

# Called to the Single Life

## Opening Prayer

*O God, after much prayer and reflection it is my belief that I can best serve you in the single state. Let me be true to my vocation to this life and never do anything to sully it. Enable me to appreciate the freedom at my disposal. Help me to make good use of the added time I have available. Inspire me to give of myself to others, to be an example to my married friends and a comfort to my single friends. May I ever realize that whether single or married our one concern should be to serve you each day and to serve others for your sake. Grant that I may be so attached to you that I may never feel lonely in my chosen state.*

*(The New Saint Joseph People's Prayer Book).*

## Scripture Theme

*Let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him. . . . So, brothers [and sisters], in whatever condition each was called, there let them remain with God. (1 Corinthians 7: 17 & 24)*

## Introduction

For most people, singleness is a temporary state, a way station on the way to married life. But for some, single by choice is their call. If that is your call, congratulations! It is a valid, legitimate call, and you are to be admired for responding to it.

Still, it doesn't mean all your questions are answered and all your anxiety relieved. Some might ask why. Why do you choose the hard road of the single life. There are a variety of possible reasons, but the strongest one is that the vocation of singleness offers fewer distractions from serving God.

The call to single life does not mean you are a failure at relationships, sexually flawed, afraid of commitment, or anything else along those lines. It does mean that, for you, aligning your work in the world with God's work in the world requires you to remain single.

By the way, two thoughts about relationships, sexuality, and commitment. First, it's quite normal—whether you are single or married or otherwise—to have questions and doubts about all three. Doesn't mean you're a failure at them. Second, as a single person responding to God's call, you will surely have to come to grips with all three. In other words, don't choose the single life to avoid relationships, sexuality, and commitment.

This reflection will help you understand what it means to be single by choice. As God's call for you emerges, place your trust in God, say 'yes' as best you can, and give it your all.

One more thing. Don't assume that God has only one call for the remainder of your life. It's easy to feel a bit of panic, like, *I can't miss the call, or I might spend the remainder of my days in meaningless mediocrity*. In reality, it is safe to say that God calls us many times throughout the seasons of our lives, and each call challenges us to stretch further than we might have anticipated or imagined. Take a breath. Relax. Open your heart to God's ideas for you now.

## What's Changing?

As you embrace the call to single life, you may feel confused, even sad and lonely, mixed with a healthy dose of anxiety. Normal . . . but pay attention to those feelings, as they are indicators of a life change.

### **Consider**

Take a look at the video "Vocation to the Single" Life by Jeremy Rude (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eRVMIADyOE>).

### **Write and/or Discuss**

Jot some notes or share with others your responses to these questions:

- ◆ Rude states that "God has called us to be single right now. God has a plan for my life right now a single person." Can you say the same about yourself? Why or why not?
- ◆ Rude also states that "Single life is not something to apologize for, to be ashamed of, to be scared of." What are your thoughts about this statement?
- ◆ Rude states that "the single life is a fantastic calling that has so many benefits." Do you agree or not? How so?
- ◆ What do you think of Rude's comments about the single life as a temporary calling?

### **Reflect**

As you embrace your call to the single life, take a moment to complete these reflection statements . . .

- ◆ One thing I really look forward to . . .
- ◆ One thing I have a lot of apprehension about . . .
- ◆ About myself, I am learning that . . .

Finding concrete answers for how to align your life with God ideas for you is a process that takes time. So, all your wonderments and anxieties are normal and part of the process. Acknowledge them and recognize that God is present in them. And pray for trust that God will mold you into the authentic person you desire to be.

### **Take heart**

*For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope (Jeremiah 29:11).*

## What's Emerging in My Life?

Let's consider what might be emerging in your life as a result of these changes. As we do so, let us remember a few things that others have discovered about God's callings in their lives. We can say that responding to God's call will likely . . .

- ◆ Lead to happiness in the long run. If it makes you depressed, it's likely not God's call. Although it won't make you immune to all other emotions such as sadness, frustration, resentment, guilt, etc. But if there is no happiness whatsoever, somehow you are not aligned with God's desire.
- ◆ Not be easy. It will probably stretch you toward something you never thought you could do or be. But you can do it, especially if you have some help.
- ◆ Benefit others besides yourself. If it only involves you, it's not God's call. Single doesn't mean solitary.
- ◆ Not be overly complicated. You'll be able to explain it to others in just a few words.

### **Consider**

Let's consider the third bullet point: benefit others besides yourself. As mentioned, the single life doesn't mean a solitary life. Responding to God's call means responding to a call to be for others in some way. This is at the heart of all vocational states, whether marriage or professed life in a religious community or the single life. You are called to be with and for others. How might this call manifest itself in you?

You can find role models in the Bible. In the book *One Like Jesus—Reflections on the Single Life* Debra K. Farrington writes,

When we think of our ancestors in the Bible, we often think in pairs. Famous couples leap to mind: Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah, Mary and Joseph. But there are single people in the Bible as well. The one who comes most easily to mind is, of course, Jesus. But many of Jesus' friends and disciples were also single: Mary Magdalene, Mary and Martha, and Lazarus. The apostle Paul was very vocal about the advantages of being single. There are also single people in the Hebrew Scriptures. Miriam, Moses' sister, was single and so were some of the prophets, such as Jeremiah and Elijah.

