

## FOLLOW-UP SURVEY QUESTION 21

## What is the greatest challenge as a single Christian woman?

Finances/chores

Financially and going to events by yourself

I cared for my family for over 28 years. I did not have a job that had income most of that time. I could not find a job for a long time due to no work experience and would have lost my home had I not taken out a student loan. The church was willing to help make one land payment (300 dollars) but told me that's all they could do. I could not find other agencies to help me and look for a job at the same time. The financial help is not available to those who go through this I know of a woman who has been left by her husband that will soon have her home foreclosed on, leaving her and her children homeless.

Financial Risk. I have myself not taking calculated financial risks for investment or starting a new business because I am a one income home.

Financial support

I have been divorced around 5 years and have struggled so much financially since the divorce. Right now I am starting to get behind on bills and I am trying my hardest to stay on top of things. I don't know where to turn for help. I may have to declare bankruptcy, which I do not want to do. Please pray for me to figure out a way to get on top of things financially so I do not have to worry so much about where my next dollar is coming from. I work full time but in the divorce got stuck with medical bills and credit card bills plus more.

Finances and help emotionally

Finances and retirement funds and time to get everything done that needs attention.

Finances/chores

When something breaks down.

No one to talk with daily or discuss upcoming projects, other than local family

Taking care of everything. Having to make sure that car is running properly, house is in order and fixing problems in the house. Working. Taking care of finances.

Managing a household with no help.

Financially and going to events by yourself

Trying to find a place to fit in or people thinking you're gay.

To be included in groups of "married couples"

Being accepted and not feeling like an outcast because you are not married. Once married woman found out you are single they shy away from you.

It's not that people in my family or church are ever directly negative about my singleness, but they don't always make efforts to "invite me in" to do things with them.

Fitting in and being supported by the church.

Sometimes just fitting in. It's not that I'm not welcomed or can't find places to serve. It's more about feeling included which is a little different. People not feeling awkward talking with me. And it may have nothing to do with being single, it might just be me.

The church and the school you attend thinking and pushing you to find a spouse.

The older married women who think you must be married to be a whole person.

Being told that you're supposed to be looking for a spouse in college.

Not being married, especially at my Christian university

That the church focuses so much on marriage and having children as something that should absolutely occur instead of seeing singleness as a real option. There are so many people who should not marry and I think if we treated singleness as an acceptable option our divorce rate might be affected in a positive way.

Some people feel that you still need to be married to be happy.

Not finding someone who loves my flaws

A lack of emotional support at church

Loneliness among friends

The battle against isolation is constant. While I realize that married people are often lonely, as a single I don't have the built-in support of having someone who at least knows that I make it home at night. Couples and families tend to spend time with people in like stages. Church culture often revolves around family. I find myself spending a lot of energy across a wide social network in order to be able to spend time with people in the limited time they have after taking care of family priorities. Approximately every four to five years, I have to completely rebuild my support system when people move away - either geographically or into different life stages where they no longer have room for single

friends. It is exhausting on so many levels. I see older Christian single women, and I become afraid about the future after my parents pass away.

The holidays, loneliness, and the fact that so much of church set up around families.

Not to have someone to be with at the end of the day, on holidays or social event.

Giving into loneliness. It is difficult sometimes. God is good and he loves me, but he's not holding my hand at night while we watch a movie or go out to eat. The simple things in life are the ones I miss the most.

Loneliness

Loneliness, jealousy

Loneliness and isolation

Loneliness & not having a direct advocate against sexism in the church.

Fighting loneliness

Loneliness. I've learned to do nearly everything alone but I don't think I'll ever be content about it. My job is stressful, and many days after work I feel the need to be hugged/held for a few minutes so I can let the day go. When there's nobody to go home to after a long day, the loneliness is amplified.

Purity. Doubts about self-worth. The question "why?". Having to prove your worth in ministry.

How to fight sexual temptation or look desperate cause single guys don't want to wait anymore. Single guys don't go to church either.

Remaining pure.

Sexual purity in mind and body

Finding a good Christian man who is a disciple not Christian in name only

Finding single Christian men.

Being surrounded by reminders of the kind of ministry I thought I was in when I was married to the preacher

The incorrect stigma associated with being divorced — no one wants to appear to condone divorce in general so they fail to be supportive

My greatest challenge as a single Christian woman is being a divorced, single mom and trying to start life all over again after being married for 22 years.

