an opportunity to bring people into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. Thus, the ultimate purposes of evangelism are reached while, at the same time, there is a specific response to pressing human need.

Over the centuries the church has struggled with this balance point. It has gradually moved away from evangelism and devoted itself instead to social action. This imbalance is a major reason so much of the world is still unevangelized. The call is for a simple focus on evangelism without excluding human need. The two were never intended to be exclusive of one another.

If the Assemblies of God is to fulfill its worldwide mission, it must accelerate its efforts to win the lost but not miss an opportunity to reach out in loving concern to a hurting world also. This kind of balance will carry us to the ends of the earth in a soul-saving mission that will bring health and healing to the lost and broken of this world.

TRADITIONALISM AND NOVELISM (THE OLD WAYS AND THE NEW)

It is fascinating to observe that the Early Church continued in the ways consistent with tradition while, at the same time, embracing the new ways open to them through the gospel. “Every day they

continued to meet together in the temple courts [tradition]. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts [novelism]" (Acts 2:46).

They moved from the temple to the home church, from the formal to the informal, from Jewish custom to Christian practice. There was a wonderful balance between the old and the new, the traditional and the novel.

Tradition calls for the retention of the past with its inviting security, comfort, and familiarity. The novel invites the new, the adventurous, the contemporary, and the experimental.

The point of incredible conflict in our churches is here. Should we use hymns or choruses? sit or stand when we worship? use organ and piano or guitars and drums? use the King James or the New International Version? The issues are too numerous to mention, but these are the kinds of issues that divide the people of God—the tension between


what is traditional and what is novel.

Admittedly, we will always have great diversity on issues of the traditional and the novel. However, our goal should not be the disallowance of diversity but the accommodation of diversity within biblical and theological parameters. In fact, the presence of legitimate diversity moves us all to a more appropriate and biblical place of balance. Sadly, some people lack the relational skills and the spiritual maturity to live together harmoniously while serving side by side in an environment that includes diversity. We must learn to love and appreciate people who are different in style, opinion, tradition, and interest.

What is the appeal of this article? That each of us understands what it really means to be a disciple of Jesus as we live together in the body of Christ. That each of us develops the spiritual maturity to love, honor, and respect other members with whom we may

disagree. That all of us must be willing to work with the legitimate diversity within the parameters of biblical truth. That we understand the positive benefits of living out personal conviction in the context of diversity so the Body might move more and more toward the kind of balance that will create unity and wholeness.

If our churches are going to fulfill their God-given mission today, they must maintain a solid commitment to balance.

Solomon had it right: "The man who fears God will avoid all extremes" (Ecclesiastes 7:18). 

**Scripture quotations are from the New International Version.*

Richard L. Dresselhaus, D.Min., is an executive presbyter and senior pastor of First Assembly of God, San Diego, California.



Power for Ministry: Fire or Refiner's

B Y B Y R O N D . K L

*Though we may reject the manipulative power by which we
have risen to notoriety, we still live in the day-to-day
demands a spiritual power we sometimes find in*

Strange Fire?

A U S

which some leaders

ministry world that

short supply.

George Sweeting, former pastor of Moody Memorial Church in Chicago, tells of a family vacation he took to Niagara Falls early one spring. Ice was still rushing down the Niagara River; and as the large blocks of ice flowed by, he could see carcasses of fish embedded in the ice. Gulls by the score were riding down the river feeding on those fish. As they came to the falls, they lifted their wings and escaped, flying back up the river to start the feeding routine again.

Sweeting noticed one gull was engrossed in eating; and, at the brink of the falls, the bird flapped and flapped and even lifted the ice out of the water. However, it had delayed its escape too long, and its claws had frozen to the ice. The weight of the ice was too great and the gull plunged over the falls.

MOTIVES FOR MINISTRY

In a similar way, our motives for ministry are ultimately tested. There comes the inevitable Niagara Falls that measures the true intent of our ministry. Motivation is most clearly revealed when we look at the sources of power with which we carry out our ministry.

The purpose of power can be seen from a variety of perspectives. In John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Lucifer speaks and reveals the essence of self-centered motivation and use of power when he says, "Better to reign in hell than serve in heaven."

Frederick Nietzsche, the 19th-century philosopher, suggested that the prime motivation of humanity was the desire to control our own destiny and impose our will on others. A minister may recoil at such a stark definition of improper motivation and misuse of power, but we ministers must face the fact we do deal in the commodity of power.

Cheryl Forbes, in her book *Religion of Power*, says: "The cassock of righteousness becomes the vestment of power." At this crucial point Pentecostal ministers must realize that as people of power and victory we have a unique Achilles' heel. Our vulnerability is this: In the day-to-day ministry, we are often tempted to settle for alternative images and sources of power that fall short of our birthright as Pentecostal believers.

Is it possible that we have listened too many times to the reports that Pentecostals are the largest Protestant group in the world? Could we have allowed our power sources to be mixed with the heady coming-of-age as a respected group in our community, nation, and world? Dr. James Dobson provides some appropriate caution: "What we own soon owns us."

The question for many people is: Who has the power?

Paul faced people in Corinth with differing definitions of what it meant to have power. First Corinthians 1:22 suggests the forms of power prized in that day. The Jews were into signs—displays of dynamic certainty. The Greeks were slick and suave—they valued power that was subtle; that expressed itself not with a sword, but flowery rhetoric, wisdom, and one-upmanship. Interestingly, the expectations of our world

still follow similar patterns.

People in the third world live in ways that necessitate images of an immediate power to help them. They wonder: *From where will my next meal come? Where can I find a job to buy a meal? What government will provide jobs so I can work, so I can eat?* A vast portion of our world still expects power to be displayed suddenly, forcefully, and convincingly. Who has the power to bring liberation—freedom in the present, the now?

Western society tends to see definitions of power in subtle ways: dressing for success, the power lunch, and the corporate ladder that will secure the good life. My divine right is prosperity. Power in the New Age movement takes the form of the self-hypnotic mind over

- The pastor down the street can't preach very well, but people are being saved.

- The failures of our counseling go to another pastor. Their marriages are restored, and they are now leading marriage retreats.

- We beg for volunteers—other churches have workers on a list waiting for openings.

- Our altar services are almost nonexistent—other churches have 5 a.m. prayer meetings that are well attended.

At this point even Pentecostal ministers ask: Where do I get the necessary resources to do God's work? At this point we also reveal our Achilles' heel. Like Abraham, we are at times too willing to settle for the sure thing, rather

triumphed over by the power of the Cross.

FINDING TRUE POWER

We cannot afford to let contemporary definitions of success, effectiveness, and relevant methodology impact us. We need to realize that in the heat of the battle in day-to-day ministry, the world offers some alluring alternatives. The rugged individualism, bigger is better, position is power, and one-upmanship mindsets—too often typical of ministry—can and do bear fruit, all of which are lethal.

Christ has shown the powers for what they are once and for all. To succumb to a defeated power wafts a stench of slavery to a dying world that desperately needs the sweet fragrance of the Cross.

Our vulnerability is this: In the day-to-day ministry, we are often tempted to settle for alternative images and sources of power that fall short of our birthright as Pentecostal believers.

matter or altered states of consciousness that motivational power brokers peddle (for a price) to the masses waiting to be enlightened.

But what about Pentecostal preachers? What images of power allure us? Though we may reject the manipulative power by which some leaders have risen to notoriety, we still live in the day-to-day ministry world that demands a spiritual power we sometimes find in short supply. For example:

- We preach faithfully—there is no response.
- We counsel compassionately and skillfully—couples still get divorced.
- We train diligently—workers lose their call after 6 weeks.
- We pray fervently—altar services get shorter and shorter.

To add insult to injury:

than believe the promise fulfilled by the coming Isaac (Genesis 15–21.)

The apostle Paul saw the price exacted by the images of power that pervaded his day. In 1 Corinthians 1:27–29, he clearly showed God's counterlogic to such a destructive spiral. God says He cares about His creation so much He will undercut all images of power in vogue, replacing the images with unlikely alternatives. He will defeat all powers of this earth. He paid the price once and for all, and we are freed from the grasp of these temporal powers. Parallel texts in Ephesians 4:8 and Colossians 2:15 give us another picture of a triumphant Jesus cast in a picture typical of Roman triumph. Paul proclaimed that every image of power that man can conceive has been publicly humiliated in the heavenlies, being

Allow me to share several suggested paths to deliverance from the powers.

1. Affirm Christ has already defeated the powers.

Pentecostals affirm that as we walk through the doorway of the baptism in the Spirit, we run straight into Jesus. Our pioneers were overwhelmed in the presence of this Jesus who is Savior, Baptizer, Healer, and soon-coming King. Let us be reminded that, "The plain things are the main things, and the main things are the plain things."

This Jesus is Savior. His redeeming love is eternal and He is on the offensive to redeem the lost.

This Jesus is the Baptizer. He wishes to superimpose His logic of purpose and power over my attempts at heroic efforts in His name. He does so in the glory of

the baptism in the Holy Spirit and subsequent daily discipline of glossolalia that conforms my mind to His eternal purposes.

Jesus is the Healer as we look at broken lives—physically, mentally, and relationally. It may be second nature for us to affirm that Jesus is Healer, but perhaps the question today is Christ's own poignant inquiry, "Who do you say that I am? Am I your Healer in this moment in space and time?"

Jesus is the soon-coming King. As we struggle with tragedy, injustice, government, poverty, and hunger, we can realistically affirm that one day we will sing, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord [and of His power] and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever" (Revelation 11:15, NASB).

2. Do not ask for restoration to former glory, but rebirth with a passion for Jesus.

Those times and places where our Lord touched us in the past were glorious,


but they can also be a limitation to what we expect God to do for us when things aren't so exciting. Nostalgia has no place in the restoration of proper motivation and purpose for ministry.

3. Pray that we may discern Christ's ministry among us.

Eugene Peterson has called a maturing walk with God "a long obedience in the same direction." Such obedience gives us clarity about to whose power we have given ourselves. This constant seeking for discernment into Christ's work by His Spirit is neither professional theologizing or empty charismania. It is a necessity for a Pentecostal minister for whom a passion for Christ-centered and empowered ministry is a must.

4. When the Spirit convicts us of those alternative forms of power we have succumbed to, the only proper response is repentance.

The Bible is clear that being sorry and saddened are not enough when

responding to priorities, motives, and actions that are displeasing to God. Repentance is the only proper response. Repentance precedes any revival, personal or corporate. 

Byron D. Klaus, D.Min., is president of the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri.



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INTERVIEW WITH DON TRIPLETT

King's Castle Ministries— Raising Up an Army of Warriors

In many nations Assemblies of God ministries to children are having a dynamic impact. Children are the future leaders. As children are touched through practical ministry that meets their needs and provides a clear presentation of the gospel, their lives and eventually the nations are transformed.

One of these dynamic ministries is King's Castle (Castillo del Rey). *Enrichment Journal* interviewed Don Triplett, director of King's Castle Ministries. Don shares the purpose of King's Castle and how God is using it to make a difference in the lives of young people and adults in El Salvador, Central America.



WHAT IS KING'S CASTLE MINISTRIES?

TRIPLETT: King's Castle is a 100-percent-indigenous army of thousands of disciples in over 20 countries who work systematically to reach their communities, their country, and the world. The King's Castle ministry in each country is self-governing. Every warrior or disciple is also self-supporting and works out of a local church. While we operate like a well-organized army with different levels of authority and a chain of command, we do not have a centralized government. We do meet together to report our accomplishments, encourage each other, and strategize on how we can reach our differing cultures for Christ.

WHO ARE THESE DISCIPLES OR WARRIORS YOU MENTIONED?

TRIPLETT: Some of these warriors are as young as 5 years old with an incredible burden for the lost. It's just amazing how anointed a young child can be as he or she shares the gospel. While the vast majority are teenagers and have plenty of time to work and energy to burn, we also have adults and grandparents. But the power of God in the lives of these warriors is the same regardless of their ages.

HOW ARE THESE "WARRIORS" BEING USED FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD?

TRIPLETT: We teach warriors that the King's strength is made perfect in weakness. A child warrior is a perfect

children modeled Christ.

I was at an all-night prayer meeting in El Salvador, and 67 children who had graduated from the King's Castle Club came forward. These 67 kids went out to minister in the power of God.

Anyone they brushed against fell to the ground and cried out to God. You know it's the Holy Spirit moving—not man. The power of God can be manifested through a child, a teenager, or a grandparent.

RECRUITING NEW WARRIORS MUST BE A REAL CHALLENGE.

TRIPLETT: Our young people attract other young people. Also, it's easier to move people in the direction they want to go. So we try and make ministry to others fun—dramas, songs, and traveling with a minimum of practice. Besides, it's fun to be together. You are a family and have fellowship with each other. Our vision is another important aspect of attracting warriors. The vision God has given us propels them forward. We have over 17,000 disciples in El Salvador after 10 years of work.

Fasting and prayer is another powerful ingredient. We started out fasting a little and saw a few miracles. We started fasting more, and we saw more. Now fasting is a vital part of the ministry. Instead of us

Instead of us telling people what

God wants them to do, the Holy

Spirit talks to people as they fast

and pray, and He tells them what

great things they should do.



model because a child can place his or her life and dependence on the Lord. We are either disciples for Christ modeling Jesus or we're not really disciples at all. Here is one example of how

telling people what God wants them to do, the Holy Spirit talks to people as they fast and pray, and He tells them what great things they should do. People just plug directly into God through the power of the Holy Spirit. That's the message of Pentecost anyway.

Finally, a genuine experience needs no promoter. As the power of God is manifest through the lives of people, real religion is demonstrated even in the lives of children and youth. It's powerful and very contagious.

KING'S CASTLE'S MISSIONS OUTREACHES HAVE HAD TREMENDOUS RESULTS.

TRIPLETT: Uruguay has just exploded as the King's Castle teams averaged about 40-percent conversions in their meetings. These teams trained other teams to reach the nation of Uruguay in a powerful way after our teams left.

King's Castle has also planted teams in Argentina and Nicaragua. After 3 years of work, Nicaragua has over 30,000 disciples. Those disciples fasted for 3 days. By the time the fast was over, about 700 had been baptized in the Holy Spirit, and a powerful revival broke out. We made many other missions trips, even to the United States and other Central American countries.

WHY DO THE WARRIORS EVANGELIZE SO MANY PEOPLE? WOULDN'T IT BETTER TO START CHURCHES AND CONCENTRATE ON CONSERVING THE HARVEST? WHY SCATTER SO MUCH SEED?

only produce a little fruit. There's no hope of a bountiful harvest if you only plant 1 acre out of a 1,000. You're only going to have a 1-acre harvest.

We scatter the seed because of the urgency of the hour. Jesus is coming!

We've got to plant. By scattering the seed we let the Holy Spirit do His work as He prepares hearts, and that seed will not return void; it will produce much fruit.

In the process of planting, we are also making disciples. Since each team works out of a local church, we are conserving the harvest. But if we just preach within the local church, we will never get the job done. There are many who would love to hear the gospel in front of their door, in the park, in the mall, on the playground, on the job—wherever they are.

Jesus scattered seed everywhere He went. He didn't build any buildings. His disciples came along behind Him. They also scattered the seed. The seed began to produce fruit and the Church was established. It's all part of a process.

Plant much seed; harvest much seed.

HOW DO THESE WARRIORS FEED THEMSELVES SPIRITUALLY?

As the power of God is manifest through the lives of people, real religion is demonstrated even in the lives of children and youth. It's powerful and very contagious.



TRIPLETT: There is nothing worse than a lazy farmer—someone who has much seed to plant and a huge field to plant in, but only plants a small patch of ground. If you plant a little seed, you'll

TRIPLETT: First, we encourage them to read the Word and to memorize Scripture. They also regularly come to all-night prayer meetings to worship God. We also have what we call power retreats—3 days of fasting and prayer.

I've been in meetings where 2,500 warriors were basking in the presence of God and in the middle of a 3-day fast, the power of God descended. Even in rooms with closed doors, sometimes the wind will literally blow in a way where everyone feels the presence of God—just like on the Day of Pentecost. People have seen visions and dreams and spontaneous healings have taken place in these fasts.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE SIGNS AND WONDERS HAPPENING IN CASTLE TODAY?

TRIPLETT: In El Salvador, we had 163,000 decisions last year. In Nicaragua we had some 29,000 decisions. It is a pretty phenomenal thing when the Lord transforms gang members, children, and families. The power of salvation is just incredible—going in and robbing Satan of the souls that he has held captive. Those life-changing experiences are probably the most powerful.

We've seen an incredible increase in deliverances. There have been many

people delivered from demon possession and healed from the bondage of sin. We've seen literally hundreds of gang members saved. We also have deliverance services for different life-controlling habits—cigarettes, alcohol,

tremendous love for Jesus Christ. Many families are restored.

It's not uncommon for the blind to be healed and begin to shout because their eyesight has been restored, or a lame person to throw down his crutches or

his cane and walk, or someone to get out of a wheelchair. We have also seen mutes speak and the deaf hear. Tumors, cancers, and growths disappear by the power of God. The Lord has healed broken bones, arthritis, back problems, and all kinds of illnesses.

We have also seen many nontraditional miracles like cookies, literature, and money being multiplied—powerful miracles of multiplication of resources. When poor people give all their resources to God, He multiplies their resources and meets their needs. We've had at least one person raised from the dead. We've had the Lord push buses up mountains and across mud flats. We have had divine appointments—powerful encounters—as the Lord has orchestrated our schedule. If you don't have truth, you won't have power.

***We need nurses, doctors, and
dentists, and people to help us
with our various feeding programs,
our dental and medical clinics,
and our milk program for babies.***



drugs, prostitution, fornication, pornography. People who need to break these habits in their lives come forward, and God does a powerful work in them, replacing those addictions with a

HOW CAN THE USA CHURCH GET INVOLVED WITH KING'S CASTLE MINISTRIES?

TRIPLETT: Well, of course, financial

support is much needed. Even though our operations are indigenous, children's ministries are expensive, and we depend on a miracle every month. In fact, that's one of the ways we know God is with us, because less than half of what we need each month is pledged.

We need food, medicines, and equipment. We need AIM teams and ministry teams to help us evangelize. We need MAPS teams to help us build the camp and the operation centers that we're building in El Salvador and Nicaragua. We need missionary associates—people

We scatter the seed because of the urgency of the hour. Jesus is coming! We've got to plant.



to give 1 to 4 years—to help us have a bountiful harvest in these last days. The Lord has brought us very gifted people, but we need more.

We need nurses, doctors, and dentists, and people to help us with our various feeding programs, our dental and medical clinics, and our milk program for babies. These are just a few of the many ways people could be involved in helping us. **E**

Don Triplett is missionary to El Salvador and founder and director of King's Castle Ministries.

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t Is Good To Stay Unmarried

BY STANLEY M.
HORTON

***In the Old Testament,
only a few remained
single.***

Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I am"* (1 Corinthians 7:8). When Paul wrote this to the Corinthians, some of them may have asked, "What is good (Greek, *kalon*, 'noble, praiseworthy, desirable, advantageous, pleasing to God') about staying single?" Everything in their culture and in their Bible (the Old Testament) seemed to encourage marriage. Everybody considered it a shame not to get married.

In the Old Testament, only a few remained single. In the Book of Ruth, Naomi chose to stay unmarried after her husband Elimelech died. At first she felt she was under the judgment of God. When she returned to her home in Bethlehem, she told the women not to call her Naomi, a name that means "pleasant or sweet," but call her Mara, meaning "bitter" (Ruth 1:20,21). But Naomi did not sit around pitying herself. Instead she guided and encouraged Ruth. When she sent Ruth out to glean and Boaz encouraged his workers to drop handfuls of grain on purpose for Ruth, Naomi was quick to give God praise. She said, "The Lord has not stopped showing his kindness (Hebrew *chasdo*, 'His faithful, covenant-keeping love') to the living and the dead" (2:20). Naomi did not think of herself, but continued to help Ruth understand local customs. After Ruth married Boaz, Naomi had the joy of holding a grandson. This caused the women of Bethlehem to praise the Lord (4:14,17). Naomi found peace and contentment—and she lived up to her name.

Jeremiah, unlike Naomi, did not choose to stay single. God told him, "You must not marry" (Jeremiah 16:2). The Hebrew (*lo' tiqqach lekha 'ishshah*, "You shall not take for yourself a wife") is in the form of a command as strong as the Ten Commandments. It was probably harder for a man than a woman to stay single in Old Testament times. But like the other prophets, his life as well as his words had a message for the people. God had

saved Jerusalem from the Assyrians in Isaiah's time. But the people had become more and more rebellious and idolatrous. God was going to judge them. None of them would grow old in peace with their children and grandchildren around them. Instead, they would all become victims of disease, war, and famine.

Because Jeremiah did not marry, people asked why. He then gave them God's warning, hoping that some would repent. Though the people of Jerusalem did not respond and the Babylonians took 10,000 into exile, Jeremiah did write a letter and encouraged them (29:1–23). Though he suffered more than any prophet, he prepared the way for God to bring the exiles back, and he received a vision of the Messiah (23:5,6) and the New Covenant that we enjoy (31:31; Hebrews 8:8–13). He was truly one of the heroes of the faith.

***Those who are married divide their
energies and concerns, for they have
the responsibilities of caring for and
pleasing each other—giving attention
to the affairs of this world.***

Paul, in 1 Corinthians 7, answered several questions the people had asked about marriage. He began by saying, "It is good for a man not to marry." In verse 8, he made this more general when he addressed the unmarried and widows and told them it was good for them to stay unmarried. In his judgment, inspired by the Holy Spirit, he said a widow is happier if she stays as she is (verses 39,40). Paul qualified this with other statements because he was not against marriage, and he did not want to encourage sex outside of marriage, prostitution, or sexual immorality. Neither did he want people to marry for sex alone, for that would be contrary to God's purpose for the family.