I see the Bible as the book where most of the wisdom to lead our lives can be found. And so it is possible to find in Scripture clues and suggestions for the single life. Look at the virtues modeled by singles: the initiative of Paul as he traveled through the Roman Empire. Or the wonderful courage of Miriam, who, as a young girl, found a nurse for Moses, and then helped Moses lead the people from Egypt. The generosity of the poor widow who gave most of what she had. The leadership of Lydia, who began the church at Philippi. From Jesus, perhaps the most famous single person in the Bible, we can learn about a life of love, healing, and sacrifice that we, too, can imitate. All these and more model for us the productive, meaningful lives and ministries we can have as single people (Loyola Press, 1999).

### **Write and/or Discuss**

Jot some notes or share with others your responses to this question:

- ◆ Of the single people in the Bible mentioned above, who inspires you the most? Why?

### **Consider**

Take a few minutes to read *Why Am I Still Single* by Chris Hazell: <https://bustedhalo.com/life-culture/why-am-i-still-single>. In the article, the author makes this statement:

All vocations are a call to love and serve. This means that in addition to each vocation's unique joys, they each entail unique suffering and sacrifice. Probably the most obvious element of suffering for the single life is the loneliness that can surface occasionally. . . . The ache is part of the call.

### **Write and/or Discuss**

Jot some notes or share with others your responses to these questions:

- ◆ How does this resonate with your experience?
- ◆ Do you agree that "the ache is part of the call"?

### **Take heart**

*The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot. The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance* (Psalm 16:5-6).

## How Should I Live?

Now we seek to turn the corner and fully embrace the call. We seek to develop fruitful patterns of behavior and action that bring fulfillment. You want to do more than just survive the single life, you want to *thrive* in it.

### **Consider**

In her article *How I Stopped Dating and Started Living*, Beth M. Knobbe says,

At the age of thirty, I decided I was tired of waiting for the right guy to come along and made what some people think is a radical choice. Instead of getting on the fast track and jumping onto the speed dating circuit like many of my friends, I did the complete opposite. I made a conscious decision to stop dating. Call me crazy but for the first time, I realized that being single is more than just waiting to get married.

I want to be with people in such a way that I can share my passion for God and live a life of service to others. This is something I've known for a very long time. It's who I am. For now, the best way to do this is as a committed single person.

<https://bustedhalo.com/features/the-single-life>

Take a couple of minutes to read the article.

### **Write and/or Discuss**

Jot some notes or share with others your responses to these questions:

- ◆ Do you think Beth is crazy to stop dating?
- ◆ Do you resonate with her desire to be with people in such a way that she can live a life of service to others?

### **Consider**

Here are links to helpful practices and strategies for responding to the call of the single life.

- *Called to Singleness* by J. Budziszewski. What does it mean to be “called to singleness” for your life? How do you know if you’re called to it?  
<https://www.boundless.org/adulthood/called-to-singleness>
- *Is the Single Life a Vocation?* by Mary Farrow. Maybe we’re asking the wrong question.  
<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/is-the-single-life-a-vocation-maybe-were-asking-the-wrong-question-68948>
- *Has God Called You to Be Single?* by Sharon Hodde Miller. Instructing singles to find contentment in their hardship not only sounds callous in the face of raw, dark grief, but it also seems to be out of step with God’s very own response.  
<https://sheworships.com/has-god-called-you-to-be-single>
- *Is there such a thing as a vocation to be single in the Church?* by Christine B. Whelen. As she mused over her situation, she wondered whether God might actually be calling her to be single.  
<https://bustedhalo.com/features/pure-sex-pure-love-121-catholic-singles>
- *Finding grace in singleness: How being single is still part of the Church* by Charles C. Camosy interviewing Janna Bennett about her book *Singleness and the Church: New Theology of the Single Life*.  
<https://cruxnow.com/interviews/2017/08/14/finding-grace-singleness-single-still-part-church>
- “‘Step Up Your Faith’: Hope for Christian Singles” CBN News. Christian singles are finding God has a purpose and plan for this season in their lives.  
<https://www1.cbn.com/cbnnews/us/2015/April/Step-Up-Your-Faith-Hope-for-Christian-Singles>

### **Take heart**

*I bless the LORD who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me. I have set the LORD always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure. (Psalm 16:7-9)*

# Blessing for those Choosing the Single Life

*This blessing may be used with a small group or with the entire congregation.*

## **Introduction**

Today, the persons before us are single, single by choice. They recognize that God has an idea for them in their lives as single persons, and they desire to respond well to God's call. And so they ask for our blessing as they seek God's guidance. Please extend your hands over them.

## **To the Young Adults**

As you seek to align your lives with God's work in the world, today, this community blesses you with wisdom, hope, and support. May you experience the blessing of inner hope and understanding.

All: Amen.

As you encounter struggles, confusion, and loneliness in this call, may you remain open to the Spirit's guidance as you do everything for the glory of God.

All: Amen.

In times when success and achievement seem to become of supreme importance, may you take time to look for God to put it all into perspective.

All: Amen.

As you serve God by serving God's people, may you be blessed with good health and sustained energy. May you always serve with compassion and humility.

All: Amen.

May God be a refuge to you on this demanding journey, shade in the heat, shelter in the storm, rest in weariness, protection in trouble, and a strong staff in challenging times.

All: Amen.

May God bless you with every heavenly blessing, and keep you safe and strong. Know that we carry you in our hearts each and every day. Through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.