

**I SAY THEREFORE
TO THE UNMARRIED
AND WIDOWS, IT IS
GOOD FOR THEM IF
THEY ABIDE EVEN
AS I. PAUL, I COR. 7:8**

SINGLE VOICES

A LETTER FROM THE EAST

Anonymous

Who would want to write an article on the single woman? It would be like being branded with a scarlet "S"! Our Church places a great emphasis on marriage and homelife. In terms of an ideal of personal happiness, doctrinal adherence, and societal cohesiveness, this viewpoint has its advantages. However, there are other parts of the equation which merit thoughtful evaluation: what kind of person are you? *Why* are you doing what-ever-it-is you are doing? I have seen many unhappy, frustrated and dull people and enough happy, productive and interesting people to know that similar circumstances do not determine similar results. There are so many challenges to living in today's world that we must put our feet firmly in the present and not over-reference ourselves to the past or the hereafter! We must strengthen our intellectual analysis, our spiritual guidance, and get to the actual doing — and find a measure of peace in all of this.

A LETTER HOME*

Maryruth Bracy

Dear Mom and Dad,

Your phone call last night left me feeling strangely orphaned, as if you had placed me on some foreign doorstep. I know you thought that Tom and I would get married, and that you can't understand why I've quit my job. Last year you questioned my going on to graduate school; last night you wanted me to return for more schooling in Utah: is it that you'd rather have me in school there than struggling out here?

My dear sweet parents, underneath all that you said was one question, "Why aren't you married?" I'm afraid I just don't know all the reasons. Somewhere along the way decisions were made and the results of these decisions have led me to where I am. I guess the best reason is that the right man has not come along at the right time. Can you understand that if I married Tom without the love I know I am capable of giving, I would be cheating both of us?

*A composite letter representing the feelings of twelve single sisters, 25 and over, across the country.

My “right man” has changed a lot since high school. And the range is narrowing; not just because the number of available men is decreasing, though I have used some foresight in planning where to live and work, but because I find *myself* gradually becoming less flexible. I am no longer willing to date just to be going out. I could not say that before I turned 24. I do love to date, but I find an increased longing to have the experiences be meaningful. I also find myself struggling to be patient; patient with the “relationship process” which takes time to enact. The biggest danger I see in breaking up with Tom is hesitancy to start that process all over again with someone new. It takes an incredible amount of energy to begin again.

There is something I need from you right now: to write me and love me and include me, without the pressure your worry too often instigates. Please be comforted that marriage and a family are still my goals. If I could only know that in say five years I'd be married, then I would have no regrets about my life to this point. My greatest plague is that my previous decisions may have stacked the cards against my getting married. But since there is no way of knowing that, I try not to worry. Even if worst comes to worst, I guess as long as I live worthily of the celestial kingdom, I will still have that final choice between being a second wife or a ministering angel!

Your loving daughter,
Mary

JOURNAL JOTTINGS

Dianne Higginson

The Victorian Ideal of Womanhood doesn't seem so disadvantageous to girls thrust into a hostile world “on their own.” When you remain single, society takes away the advantages of being a girl and forces upon you the disadvantages of being a man — so you are neither and are lost in the void.

* * *

It is difficult to talk about the advantages of being single since after a certain age it cannot properly be considered to be a blessing, though it well may be. All the advantages seem temporal and selfish, character-softening, and of diminishing value. Others, who tend to judge righteousness in terms of pitifulness (“It's not her fault, she *wants* to marry.”), tolerate only facetious exultings in the unencumbered life, for to be seriously exultant is to be instantly suspected of unrighteousness. To be too happy brings judgment, yet being too obviously unhappy is criticized just as severely. Job's comforters never had it so good!

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It's a buyer's market, one may as well face it. G. gave me this, from *As you Like It* (though I don't):

Mistress, know yourself. Down on your knees,
And thank heaven, fasting, for a good man's love;
For I must tell you friendly in your ear,
Sell when you can! You are not for all markets.
Cry the man mercy, love him, take his offer,
Foul is most foul, being foul to be a scoffer.

(Act III, Scene V, Lines 557-62)