Paul considered the unmarried state an advantage for several reasons. The chief reason is

found in 1 Corinthians 7:32–35: “I would like you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord’s affairs—how he can please the Lord. But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world—how he can please his wife—and his interests are divided. An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord’s affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world—how she can please her husband. I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord.”

***It was probably harder
for a man than a woman
to stay single in Old
Testament times.***

Paul wanted them to be free from concern (Greek, *amerimnous*, “free from care, untroubled, unworried by the things of this world”). He wanted their concern (Greek *merimna*, “care, concern”) to be about the Lord and His work. Jesus used the plural of the same word, *merimna*, when He explained about the seed that fell among thorns in the Parable of the Sower. They heard, “but as they go on their way they are choked by life’s worries [*merimnon*], riches and pleasures, and they do not mature” (Luke 8:14).

Those who are married divide their energies and concerns, for they have the responsibilities of caring for and pleasing each other—giving attention to the affairs of this world. That is not wrong; it is a fact of life. But it means their interests are divided. But those who remain unmarried can choose to live in a right way (Greek, *euschēmōn*, “noble way”) in full, undivided (Greek, *aperispastōs*, “undistracted”) devotion to the Lord—adhering faithfully to Him.

Paul had a further concern. Because of the crisis times in which they were

***Paul considered the
unmarried state an advantage
for several reasons.***

living, marriage, sorrows, happiness, buying, and possessions should not be the center of the believers’ attention. The “present form” or outward appearance of this world with all of those things is “passing away” (1 Corinthians 7:31). This can mean that the things of this world are going by so we cannot hold on to them anyway. Some commentators suppose Paul had the nearness of Christ’s second coming in mind, but this does not fit the context of the “present crisis” (7:26). When he said, “the time is short” (7:29), the word “time” (Greek, *kairos*) means a point in time or a short season. It can also mean a time of crisis or opportunity. Life is short. Whether married or unmarried, we need to focus

our attention on Jesus (Hebrews 11:13–16; 12:2,3). We know, too, that the world is headed for judgment (Daniel 2:44,45). We need to take every opportunity to serve the Lord before it is too late. It is time to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33), and it is time to help spread the gospel in every way we can. Then we will be prepared to share in God’s “eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Ephesians 3:11). **E**

Stanley M. Horton, Th.D., is project coordinator for the Pentecostal Textbook Project, Springfield, Missouri.

**Scripture quotations are from the New International Version.*

Some of this material is from 1 and 2 Corinthians, by Stanley M. Horton and published by Logion Press.

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“Please pray for my daughter; she’s terminally single.”

New Testament Principles for Contemporary Preaching

BY HOWARD L.
YOUNG

The preaching of the Early Church represents the ultimate model for the effective and dynamic communication of the gospel.

The preaching of the Early Church represents the ultimate model for the effective which Jesus fulfilled this prophecy. Strikingly clear is the powerful role of Spirit-filled preaching as the Church gained a foothold within her antagonistic surroundings.

The Church's initial activity on the Day of Pentecost was preaching (Acts 2:14–41). Preaching would continue as the means of challenging individuals to encounter the living Christ by faith (Romans 10:12–17).

Early apostolic preaching represented a communication of truth that was new and fresh. Holland observes that: "Peter's address on the Day of Pentecost was preaching in a new dimension. The Christian church was born on that day, and Jesus began keeping His promise to be with the disciples in Spirit and power wherever they communicated His Word."¹ The spiritual life and exuberance that marked Spirit-filled preaching found thousands responsive to the Church's ministry (Acts 2:40,41).

The vitality and power of first-century preaching did not prevent resistance toward the gospel. In fact, the aggressive nature of preaching sometimes placed the disciples in conflict with the religions of their day. Preaching Christianity's truths was often viewed as an intrusion into the social and religious fabric of first-century life. When the disciples were dragged before the elders of Jerusalem because of their preaching, the accusation was pointed: "You have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood" (Acts 5:28).² The Greek verb for "determined" signifies both a plan and a determination to make individuals accountable to humanity's sentence of death upon the Son of God. The disciples did not deny the charge (Acts 3:15,16; 5:29–32).

Constant harassment did not detour the preaching of the Early Church (Acts 4:21;

5:17–20). Driven by a sense of divine commission and the astounding nature of the gospel, first-century preachers would not be dissuaded from their task (Acts 5:42). Persuasive preaching and teaching the gospel, even under difficult circumstances, was a primary activity of first-century preachers (Acts 6).

Empowered preaching constituted the cutting edge of the Church's expansion in the first century. Entire cities were moved toward God as the Apostles preached the gospel and confirmed it with the miraculous (Acts 8:4–8; 9:32–35; 13:44). Although persecution arose, large numbers of converts almost always accompanied these early preaching efforts. Like a true arrow released from a bow, the truth of the gospel found its target in the lives of individuals bound by religiosity, paganism, intellectualism, and spiritual blindness.

Strikingly clear is the powerful role of Spirit-filled preaching as the Church gained a foothold within her antagonistic surroundings.

What gave these early preachers favor with the crowds? What enabled them to communicate with their audiences with authority and power? What empowered them to persuasively communicate across cultural and intellectual barriers, to bring the gospel to the reasoning Greek mind as well as barbarians? A fundamental understanding of New Testament preaching will assist the contemporary preacher in preparing and delivering sermons that mandate response from those who listen. As least three components of first-century preaching need our attention today: the role of preaching, the content of preaching, and the nature of preaching.

Preaching was designed to become the most significant methodology for the fulfillment of Jesus' command to witness (Acts 1:8). Spirit-filled preaching was the first event following the

initial outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Jesus was beginning to build His church in spiritual power and preaching marks the beginning of this process. Luke recorded that “Peter stood up, raised his voice, and addressed the crowd” (Acts 2:14). Peter’s sermon was prompted by the curious inquiries and ill-founded critiques of onlookers (verses 6–13). Replete with scriptural references that related to the process of Jesus’ redemptive work, and greatly empowered by the Holy Spirit, Peter’s Pentecost sermon won 3,000 to Christ.

The total content of Peter’s sermon is not recorded. Luke indicates that Peter said many other things (Acts 2:40). But this powerful sermon concluded with a passionate plea to “save yourselves

The spiritual life and exuberance that marked Spirit-filled preaching found thousands responsive to the Church’s ministry.

from this corrupt generation.” While this sermon prophetically validated the Pentecostal experience and substantiated Jesus’ death and resurrection, it also confronted the unsaved with their need for salvation from the corrupting influences of a spiritually bankrupt culture. Preaching was God’s tool for presenting life-changing truth.

The fact preaching is designed to confront individuals with God’s truth and call them to a relationship with God can make preaching a sensitive if not controversial activity. Not all individuals desire to hear from the holy God of heaven. First-century preaching ruffled more than a few feathers. The preaching and Spirit-filled methodology of the Apostles created deep tears in the religious fabric of Jerusalem. Their powerful ministry drew both crowds and criticisms (Acts 4:13–21; 5:17,18).

If courageous and passionate preaching effectively presents truth, it must at the same time be recognized as the

basis of spiritual transformation. While the preaching of the truth may be perceived as an intrusion into an individual’s lifestyle, it is the Spirit’s means for the conviction of sin that leads to conversion.

New Testament preachers believed that preaching was an event through which God transformed lives. Peter pointed out that individuals may be “born anew, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God” (1 Peter 1:23, RSV). How does God’s Word come to effect individual lives? “That word,” Peter explained, “is the good news which was preached to you” (verse 25). The preaching of God’s truth is the means by which individuals are redeemed.

The 12 original apostles undoubtedly provided a vast amount of preaching

for the first-century church. Unfortunately, we have little record of their actual sermons. The Book of Acts does

Preaching Christianity’s truths was often viewed as an intrusion into the social and religious fabric of first-century life.

provide a few portions of Peter’s sermons. His preaching appeared to have been straightforward and had a sense of urgency. He used concrete illustrations, lively verbs, and cited Old Testament passages to explain current phenomenon.

As for Paul’s preaching, there is an abundance of material for study. The Book of Acts records, at least in outline

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“Good morning, this is your pastor. During this sermon we’ll be heading into some rough admonishments, so please keep your seat belts fastened.”

form, his messages to the elders at Ephesus, to the Jews in Jerusalem, to Felix, Herod Agrippa, and finally at Rome. Paul's epistles may also be considered a source of written sermon material. Paul gave preaching a primary place in his ministry. Paul's first business after conversion was preaching in the synagogue, and he would not cease preaching until his martyrdom in Rome.

Driven by a sense of divine commission and the astounding nature of the gospel, first-century preachers would not be dissuaded from their task.

Paul was a man uniquely prepared for his moment in history. The content of Paul's preaching and writings enables us to understand how God uses a chosen vessel to speak to a generation. Paul's unique background—Hebrew by birth, Roman by citizenship, and Greek in culture—empowered Paul to effectively preach the gospel in the Western world.

Paul's preaching of Christ seemed as out of touch with the Hellenistic world as our preaching may seem out of touch with our own. But the skills of Paul and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, coupled with the innate power of Christ's redemption, succeeded in conveying the claims of Christianity to the contemporary Greek mind in terms that made its truth desirable.³

The preacher's background and training must ultimately converge with his or her message. Paul's thorough training from the Old Testament became the basis of the Spirit's revelation of God's redemptive plan through Christ. Paul could immediately begin to preach Christ because he had many distinct reference points to the Messiah of Scripture. Paul's theology of Christ was powerfully articulated as the Holy Spirit gave Paul an understanding of His plan through Christ (Colossians 1:24–29). By the time Paul wrote Romans (approximately

A.D. 56), the great themes of reconciliation, justification, and sanctification were constant themes in his preaching.

Although Peter's background and training were distinctly different from Paul's, his themes were consistent with Paul's. Peter's Pentecost sermon is our first example of first-century preaching. The full content of this sermon is not recorded (Acts 2:40), but Luke carefully noted the salient features of Peter's sermon. Peter's message began with an explanation of the Spirit's outpouring and ended with an appeal for individuals to save themselves from the corruption of their generation. Peter charged the Jews in Jerusalem with Christ's death; assured the crowd that according to Scripture, God had raised Jesus from the dead; and then lifted the eyes of listeners to God's right hand where Jesus was then seated and pouring out His Spirit on the Church. In essence, Peter's sermon delivered the quintessence of the gospel of Christ.

The death, resurrection, ascension, and promised return of Christ must still constitute the heart and soul of contemporary preaching. These are still the salient features of true New Testament preaching (1 Corinthians 15:11) and the means by which individuals are delivered from the tyranny of sin (Romans 1:16).

Entire cities were moved toward God as the Apostles preached the gospel and confirmed it with the miraculous.

Not every sermon will focus on the critical themes described above. The topics of contemporary preaching are as broad as the varied needs of the cultures and peoples to which we minister. The underlying authority of preaching as a means of spiritual transformation does, however, rest in the realities of Christ's provisions. Although these themes may not be articulated in every sermon, they still form the historical and theological

basis on which all contemporary preaching rests.

The apostles Paul and Peter serve to illustrate that our formal training and personal preparations for preaching ministry may vary from one individual to the next, but the heart and soul of our preaching should be the same. Furthermore, New Testament preaching may assume the contemporary dialectic forms of expository, textual, or topical preaching, but the message does not change. New Testament preaching is clearly content centered with a distinct focus on the gospel and Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension. Sermon structure and delivery systems are secondary to the fact the gospel is the basis of all meaningful preaching.

THE NATURE OF NEW TESTAMENT PREACHING

Preaching of the first century ultimately relied on the power of the Holy Spirit for effectiveness. Paul's preaching at Corinth is an example of how the Holy Spirit assists the gospel communicator in triumphing over personal weaknesses and cultural barriers. Paul apparently sensed enormously negative forces at work in this pagan center. Like most population centers of his day, Corinth's social, religious, and political structures did not lend themselves to the advancement of the gospel. Against such odds, Paul's sense of weakness, fear, and trembling is not surprising.

Another statement by Paul may indicate that some Corinthians disdained Paul's appearance and presentation in the pulpit (2 Corinthians 10:10). Paul's response to his critics anticipated the spiritual authority that characterized his ministry and message to the Corinthian believers: "Such people should realize what we are in our letters when we are absent, we will be in our actions when we are present" (verse 11). Perhaps the Corinthians expected Paul's preaching to be more culturally correct, something resembling the logical reasoning of pagan philosophers. Paul's intent, however, was to reach the spiritual

core of his audience. His preaching had to move beyond a mere exercise of intellect and accomplish something in the hearts of his audience. The impervious walls of logic and reason had to be broken. Paganism's darkness needed direct confrontation. Effectively preaching Christ in the middle of a cultural and spiritual stronghold could not be a human task. The nature of the situation demanded preaching that was empowered by the Holy Spirit and confirmed by God's power (1 Corinthians 2:1–5).

Paul understood that life-transforming preaching relies on the Holy Spirit's activity within the preacher. Because of the instrumentality of the Greek preposition *en*, Paul's statement translated "in demonstration of the Spirit and power" may be translated "enforced by a demonstration of Spirit and of power" (NASB). Furthermore, the words "Spirit and power" are hendiadys—two words used to express the same thought. To preach in the Spirit is to preach in power.⁴

The death, resurrection, ascension, and promised return must still constitute the heart and soul of contemporary preaching.

In discussing first-century preaching, Allen observes that Pentecostal preaching is the dissemination of Christian truth through a Spirit-filled personality. Jesus did not permit His disciples to engage in the preaching ministry until they had been filled with the Spirit.⁵ Obviously, Jesus knew the empowerment of the Holy Spirit would add dimension to preaching that is otherwise lacking. Therefore, a dimension of "being endued with power from on high" was a preaching ministry that was enforced by a demonstration of Spirit and power.

Although it is difficult to be precise about the exact things Paul called "demonstrations," he probably meant that preaching was to persuade. The general content, delivery, and at times

the *charismata* gifts of the Spirit that accompanied his preaching also created faith, expectancy, and a hunger for God for those who heard.

Spirit-enabled preaching inspires faith and commitment that strengthens believers and challenges the lost to salvation regardless of the duress and pressures of the times.

Powerful preaching engenders spiritual growth and productivity. Productive and resourceful preaching is characterized by two outstanding facts: preaching is powerful and productive when anointed by the Holy Spirit and preaching empowered and enforced by the Spirit's presence will bring hearts into a fresh encounter with God. Spirit-enabled

preaching inspires faith and commitment that strengthens believers and challenges the lost to salvation regardless of the duress and pressures of the times. **E**

Howard L. Young, D.Min., is president of Trinity Bible College, Ellendale, North Dakota.

ENDNOTES

1. DeWitte T. Holland, *The Preaching Tradition*. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980), 18.
2. Scripture quotations are from the New International Version unless noted.
3. Holland, 19.
4. Ralph W. Harris, ed., *The Complete Biblical Library. Volume 7: The New Testament Study Bible Romans–Corinthians* (Springfield, Missouri: World Library Press, Inc. 1986), 279.
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"I had this same feeling the day I preached my first sermon."



ough Transitions: When You Have To Leave

BY ELAINE WIPF

**Time with God
reading His Word and
praying will be your
survival kit.**

Some pastors' wives have already faced a tough transition; others have not. Some may think, *It will never happen to us*. In reality, a large percentage of pastors' wives will face one or more tough transitions.

When my husband and I went through a difficult transition, we were amazed as many of our friends told us they had faced similar situations. As we began searching for a new place of ministry, we were shocked at the number of church openings created by an undesirable parting between the pastor and the church.

Whether it is a staff member who is given a deadline to resign by a new senior pastor, a senior pastor who resigns due to pressure from the board, or a pastor who is voted out by the people he has loved and served, it is a tough transition. Sometimes a pastor finds another church without creating a gap in ministry. At other times, a ministry family may become sidelined, with no church or immediate ministry opportunities in view. When this happens, a pastor is suddenly without a place of ministry, income, community, and in some cases, a home. It is one of the toughest situations those in ministry will ever face, but it can be a time of growth and renewal if they let God do His work in their lives.

**Being with others will give
you a pleasant distraction from the
hurts, and it is more fun than
sitting around moping.**

Although you apply Romans 8:28, "All things work together for good..." to these circumstances, you will still experience a variety of emotions: rejection,

hurt, anger, humiliation, fear, confusion, bewilderment, and aloneness. You might also have a sense of relief that the struggle or fight is over. You will have good days and bad days, and good hours followed by bad hours. Depression may seem to be just around the corner. Words of comfort from your friends may seem like trite clichés. Your intellectual knowledge does not seem to reach your heart.

**When my husband and I went through
a difficult transition, we were amazed
as many of our friends told us they
had faced similar situations.**

Even when you can see some blessings and benefits in the transition, you still hurt. The wounds are deep. But God can and will heal them and strengthen you during this time.

When I went through one of these tough transitions, complete with a sideline experience, I discovered some do's and don'ts that helped me. Some of them are the result of learning from mistakes. I often reread them to regain focus and perspective in times when there seemed to be no hope or future.

DON'TS

1. **Don't deny the pain.** You have suffered a major loss and will go through the stages of grieving—accept it; face it; cry (allow for that emotional release and cleansing); pray (bring your troubles to God); read the Psalms. Many of them are David's prayers in times of great distress. David knew the value of bringing his despair to God, then praising Him for His faithfulness.

2. **Don't isolate yourself.** It is tempting to isolate yourself because of the pain you feel. Be available to true friends—allow

their words to encourage you. Being with others will give you a pleasant distraction from the hurts, and it is more fun than sitting around moping.

3. Don't look back and say, "What if." You cannot change the past; it is done. God has given you an opportunity for a new present and a new future. Go forward.

4. Don't allow your anger to be misdirected. Admit your anger. It is not a sin if you deal with it correctly. Ask God to help you forgive those who hurt you. If you try to hide your anger, it will be misdirected. Misdirected anger will be vented inappropriately toward family or others.

5. Don't make hasty decisions. Be careful of decisions made in desperation or panic—they may not be good decisions. Pray about each decision (temporary employment, place of relocation, future ministry). Discuss major decisions with your spouse and children.

6. Don't pull away from your spouse or family. They are hurting too. Be willing to share their pain. Also, be transparent and let them see your pain. Other than God, your family will be your best help through this time.

***God has given you
an opportunity for a new
present and a new future.
Go forward.***

7. Don't allow bitterness. It is tempting to ask questions that have no answers. You cannot control your circumstances, but you can control your attitude. Fighting against the situation will not solve anything. Surrender to God, and let Him vindicate you and work in your life. Our greatest spiritual growth often happens during the tough times of life. Great miracles happen when there is great need.

DO'S

1. Keep a regular and balanced devotional life. It is tempting, in the middle of self-pity, to become careless about spending time with God. Time with God reading His Word and praying will be your survival kit. Find your own special Scriptures (mine is Jeremiah 29:11–14) and read them daily. A favorite phrase of mine is, "and it came to pass." Spend time in praise and worship. This is incredibly comforting and refreshing.

2. Count your blessings. Accentuate the positive. Even when the difficulties outweigh the benefits, focus on the blessings. Notice with gratitude the ways God provides. Look for any possible benefit, great or small. Make sure your family

knows about these blessings.

3. Keep family communication open. Be open and honest with your spouse and children. God will give you wisdom concerning how much to tell family members. It is better to be honest rather than cover up the issues. Discuss your feelings and major decisions. Talk about the blessings of your current situation as well as future goals and desires.

***You cannot control your
circumstances, but you can
control your attitude.***

4. Accept the encouraging and edifying words of friends. The kind and encouraging words of a friend are sent by God to help you—accept

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The initials on Ken's bracelets stand for two questions that have kept his life and ministry on track: "What Would Jesus Do?" and "What Would My Wife Do?"

them and believe them. Learn to ignore foolish comments. Feelings of hopelessness and inferiority are from the enemy—don't believe them.

5. Find a new church home. Church hopping may be fun, but there are more benefits in finding a church home. It is imperative if you have children at home to avoid church hopping. Children need the stability of regular church attendance, activities suited to their needs, and the chance to make new

friends. Having a church home will give you an opportunity to be spiritually refreshed; learn about another church's policies, administration, and ministry; and provide a place for you to heal and receive affirmation.

6. Find ways to minister. Finding opportunities of ministry can help prevent wallowing in misery and self-pity. These opportunities can help you keep your focus and perspective. Use moderation as your

guide in choosing opportunities. This is not the time to overextend yourself. You need time to rest and refresh.


7. Encourage your spouse and children to pursue their interests even in a temporary location. Do the same for yourself. Finding some activities of interest can help relieve stress.

8. Pamper yourself and your family. Treat yourself to something pleasant. This can be done without ruining a tight budget. It may be some small thing purchased for your new home, a special bottle of scented lotion (something that makes you feel special). Perhaps a planned activity or favorite meal will be just the catalyst to perk up your family.

9. Plan family activities. You may have more free time than you did while in ministry. Use it to spend time together as a family to create memories that will be beyond value in coming years. There are plenty of activities with little or no cost (explore new parks, visit a new store, or plan a night of games).

10. Get proper rest. Stress is exhausting, both physically and emotionally. You need extra rest to let your body refresh and refuel. Your problems will seem magnified if you are exhausted. This is a God-given opportunity to rest.

11. Be submissive to God's plan. This may seem like the obvious. However, we are human, and we may struggle with resentment.

12. Anticipate the future God has prepared. God is using this time to teach and prepare you for your next ministry opportunity. He desires only what is best for you. He promises to give you the desires of your heart. Even when you can't see ahead, trust Him. He will bring you out of the desert and into a new fertile field. 

