

AT MY AGE, MOST PEOPLE ASSUME THAT I am divorced. Or they say, "You've never been married, what's wrong with you?" There is nothing wrong with you if you've never been married. I do not think that I am any less whole by being single than somebody else is by being married. I do admit that there are times of being lonely. But there is a difference between aloneness and loneliness. We all suffer loneliness, whether we're married or not.

I wish that people would recognize you not for your marital status first, but for your spiritual gifts, and that they would just accept you into the body. When you're in your late 30s, you often don't fit into the singles groups anymore, and you don't know where to go. You don't fit into the

couples classes either, although you're closer to their age.

I think some believers need to cast away that "Gee, because you're single, you need special ministry" attitude. There are people who need it, maybe because they need counseling or because they are bitter about not being married. But that is not going to be resolved until they understand that they are right where Christ wants them at the present time.

We all have areas of deep hurt, but I see a lot of single people focusing too much on that deep hurt rather than rejoicing in Christ and saying, "I do have salvation. I do have the promise of resurrection." Just because you're single and unhappy doesn't mean you're going to be happy married. We all get depressed when we focus on ourselves. I am

my happiest when I am giving.

If I were married, I don't know that I would have the opportunity to devote as much time to ministry. There is a selfish side to that too. I like the flexibility of being able to give to ministry what I feel called to give at the present time, without having to worry about other priorities. I think, though, that the church can sometimes take advantage of that: *You are single and therefore you can take care of the nursery.* Singles do have a life, contrary to popular belief.

I want married people to remember that they were single once and that there is no difference between a married person and a single person. The Lord is blessing both in His own ways.

I appreciate a friend who looks at me as Mark, and who doesn't view me as someone who needs to get married. ■

With Judy Nelson



Single

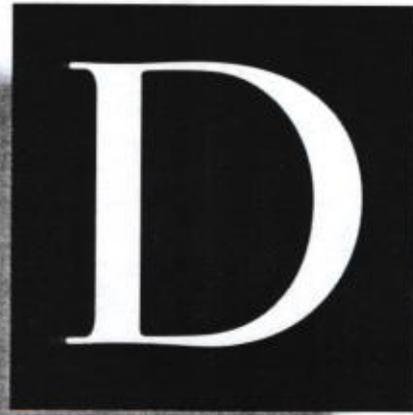
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AGE 41

ARCHITECT

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by



Design

SPECIAL SECTION

THERE HAVE BEEN TIMES WHEN I FELT I need to be remarried for the fellowship, companionship and financial help. I work two jobs, and my children don't have a godly man in the home to be an example to them, to read the Word with them. It's just me, but I have reached a point where I can focus on my children, where I can tell them confidently that God can be enough.

The Lord showed me that He was what I really needed to fill the void and take the loneliness away. His presence could bring me the wholeness no man could give. There was a time when I thought all I really needed was to have a husband by me to take care of me and my children, and then everything would be OK. I was so sure that was what I needed. But I was wrong. I never thought I'd reach the day when I didn't feel like I had to have marriage. Yet the Lord said to me, "I am here and I am

your sufficiency. I will supply you with all things materially, emotionally and spiritually." He has filled the gap.

Having been married before, I have been through some things that maybe other singles have not been through. That has helped me minister to girls who are hurting. It is neat to know that having been through certain pains hasn't been in vain, but has resulted in experiences that can help someone else.

Being single gives you a little more flexibility to just work for the Lord. One of the things that excites me about being single is knowing that I have that freedom, that I can get away and minister in a door-to-door outreach I have become involved in. I want my children to see Mom active in ministry, to see that material things really aren't the emphasis in life.

My ministry right now, though, is primarily with my children. If I were to

leave this world and the children did not have me anymore, would I have provided them with enough godly assurance to keep them holding on through whatever it is they will endure? I want to spend more time developing their spiritual character.

Many times I looked at the church and wondered if they knew just how much I needed support and encouragement. I am thankful that God has pulled me through, but I know others who aren't coming through. As the divorce rate continues to increase, there will be more people like me in the church. We need support groups so we know that people are praying with us.

I once thought that if the opportunity came for me to get married, I would jump in a heartbeat. But now if I do get married it will be because the Lord chose to have someone for me, not because I desperately needed it. ■

With Judy Nelson

RUTHIE SANTIAGO

AGE 35

FINANCIAL

SERVICES

REPRESENTATIVE

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Photograph by Guy Gerrard

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Gap

by Susie Hilsman

SPECIAL
SECTION

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Whether single or married, we are to fix our eyes on Jesus and serve Him right where we are.