Accepting with grace the fact that people do not view me as settled or "grown-up" because I haven't completed all the expected steps of a "normal Christian adult life", pity me because my life isn't viewed as fulfilling, and assume that I'm not happy and/or content yet.

Knowing how God wants you to serve, but I think that could be said for people in every walk of life. I really don't think being single is challenging. I do hate it for my other wonderful, single Christian friends who really want to be married and have families though. I know that is really hard for them.

Many members are very uncomfortable around single women.

Hearing scripture about childbearing

Lack of physical companionship.

Jealousy

Being accepted in a society that is predominately made up of married couples.

Providing for my children in every way- spiritually, financially, emotionally, etc.

I feel as if no one understands me and alone.

Being ignored and treated as if I don't matter.

Obedient to God

Making close friends with other sisters

When my friends start dating or get married and stop spending time with me as a result.

Practicing forgiveness. Putting better boundaries up.

Married church women and loneliness

Feeling alone. Lack of physical, emotional, and monetary support.

Lack of Support

Most everyone in my community (especially church community) are married.

Finding a way to be involved in ministry.

Finding ways to support the community/church without offending white men.

No falling into temptation of worldly pleasures and dating people that aren't from the Lord

Finding a place to belong, and work. Not being too friendly with men.

Single men in church who want to get too friendly and don't respect boundaries.

Not having a spouse to grow old with and to discuss the Bible with.

Feeling comfortable going places and doing things by myself.

A longing to have a family of my own.

Not being distracted by dating ungodly men.

Finding other Christian woman that aren't married to connect with and finding a Christian man.

To earn the respect of the men in church. I am the kind that gets involved and wants things to work efficiently. But it has been an uphill battle for several of the brothers to respect my input on things. The men talk to their wives and get their input then have their meetings and make decisions. Unless I "push", no one comes to me to ask what I think (except for one brother who is kind of like my uncle now, but he has moved away, so still having to "push" to not be ignored.

My greatest challenge is remaining content where I am. I've always had the desire to remarry and struggle with why this prayer hasn't been answered. Most days are pretty good but some days are very hard.

Breaking the stigma that the titles of wife and mother are the penultimate goal of women.

Serving and letting my voice/opinions be heard

Going to church services. Finding a place to really fit.

I can't participate in most women's events because there is nobody to watch my kids. The women I would ask are already participating in the event. It is assumed that a dad is available to help at home. Also, father/daughter and father/son events assume there is a father figure at home.

I don't think it's any different from marrieds- being wholly devoted and finding supreme joy in Jesus!!

The constant pressure to find a mate, and the constant "encouragement" that I'll be married someday. I do want to get married, but it's hard when that's the only thing people see when they know that you're single

Being told that God has a perfect man waiting for me and doing long-term, international ministry without a consistent partner

Creating a social network. Most of the women I know are stay at home married women. Our schedules just don't jive.

From a Harding perspective, just the whole concept of "the perfect Christian love story" and witnessing how much women around me place their happiness in relationships and marriage.

I struggle with wanting the "cookie cutter" future: being married, having kids, and living in a big house. But I'm not so sure that is what God has planned for me, and that scares me a bit. I don't think the "normal" future would ever make me happy, but I'm also scared that I will end up alone.

Not losing hope in God's plan for my life

Voicing my opinions

Communicating to more traditional circles how content I am without being married.

Trying to piece together a stable support system. People move, become absorbed in their own families and children. I have to work very hard to create a makeshift family and it changes around much more often than I would like.

Remaining faithful in church attendance. To find individuals or couples accepting me in my status now

For me, the hardest thing is that married people at church don't understand single life.

If I say I need more company, they say there are plenty of events or clubs I can join. But it is exhausting having to go out to socialise. I recently had several bereavements and I haven't got the energy to go out and socialise, but I still need company. I have asked some friends to come round and just eat or watch TV with me, but they are busy with their families or they want to 'do something'. Being single means never having any relaxed company, I'm always either entertaining or going out. When I most need company, is when I'm least able to get it.

At church, there is very few ways I can serve. I don't know music, technology or anything. I'm expected to do the creche instead and it really stings. I struggle with resentment, 'it's not my fault you had kids' and I need a place at church where I can admit that and repent.

When I'm told I'm single so I can serve married people, I feel dehumanised. I feel like a cog in someone else's machine.