Elaine Wipf is a pastor's wife and lives in Richfield, Minnesota.



The Role of the Singles Pastor and His Relationship to the Senior Pastor*

BY CRAIG A. GORC

Being a spiritual leader is an absolute necessity for the singles pastor.

Over 9 years ago, when I stepped into my first singles Sunday school class to teach, what occurred was reminiscent of an episode of the Keystone Cops. I bounced around the room, flapping my arms, teaching and preaching. I acted like I knew all about singles and single parents by quoting statistics on divorce rates and other issues dealing with single adults. It was comical—I knew virtually nothing about ministry, let alone singles ministry.

As a recent Bible college graduate, I didn't have a vision for singles ministry. I also didn't have a well-developed ministry plan, a well-articulated philosophy of ministry, or tenure in church work of any kind. In fact, I did not even feel "called" to a specific group or type of ministry. What I did have was a desire to be used by God and a calling to be faithful to Him.

The singles pastor should make it his goal to be the best-equipped person on staff to lead the singles ministry. Attending seminars, reading books, and talking with other singles pastors are tools that educate and equip the singles pastor for more effective ministry.

Over the following months, I gleaned from my senior pastor and other pastors. Most important, I learned how to work in a setting with 12 other pastors and several ministries led by laypeople. With so many pastors and ministries, I eventually had to ask: What is the role of the singles pastor, and how does he* work with the senior pastor to develop and maintain a thriving ministry that is effective in meeting the needs of the unmarried people in the local church?

We refer to pastoral ministry as a calling to

distinguish it from other occupations. The sense of a call is what separates the ministry as a work *from* the Lord rather than working *for* the Lord. Whether a singles pastor senses that his life calling is to work exclusively with singles or sees the need in this area and endeavors to meet the need, a verifiable calling from God is critical.

In filling the role as a singles pastor/staff member, four areas rise to the surface as mandatory requirements.

BE A SPIRITUAL LEADER

Setting a godly example is the number one expectation senior pastors have for their staff. But spending time alone with God can easily be crowded out by activities. Much of singles ministry deals with social interaction, but the singles pastor must not reduce the spiritual work he does to the same level as an activities director.

Years ago a gentleman wanted to help with our church's Friday evening singles ministry. He was enthusiastic as he shared his success in working with singles in the past. He had a foolproof plan to double or triple the size of a singles group within a few months. I had him lay out a plan for our group to triple its current size. His plan involved hiring local celebrities, musicians, and comedians on a weekly basis to provide entertainment that would draw a crowd.

"And once we have a crowd of hundreds, what?" I asked.

"We have the city's largest singles ministry," he replied.

I'm not against big crowds or spending money, but if it doesn't bring people closer to Christ, what is the use? When singles pastors do not lead their singles spiritually, singles are left to find their own way. It reminds me of a line from a song by First Call, *Ring Them Bells*: "The shepherd is asleep and the hills are filled with lost sheep."

SUPPORT THE SENIOR PASTOR'S VISION AND GOAL FOR YOUR CHURCH

The associate must demonstrate loyalty to the senior pastor first, then loyalty to the church, his colleagues, and finally to himself. There must be a trust between the senior pastor and the associate.

Support the senior pastor by being a self-starter. If the senior pastor is constantly picking up behind you or holding your hand through each decision, he is actually doing the ministry and does not need you. Being a self-starter does not mean you know everything; it simply shows you can take initiative.

With so many pastors and ministries, I eventually had to ask: What is the role of the singles pastor, and how does he work with the senior pastor to develop and maintain a thriving ministry that is effective in meeting the needs of the unmarried people in the local church?

When I first started a singles ministry at Cedar Park, I made appointments with the senior pastor. We discussed everything from how to form a leadership team to the organization of the first meeting. Over time the questions changed as the ability and skill of pastoring people developed.

The singles pastor should make it his goal to be the best-equipped person on staff to lead the singles ministry. Attending seminars, reading books, and talking with other singles pastors are tools that educate and equip the singles pastor for more effective ministry.

Sometimes areas of disagreement between the senior pastor and singles pastor may arise. How these issues are resolved and what direction the ministry takes are less important than the way the singles pastor lets it impact his attitude toward the senior pastor. Grudges and animosity in the heart eventually work their way into a person's conversations, relationship, and leadership.

ADD VALUE TO THE CHURCH AND THE SENIOR PASTOR'S MINISTRY

The singles pastor must agree with and feel the pastor's heart, priorities, philosophy, and vision. He must then work them into the specifics of the singles ministry and properly reflect the pastor's values, verbally and nonverbally.

Our senior pastor believes that building strong families builds a strong nation. Singles can often feel alienated by references to family, so my senior pastor and I have always interpreted that concept to mean that the network of their family relationships should be as strong as possible. God puts people in families. In His family, no one is left out.

The singles pastor can help the senior pastor (and the singles) in three ways:

1. Uphold (brag about) the positive contributions of single individuals in the church in staff meetings or other times when the staff is together. Bring clarity to misconceptions of singles in general.

2. Advocate on behalf of the singles of the church. Our church also has an 800-student school. Facilities are tight, even when school is out. Because of space challenges, our singles meetings were being bumped into smaller rooms. This was sending a subtle message to the leaders and singles that they were not significant enough to have a consistent place to meet. I discussed the priority of singles ministry when room-change situations arose again. After this, the importance of the singles ministry in the minds of the staff took a significant leap forward.

Much of singles ministry deals with social interaction, but the singles pastor must not reduce the spiritual work he does to the same level as an activities director.

3. Help the senior pastor by pointing out missed opportunities to make applications to singles.

DEVELOP AND MENTOR POTENTIAL LEADERS

This will take two avenues: identify, train, and release leaders into the work of singles

As a recent Bible college graduate, I didn't have a vision for singles ministry. I also didn't have a well-developed ministry plan, a well-articulated philosophy of ministry, or tenure in church work of any kind.

ministry; and, involve as many singles as possible in ministries of the church. The three areas that singles need from a singles pastor and church are a place for social interaction, opportunities for spiritual growth, and challenges to organize their lives around ministry that suits them.

FINAL REFLECTIONS

In my 9-year tenure in singles ministry, the topic least addressed by singles pastors and senior pastors is sexual abstinence and sexual purity. Singles want a biblical basis for sexual purity and sexual abstinence.

A *U.S. News and World Report* article states: "Many more 20-something adults than teenagers give birth to kids out of wedlock. In fact, most of the current social ills tied to sexual behavior—not only children born to unwed parents but sexually transmitted diseases, abortions, and the like—stem chiefly from adults who have sex before they marry, not from sexually active teens."¹

Whether a singles pastor senses that his life calling is to work exclusively with singles or sees the need in this area and endeavors to meet the need, a verifiable calling from God is critical.

Christian marriage counselors have also expressed concern: "Have you ever heard a sermon on living together?" asks religious columnist Michael McManus in his 1995 book, *Marriage Savers*. Condemnation of adult premarital sex has virtually vanished from religious preaching, even in the homilies of Catholic priests. "In the pulpits there has been a backing away from moralizing about sex before marriage," says Bishop James McHugh, the bishop of Camden, New Jersey.²

A *U.S. News and World Report* poll shows that while 74 percent of Americans have serious qualms about

teens having sex before marriage, more than half believe it is not wrong, or wrong only sometimes, for adults to have premarital sex.³ In an ungodly world, single adults need to hear the message of sexual purity.

The role of the singles pastor is crucial to the senior pastor and the church. The singles pastor leads single adults, provides opportunities for fellowship and growth, and helps singles develop their ministries so they become productive members in the church. **E**

**Even though this article refers to the singles pastor in the male gender, it equally applies to women who minister in this role.*

Craig A. Gorc is the singles pastor at Cedar Park Assembly of God, Bothell, Washington.

ENDNOTES

1. David Whitman, "The Trouble With Premarital Sex," *U.S. News and World Report*, 19 May 1997, 56.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.

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"I can't help it. My mentor was a disorganized person."

People Helping in the Church,

PART 4: A Biblical Model for Counseling in the 21st Century (The last in a four-part series.)

Previous articles in this series described some basic counseling skills the 21st-century pastor needs to face increasingly complex problems in the local church. In the last issue of *Enrichment* I discussed how one can pray through past hurts to live more effectively in the present and future. This final article in the series demonstrates a useful model used frequently at EMERGE Ministries—"Putting Off the Old Self/Putting On the New Self"¹—to deal with besetting sins and temptation.

People want their pastors to provide practical guidelines in the counseling process. They want relevant "how-to's" for the biblical "ought-to's." One of the most frequently presented problems is how to deal with besetting sins and/or temptation. Helping counselees admit they have problems with temptation is a significant first step in this process. For some, to acknowledge they struggle with temptation is seen as spiritual weakness or a character flaw. Not so. Scripture is quite clear that Jesus was tempted in every sense such as we are...and yet without capitulating to sin (Hebrews 4:15). To be tempted is not sin. It is only when we are drawn away in our temptation and the evil desire is conceived that it gives birth to sin (James 1:13). The following

section provides a description of the model for putting off the old self/putting on the new self.

PUTTING OFF THE OLD SELF/PUTTING ON THE NEW SELF

The "Plane of Rest" (see illustration) represents the time when you are relatively free from temptation. The mind speeds along at 4,000–5,000 words per minute and much of our mental activity is spiritually driven. Wise believers seek to discern the origin of their thoughts. Eternal life emanates from the person of Christ. It impacts the mind to stimulate the brain to think in terms of urges, thoughts, fantasies, and ideas that enhance and develop one's divine potential. Conversely, sin emanates from the person of Satan and impacts the mind to stimulate the brain to think in terms of urges, thoughts, fantasies, and ideas that detract from God's divine ideal and develops the enemy's destructive potential. Thus, the very act of thinking can potentially involve spiritual warfare. Take time to discern the thoughts and intents of your heart. Are they generated from the influence of God's Son, or are they a result of the influence of God's enemy?

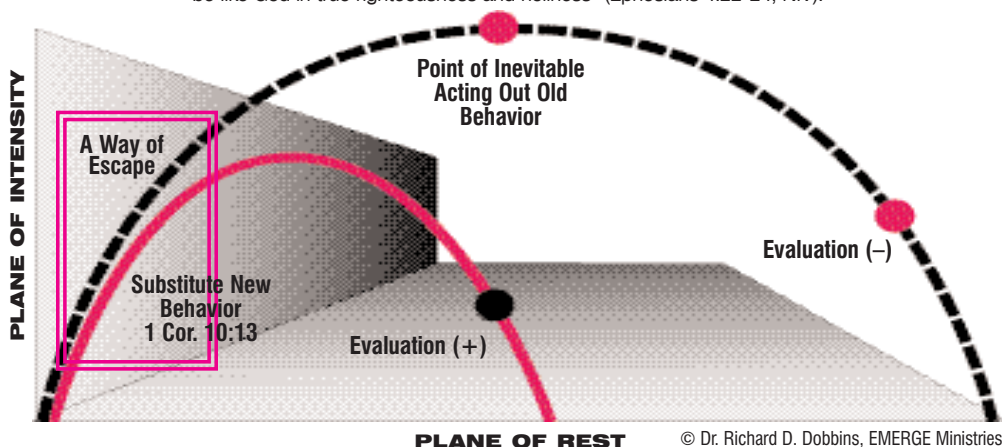
The "Plane of Intensity" represents the degree

BY DONALD A.
LICH

One of the most frequently presented problems is how to deal with besetting sins and/or temptation.

PUTTING OFF THE OLD SELF/PUTTING ON THE NEW SELF

"You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness" (Ephesians 4:22–24, NIV).



© Dr. Richard D. Dobbins, EMERGE Ministries.

of your temptation's intensity. Between the time you become aware you are being tempted and the point of acting out, there is a window of control called the "Way Out" or "Window of Escape." The enemy is sly, deceptive, and will seek to destroy your godly potential...but he's not very creative. How do we know this? First Corinthians 10:13 clearly states, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who...will with the temptation also make a way to escape." Help the people you counsel see that they are tempted "commonly" like every other person. Note also that the Holy Spirit will suggest a way out of the tempting situation. Some people hang around even after they are aware they are being tempted, and after a while, if they do not choose the way of escape suggested by the Holy Spirit, they will inevitably act out their old behavior. Then, when they evaluate their behavior, it is often with sorrow, regret, loss of spiritual growth, and

perhaps irrevocable consequences. While God can and will forgive any sin we confess to Him (1 John 1:9), this does not necessarily cancel the law of the harvest. The enemy will take you farther than you intended to go, keep you longer than you intended to stay, and when he reveals the price tag, it will be more than you dreamed of paying. The best time to think about consequences of behavior is before you act out...not afterward.

The "Window of Escape" represents the period of time you have between your first awareness of tempting thoughts and your loss of control over them. When you implement some substitute behavior (do not act out on the temptation), the evaluation is positive because you have been strengthened in your "inner man." It results (for a time) in the diminished intensity of the temptation.

There are two skills people must develop with God's help. First, they must define the triggering mechanisms (a mood, a place, certain persons). They need to ask

the Holy Spirit to help them become aware of what triggers these tempting thoughts. For example, if you discover that tempting thoughts are most likely to occur when you are alone and unoccupied, avoid being alone as much as possible; or, be sure that when you are alone, you have a healthy activity to keep your mind occupied. Businessmen are particularly susceptible to sexual temptation when they are away on business trips and alone (and lonely) in their hotel rooms. Others are most likely to be tempted after a great spiritual victory—they may feel "entitled" to act out since they have done so many great things for the Lord.

If a certain part of town or certain place triggers tempting thoughts, plan your travel to avoid those places or have some type of accountability system. Perhaps your spouse or a close friend can be available "on call" to help you through a particularly difficult period. Scripture is clear that we are to "abstain from all appearance of evil" (1 Thessalonians 5:22). First Corinthians 6:18 commands, "Flee fornication." It may take several days or weeks to define all of the triggering mechanisms, but it is important for you to identify these traps of the enemy; otherwise, he will take advantage of your spiritual blindness and defeat you.

The second skill one must develop in using this practical model for putting off the old self and putting on the new self is that of defining substitute behaviors. Once a person knows he is being tempted, it is important for that person to initiate some activity to remove himself mentally, emotionally, and spiritually from the temptation. For example, turning off the television or video when a person realizes he is being tempted.

Temptation thrives on secrecy. You need to go to your spouse or friend when you are first tempted. Share the secret and have him or her pray with you. James 5:16 says, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed." Galatians 6:2 further states, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

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"I try to be godly, Pastor. I regularly love, have patience, am generous, and floss twice daily."

The tendency will be to avoid going to your spouse or friend in the early stages of temptation for fear of being embarrassed. However, humbling yourself and asking someone to pray for you in the early stages is much more likely to be successful in helping you break through this bondage than trying in your own strength to resist the temptation and later having him help you pray for forgiveness. Also, your honesty and transparency may cause him to seek your help during his time of temptation.

Forgiveness is not needed when you are honest about your temptation. It is only when you deceive yourself into believing that you can overcome the temptation in your own strength and fall into it that you have to ask for forgiveness.

A combination of these two skills—identifying the triggering mechanisms and defining some effective substitute behaviors—will help you to use the Way of Escape to defeat the enemy's effort to take you to the point where you act out.

Every time the Lord helps you to escape temptation at the point of evaluation indicated on the chart, praise Him and thank Him for keeping you.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION²

1. List several triggering events that have been particularly bothersome in dealing with temptation.


2. When are “addictive/sinful” cravings most prevalent?

3. Are you more susceptible to temptation when you are tired? Alone? Successful?

4. List several guards or ways of escape you will employ when you are aware of being in a state of temptation (be specific).

5. What are some healthy ways to reward yourself when you have done well or been successful?

The believer's character, spiritual growth, reputation, and Kingdom effectiveness are a consequence and outgrowth of life choices he or she makes over time. By choosing to respond to the

suggestions made to us from the power of eternal life emanating from Christ, our divine potential for Christian growth and maturity is enhanced. Without question, the 21st-century pastor will face increasingly difficult counseling situations. This series provided basic counseling skills every pastor should have in meeting the complexities presented to him or her. 

Donald A. Lichi, Ph.D., is executive vice president with EMERGE Ministries, Inc., Akron, Ohio.

ENDNOTES

1. The author gratefully acknowledges the writings of Richard D. Dobbins, Ph.D., in the compilation and use of this model.
2. The author strongly suggests reading Richard Foster's *Celebration of Discipline* (Rev. 1998) where he describes in practical detail the exercise of the traditional spiritual disciplines; and Dallas Ward's *The Divine Conspiracy*, especially chapter nine, “A Curriculum For Christlikeness.” Both books are available from Gospel Publishing House.

Reimbursing Medical Expenses Without a Formal Plan

BY RICHARD R.
HAMMAR

The relevance of the IRS policy to church leaders is clear. Church leaders often distribute funds to ministers and lay employees to cover medical expenses without any serious consideration of the tax consequences.

It is common for churches to pay some or all of the medical expenses of their ministers or lay employees. This can include direct payment of expenses, reimbursing employees for expenses they have incurred, and paying a deductible amount on an employee's medical insurance. The tax consequences of such payments and reimbursements are not well understood.

Section 105 of the tax code permits employees to exclude from gross income amounts received under an employer-financed "accident and health plan" as payments for permanent injury or loss of bodily function, or as reimbursements of medical expenses. The payments can be made on behalf of a spouse or dependent of the employee. This exclusion assumes that the employer has established an "accident or health plan." Unfortunately, the requirements for such a plan are not specified in the tax code. The regulations simply state that "an accident or health plan is an arrangement for the payment of amounts to employees in the event of personal injuries or sickness." The regulations further specify that "an accident or health plan may be either insured or uninsured, and it is not necessary that the plan be in writing or that the employee's rights to benefits under the plan be enforceable." Of course, a written plan is preferable, since it generally will eliminate any doubt regarding the existence or date of a plan. The regulations do require that notice of a plan be "reasonably available" to employees (if employees' rights under the plan are not enforceable).

A recently published internal IRS policy provides church treasurers with some helpful guidance on these rules. *IRP* ¶ 80,600 (1999).

THE IRS RULING

The IRS policy addresses this question: "Are employer reimbursements under a self-insured accident and health plan for medical expenses

incurred prior to the adoption of the plan excludable from gross income by the employee under section 105(b) of the Internal Revenue Code?" The IRS policy concludes that "employer reimbursements under a self-insured accident and health plan for medical expenses incurred prior to the adoption of the plan are not excludable from gross income by the employee."

"Are employer reimbursements under a self-insured accident and health plan for medical expenses incurred prior to the adoption of the plan excludable from gross income by the employee under section 105(b) of the Internal Revenue Code?"—IRS Policy

The IRS noted that employers often adopt self-insured accident and health plans to cover medical expenses incurred *prior to the date of the adoption of the plan* but within the same taxable year. This is done in an attempt to allow employees to exclude these medical expense reimbursements from income. The IRS noted that:

The basic tenet of income taxation is that unless wages, benefits or other income falls within an explicit exclusion to the Internal Revenue Code's definition of gross income, they are included within that term. Exclusions and exemptions from income are matters of legislative grace and are construed narrowly.... [Code section] 105(b) states that gross income does not include amounts paid, directly or indirectly, to the employee to reimburse the employee for expenses incurred by him, his spouse or dependents for medical care.... However, section 105(b) does not apply unless the medical expense reimbursements are received under an accident or health plan.

The IRS pointed out that the income tax regulations define a “plan” as “an arrangement for the payment of amounts to employees in the event of personal injuries or sickness.” The IRS conceded that a plan “need not be enforceable and need not be in writing.” However, in order for there to be a plan, the employer “must be committed to certain rules and regulations governing payment. These rules must be made known to employees as a definite policy and must be determinable before the employee’s medical expenses are incurred.”

The IRS concluded that “payments for reimbursement of medical expenses incurred prior to the adoption of a plan are not paid or received under an accident or health plan for employees. Thus, these amounts are includible in the employee’s gross income...and are not excludable under section 105(b) of the Code.”

CONCLUSIONS

The relevance of the IRS policy to church leaders is clear. Church leaders often distribute funds to ministers and lay employees to cover medical expenses without any serious consideration of the tax consequences. In most cases, they simply assume these payments are non-taxable. The IRS policy addressed in this article suggests that such an assumption may be erroneous and lead to needless tax complications. In many cases a church not only is required to report the payments or reimbursements as taxable income and add them to the employee’s W-2, but the employee will need to report them on his or her tax return and pay taxes on them. All of this can be avoided, the IRS concluded, if the church simply adopted an adequate “plan” in advance of making the medical payments.

***Key point.** A plan may not operate retroactively. A church cannot reimburse an employee’s medical expenses, and later attempt to insulate these payments from tax by belatedly adopting a medical payment plan.*

Let’s illustrate these important rules with some practical examples.

***Example 1.** Rev. M is a minister at First Church. He undergoes major surgery and incurs \$10,000 of expenses that are not covered under any insurance policy. The church board decides to reimburse Rev. M for the full*

amount of \$10,000. The church has no formal plan of reimbursing any employee’s medical expenses. Several weeks after making the \$10,000 reimbursement, the church treasurer learns that the reimbursement will represent taxable income to Rev. M unless it was made pursuant to an “accident and health plan.” The church board quickly adopts a written plan. The board’s action is too late to avoid reporting the \$10,000 reimbursement as taxable income to Rev. M under section 105 of the tax code.