"You aren't married yet?" > I wish I had a dollar for each time someone has asked me that question. Recently, a friend that I hadn't seen in years probed even further: "Well, do you have any prospects?" No, I don't. And it's OK. I am learning that I am complete because Jesus Christ lives within me; I don't need another person to make me whole. In Colossians 2:10, Paul says, "... in Him you have been made complete. ..." But that doesn't mean I don't ever get lonely or wish that I had someone to spend the

rest of my life with. ➤ According to Census Bureau demographer Arthur J. Norton, marriage is still the desired status in America today. Despite this desire, the demon called Divorce constantly lurks just over the connubial horizon. There are many who have suffered through the tragedy of divorce

small church said she feels like the people in her church just don't know what to do with singles. "I want to feel appreciated for what I have to offer and for what I am," she said. "I don't want to feel left out just because I'm not married." ➤ I confess that I am guilty of doing the thing I so dislike: looking at

or what we think we see, on the other side. "A lot of our attention is on what we don't have because our world says we have got to have it," says Dick Purnell, director of Campus Crusade's Single Life Resources ministry. "It's not easy to be single in a world that seems geared for married people. But God

I am complete because Jesus Christ lives within me; I don't need another person to make me whole.

and now find themselves struggling through the singles scene again. Some have the added responsibility of raising children. ➤ Our society and our churches are divided by a marital chasm—the married on one side and the not-married on the other. The church faces a Catch-22 of trying to minister to each group without making either feel less important. For example, many churches have singles Sunday school classes and singles Bible studies to reach out to single people as part of the body of Christ. Yet this type of specific ministry makes some single people feel "singled out" and separated from the rest of the church, rather than included. One single friend from a

someone's marital status first. There have been times when I have excluded a married friend from my activities because I thought she would just want to be with her husband. Some married friends have shared with me that they have excluded me, too, because they figured my social calendar was full. I need to remember that they are my *friends* whether they are married or not. ➤ There are, naturally, differences between married and unmarried people, and there are times when our gaze wanders over to the other side of the marital chasm. This is good if what we see on the other side reminds us of the benefits we have right now. Danger comes when we long for what we see,

wants all of us to want *Him* more than we want anything else. In 1 Corinthians 7:17, Paul says, ". . . as the Lord has assigned to each one, as God has called each, in this manner let him walk." If you are single, fine. If you are married, fine. The most important fact is that you are right where God wants you and where He can use you. ➤ Singleness is not just a waiting game. Later in 1 Corinthians 7, Paul explains that one who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world and his interests are divided. Tom Nelson, pastor of Denton Bible Church in Denton, Texas, elaborates on how marriage can affect a per-

son's spiritual vision: "The vision that they had during college of reaching the world for Christ narrows, and soon it's a vision for reaching the Western Hemisphere. Pretty soon it's just North America, then it's their state, their city, their family, and pretty soon their vision is just about as wide as a Kimbies diaper box." > Tom advises those who are single to beware of spending their time and energy on looking for a mate instead of spending them on serving the Lord. "I can't tell you," Tom says, "how many times I've seen a neat Christian guy or girl really having an impact in ministry, but they take their eyes off what they're doing and start looking around for a mate, and pretty soon they become ineffective. Your philosophy of ministry should never change, regardless of your marital status." > Each of us is called to keep our vision clear in a world of distractions. As Hebrews 12: 1, 2 says, "... let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith...." Whether single or married, we are to fix

our eyes on Jesus and consider it our calling to serve Him right where we are. > If you are single, you will find in this section encouragement in the fact that this is what the Lord has chosen for you now. Trust God to provide a partner for you if that's what you desire, but remember that being married is not a requisite for service. The God of peace "will equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ. . ." (Hebrews 13:21). > If you are married, these articles might be a reminder that the chasm between you and singleness isn't as wide as you think. "If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired" (1 Corinthians 12: 17, 18). Your living arrangements and responsibilities might be different, but we are all part of the body of Christ. And we need to work together to reach out to the world around us. >

Single Life Resources

Singles today are a strategic, yet often overlooked, segment of our society, comprising 40 percent of America's adult population. Single Life Resources, a ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ, motivates singles to total commitment to Christ and provides them with tools for living a godly life. Single Life Resources holds "Becoming a Friend and Lover" conferences across the country to help single adults in their relationships with the opposite sex and to help bring single adults to Christ. Conference topics include "Why Relationships Fail," "Friendship: The Basis for Love" and "Building a Relationship That Lasts." For more information on this ministry and for a schedule of Spring 1993 conferences, write Single Life Resources at 1152 Executive Circle, Suite 300, Cary, NC 27511, or call (919) 460-8000.