After church we all eat together, but the women are busy feeding their kids so I hang around waiting for them to finish but then they go straight home to put kids to bed.

I want to invite my friends and their families around for lunch, but they have such fixed routines at the weekend that I have to book two months in advance. Then I don't have any toys and the kids are bored.

I don't like when married people say that singleness is a gift and if I'm upset it's because I'm jealous. It's true I am jealous, but I'm also lonely, depressed, bored, pointless, empty, worthless, experiencing grief. It needs to be OK to say actually I'm grieving the loss of the connection I hoped for.

I'm not a priority to anyone.

I'm not convinced that singleness is as good as marriage because marriage is part of the original plan before the fall. Singleness can be a blessing in a fallen world, but I don't think humans can flourish like this.

In Christian circles, everyone says it's OK to be single but actually there is shame. When they say, 'are you married' and I say no, they look pity and say ahhh.

We are told to develop friendships instead. It's difficult to do that healthily. I put in 100% but my friend has other commitments.

In my non-Christian family, neither married or single is positive or negative.

At work in academia, singleness is militant and encouraged.

Finding someone in the church to relate to; feeling involved and adequate when surrounded by married women

Attending events with other dating couples

Finding ways to serve in the American church and not feeling like an outsider

Self-care

Overcoming judgement and prejudice, needing to belong, being seen as an equal and capable servant of God

Making sure that I do not overstep unseen boundaries when reaching to families, and fellow Christian men. Making sure that nothing done from love or pure motive is taken the wrong way.

The society

Knowing how to plan my future without knowing if or when I will be married.

Nowhere to be included. Even in women's groups, the focus tends to be on marriage and children. As a single woman, you're excluded even in the group you're supposed to be part of.

1. The fact that you HAVE to do everything alone. 2. Sitting in church alone 3. The dichotomy of being genuinely happy for your friends when they get engaged/announce a pregnancy AND feeling intense jealousy/sadness at the same time. No one talks about that.

Being stereotyped that I am always looking for someone to date.

Fitting in.

Seeking affordable and reliable help for household maintenance tasks

Being responsible for all decision making

Being single. I long for companionship and have none in this world. Everyone is busy and I don't want to fill my free time with the superficial, so I have to choose between succumbing to the evil busyness swallowing the church too, to stave off loneliness, or just be alone a lot. I need nothing else in a relationship; I make a lot of money, I give and volunteer, I have deeply fulfilling friendships and hobbies and a nice life. But I want to share it and pursue Christ with a partner, and I want to bless a husband with all God has done in me. It is hard to think about always being alone, especially after my kids are grown, since I have raised them to be independent and not feel guilty about moving on and living their own calling. The greatest challenge is keeping my head and heart straight in this longing, and not letting it become an idol or bitterness or fear. Please pray for me.

Wondering if something is wrong with me

Remembering that God is there with you and you are not alone.

The church making it seem like marriage is the end all, it's the ultimate goal in life here on earth. Also, a lot of the analogies and references are to married life, making it hard to break through the ice and relate sometimes.

Always being thrown at single Christian men. It is assumed if there are only the two of you, you must fall in love.

Be content and not comparing myself to other people or friends who are married

In the Christian community, I sometimes feel like I am looked upon as being lesser, that something is wrong with me because I have never married. Christian women are supposed to marry and raise Christian families and if you haven't done that, maybe something is wrong with you.

Standards you place on yourself and comparing with the desires you have to the reality of your life

Feeling included in the congregation. I always feel like a charity case. Like I should be proud of people remembering to include me because they are so considerate.

Feeling alone, and the church not really understanding or accepting singleness as a valid life state. Not having easy ways to connect. (i.e., "singles" classes that are for kids after high school//groups that are delineated based on life status' that don't apply to me- young marrieds/young parents/parents of teens/empty nesters)

Having no one to do things with regularly

Always adapting to a new environment

1. The expectation of marriage with no other alternative discussed & the way Christians talk about it through teen years & college. It's as if they think my life is in a holding status until I marry. Now that I'm older I no longer get that expectation. It is a non-issue at my current church. 2. Also, the assumption that since I'm in my thirties that I have, of course, had sex. As Christians we should know that sex is for marriage & I shouldn't have to explain that I have actually abided by that Bible teaching all my life. I can understand non-Christians being surprised but when Christians are it is incredibly frustrating, especially when they know my daughter is adopted.