***Example 2.** Same facts as example 1, except that the church board decides that their previous decision to reimburse the pastor’s medical expenses constituted an accident and health “plan.” They rely on the fact such a plan need not be in writing. It is likely that the board’s argument will fail. According to the IRS internal policy, an employer “must be committed to certain rules and regulations governing payment,” and these rules “must be made known to employees as a definite policy and must be determinable before the employee’s medical expenses are incurred.” It is very unlikely that the IRS would consider the mere act of reimbursing the pastor’s medical expenses to constitute a “plan.” If the church’s argument were accepted, it would render the plan requirement meaningless, since any employer’s payment or reimbursement of medical expenses would automatically constitute a plan.*

In order for there to be a plan, the employer “must be committed to certain rules and regulations governing payment. These rules must be made known to employees as a definite policy and must be determinable before the employee’s medical expenses are incurred.”

***Example 3.** Same facts as example 1, except that the church treasurer learned of the “plan” requirement a few weeks before the reimbursement was made. Prior to making the reimbursement, the church board adopted a “plan” that stated: “Resolved, that the church will pay the unreimbursed medical expenses of the pastor.” It is possible that this action will not*

If an employer reimburses an employee’s medical expenses under a self-insured plan, then nondiscrimination rules apply.

All of this can be avoided, the IRS concluded, if the church simply adopted an adequate “plan” in advance of making the medical payments.

constitute a valid plan. According to the IRS internal policy, an employer “must be committed to certain rules and regulations governing payment,” and these rules “must be made known to employees as a definite policy and must be determinable before the employee’s medical expenses are incurred.” Does the one-sentence resolution by the church board satisfy this test? Unfortunately, the answer is not clear. The church could have eliminated any doubt by providing more detail in the resolution.

Example 4. Same facts as example 1. The church treasurer realizes by now that the \$10,000 reimbursement cannot be excluded from the pastor’s income as a payment under an accident and health plan under section 105 of the tax code. The church treasurer is wondering if the amount can be excluded from the pastor’s income as a charitable or benevolent distribution from the church. This is a possibility, depending on the circumstances. Churches certainly are free to make distributions to the poor and needy, since such distributions further a church’s religious and charitable purposes. However, when churches make

The IRS concluded that “payments for reimbursement of medical expenses incurred prior to the adoption of a plan are not paid or received under an accident or health plan for employees. Thus, these amounts are includible in the employee’s gross income...and are not excludable under section 105(b) of the Code.”

distributions to one of their own employees (such as the pastor in this example), it is less likely that the distribution will be viewed by the IRS or the courts as serving the church’s religious and charitable purposes. This is so for the following two reasons: (1) Whenever an employee is the recipient of a church distribution, the immediate assumption is that the distribution represents additional taxable compensation for services rendered. (2) The income tax regulations define “charitable” quite

narrowly. The term includes the “relief of the poor and distressed or of the underprivileged.” The regulations define “needy” as “being a person who lacks the necessities of life, involving physical, mental, or emotional well-being, as a result of poverty or temporary distress. Examples of needy persons include a person who is financially impoverished as a result of low income and lack of financial resources, a person who temporarily lacks food or shelter (and the means to provide for it), a person who is the victim of a natural disaster (such as fire or flood), a person who is the victim of a civil disaster (such as civil disturbance), a person who is temporarily not self-sufficient as a result of a sudden and severe personal or family crisis (such as a person who is the victim of a crime of violence or who has been physically abused).” It is unlikely, though not impossible, that the church’s reimbursement of the pastor’s medical bills would be deemed a “charitable” distribution under this definition.

Example 5. Same facts as example 1, except that the church board adopted a plan several months before reimbursing the pastor’s medical bills that spelled out the church’s commitment to paying the senior pastor’s medical bills not covered under any available insurance coverage. The plan did not provide for the payment of any other employee’s medical bills. Assuming that the board’s action qualifies as an accident and health “plan,” it will not prevent the \$10,000 reimbursement from being treated as taxable income to Rev. M. Why? Since the church’s plan is self-insured (the pastor’s medical expenses will be paid out of the church’s general fund), the \$10,000 is excludable from Rev. M’s income only to the extent that the church’s plan is not discriminatory. If Rev. M is one of the 5 highest paid officers, or is among the highest paid 25 percent of all employees, he may not exclude any of the \$10,000 from his income for tax purposes if the same benefit is not available to non-highly compensated individuals.

Example 6. First Church provides health insurance for Rev. G, who reports his

income taxes as an employee. In order to reduce the cost of the insurance, the church elects a \$1,000 deductible (e.g., the insurance pays for any expense only to the extent that it exceeds \$1,000). The church established a "medical fund" for Rev. G to reimburse all of his medical expenses that are less than \$1,000 (and not covered by insurance). The church does not provide health insurance, or a "medical fund," for any other employee. The church's "medical plan" is self-insured and discriminatory (in favor of Rev. G, a highly compensated individual), and accordingly all of Rev. G's medical expenses reimbursed by the church represent taxable income and must be included on his W-2 and Form 1040 (as wages). However, the health insurance premiums paid by the church are not taxable to Rev. G.

PAYMENT OF EMPLOYEE MEDICAL EXPENSES

Here are some important points to consider before paying some or all of an

employee's medical expenses:

- Do you want the payments to be nontaxable? There are only two ways for this to occur: (1) The payments satisfy the IRS definition of "charitable." This definition is quoted in the article. Note that this is a narrow definition, especially in the context of employees. (2) The payments are made pursuant to an accident and health plan.

- If you are considering the adoption of an accident and health plan, note the payments made under the plan will be nontaxable only if they meet the following conditions: (1) an adequate plan is established prior to the payment or reimbursement of medical expenses, and (2) the plan does not discriminate in favor of "highly compensated individuals" as defined in this article.

Caution. If an employer reimburses an employee's medical expenses under a self-insured plan, then nondiscrimination rules apply. Generally, these rules require that the plan not discriminate in

favor of highly compensated individuals with regard to either amount of benefits or eligibility to participate. If a self-insured plan is discriminatory, then "highly compensated individuals" ordinarily must report some or all of the amount of the employer's reimbursements as taxable income. Who are highly compensated individuals? For churches, they include (1) one of the 5 highest paid officers, or (2) those employees among the highest paid 25 percent of all employees (some employees are not considered, including those who have not completed 3 years of service, or who have not attained age 25, or part-time or seasonal employees—and who are not participants in the employer's plan). **E**

Richard R. Hammar, J.D., LL.M., CPA, serves as legal counsel to The General Council of the Assemblies of God. A graduate of Harvard Law School, he is the author of over 30 books on legal and tax issues for churches and pastors. This article is excerpted from his monthly Church Treasurer Alert newsletter.



"Pastor, you've just retired from ministry. What are you going to do now?"

Waiting for That "Right Time" to Invest? Think Again.

BY RANDALL K.
BARTON

Fretting over stock or fund selection, chasing performance, or trying to time the market focuses you on the wrong target.

Nearly every week a minister calls asking: "Is this a good time to move from fixed income to equities?"

I usually respond tongue-in-cheek, "If I knew the answer, I wouldn't be sitting behind a desk at Ministers Benefit Association."

My failed attempt at humor is met with the sincere, anxiety-filled question, "What should I do?"

"While responsibility for retirement investments decisions at MBA appropriately rests with each minister and layworker, some basic principles can help you in the decision-making process.

ASSESS YOUR TIME HORIZON

The first and most important factor is to understand your investment time horizon. Anyone under 50 has 15 to 20 years before retirement. With increased longevity, your time horizon actually approaches 35 to 40 years, since you don't want to outlive your retirement fund.

A long time horizon provides ample opportunity to benefit from a variety of investment options, without being overly concerned about market corrections and short-term volatility. (There will always be years when stock or bond markets lose money.)

When assessing time horizon, the real question is this: When will you need the money? If you need all your retirement or savings funds within the next 2 years for a major expenditure, you need to be concerned with market fluctuations. If you have only 5 years to ride through market cycles, you need moderate concern.

Time horizon is only one factor to consider. Other factors would include your own personal risk tolerance for market fluctuations and how on target you are in planning for your retirement needs.

MARKET TIME IS FOR TRADERS, NOT INVESTORS

The murder rampage by a stock market day

trader in Atlanta, Georgia, brought to light that purportedly near 80 percent of all day traders lose money. Day trading is really another name for gambling.

Assuming godly stewardship would not allow us to engage in day trading, what about weekly, monthly, or quarterly trading? There are appropriate and legitimate reasons to sell or purchase stocks or mutual funds. However, fretting over stock or fund selection, chasing performance, or trying to time the market focuses you on the wrong target. When investing for retirement, it is critical to focus on your long-term financial goals, not timing of investments. There is an easier way—diversification through asset allocation—a combination of investments that will point you toward your financial goals, within your tolerance for risk, during good and bad markets.

DIVERSIFICATION, DIVERSIFICATION, DIVERSIFICATION

In real estate, there are three things to remember: location, location, location. In investing, there are also three things to look for: diversification, diversification, diversification.

To choose an appropriate long-term investment strategy, consider three levels of diversification:

1. *Diversification by Asset Class.* This is probably the most widely practiced form of diversification. It combines different classes of assets (such as stocks, bonds, international, and cash) into a single portfolio. Different asset classes rise and fall in value independently of one another, so combining them reduces the volatility of the entire fund.

2. *Diversification by Investment Style.* Many investment managers stop short at diversification by asset class. What most people don't know is that many funds are generally single-style in design, and those styles substantially affect performance. However, if you were able to combine in one fund multiple managers who

practice complementary investment styles (whether it's growth, value, market-oriented, or small or mid cap), the negative impact is softened when a style goes out of favor.

Timing has very little relevance when compared to investing for the long term.

3. Diversification by Manager: Not all fund managers are created equal. Even within particular styles of managing, the strategies and techniques differ. If you put all your eggs in one manager's basket and they drop the basket, you've got a mess. By adding multiple managers to your investment portfolio, when combined with multi-asset, multi-investment styles, you will substantially reduce risk and volatility while building long-term growth.

By providing three levels of diversification, you reduce volatility in your investment portfolio and maximize return relative to the risk you have taken, but there is still one more principle to remember.

INVESTING FOR THE LONG TERM

What about that market correction everyone is expecting? Although no one can accurately predict what will happen next week, next month, or in the year 2000 and beyond, a look at the stock market's historic performance reveals that over long time periods, there is virtually no wrong time to invest in the stock market when compared to "sitting on the sidelines" in fixed income.

Let's assume that 3 coworkers, over a 20-year period from 1977 to 1998, invested \$5,000 per year into retirement accounts:

- Smart Investor A invested at the best possible time each calendar year, when the S&P 500 was at its very lowest. (How could someone be so lucky?)

- Let's assume, however, that you're Unlikely Investor B. You bought high more than anyone you know, at the worst possible time when S&P 500 was at its

high, just before it makes its correction.

- Cautious Investor C doesn't want any volatility. He can't stand market fluctuations and doesn't want to guess wrong like Unlikely Investor B. Cautious invests in T-bills that have provided an annualized total return of approximately 7.14 percent.

Over a 20-year period, the following would be the results for these retirement investors who each have a \$100,000 cumulative investment—\$5,000 invested each year for 20 years:

- Smart Investor A—\$540,641
- Unlucky Investor B—\$423,866
- Cautious Investor C—\$218,747


If you were an unlucky investor for 20 years straight, you would outperform the cautious investor who invested in fixed income treasury bills if you maintained a buy and hold strategy rather than market timing.

CONCLUSION

Timing has very little relevance when compared to investing for the long term.

Favorable results are achieved by staying fully invested in the market and participating in the rallies (and dips) that occur over market cycles.

Sitting on the sidelines waiting for what appears to be the best time to invest increases your likelihood of missing out on market upswings. Over the long run, it will result in less retirement funds. Proverbs puts it this way, "The plans of the diligent lead to profit as surely as haste leads to poverty" (Proverbs 21:5, NIV). Make your plans (asset allocation), stick with it through all the market cycles (be diligent), and you will reach your investment goals.

The LifePoints presentation available from Ministers Benefit Association (1-800-MBA-PLAN) takes you through the process, step-by-step, of assessing these factors and can assist you with deciding how best to allocate your assets in a portfolio. 

Randall K. Barton is CEO of the Assemblies of God Financial Services Group.

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"How's come I prayed this morning, and my mom still says we're having liver for supper?"



Affair-Proofing Your Marriage

The Minister

BY MILTON E. DYKES

Thankfully, according to statistics, the ministry is freer from adultery than any other profession. But it is not immune. What can ministers do to prevent moral failure?

NINE STEPS TO PREVENT MORAL FAILURE

1. Distinguish between your walk with God and your ministry.

The two are not the same. One minister who failed morally said, "The road to failure began when I started reading the Bible only to find a sermon."

Have a daily prayer/devotional time. Ludicrous, you say? Not according to Christian psychologist Richard Dobbins who says, "You can be a success in your work and a failure in your walk."

2. Have proper goals.

Ask a pastor how he's doing, and he's likely to give you an attendance report. The goal of many ministers is to pastor a thriving church. That is a worthy goal. But pastors become so preoccupied with this goal that their spiritual walk is weakened. When temptation comes their way, they succumb. Your goals should be to have a first-love relationship with the Lord, to lovingly shepherd your flock, to faithfully preach the Word, and to live a godly example.

3. Be aware that God is always there.

He sees all, and you can never get away from Him. Let this be a strong deterrent.

4. Make right decisions about danger zones.

Proverbs 2:11, states, "Discretion will protect you" (NIV). Don't visit women alone. Don't do a lot of counseling of women alone. Instead, ask your wife or a mature, godly woman in your congregation to counsel other women

(Titus 2:3,4). A minister who failed morally stated emphatically, "Never counsel a woman more than three times. That was my downfall." Don't be flirtatious with the opposite sex (complimenting their appearance or being huggy/handsy). Do choose the right office help. Don't watch sensuous television programs or look at sensuous Internet sites or magazines. Don't allow your thoughts to dwell on the beauty of another woman (Proverbs 6:25). Don't think, *I'll look, but not touch*. If you keep looking, one day you'll have the opportunity to touch, and you will touch.

5. Keep your love relationship with your wife.

Recognize her beauty and talents and let your eyes and attention be continually focused on her. Marital love as God intended it is love at its best. Remember, "May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth. A loving doe, a graceful deer—may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be captivated by her love" (Proverbs 5:18,19, NIV).

6. Remind yourself of the consequences of adultery.

Some of the consequences include a broken relationship with the Lord, your wife's devastation, overwhelming economic loss (you'll have to immediately find a new way to make a living), loss of reputation and respect, reproach on Christ in your community, and church members' hurt.

7. Watch out for mid-life crisis.

Sometimes a man wants to see if he's still attractive to the opposite sex and tests the waters. Keep up your guard during this vulnerable time.

8. Don't let Satan fool you into thinking, *It's OK to be flirtatious (and later adulterous)*.

One minister said, "When a minister is involved

Marital love as God intended it is love at its best.

Ten Symptoms of a Preadultery Condition

1. Sharing private matters with a person of the opposite sex before sharing them with your spouse.
2. Spending inordinate amounts of time with this person.
3. Finding more delight in being with this person than with your spouse.
4. Thinking this person understands you better than your spouse.
5. Being unwilling to hear the warnings of others and stubbornly maintaining this platonic relationship.
6. Feeling youthful or “high” around this person.
7. Developing romantic feelings for this person that you try to transfer to your spouse.
8. Being defensive when you try to keep from admitting you are into something wrong. Instead, you accuse others of attacking you when they are really trying to warn you.
9. Looking for opportunities to be with this person, away from the scrutiny of others.
10. Finding reason to avoid the wise counsel of friends while accepting the unwise counsel of fools.

John Sanford in his book, Why Some Christians Commit Adultery (Victory House, 1989).

in an affair, Satan withdraws his attack so your ministry is blessed and successful.”

“You’re OK,” Satan tells you. “Look how successful your ministry is.” Then, when you are securely caught in his snare, Satan attacks you forcefully, such as giving you suicidal thoughts, and then he laughs at you.

9. Most important, hide the Word in your heart (Psalm 119:11).

Be continuously filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18) and yield yourself to righteousness leading to holiness (Romans 6:19).

Milton E. Dykes, Lakeland, Florida, is an ordained minister with the Peninsular Florida District Council of the Assemblies of God.

The Minister's Wife

BY KRISTY DYKES

For 3 days, Sarah* lay on the sofa, her tears gushing like a geyser. Her minister husband, Scott*, had confessed to an affair with a woman in the church. This wasn’t supposed to happen, she thought, her emotions bouncing between disbelief, rage, shock, grief. This is a dream—no, a nightmare.

Adultery is rampant, and ministry couples are not immune to its tenacious clutches. Although there’s no surefire way to affair-proof a marriage, there are some practical areas the minister’s wife must concentrate on to see that “the heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil” (Proverbs 31:11). Interestingly, the following acrostic spells pastor:

PERSONAL APPEARANCE

The majority of us will never look like a model, but we can make the most of what God has given us. Keep yourself as attractive as possible for your husband.

ATMOSPHERE IN THE HOME

“The Lord God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.’” (Genesis 2:18, NIV). Be his helper. Be kind to him—a simple “please/thank you” generates mutual respect. Compliment him, especially on his masculine traits.

SENSE OF HUMOR

Do you laugh together? Called internal jogging, laughter reduces stress, rescues you from embarrassing situations, and dispels anger (Proverbs 15:13). My aunt and uncle frequently read joke books aloud to each other. Try it. It’s fun. Don’t take life so seriously. A few years ago, we’d just gotten a new Mercury Marquis and had gone to the body shop to check on our older car that was being repainted. As Milton backed up, he hit a low post, and we heard a sickening crunch. (We were in the appropriate place.) “Praise the Lord,” I exclaimed. He looked over at me like I’d lost my marbles. I grinned and said, “I’m praising the Lord you’re driving and not me.”

***Adultery is rampant,
and ministry couples are not
immune to its tenacious
clutches.***

TOGETHERNESS IN PRAYER AND FELLOWSHIP

Pray together. “Even 80-second prayers together are better than none,” says Richard Dobbins, Christian psychologist. Play together—visit the zoo, walk, watch television and eat popcorn, picnic, go for a drive, visit museums/historic sites, canoe.

OVERLOOK HIS FAULTS AND CONCENTRATE ON HIS PLUS POINTS

If he disappoints you in an area, concentrate on what he does that pleases you. For example, if he’s always forgetting to take out the garbage but he’s good with the kids, focus on that. The Bible says,

"Love covers over a multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8, NIV). Nancy's husband may go shopping with her and actually enjoy it, and Jane's husband may cook dinner every evening, but your husband _____. (Fill in the blank and then concentrate on this.)

RESPOND TO HIS SEXUAL NEEDS

Josh McDowell was asked, "How often do men like to make love?" He said, "Only on days that begin with T: Tuesday and Thursday, Taturday and Tunday, Today and Tomorrow." Learn your husband's sexual needs and meet them (1 Corinthians 7:2-5).

Dr. James Dobson of Focus on the Family says, "Women should understand how their husbands' needs differ from their own. Hormonal influences sensitize the man to all sexual stimuli. Whereas a particular woman would be of little interest to him when he is satisfied, he may be eroticized just to be in her presence when he is in a state of deprivation. A wife may find it difficult

With child care, car-pooling, and bill-paying, even a good marriage can become more of a partnership than an intimate relationship, according to Jennifer Louden, author of *The Couple's Comfort Book* (Harper Collins, 1994). Her tip for preventing a relationship from becoming stale: "Kiss for at least 20 seconds, twice a day. So many couples get into a pecking rut and forget how wonderful it can be to make out with each other."

This goes along with an interesting tidbit (source unknown):

Men who are kissed before going to work every morning:

- have fewer accidents.
- live 5 years longer.
- make 15 percent more money.

—Kristy Dykes


to comprehend this accumulating aspect of her husband's sexual appetite. She should recognize that his desire is dictated by definite biochemical forces within his body; and if she loves him, she will seek to satisfy those needs as meaningfully and as regularly as possible. I'm not denying that women have

She should recognize that his desire is dictated by definite biochemical forces within his body, and if she loves him, she will seek to satisfy those needs as meaningfully and as regularly as possible.

definite sexual needs which seek gratification; rather, I am merely explaining that abstinence is usually more difficult for men to tolerate."

WORDS OF WISDOM

I frequently tell myself, "I'm the only woman who can share my husband's heart, his home, and his bed. I'm proud to be his wife."

To sum it up, follow my grandmother's sage marital advice: "Do your part, no matter what he does." And if we'll both do our parts, we'll build strong, Christ-honoring, affair-proof marriages. 

Kristy Dykes, Lakeland, Florida, is a minister's wife, writer, and speaker. One of her favorite topics to speak on is "How To Love Your Husband." She is the wife of Milton Dykes.

*Names changed.



"Uh... uh... Pastor, I'd like to use a lifeline."



Integrating Faith With Learning

BY WAYNE E.
KRAISS

For the student in a Christian college or university, there should be little doubt about the need for absolutes based on biblical authority.

One of the problems in the Early Church that the Lord said He hated was the practice of the Nicolaitans (Revelation 2:6). Deeply embedded in their teaching was a compartmentalized approach to life. They held to this view: what was done in the body (flesh) did not affect what was done spiritually (soul).

Compartmentalization is a characteristic of today's society. People have their church life, social life, personal life (what I do for pleasure and the way I spend my personal time and money), family life, and academic life. Often each is independent from the others and controlled by the whims of the moment or by popular opinion. Their spiritual life is nurtured and given attention on Sunday, but has little impact on everything else that happens the rest of the week. These individuals have not allowed a belief system or conviction to penetrate these artificial partitions to impact all other aspects of life. Decisions about how they will spend their money are not directed by Scripture. What they do for pleasure is not guided by the moral teachings of the Word, but mirrors the behavior of today's society. This is one reason we often see little difference in the behavior of Christians when compared to those outside the church.

The primary benefit of a Christian education is to integrate faith with learning. That process begins with the acceptance of absolutes. Where are these absolutes to be found? Whose philosophy should be embraced?


For the student in a Christian college or university, there should be little doubt about the need for absolutes based on biblical authority. This requires much more than a polite salute by a professor as the subject of biblical values surfaces. It must be a conviction that is clear from both the teaching and lifestyle of the faculty. It must be an intentional part of the curriculum and woven into the syllabi of classes. It is foundational to the purpose and mission of the school.

Students should not be expected to make this integration by themselves. They have a right to the

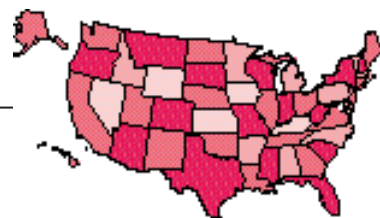
assistance from faculty who can give guidance to their search for reconciliation of two opposing philosophies—biblical versus secular. It is a rare student who can independently make this integration.

Sitting in church on Sunday and then listening to a lecture from a pagan point of view on Monday poses serious dilemmas for the thoughtful student. But as the faculty at a Christian college or university shows the contradictions and points out the false assumptions made by unbiblical systems of thought, students not only see the fallacy in the light of biblical truth, but also observe the way the faculty members have honestly worked through the problem to a righteous conclusion. This gives students a model to use in witnessing to their own generation. This is an extra dimension of getting a degree from a Christian institution.

The critical component in achieving this integration is the faculty. They must be men and women who know Christ and know His Word. But just being a Christian and having a graduate degree does not qualify a person for this unique assignment. New faculty must be carefully chosen and mentored. They must be willing to invest the extra time and thought required for this integration. The demands this places on them are far beyond the demands they would face in a secular institution. The courageous men and women who accept this challenge and teach in our Assemblies of God colleges and universities deserve our respect and appreciation. It is a tough assignment. They are often the focus of intense scrutiny and examination. Tragically, they are often criticized and seldom praised.

Have you recently thought about encouraging one of our faculty members with a note of appreciation? Did one of them have a special role in shaping your life? Why not tell them? They are helping us avoid the teaching of the Nicolaitans. 

Wayne E. Kraiss, D.Min., is president of Vanguard University, Costa Mesa, California, and the commissioner of the Assemblies of God Commission on Christian Higher Education.



The Dechurched Mission Field of America

According to pollster George Barna, the unchurched population of America (over 80 million) is greater than the entire population of all but 10 world countries, and higher than the entire population of any nation in Europe. Unlike the unchurched of most nations, however, is this fact—the vast majority of unchurched adults in America (85 percent) were once regular church attenders.

According to Barna, the dechurched indicate that if the church they had been attending had understood them and effectively ministered to them, they would have stayed. This unchurched group is open to religion if religion can help them solve their problems and address their most pressing needs.

Sending missionaries to this mission field does not require new language acquisition and adjustment to different cultural values. It does require focusing on how to help people cope with such issues as personal health, finances, job stress, or family dysfunction. Providing help for these issues is far more important in attracting the dechurched than worship style, doctrinal position, and programs that many churches spend countless hours developing in an attempt to ensure relevance.

Research tells us that over \$100 million is spent annually on Christian television, over \$200 million on Christian radio, and \$1 billion on Christian books and music. What is the effect of this investment on the church-going patterns of Americans? The National Association of Evangelicals reports that North America is the only continent where Christianity is not growing. According to the Center for Muslim Ministry, over 30,000 Christians convert to Islam every year. The growth of the Mormon Church, the New Age Movement, and countless other cults and ideologies is proof that the dechurched are earnest in their quest for something to fill the spiritual void and provide the structure and discipline they are lacking. Yet they are rejecting the church in growing numbers.

When one considers the enormous growth of private Christian schools and home schooling among evangelical Christians, it seems that the church views its primary responsibility in its homeland as

self-preservation. Preservation is important. One of the greatest challenges churches in America face is assimilating into the Christian faith those who visit our churches. However, when we are so preoccupied with trying to ensure we are not contaminated by the world, we further distance ourselves from the mission field around us. And when so much effort is devoted to maintaining what we have, it leaves little resources, energy, and creative power for evangelizing the dechurched mission field of America.

Jesus faced a similar dilemma when He spoke to His disciples immediately after His encounter with a woman at a well in Samaria—a place God-fearing Jews avoided at all costs. His disciples, who were hungry, steered the conversation to self-preservation. “Rabbi, eat something,” they pleaded (John 4:31, NIV). But Jesus replied, “Open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest” (verse 35).

What is often missed in reading this text is this: Jesus identified the apostate Samaritans with whom the Jews refused to associate as the harvest field. These same Samaritans were once part of the Jewish tradition. They were like the dechurched in America today—forsaken and rejected by the established religious order because of circumstances of which many of them had little or no control, and because of the unwillingness of the followers of Christ to see them as an opportunity rather than a threat.

It was not worship style, doctrinal position, or program that attracted the unnamed Samaritan woman to Christ. Rather, it was His identifying her dysfunctional background as her real source of need, and offering a spiritual solution. The Samaritan woman was so overwhelmed by Jesus’ compassion that she immediately went to town and told the people what had happened to her.

One of the greatest mission fields in the world is the dechurched of America. The mission field of America is white and ready for harvest. And when we reach the dechurched for Christ, they will tell their friends. **E**

David Moore is director of the Intercultural Ministries Department, Assemblies of God Division of Home Missions, Springfield, Missouri.

BY DAVID MOORE

This unchurched group is open to religion if religion can help them solve their problems and address their most pressing needs.

S E R M O N S E E D S



INVITED TO A WEDDING

Matthew 22:1–14

INTRODUCTION:

To the multitude, to those who “sought to lay hands on him” (Matthew 21:46), to His disciples, and to believers today, Jesus spoke this parable of divine grace. Through the familiar and joyful features of a wedding, Jesus portrays the relationship between God and all humanity.

MESSAGE:

1. The fullness of God’s grace.

“A certain king, which made a marriage for his son...sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding” (verses 2,3).

2. The completeness of man’s rejection.

- a. “They would not come” (verse 3).
- b. “They made light of it” (verse 5).
- c. “The remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them” (verse 6).

3. The fierceness of God’s wrath.

“When the king heard thereof, he was wroth” (verse 7).

4. The wideness of God’s mercy.

“Go...and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants...gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good” (verses 9,10).

5. The brashness of man’s response.

“The king...saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment” (verse 11).

6. The anguish of man’s punishment.

“Cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (verse 13).

CONCLUSION:

God’s invitation to the wedding of His Son is going out. Each person must respond in one way or another. The wise will respond promptly and positively. Our eternal destiny—whether joy or judgment, salvation or sorrow, heaven or hell—is at stake.

—Warren D. Bullock
Reprinted from Advance.

THE WALK OF CIRCUMSPECTION

Ephesians 5:15–21

INTRODUCTION:

The word translated “walk” encompasses our whole lifestyle. The word translated “circumspectly” represents accuracy that is the result of carefulness. To walk circumspectly is to:

MESSAGE:

1. Walk with wisdom (5:15).

- a. Believers are to walk in wisdom toward those who are without (Colossians 4:5), being wise as serpents and harmless as doves (Matthew 10:16).
- b. Wisdom must come from God (Ezra 7:25). Solomon is one person who asked for wisdom and received it (1 Kings 3:5–13).

2. Redeem the time (5:16).

- a. Because of evil days and brevity of time, believers are to redeem time for such things as assembling together (Hebrew 10:25), emphasizing the acceptable time of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2), and doing good to all men (Galatians 6:10).
- b. Time should be spent in the fear of the Lord (1 Peter 1:17). Nehemiah knew how to use time (Nehemiah 6:3).

3. Understand the will of God (5:17).

- a. Understanding is needed concerning the believer’s entire lifetime, as in the case of Saul (Acts 9:15,16).
- b. Understanding of God’s will is also important concerning brief times of service, as in the case of Philip (Acts 8).

4. Be filled with the Spirit (5:18–21).

- a. Be filled with the Spirit makes acceptable worship possible (verses 19,20) and also results in right relationships among God’s people (verse 21).
- b. Pentecost resulted in 3,000 converts and fellowship among believers (Acts 2:41,42).

CONCLUSION:

Because of the believer’s high calling, because of many temptations, and of responsibility to the unsaved, the believer must walk circumspectly, that is, live a life of accuracy.

—Hardy W. Steinberg

FOUR THINGS GOD NEEDS

MESSAGE:

1. Men and women with vision.

(Proverbs 29:18; Isaiah 6)

2. Men and women with power.

(Matthew 10:1; Acts 1:8)

3. Men and women with courage.

(Joshua 1:5,6; 10:25)

4. Men and women who are not ashamed.

(Romans 1:16; 2 Timothy 1:12)

—Arthur Phelps
Reprinted from Advance.

S E R M O N S E E D S



LOT'S THREE DWELLINGS

Psalm 90:1

INTRODUCTION:

In the beginning, Lot evidently made the Lord his dwelling place, but Lot failed to maintain this relationship with God. By studying Lot's earthly residences we may learn something about his spiritual life. He moved from a tent to a house and finally to a cave.

MESSAGE:

1. Lot's tent (Genesis 12:4).

- a. Lot chose to forsake the comforts and security of Ur of the Chaldees and venture out with Abram to follow a spiritual vision.
- b. Lot chose Jehovah over idols. He preferred the "city which hath foundations" over the temporal dwellings of stone and clay.
- c. He embraced the life of a pilgrim and dwelled in tents. He realized that those who plan to make heaven their home are "strangers and pilgrims" on earth.
 - (1) "These...confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims" (Hebrews 11:13).
 - (2) "As strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts" (1 Peter 2:11).

2. Lot's house (Genesis 13:12; 14:12; 19:1).

- a. There was a subtle change from tent to house. It was a gradual process.
 - (1) As a ship without a disciplined crew may drift into danger, Lot drifted.
 - (2) Eventually he settled among the ungodly and lost the pilgrim vision.
- b. His house in Sodom speaks of earthly attachment.
 - (1) "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world" (1 John 2:15).
 - (2) "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Colossians 3:2).
 - (3) Many who are not tempted to gross sin may be drawn to materialism which may choke their spiritual life.

3. Lot's cave (Genesis 19:30).

- a. Lot feared to dwell in Zoar, so he dwelt in a cave. It was a sad decline of a once great man from respectability to ignominy.
 - (1) He lost opportunities to be an influence for God.
 - (2) He was left with only shattered dreams and regrets over wasted

years. John Greenleaf Whittier wrote in the ballad of Maude Muller: "Of all sad words of tongue or pen, The saddest are these: 'It might have been.'"

- b. Lot took his two daughters with him, and their lives were ruined as well as his own.
 - (1) Had Lot chosen a different course for his life, his daughters would have been better women.
 - (2) The sin of Lot and his daughters was a poor start for two large nations—the Moabites and the Ammonites (Genesis 19:37,38). The law of the harvest, based on the multiplication table, makes sin exceedingly sinful.

CONCLUSION:

Where do you dwell? In a tent? Then press on, O pilgrim. In a house? Then arise, and be separate: live in God's country. In a cave? Take courage: there is mercy for you if you will come to the Lord just as you are. Bring your ruined life to Him in genuine repentance and let Him salvage what is left.

—David Laquintano
Cresco, Pennsylvania

LIVING IN THE LIGHT OF FREEDOM

John 8:36; Galatians 5:1; 1 Peter 2:16; 1 John 1:7

INTRODUCTION:

God created man to be free, but sin produced slavery—spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical. The glory of the gospel is the freedom it brings to those who accept Christ.

MESSAGE:

1. Freedom from sin (1 John 1:7; John 8:36).

- a. Fellowship with God begins with our cleansing from sin.
- b. Cleansing from sin also brings us into fellowship with others who are living in the light.

c. In contrast to the false freedom promised by Satan, Jesus Christ makes us "free indeed."

2. Freedom can be lost (Galatians 5:1).

- a. We must practice daily discipline ("stand fast") to avoid being "entangled again."
- b. To lose our freedom would be to exchange Christ's gentle yoke (Matthew 11:30) for the yoke of bondage from which we were once delivered.

3. Freedom to serve God (1 Peter 2:16).

- a. Our spiritual freedom must not be used as a cover-up for sin. We have been made free to do the will of God, not indulge our fleshly desires.

b. Serving God involves maintaining the right relationship with others (1 Peter 2:11–15).

CONCLUSION:

Spiritual slavery and spiritual darkness are inseparably connected. Spiritual freedom brings us into the full light of God's grace and love. When we have received that freedom, we must guard it as carefully as citizens of a nation must guard their freedom against the efforts of those who desire to conquer and oppress them.

—Kenneth D. Barney
Springfield, Missouri



LOOKING AT GOD THE FATHER

Luke 15:11–24

MESSAGE:

1. Father of conviction.

The loving Father won't let you go far in your sins without making you miserable (Luke 15:14–17).

2. Father of compassion.

The young man knew what kind of father he had. Do we recognize the kind of Heavenly Father we have? (Luke 15:18–21).

3. Father of conversion.

Our Heavenly Father gives us a robe of righteousness (Luke 15:22–24).

—James Occhipinti
Reprinted from Advance.

THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST

INTRODUCTION:

1. The Rapture—Christ's return for His saints (John 14:3).
2. The Revelation—Christ's return with His saints (Jude 14).
3. The major differences:
 1. They differ in their purpose.
 2. They differ in their time.
 3. They differ in their place.

MESSAGE:

1. The blessed promise fulfilled.

- a. The promise of Christ.
 - (1) Christ, the promise maker:
 - (a) Promise to establish the Church (Matthew 16:18).
 - (b) Promise to empower the Church (Acts 1:8).
 - (c) Promise to emancipate the Church (John 14:3).
 - (2) Christ, the promise keeper.
 - (a) Paul described in 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17, the fulfillment of John 14.
- b. The promise of Scripture.
 - (1) "This same Jesus...shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).
 - (2) "For the coming of the Lord draweth nigh" (James 5:8).
 - (3) "Unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time" (Hebrews 9:28).

2. The blessed escape from wrath.

- a. Israel's appointment: Jacob's trouble

(Jeremiah 30:7).

- b. World's appointment: The wrath of the Lamb (Revelation 6:16).

- (1) World that then was perished with water (2 Peter 3:6).
- (2) World that now is, is reserved for fire (2 Peter 3:7).
- (3) World that is to come...righteousness dwells (2 Peter 3:13).

- c. Church's appointment: Salvation through the Lamb.

- (1) "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape" (Luke 21:36).
- (2) "Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come" (1 Thessalonians 1:10).
- (3) "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation" (1 Thessalonians 5:9).
- (4) "Because thou hast kept the word of patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation" (Revelation 3:10).

3. The blessed hope of glory.

- a. The hope of the Church is His appearing (Titus 2:13).
- b. The hope of the believer:
 - (1) Hope of deliverance from this present evil world (Galatians 1:4).
 - (2) Hope of deliverance from judgment to come (1 Thessalonians 1:10).
 - (3) Hope of deliverance from corruption (Romans 8:21,23).

- (4) Hope of being like Him (1 John 3:2).

CONCLUSION:

Are you ready for the return of Jesus Christ? To help you answer this question of eternal importance, ponder the following questions. If Jesus were to come at the conclusion of this service:

1. Would you need to change your lifestyle?
2. Would you need to change your thought life?
3. Would you need to change the way you spend your time, money, and abilities?
4. Are your past sins under the blood of Christ?
5. Are you walking in Christ's light for present cleansing?
6. Will your possessions be an asset or a liability to you?
7. Have you failed to make things right with people?
8. Are there commandments of His that you have put off obeying, such as tithing, praying, studying the Bible, being filled with the Spirit, and witnessing?

Perhaps He has delayed His coming just to give you the opportunity to prepare your life for His return. There is room at the Cross today.

—James K. Bridges
Springfield, Missouri



THE SECOND "FOLLOW ME"

John 21:15–22

INTRODUCTION:

In comparing Jesus' first call of Simon Peter (Mark 1:16–20) with Peter's second call, there are several similarities:

- Both take place on the shore of the Sea of Galilee.
- Both are associated with a miraculous catch of fish.

It is as though the Lord was making a very specific point about Peter's call to discipleship. Jesus confirmed that His call to Peter did not terminate because of difficult circumstances or Peter's personal failure to keep his commitment. The Lord often gently reminds us of His love in spite of our weakness and failures.

But this is a call to a new level of discipleship and leadership in the Church. Although the Resurrection had taken place, the disciples were fearful and had returned to Galilee to escape the hostility of the religious leaders in Jerusalem. Peter (and six other disciples) returned to the security of their former occupation. It is here Christ revealed himself and spoke to Peter about his commitment. An examination of this passage will help us discover the meaning of this second "follow me."

MESSAGE:

1. Supreme love for Christ (verses 15–17).

- "Simon, lovest thou Me more than these?"
- More than...these other men love me?
 - (1) Peter had declared that he would never deny the Lord (Mark 14:27–31).
 - (2) Here Peter is not so quick to declare superior commitment.
 - (3) True love for Christ does not boast nor compare with others.
- More than...you love these men?
 - (1) Would you rather be leader

among these men or be My servant?

- (2) Disciples were constantly bickering over position.
 - (3) Jesus taught that we must "hate" (by comparison) father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters (Luke 14:26).
 - (4) We need to be careful that the approval of others is not more important than commitment to Christ.
 - d. More than...you love these things?
 - (1) Security of earthly possessions.
 - (2) You don't have to have money to love it.
 - e. We must be willing to abandon "comfort zones" of life, and love Christ supremely in every area of life.
- #### 2. Willful choosing of the cross (verses 18,19).
- a. Christ prophetically foretold the martyrdom of Peter.
 - b. The cross was the most shameful, humiliating form of death.
 - c. Choosing the "crucified life" is volitional, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12).
 - d. We should not be surprised at trials and suffering for the name of Christ (1 Peter 4:12, 13).
 - e. Words of caution.

- (1) Do not always live in Gethsemane. Settle the issue of surrender, live in joyful fulfillment of His will (Philippians 1:12,21; 4:13).
- (2) Do not assume that every difficulty is suffering for Christ. A chip on the shoulder must not be mistaken for a cross.
- (3) Choosing the cross is not to be feared or shunned. Jesus has promised to be with us "unto the end of the age." His grace is sufficient for every cross you bear.

f. To follow Christ means to "take up the cross...daily."

3. Absolute obedience to the will of God (verses 20–22).

- a. The will of God agrees with the Word of God and the Holy Spirit.
- b. Abraham's sacrificing of Isaac (Genesis 22).
 - (1) God's plan did not allow for human sacrifice.
 - (2) Abraham believed that God would raise the "promised son" from the dead (Hebrews 11:17–19).
- c. Our attitude toward the will of God is as important as being obedient to His will.
 - (1) Jonah obeyed, but was angry with God for not destroying Nineveh (Jonah 4).
 - (2) Peter had to adjust his thinking concerning ministry to Gentiles (Acts 10).
 - (3) Paul found his greatest delight in following Christ at any cost (Philippians 3).
- d. God's way is always best (James 1:17).
 - (1) Perfect (Psalm 18:30).
 - (2) Beyond human comprehension (Isaiah 55:8,9; Romans 11:33).
 - (3) Trustworthy (Proverbs 3:5,6).

CONCLUSION:

The story of Simon Peter reveals the patient love of Christ at work in each individual. However, His call today is equally dramatic. Christ is searching for men and women who love Him supremely, are willing to live the crucified life, and who will never be deterred from obedience to His will. Will you hear Christ's second "Follow Me"?

—Maurice Lednický
Springfield, Missouri



CAFÉ

Our young adult ministry is called Powerhouse, so we started the Powerhouse Café. This informal time once a quarter features mixer games, prize give-aways, humorous skits or homemade videos, and music (a live band or Christian music played through the sound system). We arrange 8 to 10 chairs in circles for small groups. We pre-arrange group leaders to ensure the success of the groups. Everyone wears a nametag. We provide beverages, and young adults sign up to bring food.

After I make introductory remarks, the small-group leaders take over. I only interrupt when I give away a prize. At the end of the night, I interview a young adult about how he or she came to know the Lord. The Powerhouse Café is a great entry point to our young adult ministry.

—Wayde Wilson, Hazleton, Pennsylvania

COFFEEHOUSE

The coffeehouse concept is popular among Gen Xers. One of our young ladies, who had been involved in the coffeehouse culture and was saved through our ministry, approached me about starting a coffeehouse. I encouraged her to form a brainstorm team, and they started Arise Coffeehouse.

Our young adults brought furniture and decorations, and they take care of food, beverages, sound system, and lighting.

Entertainment and community is the focus of the coffeehouse. They sometimes feature local Christian artists; at other times they have open mic night, featuring music, poetry, readings by anyone who signed up (screened ahead of time). The informal, interactive atmosphere along with the expressions of the artists/musicians speak to this generation.

—Wayde Wilson, Hazleton, Pennsylvania

COUCH POTATO OUTREACH

If eating nachos and watching football is your members' favorite pastime, there is a mission opportunity for your group. Sports fanaticism and snacks are a winning combination for offering hospitality to foreign students eager to understand more about American culture. An understanding of American football (and a proper respect for the _____[your favorite team]) are important to many college students. Foreign students will appreciate the education as well as the friendship. No special skills or training are needed to reach out to these students who have heard of Christianity, but may not have interacted in a meaningful way with any Christians.

—Steve Clinkscales, Littleton, Colorado.

Adapted from SAM Journal. Used with permission.

DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING SCHOOL

Discipleship Training School is a great way to develop a strong core of people who understand your vision. Several resources are available to conduct discipleship training.

Discipleship training can be conducted any night of the week. I conducted one using a 3-hour block of time each week. We used curriculum, book studies, guests, and small groups. To help bring spiritual change on a personal level, people stayed in the same small group the whole semester. Each small group had a leader who helped lead the group to spiritual growth.

Discipleship training schools help develop an exciting singles ministry. It provides a team who will commit to ministry together and develops loyalty and maturity.

—Steve Novotny, Tacoma, Washington

FAMILY-SENSITIVE PASTORING

How can we plan effective events and programs for families? It begins with a family-sensitive pastor.

Today's culture sometimes makes family life difficult, so be aware of the difficulties families are facing. Your solid teaching from the Word can help build strong families. Care about what your people care about. Be aware of their needs—not just the specific problems you hear about in the counseling office—but the general needs of your families.

A pastor's presence at community events where church families are involved speaks volumes. Attending school functions where your young people are involved tells them they are important.

—Nancie Carmichael, Sisters, Oregon

FELLOWSHIP—A CRUCIAL NEED FOR SINGLES

In a recent survey, our singles pastor asked, "What is the greatest need facing singles?" Over 95 percent said fellowship.

Centers for adult activities in our city consist of one bowling alley, a skating rink, and several bars. Though our single adults love church and teaching and are faithful in attendance, they need fellowship. Not only was fellowship with other Christian singles difficult to find, child care and a limited income complicated it.

Our singles ministry sponsored a singles-family campout. Over 60 single adults and children came. There was no charge. Each family brought their own food. We played dominoes and other games, while some singles spent time alone with their children. This trip affirmed the need for a monthly fellowship for singles and their children.

Friday night services were formerly for preaching/teaching. Preaching/teaching are provided on Sundays, Wednesdays, and in the weekly meetings. Friday nights are now dedicated to fellowship. We provide child care with activities for the children. The 3-hour fellowship time includes games and opportunities for talking.

—T. Suzanne Eller, Muskogee, Oklahoma



FINDING THE LOVE OF YOUR LIFE SEMINAR

This seminar has been successful in helping young adults discover biblical principles for dating and marriage. I publicize this as a seminar on discovering the love of your life. I use the book *Finding the Love of Your Life*. This 4-week seminar has also become an opportunity for evangelism because it draws new people to the church. I talk about Jesus Christ as Lord of our lives and His part in the dating process.

—Steve Novotny, Tacoma, Washington

LEADERSHIP TEAMS

One danger in leadership is the desire to control because we want things done our way. But one of the best ways to plan and conduct single-adult activities is with a leadership team. I learned this the hard way after my first retreat where I did everything, while capable single adults looked on.

My team is built with a variety of people who care about single adults—some who have never been married, and those who are married, widowed, or divorced. We meet biweekly to plan our single adult ministry. We pray, assign responsibilities, and allow single adults use their God-given gifts.

—Rhonda Amer, Springfield, Missouri

NETWORKING

Even though we have an active single adult ministry, some of our singles desired more relationships with other single adults. They wanted to meet more Christian singles. We started networking with other churches.

We called several churches in our city to see if they had the same challenges in their ministries. Response was positive. Within days, we formed a leadership team that united several churches (and denominations) with a common goal: providing single adults in our city additional opportunities to fulfill their social and spiritual needs.

We started with social events. This also provided a place where single adults could invite unsaved friends to a nonthreatening environment. From these events we are seeing walls break down between people, churches, and denominations.

Church size has not been a barrier; we each come with ideas, and we leave with increased wisdom from the knowledge we share with one another.

—Rhonda Amer, Springfield, Missouri

VALENTINE PRESCRIPTION FOR BROKEN HEARTS

Valentine's Day is tough for most singles. Staring at flowers sent to coworkers makes this holiday a teeth-clenching event. Watching starry-eyed lovers eat their Valentine's meal can extinguish the most hearty appetite. Make Valentine's Day special for your singles.

Many discount stores are willing to give their returns or left-over sales items to single-adult ministries. (Some stores will ask for a letter from your church with the Federal ID number.) Collect boxes of these items each week and store them until February. Then assemble special Valentine gifts for your members. Here's how you do it.

In the week before Valentine's Day, bake banana bread in heart-shaped pans. (This might be a way to have other church members involved with single-adult ministry.)

Fill a large basket with perfume, cologne, household goods, or any other item single adults might like. Have one basket for men and another basket for women.

Pack a paper bag for each person filled with the following: one of the donated items, a book of interest to single adults, the banana bread, a personal message from the church's leadership, a Bible verse expressing God's special love for single adults.

At your meeting just prior to Valentine's Day, pass out the paper gift bags, followed by the men's and women's basket. Let each person choose a personal gift from the basket.

Make sure your message communicates that single adults are not only special to the church's leadership, but that God's thoughts and love are always turned toward them.

—Scoti Springfield Domeji, Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Adapted from SAM Journal. Used with permission.

SINGLES MINISTRY OUTREACHES

Singles ministry can be used to draw together the four main singles groupings—college age, career age, divorced, and seasoned singles. When I led a singles ministry, I had activities for each group, and activities where these groups worked together.

Every year we have outreaches to the poor in our community. One program uses church members to paint houses for retired people—many of them shut-ins. This brings singles groups together to do something that has meaning and also provides fellowship.

Once a year our church collects clothes and food for families in need. This is an opportunity to share the gospel. Our single-adult band sings, and we also invite other churches with good music programs to minister. These events are fun, and they have become a way for our singles groups to work together.

—Steve Novotny, Tacoma, Washington

SEND US YOUR IDEAS

Enrichment will pay up to \$50 for each published account of a program idea. Send your ideas, along with a detailed description, to: Ministry Ideas, *Enrichment* Journal, 1445 Boonville Ave., Springfield, MO 65802-1894.

E-mail: You may send your ministry ideas to: enrichment@ag.org.



AUTHOR-FATHER

Christopher Robin Milne died in England in the spring of 1996. His father, the famed children's author A.A. Milne, named the lead character in his numerous Winnie the Pooh books after his little son.

According to the younger Milne's obituary, his author-father actually spent little time with Christopher. He was too busy making other children happy through his prolific writing. Tragically, Christopher Milne died in his seventies hating his famous father, all because his father didn't practice what he had so eloquently communicated on paper.

Paul wrote to the fathers in the church in Colosse, "Do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged" (Colossians 3:21, NIV).

—Greg Asimakoupoulos, Naperville, Illinois.

Adapted from an article in The Daily Herald Newspaper.

FACTS, FAITH, AND FEELINGS

An airline pilot tells about a pilot-training trick. The pilot sits in a swivel chair, arms folded, feet off the ground, and eyes blindfolded. Someone spins the chair and the pilot guesses which way he is being turned and tells when he has stopped moving.

The pilot never guesses right. The fluid in his ear canal distorts his balance and perception. The lesson is clear—there are times when your senses tell you one thing and your instruments another. Believe the instruments.

As a Christian, there will be occasions when your senses tell you to panic and run, but God tells you to stand still. Part of growing in God is learning to trust His judgments and not your own.

—Robert L. Neuman, Lansing, Illinois

BUILDING A MEMORIAL TO GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

Just south of the Wisconsin border on State Highway 47 lies the small town of Hebron, Illinois. Hebron's unmistakable landmark is a sphere-shaped water tower painted to resemble a giant basketball. Closer examination reveals the reason for this unusual landmark. The lettering on the tower boasts: 1952 State Basketball Champions.

Forty-eight years ago high schools were not rated according to student body size or community population. Small schools played schools their size as well as much larger ones. With a team whose roster numbered less than 10 players, Hebron's statewide championship was a once-in-a-lifetime achievement. No wonder the people of Hebron

decided such a remarkable feat should be remembered.

Ironically, this Illinois town is named after a town in Genesis 13. At Hebron, Abraham erected an altar of stones to celebrate God's power to achieve among His people what the surrounding nations thought impossible. Much like the giant basketball tower, Abraham's vertical pile of boulders reminded following generations that something out of the ordinary had happened. The Old Testament is replete with memorials to God's faithfulness.

Because we need visual aids to help recall what might be forgotten, Jesus also built a "tower" to celebrate God's victory over sin. We call it the Lord's Supper.

—Greg Asimakoupoulos, Naperville, Illinois

A FAMOUS FATHER

Dear Ann Landers:

A great man died today. He wasn't a world leader, a famous doctor, a war hero, or a sports figure. He was no business tycoon, and you will never see his name in the financial pages. But he was one of the greatest men who ever lived. He was my father.

I guess you might say he was a person who was never interested in getting credit or receiving honors. He did corny things like pay his bills on time, go to church on Sunday, and serve as an officer in the PTA. He helped his kids with their homework and drove his wife to do the grocery shopping. He got a great kick out of hauling his teenagers and their friends to and from football games.

Tonight is my first night without him. I don't know what to do with myself, so I am writing to you, Ann. I am sorry now for the times I didn't show him the proper respect. But I am grateful for a lot of other things.

I am thankful that God let me have my father for 15 years. And I am happy that I was able to let him know how much I loved him. That wonderful man died with a smile on his face and fulfillment in his heart. He knew he was a great success as a husband and a father, a brother, a son, and a friend. I wonder how many millionaires can say that.

15 Years Old & Lonely

What a wonderful tribute. When was the last time you expressed love to your father, mother, brother, sister, or anybody who has impacted your life? When life is over, the only things that are important are the relationships we made while alive. Express appreciation before it's too late.

—Robert Strand, Springfield, Missouri.

Adapted from his book, Moments for Teens.



FREEDOM

On my way home from work, I frequently see a large truck with about 200 live chickens onboard. The chickens stacked row upon row are on their way to be slaughtered. They are trapped in little wire cubicles that give them little freedom to move. I've seen them on stifling, hot summer days and thought, *What a confined, dirty, smelly final journey—and they are oblivious to their destination.* They are not alone, but that doesn't make their journey more bearable. At times I've imagined what it would be like to set the chickens free. I quickly dismiss the thought because I would have to pay a big price since they belong to someone else.

People who are not living for the Lord are on a similar chicken-truck journey. They are imprisoned by bad habits and sin that make their ride through life dirty and smelly. Their lives belong to the prince of this world, Satan, and they are by no means alone. Unaware of their final destination, they're oblivious to their fate—an eternity in hell.

Jesus is the only one who can set people free. First Corinthians 6 indicates He has paid the price. Romans 8:2 says, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." There is liberty and freedom in Christ Jesus.

—Diane Fulks, Springfield, Missouri

NOVEL ILLUSTRATES GOD'S SACRIFICE

In the novel *Les Misérables*, an ex-convict took the name Monsieur Madeleine Jean Valjean, and found anonymity in the small French village of Montreuil sur-mer. His innovative skills made him rich and he became the mayor of the town. Javert, a detective who had searched for Valjean for years, became inspector, the chief lawman for the town. He was intrigued with the mayor, noticing something familiar about him.

A third person, elderly Fauchelevent, brings the scene to a dramatic climax. His once-thriving business has been brought to ruin by the mayor's success. Jealousy of the mayor has become hatred. The aged man brings his heavily loaded cart into town, on the main street, now deep in mud because of recent rains. Tragedy strikes when the horse slips and falls, and the driver is caught between the two wheels. The cart begins to sink in the quagmire, and the old man will be crushed to death. Javert happens along, the mayor has also come upon the scene, and a crowd watches in horror.

Someone speaks: "If only someone could get down beside the man and lift the cart a little, we could pull the poor man out."

Javert seizes the opportunity to confirm his suspicions. Looking steadily at Valjean, he said, "I knew of only one man

in my lifetime strong enough to do that—but he was a convict."

As the cart settles further, the victim cries out, "Help me, I'm dying!"

Then Jean Valjean, the former convict, looking steadily into Javert's eyes, removes his coat. With a supreme effort, he shoves the cart up enough for men to pull the old man to safety.

This is a remarkable illustration what the Son of God did for us. Humanity was helpless and hopeless. In the mire of sin, crushed beneath the burden of its horrible effects. Worst of all, we were a foe of the only One who could rescue us.

But someone was watching. Someone strong enough. Someone who loved us enough to sacrifice himself. There was a terrible price to pay—not only the physical torture, but identifying with sin-burdened and doomed humanity and lifting us from sin, sickness, and sorrow.

—Ralph Harris, Springfield, Missouri.

Adapted from the Springfield NewsLeader.

SEEING THE BIG PICTURE

A leader is to help people see the big picture. Churches are filled with people who are frustrated, passionless, and burned out. One of the cures to these problems is to cast a vision of the big picture. The following may be helpful.

One day a young man, walking down a road, came upon a laborer fiercely pounding away at a stone with a hammer and chisel. "What are you doing?"

The laborer answered in a pained voice: "I'm trying to shape this stone, and it is backbreaking work."

The youth came upon another man chipping away at a similar stone, "What are you doing?" the young man asked.

"I'm shaping a stone for a building."

The young man came to a third worker chipping away at a stone, but this worker was singing happily as he worked. "What are you doing?" the young man asked.

The worker smiled and replied, "I'm building a cathedral."

People must constantly be reminded that they are not just changing diapers, cutting the grass, or driving a bus—they are building a Kingdom.

—Kenneth Pagano, Garfield, Kentucky. Adapted from "Why Do We Work" by Brian Dumaine in *Fortune*, December 26, 1994.

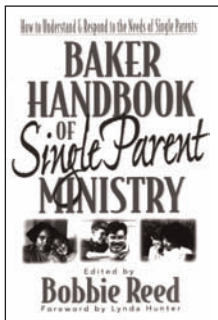
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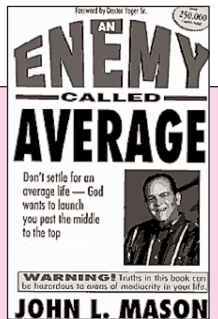
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Mary Welchel
(Baker, 158 pp.,
hardback, \$10.99)



Edited and compiled
by Bobbie Reed
(Baker, 304 pp.,
hardback, \$18.75)



ocurity and becoming stale in his or her life and thinking. This book would also make a great graduation gift for students.

One of my favorite topics was, "We can grow by our questions as well as by our answers." The author encouraged the reader to ask:

What one decision would I make if I knew it would not fail?

What one thing should I eliminate from my life because it holds me back from reaching my full potential?

Am I on the path of something absolutely marvelous, or something absolutely mediocre?

Does the devil know who I am?

Read the book to discover the other 16 questions to keep you from the enemy called average.

—Reviewed by Donna L. Barrett, Parma, Ohio.

Common Mistakes Singles Make

Mary Welchel (Baker, 158 pp., hardback, \$10.99)

Common Mistakes Singles Make is directed primarily to single adults and secondarily to married adults. This book brings to light the mistakes single adults make in their attitudes and behavior toward marriage, the opposite sex, dating, friends, married adults, family, career, lifestyles, and spiritual life. Welchel's observations and opinions are helpful to single adults of all ages because, by identifying these mistakes, people can understand themselves and see their need for personal growth.

The author also helps married adults understand single and single-again adults. As a married adult myself, and having worked with single adults for 20 years, I agree with most of her ideas and wish that more marrieds could at least read the chapter that addresses the attitudes of married adults towards singles.

Welchel speaks from personal experience with the understanding of the single lifestyle, the married lifestyle, and the single-again lifestyle. Out of her personal life, as well as varied ministry opportunities, she has dealt with many people in counseling and relating to the issues they face. She backs her

thoughts with Scripture and also finds her thoughts from Scripture.

This book will help the reader understand the hurts, needs, and issues of the single and single-again person. I recommend it for those involved in singles ministry and for single and married adults of all ages.

—Reviewed by Dennis Franck,
Valley Christian Center, Dublin, California.

Baker Handbook of Single Parent Ministry

Edited and compiled by Bobbie Reed (Baker, 304 pp., hardback, \$18.75)

Baker Handbook of Single Parent Ministry is a companion volume to *Baker Handbook of Single Adult Ministry*. Each of the book's 28 chapters is written by one of the 28 experienced single-adult ministry practitioners who contributed to this work. Among the contributors are Harold Ivan Smith, Craig Caster, Douglas James Dees, Dick Innes, and Doug Rohde.

The book is divided into three general categories: the challenges of single parenting; the challenges for children of single parents; and the challenges for ministry with single parents and their children.

The value of this book includes the scope of issues addressed, the insights given from people who do singles ministry, and the practical suggestions to help the reader address the challenges faced by this complex group of individuals.

I recommend this book to senior pastors and layworkers who wish to better understand the unique issues involved in the single-parent family, and anyone involved in ministry to single parents. Years of experience and attempts to minister to singles and their children are distilled in this book.

Baker Handbook of Single Parent Ministry is designed to inform, but it will also motivate readers to reach out to the single parent and his or her children with practical acts of love.

—Reviewed by Clancy P. Hayes,
adult ministries consultant, Sunday School
Promotion and Training Department,
Springfield, Missouri.

Ministering to Today's Adults

Kenn Gangel (Word Publishing, 307 pp., hardback, \$24.99)

Ministering to Today's Adults is a practical work designed for the seasoned adult educator as well as the newcomer to the field. Gangel covers a wide range of topics in 25 well-planned chapters divided into 4 main sections.

The first section deals with the philosophical, educational, and biblical foundations for adult education. The highlight of this section is Gangel's insight regarding the differences between teaching children and adults. He emphasizes that the techniques and assumptions used by children's workers will not reap successful results with adults.

The second section of the book helps the reader identify the difference between the various age groupings within the broad category labeled "adult." GenXers, Busters, Boomers, and Seniors all have unique needs that must be recognized and addressed if adult ministry is to be effective.

The third segment of the book deals with the application of material to the student's daily life. Gangel concentrates on family outcomes by suggesting ways students can transfer their learning to the home.

The final segment of the book deals with the selection of curriculum, the settings for adult education, and cooperative learning techniques.

One of the most helpful aspects of the book is Gangel's use of diagrams and tables. The author captures the essence of his discussion in these illustrative devices.

Ministering to Today's Adults is a book every teacher or leader of adults will benefit from reading.

—Reviewed by Clancy P. Hayes,
adult ministries consultant, Sunday
School Promotion and Training
Department, Springfield, Missouri.

Power Encounter: a Pentecostal Perspective

Revised Edition, edited by Opal Reddin, D.Min. (Central Bible College Press, 362 pp., paperback, \$15.99)

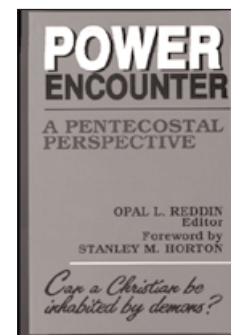
The first edition of *Power Encounter* came at a time in Pentecostal history when Pentecostal and charismatic churches were being inundated with teaching on spiritual warfare with an unprecedented amount of attention to Satan and the world of principalities, powers, and rulers of the darkness. Much of this material went beyond Scripture. *Power Encounter* presented a sound biblical basis for understanding spiritual warfare. The current revision has added two chapters to address the growing doctrinal error and unscriptural practices that continue to plague the church.

Chapter 10 corrects erroneous teachings regarding: "Generation Curses, Strongholds, Binding and Loosing, and Deliverance Ministry." Citing the Scriptures used by those who teach such errors, Opal Reddin shows the flawed hermeneutics used to promote such teaching and leads the reader away from the pitfalls of false doctrine.

Chapter 11 is titled, "Encountering



Kenn Gangel (Word Publishing, 307 pp., hardback, \$24.99)



*Revised Edition, edited by
Opal Reddin, D.Min.,
(Central Bible College Press,
362 pp., paperback, \$15.99)*

How To Build a Life-Changing Men's Ministry

Steve Sonderman (Bethany House, 240 pp., paperback, \$12.99)

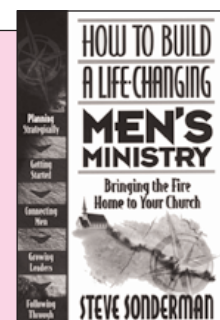
Sonderman's book is a must read for building an effective men's ministry. His straightforward principles, ideas, and guidelines can be used to develop a quality men's ministry in a local church.

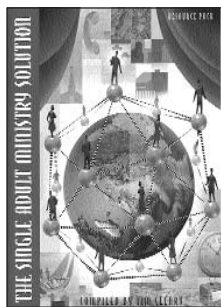
Sonderman stresses two significant keys for developing an effective men's ministry: good pastoral leadership and the careful selection of men for the leadership team. "The guy we are aiming for has four characteristics: integrity, intimacy, identity, and influence." He lists several other qualities that are resident in leaders, as well as sample job descriptions and working models.

This book shares some important ingredients for building a church's philosophy, setting goals for men's ministry, principles for men's ministry, and how to minister in the male context in a way that attracts men's involvement. Several models of successful men's ministry are given as well.

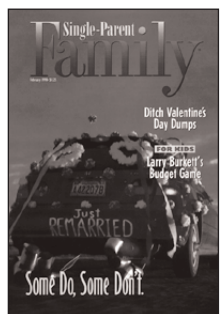
This book is part of the HonorBound Start-Up Kit.

—Reviewed by Jeff Swaim, Springfield, Missouri.

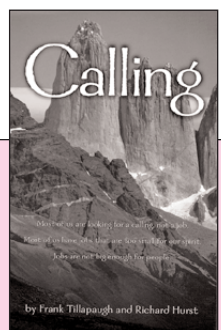




Compiled by Tim Cleary (LifeWay Press, \$39.95)



(Focus on the Family, 24 pp., \$15 per year USA)



Territorial Spirits." From a wealth of training and experience, Charles Harris, Ed.D., exposes the carnal imagination that conceives the spiritual mapping and territorial staking that are more related to pagan theology than the Bible. The author measures the current teachings against the truth of God's Word. He also declares the Bible's sufficiency to provide a power ministry for today. One need not go outside Scripture for training.

Because of the popularity of such erroneous teachings and practices in the church today, every minister and believer needs to read the revised version of *Power Encounter*. This book will bring a balanced Pentecostal lifestyle and ministry.

—Reviewed by James K. Bridges, general treasurer of the Assemblies of God, Springfield, Missouri.

The Single Adult Ministry Solution

Compiled by Tim Cleary (LifeWay Press, \$39.95)

The Single Adult Ministry Solution provides a wealth of field-tested information for single-adult ministry. This resource pack contains six audiotapes, a book, and a leader's manual.

Calling

Frank Tillapaugh and Richard Hurst (Dreamtime Publishing, 147 pp., paperback, \$14.95)

Why do only 20 percent of the people do ministry? Are the other 80 percent lazy or do they lack empowerment?

Tillapaugh and Hurst suggest that laity are not given permis-

sion by church leadership to do what God has called them to do.

Addressing the top down ministry philosophy, *Calling* challenges the church to emphasize growth of the Kingdom. Empowering the 80 percent can get messy, but that's to be expected with expanding the Kingdom.

Though extreme with some suggestions, such as conducting singles classes in a bar, Tillapaugh and Hurst respect the right of each congregation to hold its absolutes while stretching its vision and outreach. Allowing people to fail or succeed takes the burden off paid ministers and allows it to be shared by people with talents and resources suited for building the Kingdom.

Calling can be a valuable tool for those who have a burden to evangelize people in the marketplace and are willing to utilize the gifts of all Christians.

—Reviewed by Fannie Mae Hall, Sunday School Curriculum and Literature, Springfield, Missouri.

The audiotapes are produced in a professional manner and use an interview format. Some of the best-known singles leaders today discuss topics such as strategies for starting a singles ministry, the importance of a singles Sunday school class and small group ministries, issues of counseling and support groups, and various issues unique to the paid singles leader versus a volunteer leader.

The book, *Start a Revolution* by Stephen Felts, is designed to help a singles leader develop a ministry that will last. He emphasizes the importance of knowing your personality type and your ministry gifts, allowing those things to direct the ministry you lead. Team building and people building are highlighted in the book.

The leader's manual is an overview of singles ministries and draws from the wisdom of George Barna, Ken Brumley, Rich Hurst, Harold Ivan Smith, and Carolyn Koons. Issues such as leadership models, empowering singles, incorporating singles into the life of the church, and developing fresh ideas are explored.

The single adult ministry pack is Southern Baptist in its orientation and refers to Southern Baptist programs, phone numbers, and product lines. The original material was published in 1996 and some of the information might be slightly dated.

Overall, this is excellent information for those who are ministering to singles. It is well worth the money and will help avoid some of the pitfalls associated with ministry to singles.

—Reviewed by Clancy P. Hayes, adult ministries consultant, Sunday School Promotion and Training Department, Springfield, Missouri.

Single-Parent Family Magazine

(Focus on the Family, 24 pp., \$15 per year USA)

Single-Parent Family is a quality resource produced by Focus on the Family. This

B O O K R E V I E W S

monthly magazine addresses the concerns of unmarried adults who are raising children alone.

While relentlessly positive, this magazine does not sugarcoat the issues these families face. One month the magazine handled the delicate subject of remarriage by presenting the stories of two single parents, one who decided to remarry, and the other who declined. Using this autobiographical method, the editors examined a difficult question with honesty and respect in a way that would help single adults reach healthy conclusions for their own lives.

The variety and practicality of *Single-Parent Family* also adds to its usefulness for the unmarried parent. Articles cover themes such as teaching financial management to children, parenting strategies for teens, and dealing with loneliness. The periodical uses contributors such as finance expert Larry Burkett (and others) to maintain the caliber of the magazine.

Single-Parent Family would be a valuable addition to any church, single-adult ministry, or parent raising children alone.

—Reviewed by Earl Creps, senior pastor,
Calvary Temple, Springfield, Missouri.

Successful Single Parenting

Gary Richmond (Harvest House, 256 pp., paperback, \$9.99)

In a society plagued by divorce, single parenting is no longer an occasional topic. There are probably several single parents in your church who are confronted with this challenge.

Tony Richmond, a pastor to single parents at the Evangelical Free Church in Fullerton, California, offers hope and encouragement to the single parent through biblically based truths as he helps equip parents to deal with the issues in a single-parent home.

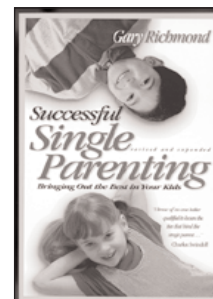
After addressing the areas where the parent may struggle—anger, loneliness,

rejection, and failure—Richmond discusses the needs of the children. Acknowledging that divorce will affect them for a lifetime, he shows the importance of getting beyond us and focusing on them.

Topics in this book range from finance, immorality, custody, behavior, and a chapter on difficult questions that will arise throughout the course of this journey. The author never discounts the parent's continual healing process.

The author has years of experience working with the single-parent family, which makes this book perfect not only for the parent, but also for those involved in a supportive role to the family.

—Reviewed by Rhonda Amer,
singles pastor, Calvary Temple,
Springfield, Missouri.



Gary Richmond
(Harvest House,
256 pp., paperback,
\$9.99)

A S E R V I C E

Enrichment reviews books we feel our readers would like to know about. These books are not always in accord with our point of view, and the reviews do not constitute a recommendation of the books. As a service to readers the Gospel Publishing House will supply any of these books, but books cannot be returned for credit.

The Hidden Mission Field

Theresa McKenna (Winepress Publishing, 155 pp., paperback, \$12.95)

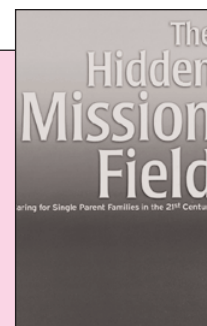
Theresa McKenna writes: "Single-parent families in the United States represent a mission field as large as the entire population of Central America. One-third of the families with children under the age of 18 are single-parent families, yet 95 percent of them do not attend church."

The church must ask, "Why do they not feel welcome?" and "How can we reach them?"

McKenna answers these questions and challenges the church. The Greek words for "widow" and "orphan" could include divorced and unwed mothers and their children. The church is commanded to care for them. We cannot ignore the Great Commission mandate for ministry to this hidden mission field.

The Hidden Mission Field provides practical how-to ideas for creating an effective single-parent family ministry utilizing every other ministry in the church. A caring, community missions outreach program will create unity in the body of believers and demonstrate God's unconditional love to others.

—Reviewed by Bonnie Denton,
Assemblies of God Foundation, Springfield, Missouri.



NEWS & RESOURCES

NATIONAL FINE ARTS FESTIVAL

The National Fine Arts Festival will be held Aug. 7–11, 2000, at the Indianapolis Convention Center, Indianapolis, Ind., in conjunction with 2000 Celebration. Students who receive a “Superior with Invitation” from their district qualify to attend. Registration is due to the National Fine Arts Festival office 4 weeks after the districts fine arts festival, and must be postmarked no later than June 16, 2000. No exceptions will be made to this deadline. For registration information, call 417-862-2781, or E-mail: faf@ag.org.

ASSEMBLIES OF GOD LAUNCHES A/G FINDER ONLINE CHURCH DIRECTORY

A comprehensive Assemblies of God church directory known as A/G Finder is now available online at: www.ag.org. This new service allows Internet users to search the directory by name, city, state, zip code, area code, or district. A/G Finder also lists A/G colleges, universities,

institutions, and districts. The directory is updated weekly from the General Council's official list of churches and institutions.

Every church in the Assemblies of God is listed in the A/G Finder directory with street address and phone number. This new service also gives churches the opportunity to join the Assemblies of God's official presence on the Internet with an enhanced page feature. The enhanced page service allows churches to create and maintain their own customized page in the A/G Finder directory. A pastor can enhance his or her church's basic listing with a full-color photo, existing web site address, staff listing, and a greeting or a list of the church's programs. There is also a map feature linked to MapQuest, a third-party mapping service, to provide directions to the church. Two additional features include an alias web address at: yourchurch.agchurches.org, and an E-mail forwarding address at: yourchurch@agmail.org.

To see a sample page, visit: <http://praiseassembly.agchurches.org/>. To upgrade a church's service, click on the “Upgrade Listing” link in the left column and follow the instructions. An enhanced listing costs \$60 per year and is charged to the church's GPH account.

If a church already has an Internet web site, the enhanced page can direct visitors using the A/G Finder to the church's existing web site. If a church is not on the Internet, A/G Finder is an affordable opportunity to develop an Internet presence as part of the Assemblies of God online community. For churches without access to the Internet, a page setup service is also available for a small fee. For more information visit: <http://agfinder.org>, or E-mail: support@agmail.org.

NATIONAL BIBLE QUIZ FINALS

The National Bible Quiz finals will be held July 9–14. For further information, contact the national Bible Quiz office at 417-862-2781, ext. 4034.

BENEVOLENCES CHRISTMAS OFFERING SCHEDULED FOR JULY 30

July is not too early to start Christmas shopping, especially for the Benevolences Department family. The department will soon be preparing Christmas packages for the young women and babies at Highlands Child Placement Services and Maternity Home, the boys and girls at Hillcrest Children's Home, and the nearly 500 aged ministers and spouses. Your offering or gifts sent to the Benevolences Department in Springfield, Mo., will help give them a merry Christmas.

Christmas needs lists for these ministries are available by checking #1 on the Reader Service Card.

AUGUST 13 IS HILLCREST BACK-TO-SCHOOL DAY

Like all families with school-age children, Hillcrest will need to purchase clothing, shoes, and supplies for their boys and girls returning to school. Your church or church groups can help with a Hillcrest back-to-school offering on Sunday, Aug. 13, or by purchasing back-to-school items for Hillcrest's children. A Hillcrest back-to-school needs list is available by checking #9 on the Reader Service Card.

DAD'S COACHING CLINIC

HonorBound: Men of Promise has developed a seminar for fathers—Dad's Coaching Clinic. HonorBound wants to help fathers make their families a winning team by giving fathers the tools and confidence-building skills they need.

Why a clinic for dads? We are living with an epidemic that is tearing our nation apart. It is as destructive as drug abuse, crime, AIDS, communism, or any other concern that impacts the well-being of all Americans. The epidemic is the "Absentee Father."

A fact-finding report by the California governor's office revealed the following:

(Source: *California Governor's Focus on Fathers Summit Burbank, Calif., June 13, 1995.*)

- 85 percent of all children who exhibit behavioral disorders come from fatherless homes.
- 90 percent of all homeless and runaway children are from fatherless homes.
- 71 percent of all high school dropouts come from fatherless homes.
- 75 percent of all adolescent patients in chemical abuse centers come from fatherless homes.
- 63 percent of youth suicides are from fatherless homes.

• 80 percent of rapists motivated with displaced anger come from fatherless homes.

• 70 percent of juveniles in state-operated institutions come from fatherless homes.

• 85 percent of all youths in prison grew up in a fatherless home.

• 71 percent of teenage pregnancies are to children of single parents.

• Daughters of single parents are 2.1 times more likely to have children during their teenage years than are daughters from intact families.

• Nearly 75 percent of American children living in single-parent families will experience poverty before they turn 11. Only 20 percent in two-parent families will experience poverty.

Dad's Coaching Clinic is not designed to tell fathers what they are doing wrong. Instead, dads receive pointers through practical, easy-to-do steps and principles. The clinic illustrates coaching tips and principles from the lives of famous coaches and athletes. Each session is packed with practical discussion that allows men to develop relationships with other fathers. With this method, HonorBound hopes to build communities of dads who have caring relationships with one another.

The goal of HonorBound is to empower each district to equip local churches to conduct a Dad's Coaching Clinic in their own communities. Unlike other seminars for fathers that require an outside speaker and travel expenses, this seminar is cost-effective. It can also be tailor-made by a church staff to fit any community. HonorBound encourages churches to hold these clinics two to three times per year.

To learn how you can launch the Dad's Coaching Clinic in your district, call HonorBound at: 417-862-1447, ext. 4169, or 4168.

WORSHIP CASSETTES AND CDS

HonorBound: Men of Promise announces its two new worship tapes and CDs for men. The first, *Raise An Army*, is the theme of the HonorBound Men's Conferences for 1999–2000. The second is, *Take the Nations*. The worship music on these tapes and CDs has been helpful in men's meetings and conventions across the country. Each cassette is \$11.95, the CD is \$15.95, and a music book is \$15. These items are available through HonorBound. To order, call 1-877-246-6672 or check #10 on the Reader Service Card and indicate quantity.

NEW PRESIDENT APPOINTED TO LABI-CA

Isaac J. Canales, Ph.D., has been appointed president of the Latin American Bible Institute-CA (La Puente, Calif.). Dr. Canales received his B.A. in religion from Vanguard University (Costa Mesa, Calif.) and his M.Div. at Harvard. He obtained his Ph.D. in New Testament at Fuller Theological Seminary. Canales served on staff at Fuller for 20 years, most recently as director of the Hispanic Church Studies Department and as assistant professor of New Testament.

Dr. Canales, an Assemblies of God minister, will also continue as senior pastor of the Misión Eben-Ezer Family Church (Carson, Calif.), a dynamic 1,500-member urban ministry.

"I believe the preparation of our youth for ministry in the face of new global realities should be a priority," Canales said. "Together we can help LABI take its proper place among the great Bible schools of our time. We can nurture and mentor future generations of youth with a Christ-centered education in the best of our bilingual Pentecostal tradition."

NEWS & RESOURCES

Canales and his wife, Ritha, have three sons.

Former president Simon Melendres, Jr., served LABI-CA from 1987–99. He returned to pastoring in southern California. LABI-CA is one of 18 endorsed A/G postsecondary schools.

VALLEY FORGE CHRISTIAN COLLEGE RECEIVES CANDIDATE STATUS

The Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools (MSA) granted candidate status to Valley Forge Christian College (Phoenixville, Pa.) on June 30, 1999. Dr. Don Meyer, VFCC president, said, "We are excited about this milestone in the history of our college. This affirms our ongoing commitment to excellence across the entire campus."

Candidacy is the second step of a three-step accreditation process. The college will now begin working toward initial accreditation, the final step in the process. For students, credits from accredited institutions are more easily

transferred. Dr. Philip McLeod, academic vice president, notes, "Candidacy also helps VFCC in developing new programs such as state approval for public school teacher certification."

Valley Forge has been accredited with the Accrediting Association of Bible Colleges (AABC) since 1967. VFCC is one of 18 endorsed A/G postsecondary schools.

ZION BIBLE INSTITUTE ACHIEVES CANDIDATE STATUS WITH A/G

The Executive Committee of the Assemblies of God Commission on Christian Higher Education (COCHE) approved Zion Bible Institute (Barrington, R.I.) for candidate status with the Commission on July 27, 1999. This is the first official step toward full Assemblies of God endorsement.

Christian A. Gibson, a young minister from British Guyana, started Zion Bible Institute in the fall of 1924, with approximately 12 students. The purpose of the institute, both then and now, is "to train men and women to carry the gospel to the

four corners of the earth." Student enrollment for fall 1999 was 417. Today, Zion is one of the oldest Pentecostal Bible training centers in existence.

In 1994, the Board of Governors for Higher Education in Rhode Island approved Zion to become a 4-year, baccalaureate degree-granting institute. Zion is an applicant for accreditation from the Accrediting Association of Bible Colleges (AABC).

Membership in the Commission requires a college to be owned/controlled by a district council of the Assemblies of God. In session, May 11, 1999, the Southern New England District Council of the Assemblies of God voted unanimously to become the governing body of Zion Bible Institute.

Wayne Kraiss, COCHE commissioner, said, "It is wonderful the way Valley Forge Christian College (Phoenixville, Pa.) and the surrounding districts have supported the inclusion of Zion as an A/G school. The unselfish cooperation demonstrated reads like a chapter from the Book of Acts."

Dr. N. Benjamin Crandall has served as the college's president since 1985. From 1956 to 1958 he was Zion's vice president. From 1947 to 1952 he held the office of alumni president.

Crandall was awarded the "Literarium Doctor" by the California Graduate School of Theology in 1982. He has served on the A/G Committee for Home Missions and has founded seven churches.

Zion and Valley Forge are two of 18 endorsed A/G postsecondary schools.

SOUTHWESTERN NAMES BRIDGES PRESIDENT

Kermit S. Bridges, formerly vice president for University Advancement at Southwestern Assemblies of God University (Waxahachie, Tex.), will succeed President Delmer Guynes in May 2000.

Dr. Guynes served as SAGU president from 1982–84 and then again from 1991 until his retirement this May.

During the past 5 years, Bridges gave oversight to the university's public relations, enrollment services, and development offices. Before coming to Southwestern in 1994, Bridges served as pastor of First Assembly of God in Grand Prairie, Tex.

Bridges is a 1982 graduate of SAGU and also holds an M.A. from the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary (Springfield, Mo.) and an M.Div. from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (Fort Worth, Tex.) He is nearing completion of a doctorate from Fuller Theological Seminary (Pasadena, Calif.).

Bridges and his wife, Jan, have two sons.

SAGU is one of 18 endorsed A/G postsecondary schools.

HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS ANNOUNCE FALL 1999 ENROLLMENT

Total enrollment for the 18 endorsed Assemblies of God postsecondary schools for fall 1999 is 13,776. Enrollment is up 565 from the previous fall.

American Indian College, Phoenix, Ariz.—76

Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Mo.—385

Bethany College, Scotts Valley, Calif.—548

Black Hills Indian Bible College, Rapid City, S.Dak.—11

Central Bible College, Springfield, Mo.—1,019

Evangel University, Springfield, Mo.—1,564

Global University, Springfield Campus, Springfield, Mo.—1,286

Latin American Bible Institute, La Puente, Calif.—432

Latin American Bible Institute, San Antonio, Tex.—103

Northwest College, Kirkland, Wash.—972

North Central University, Minneapolis, Minn.—1,716

Southwestern Assemblies of God University, Waxahachie, Tex.—1,672

Southeastern College, Lakeland, Fla.—1,118

Trinity Bible College, Ellendale, N.Dak.—349

Valley Forge Christian College, Phoenixville, Pa.—613

Vanguard University, Costa Mesa, Calif.—1,440

Western Bible Institute, Phoenix, Ariz.—55

Zion Bible Institute, Barrington, R.I.—417

A/G FINANCIAL SERVICES GROUP/NEW CHURCH PLANTING PROVIDE STRATEGIC RESOURCES FOR NEW CHURCHES

The Division of Home Missions Church

Planting Department, in cooperation with the Assemblies of God Financial Services Group, is making available \$10 million in low-interest loans to new churches that have shown dramatic growth, are ready to relocate or build, and would normally not qualify for traditional funding. The criteria for these loans include:

The pastor must attend BootCamp and implement materials that ensure ongoing church health.

The church is required to conduct a capital campaign with Master Plan Stewardship Services/AGFSG within 1 year of the loan and implement other stewardship education programs.

The pastor and board must establish a written ministry plan and clear vision.

The church must be actively involved in its district and section.

The purpose of the program is to invest capital resources in newly planted A/G churches that are showing growth potential and involve the pastors in leadership training programs. This resource is a partnership with the local

church and district to assist and fast-track the building of effective Kingdom churches.

Randy Barton, CEO/president of the

Assemblies of God Financial Services Group, states: "The new program invests in the future of our Fellowship by providing capital resources for strategic church growth."

Those interested in the program and the services can contact Paul Drost at 417-862-2781, ext. 3252, or E-mail: churchplanting@ag.org.

CHI ALPHA PLANS HISTORIC GLOBAL GATHERING OF PENTECOSTAL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Over 2,000 students from secular colleges and universities are expected to attend the Chi Alpha Campus Ministries event, The World SALT Set in Los Angeles, Calif., and marking the 100th anniversary of the modern Pentecostal movement, Chi Alpha believes this conference will launch a "student Azusa" of missions and evangelism.

"Students are the future leaders of the world. If we impact the future teachers, politicians, journalists, and businesspeople, we will transform the world for Christ. This conference will spread that vision to over 45 nations," stated Curt Harlow, World SALT director. Harlow envisions this gathering will unite college students into a global movement and spread God's mandate for world evangelism.

The conference will be held Dec. 29, 2000–Jan. 3, 2001, at the Westin Bonaventure Hotel in downtown Los Angeles. For more details, visit: www.worldsalt.org.

CHURCH PLANTING DEPARTMENT

In the 5-year reporting period from 1979–83, 56 A/G churches produced 1 new/net church per year. In our last reporting period (1994–98), it took 339 A/G churches to produce 1 new/net church year. It now takes 6 times as many churches to produce 1 church as it did

15–20 years ago. Furthermore, since 1990, 50 percent of A/G church plants have closed within 5 years of starting.

In response to this, the Church Planting Department is providing our constituency a proven plan for church planting—Church Planting BootCamps. This plan, when properly implemented, has seen a 90+ percent success ratio after 5 years.

The plan involves four critical areas: proper assessment, proven training and ongoing coaching for the planter, and training to multiply by church-planting churches. To date, districts representing over 4,000 churches have requested a BootCamp or hosted one as part of their church-planting strategy. For further information and dates, contact the Church Planting Department at 417-862-2781, ext. 3252, or E-mail churchplanting@ag.org.

MILITARY PERSONNEL DAY IS JULY 2

Every year the U.S. military is seemingly required to do more with less. From peacekeeping and disaster relief to armed intervention and war, today's military men and women—and their families—are often stretched to physical and emotional breaking points.

But what's exciting is that today's military is a vast field ready to be harvested for Christ. Stress, pressure, and the real threat of losing one's life causes a lot of personal reflection. "Assemblies of God military chaplains and military personnel have an incredible opportunity to share their faith with thousands of men and women," Chaplaincy Director Charles Marvin said. "There are so many who are desperately searching for answers—and Christ is the only answer that will satisfy them."

However, our military personnel need your prayer support not only to make it

through difficult times, but to recognize opportunities to share their faith. Military Personnel Day is Sunday, July 2. Please take time in your service that day to recognize the contributions of our military personnel and their families, and pray for their protection, guidance, and effective witness for Jesus Christ.

For more information about Military Personnel Day or the Chaplaincy Department, call 417-862-2781, ext. 3273 or E-mail: chaplaincy@ag.org. You may also visit our A/G web site: <http://chaplaincy.ag.org>

WHITNEY LIBRARY FOR THE BLIND

Currently, there are at least 4.5 million blind people in the U.S. with 50,000 joining this number each year. Only 1 out of 10 will read Braille and less than 50 percent will use a guide dog or white cane.

Current statistics indicate there is at least one legally blind person over the age of 40 in each A/G church in the United States. No statistics are available for those under 40.

The Whitney Library for the Blind ministry gained recognition at the National Federation of the Blind convention in Atlanta, Ga., in July 1999. The quality literature the ministry provided at the convention was evident. One lady who came back for more material to share with non-Christians said, "This is the first evangelical material for the blind I'm aware of that I am not embarrassed to give to an unbeliever." The items in highest demand were the *Book of Hope* in Braille or on cassette and the "descriptive" *Jesus* video.

The Assemblies of God National Center for the Blind has been established to better meet the needs of the blind. NCB is a more comprehensive representation of the many ministries already active. The

Whitney Library for the Blind will continue as the Library for the Blind under the NCB.

The Adriene Resource Center for Blind Children has also been created to help fill the void in Christian material for blind children and the children to blind parents.

INTERCULTURAL MINISTRIES DAY IS AUG. 20

America is a unique place. Where else in the world can you find more diversity? Never before in our nation's history have we had a wider range of people to reach.

The opportunities Assemblies of God home missionaries have for evangelism are exciting. However, these same opportunities are overwhelming. It takes godly

men and women of vision and diversity to reach Native Americans, Chinese, Arabs, Gypsies, as well as people with disabilities, members of cults, and other cultural groups in our cities and remote back roads.

The harvest is ready but the laborers are few. Help our home missionaries with your financial and prayer support by observing Intercultural Ministries Day on Aug. 20. For more information, contact Intercultural Ministries at 417-862-2781, ext. 3256.

DHM MAPS DAY IS JUNE 25

The Home Missions Mission America Placement Service (MAPS), consisting of RV volunteers, missionary and summer

NEWS & RESOURCES

associates, and church construction and prayer teams, donate tens of thousands of hours of skilled labor as well as materials and finances to the Assemblies of God. This labor of love has saved churches and ministries millions of dollars in construction costs.

"The MAPS RV volunteers cut the cost of repairing an existing church or building a new church or Teen Challenge center to a fraction of the original estimated cost," MAPS Director Pat Donadio said. "And our associates and teams provide home missionaries and many churches with the free assistance they need to become even more effective ministries."

Sunday, June 25, is DHM MAPS Day. There are thousands of DHM MAPS workers involved in selfless giving to further God's kingdom. Pray for these men and women. Also, consider supporting DHM MAPS through a special offering or pledge.

For more information concerning becoming a DHM MAPS worker, call 417-862-2781, ext. 1385, or E-mail: dhm@ag.org.

LFTL LAUNCHES NEW COUNCILMEN CAMPAIGN

The year 2000 opens the doors for the greatest opportunity of reaching the lost in the history of the church. Light for the Lost must be on the cutting edge of this great thrust into the harvest.

To do this, LFTL has launched a councilmen enrollment campaign called "10,000 in 2000." At the beginning of 1999, there were 7,905 LFTL councilmen. The goal is to have 10,000 councilmen by the 2000 LFTL convention, held Aug. 7,8, 2000, in Indianapolis, Ind. Why is it important to have 10,000 councilmen? Assistant Superintendent Charles T. Crabtree recently stated that the greatest way to increase LFTL literature income is to broaden our LFTL councilmen base.

Last year, for every \$1 received in councilmen dues, LFTL raised over \$7 in literature funds. These literature dollars are what make it possible for missionaries to reach the lost. Without councilmen, it would be impossible for LFTL to exist.

2000 CONVENTION

The 2000 LFTL convention will be held in Indianapolis, Ind., Aug. 7,8, in conjunction with the 2000 Celebration. You will not want to miss the exciting testimonies from missionaries and church leaders from around the world. Take advantage of a great opportunity to sharpen your vision for missions by attending this year's convention. Call 800-988-0292 for more details.

NATIONAL RENDEZVOUS 2000

The national Royal Rangers ministry will host Rendezvous 2000, July 17-21, 2000, at Camp Eagle Rock, Eagle Rock, Mo. Some 2,000 members of the Frontiersmen Camping Fellowship are expected to attend. This will be the largest FCF gathering in the history of Royal Rangers.

"Come and experience the most dynamic Rendezvous ever," says Fred Deaver, national FCF president. "We're believing God for a great outpouring of His Spirit at this millennium kick-off event as He prepares us for the greatest harvest challenge the church has ever witnessed. You'll experience dynamic evening services and enjoy great fellowship. And you can participate in frontier crafts and competition or relax in your teepee to the smell of freshly baked black-kettle cobbler. You won't want to miss out."

The application fee for campers is \$50 for adult FCF members and \$40 for boys 12 or older who are FCF members. Pastors can obtain applications for their laymen by contacting the national Royal Rangers Office, 2000 Rendezvous Application Request, 1445 Boonville Avenue, Springfield, MO 65802-1894, or phone: 417-862-2781, ext. 4177, or fax: 417-831-8230.

NEW PARENT NEWSLETTER IN EARLY CHILDHOOD CURRICULUM

Parenting and family issues that touch the Christian home are the focus of articles in the new monthly parent newsletters provided in Early Childhood Sunday school curriculum beginning Fall 2000. *Parenting Helps* has a fresh design and is a stand-alone publication for parents of babies. *Bible Treasures for Parents* is new and targets parents of 1- and 2-year-olds. It is provided with *Toddlers & Twos Bible Treasures*, the take-home paper for that age level. *Preschool Parenting*, provided with Preschool Bibletime Stories, is newly designed and changed to a monthly newsletter that ministers to parents of preschoolers.

The newsletters cover a variety of topics, ranging from spiritual issues to health and relational issues. Topics include discipling young children, God's purpose in designing the family, what to expect in a child's social development, dealing with ADHD, introducing the true meaning of Christmas, and preserving family memories.

The newsletters offer encouragement and support to parents and families. They also serve as an outreach to unsaved families of the community.

BEGINNING EXPLORERS—A VALUABLE TOOL FOR ENHANCING BIBLE LEARNING

Beginning Explorers, Radiant Life's children's church program for preschoolers, is a powerful tool for reinforcing Bible learning begun in Sunday school. Children actively participate in dramas, movement, music, prayer, Bible-related snacks, simple crafts, stories, circle games, and activity centers in exciting review of the Bible story. The curriculum provides colorful posters, flash cards, Bible visuals, stickers, puppet skits,

music, and more to keep the children focused and interested.

To create continued interest, children's church can begin with active learning centers or group activities. An adventurous character, Sycamore Sam, makes review of the Bible story fun and exciting. Proven techniques are used to review Bible verses and enhance understanding of scriptural principles.

Preschoolers learn best through repetition of one Bible idea presented in a variety of activities. Radiant Life has designed *Beginning Explorers* to be the tool to use to extend Bible learning from Sunday school through churchtime.

2000 NATIONAL JUNIOR BIBLE QUIZ FESTIVAL

The 2000 National Junior Bible Quiz Festival will be held June 8–10, 2000, at Calvary Church, Naperville, Ill. The festival will feature national competition over the entire Fact-Pak. Each team attending will receive a plaque and individual certificates for team members.

Teams qualify for the national festival by placing first or second in their district, or by placing first, second, third, or fourth at regional competition. Districts with more than 75 teams may send their first-, second-, and third-place teams if they do not have more than two teams that placed in the top four at regionals.

Registration information and forms are available by calling Dan Rector, meet coordinator, at 612-343-4763, or E-mail: derector@juno.com. The cost to register is \$75 per team. All registrations must be received by May 12, 2000. Mail completed forms to: Dan Rector, North Central University, 910 Elliot Ave. S. Minneapolis, MN 55404. Registration is limited to the first 64 teams. Confirmation and housing information will be sent to those who register.

WOMEN'S ACTIVITIES AT 2000 CELEBRATION

Leaders of national and district women's organizations from around the world will find opportunities for involvement at the third triennial World Assemblies of God Congress and 2000 Celebration.

National, district, and sectional Women's Ministries leaders will be involved as hostesses at the International World Missions Luncheon on Tuesday, Aug. 8.

Women's Ministries and Senior Adult Ministries will partner in forming a team of altar workers providing prayer support for those seeking God at the altars during the 2000 Celebration meetings.

The annual seminar for district Women's Ministries directors and district

Missionettes coordinators will be conducted by the national Women's Ministries Department staff Friday and Saturday, Aug. 11,12.

All women are invited to attend an International Women's Leaders Rally on Friday, Aug. 11. The event is scheduled for 7 to 9 p.m. in the Westin Hotel, Grand Ballrooms 4 and 5. The inspirational rally will feature international guest speakers and musicians.

ZONDERVAN'S NEW RESOURCE WEB SITE

Pastors and church leaders seeking the latest and best online resources for ministry and life in general have a new site on the Internet they can call home. The Church Leader Internet Portal (CLIP), a new service of Zondervan ChurchSource™ on the World Wide Web at www.ZondervanChurchSource.com/CLIP, is a comprehensive start-up page with hundreds of practical links and several features specifically designed for anyone involved in leadership at the more than 300,000 churches in America.

"CLIP is the best gateway to online information for pastors and church leaders," says Jonathan Petersen, marketing director for ZondervanChurchSource. "By focusing solely on their needs, CLIP saves them time they would spend searching for ministry resources on any of the standard one-size-fits-all Internet portals."

Designed to be the first web site a person sees when he or she accesses the Internet, CLIP contains links to search engines and sites dealing with counseling, worship, news, religious news, humor, academic information, colleges, postmodernism, libraries, sermon illustrations, military, leadership, writing resources, government, weather, sports, travel, and more. It also provides pastors

with the *Church Leader Briefing* weekly news report, a Bible Verse-a-Day, Daily Church World Vocabulary Builder, Today in Church History, Ministry Quote of the Week, and a Calendar of Church Dates. Additional features will be added to CLIP on an ongoing basis.

HISTORY IN THE MAKING VIDEO IS NEW TOOL FOR CHURCHES

Looking for a captivating tool to introduce the Assemblies of God to your congregation? Then consider *History in the Making*, the new video produced by the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center. General Secretary George O. Wood noted that this new video tool presents the Assemblies of God "and its rich heritage in a most informative and compelling way."

The video not only gives a view of our thrilling past, but it also demonstrates how we are meeting today's needs, and that we are a church with a hope for the future. Assemblies of God General Superintendent Thomas E. Trask said the video "will cause your people to rejoice and recommit to completing the tasks God has purposed for the Assemblies of God."

The 28-minute video can be used for new converts, visitors, Sunday school classes, youth groups, and others interested in learning more about the Assemblies of God. In addition, it is designed for a standard 30-minute television program. It could be just the tool to challenge inactive church members to an effective ministry for the Kingdom.

History in the Making (order #750-195) is available from the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center for \$19.95, plus \$1.99 for shipping and handling.

EVANGEL VISITORS EDITION SURPASSES RECORD LEVEL

Within 2 months of its publication, the

October 10, 1999, Visitors Edition of the *Pentecostal Evangel* had surpassed the 60,000 mark in additional copy sales. On a short-term basis, the issue is one of the strongest-selling Visitors Editions in the magazine's history.

"We produced this edition as a service to our churches," *Pentecostal Evangel* Editor Hal Donaldson said shortly after the issue's release. "Pastors told us they wanted quality, comprehensive materials to put in the hands of visitors—materials that portrayed a friendly, family-oriented church. I believe this issue hit the mark."

A limited number of undated Visitors Edition remain available for distribution via church information packets, membership classes, communitywide canvassing and other outreaches. This edition provides an introduction to the Assemblies of God and emphasizes having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. To order this special issue for as little as 22 cents per copy (minimum order of 50), please call 1-800-641-4310 and request item #69-6941.

PENTECOSTAL EVANGEL BOOKS RECEIVING STRONG RECEPTION

Strategies for Victorious Christian Living and *Family: How To Have a Healthy Christian Home*, the two titles of the *Pentecostal Evangel* (PE) books, have been warmly received by the magazine's readers. The books were released by Gospel Publishing House in August and December 1999, respectively, and demonstrated strong sales during the year's first quarter.

"It has been exciting to see and hear the reaction of people who have been ministered to by our first two books," noted *Pentecostal Evangel* Managing Editor Ken Horn. "We wanted to put some of our best articles in a permanent form that people would keep and refer to again and again.

"This has happened with the practical

messages of the first two books: people have applied them to their Christian walk and their families. With the reception the first two received, we are eager to continue the line and our staff is absolutely brimming with ideas."

SALVATION RESPONSES TO PENTECOSTAL EVANGEL EXCEEDS 5,000

Last November, the *Pentecostal Evangel* received its 5,000th salvation response coupon from a reader who had committed his or her life to Jesus Christ. The forms have been received in the *Evangel* office since January 1997. More than 145 salvation coupons are returned in an average month. The number does not include readers who call the Assemblies of God

National Prayer Center to verify their step of faith.

"God raised up the magazine many years ago to touch lives," said *Pentecostal Evangel* Editor Hal Donaldson. "These salvation responses indicate that the Lord is continuing to use the publication to reach out to people who need Jesus."

While their names are forwarded to local Assemblies of God churches for follow-up, new believers who've contacted the *Evangel* receive a discipleship booklet, *Rock Solid—Building Your Relationship With Jesus*. Many of those making commitments to the Lord were recipients of *Pentecostal Evangel*s distributed by churches and laypersons in their local communities.

With Christ

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In Closing

BY RICHARD L. SCHOONOVER

By now you have probably read all or most of the articles in this issue of *Enrichment*. As each writer shared his or her heart concerning ministry to single adults, you may have noticed several things:

1. Single adults are the fastest-growing segment in today's society.
2. There are four major categories of singles—the never married, the widowed, the divorced, and the single parent.
3. Each category of singles has unique needs that need to be addressed by the church.
4. Single adults want to be and can be a valuable resource for ministry in the church.

The church cannot and must not ignore single adults. They are a valuable part of the church. And God is using them in dynamic ways.

The single adults in the church we attend have developed their own single-adult ministry under the direction of the senior pastor. Their mission statement is: To create an effective ministry to single adults, with single adults, and by single adults to each other, the church, and the community. Several single adults coordinate the various ministries and activities to fulfill this mission statement.

My wife and I have several single-adult friends who belong to this ministry. We rejoice at the ways they are making themselves available for service. Some are small-group leaders in the youth department. They have the time and energy to help the youth pastor disciple teens. And they have the spiritual maturity to guide these young people through their teen years. They are making a significant impact in the lives of our teens.

Other single adults are medical professionals. They have become involved in short-term medical mission trips. Not only have they been a blessing as they minister to people on these assignments, they come back with a greater desire to make a difference in their home church.

Two of our younger single adults are sisters who teach music in the public schools. Each summer they sponsor a week-long choir camp at church and invite children from their schools to attend. This has provided an opportunity for these children to hear the gospel. Many of their parents also come to the musical presented on the Sunday night after the choir camp. Some have accepted Christ as their Savior.

The church cannot and must not ignore single adults.

Some of our single-adult friends have experienced the devastation of divorce. Yet they have allowed the Lord to bring healing to their lives and they now minister to those who have been or are now going through divorce.

Not only do the singles have their own Sunday school class, they also have a weekly Bible study. This provides spiritual growth, fellowship, and an avenue for discipleship. These single adults are serious about their relationship with Christ, and they hold each other accountable in their Christian walk.

While the single adults in your church are a valuable resource for ministry, the single adults in your community present an opportunity for evangelism. Single adults who have never married may be discouraged and looking for meaning in life. They may have tried various activities offered by today's

society and did not find fulfillment. Through a singles ministry in your church, you can reach these single adults with the gospel.

Some single adults may not be single by choice, but by circumstance. When a spouse leaves or dies, the remaining spouse (and sometimes children) face some critical issues: anger, fear, loneliness, financial difficulties, and single-parenting issues. How the church ministers to these needs may determine whether those in your church who have recently become single adults will continue to attend. And the single adults in your community will not come if you do not provide ministry to help them in their time of crisis.

This issue of *Enrichment* provides practical ideas for starting a single-adult ministry in your church. As editors, we asked some of the most prominent Christian leaders in single-adult ministry to share their thoughts and provide practical ways to develop and strengthen single-adult ministries. We have also provided a list of resources to help you in your ministry to single adults.

Pastor, don't overlook the single adults in your church. Many of them want to serve. They have gifts that your church needs to be complete in all that God desires for it. Allow your single adults to be the ministry resource you need. They will bless you, your church, and your community as they are empowered for ministry. **E**

Richard L. Schoonover, M.Div., is associate/technical editor of Enrichment Journal, Springfield, Missouri.



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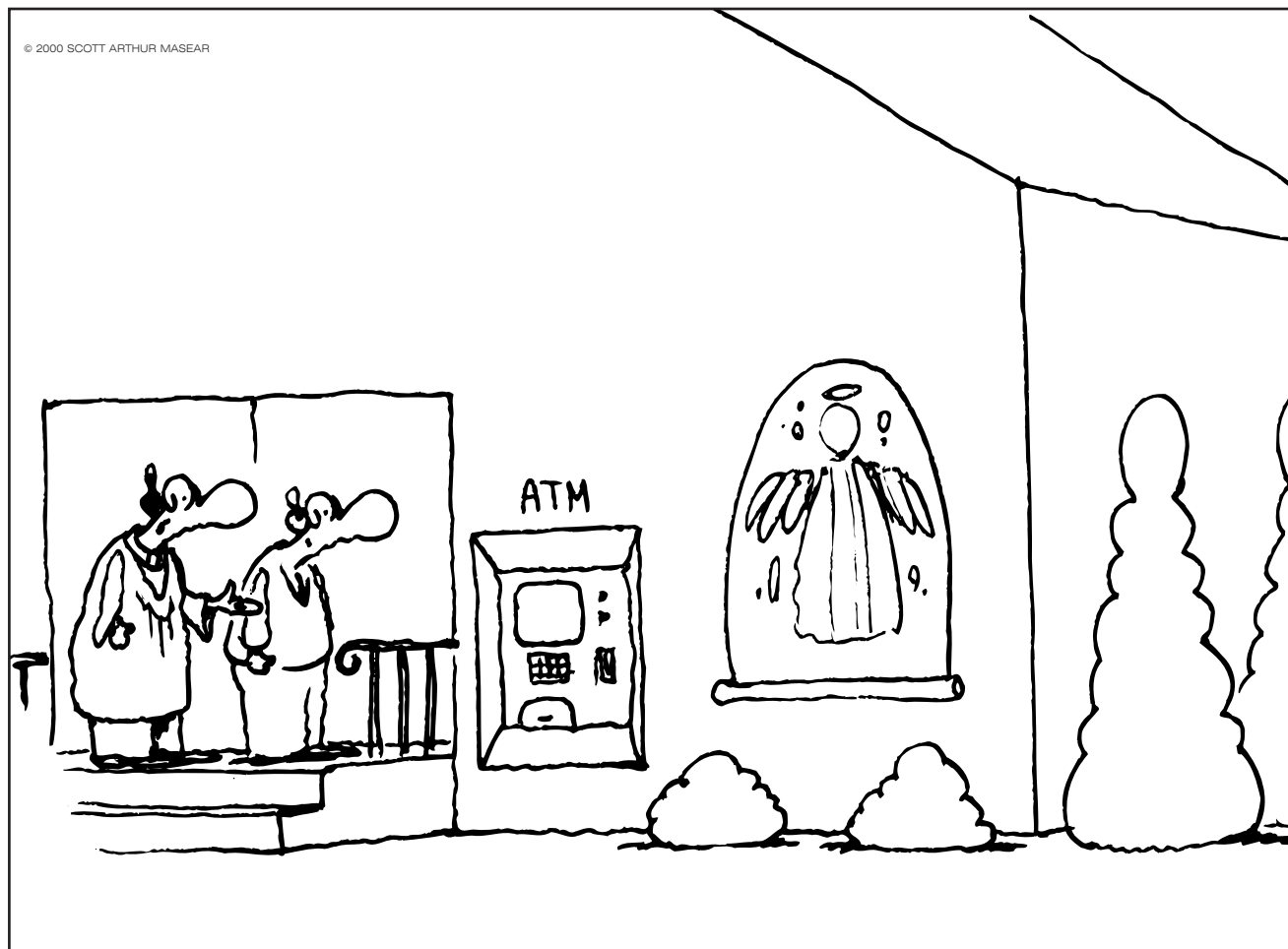
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"I realize we need more contributions, but I think the church board may be going a little too far."