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“THAT THEY MAY Grow Up IN THEE”

By Wendy Ulrich, Ph. D., and Christine Packard, M.C., L.P.C.*



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During the dedicatory prayer of the Kirtland Temple, the Prophet Joseph Smith prayed that those in attendance, “*may grow up* in thee [Heavenly Father], and receive a fulness of the Holy Ghost, and be organized according to thy laws, and be prepared to obtain every needful thing” (D&C 109:15; emphasis added).

Latter-day Saint young adults can feel uncertain about what it takes to grow up, especially to grow up in the Lord. Because many see marriage as the primary marker of adulthood, single individuals can feel they lack the ability to graduate into full adult status. By considering what adulthood entails, all young adults—single or married—can work constructively toward maturing, or growing up, not just growing older.

Identifying the markers of adulthood and determining how to meet them is the first step. Some markers of adulthood include the following.

Acquiring an Adult Sense of Mission

In response to her father’s question about her plans for a college major, Jean (names have been changed) told him she was praying to know what Heavenly Father wanted her to study. He said, “If you asked me what you should study, what do you think I would say?” She didn’t think he would care as long as she pursued something she enjoyed that would use her strengths, bless others, and provide for her needs. He suggested, “Heavenly Father probably won’t tell you what to do any more than I would. Study your options and make the best decision you can. He will let you know if He supports your choice.”

Adults gain clarity about educational and career choices by trying multiple options, asking questions, volunteering, or working in entry-level jobs to gain experience. This provides income while helping them discover a career that best fits them.



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Establishing Personal Goals and Routines

Learning to prioritize, find balance, and work hard toward a goal are important markers of maturity. Sean learned early the value of a good night's sleep, so the discipline of getting to bed and arising early came easily to him. Karen had to learn the hard way that she was

Arranging for our own dental and medical care, haircuts, nutritious meals, exercise, and consistent and adequate sleep can become positive ways to truly claim the gift of the body. Physical self-care allows us to be proactive about our health and well-being.

Markers of Adulthood for Young Singles

less prone to depression when she set goals and structured her time to accomplish them.

Goals and routines help people prevent depression and temptation and navigate between the opposing quicksands of boredom and excessive stress. As we learn to stick with a difficult task, we have the pleasure of getting the things we want most, not just the things we want now.

Managing Physical Self-Care

Many young adults assume everyone except them knows how to cook for a crowd, decide if a medical problem is serious, or dress for an interview. However, most adults feel inadequate regarding some aspect of adult life. Although it is tempting to hope a future spouse will know how to do what we do not, we grow in confidence and skill as we step up to the task of learning these things for ourselves.

Increasing Financial Independence

Financial independence requires forward thinking. Some single adults may find that this does not come naturally. For example, Lynn, 31, always assumed that when she got married her spouse would manage the financial obligations, such as paying bills and investing for retirement. However, as she grew older and was not yet married she realized that in order to manage her finances wisely she would have to learn about things like investment tools and online banking. Lynn read basic books on investing, talked to advisers, and carefully studied her options. Now she enjoys planning for vacations and purchases, making charitable contributions in accordance with her values, and feeling like a good financial steward.

Another single woman notes, "There is peace of mind that comes from preparing an emergency fund and saving for purchases instead of relying on loans or credit cards. Our parents worked for years to obtain what they have. We too can learn to budget and save."

As young singles come to understand that maturity and adulthood are marked by behavior and attitude rather than marital status, they will come to achieve a greater sense of satisfaction and purpose in their lives.



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Creating a Home

One of the biggest things we can do to create a sense of independence is to establish a home that reflects our own tastes, lifestyle, and personality. The reality is, singles do not have to wait for marriage to create their own home, even if it is a small space in a home or apartment.

Jean, 28, concluded she did not need to be married to buy “real” dishes. She chose a pattern she liked and bought herself a plate or bowl when she reached an important goal. She enjoyed entertaining family and friends with confidence and pleasure.

Samuel, 23, lives with his parents, but still assumes responsibilities he would have if living on his own. He notes, “I choose to help out with household tasks because as an independent single adult I feel I need to pull my weight in the family.”

Shifting Our Sense of Family

Although nothing replaces the ideal of marriage, singles can also create a sense of family with siblings, cousins, friends, co-workers, neighbors, and ward members. A family of wholesome friends can provide a sense of belonging, uplifting friendships, and mutual care to help fill in the gaps between childhood in our parents’ home and a family of spouse and children.

Singles can find a sense of family through ward members, friends, and neighbors they eat with, vacation with, serve with, and talk to regularly. Adults learn to invest in such relationships by both initiating

and responding to opportunities to make friends rather than just waiting for others to come to them.

Carefully planning a vacation with a roommate gave Shellie, 28, something fun to look forward to. She felt less dependent on her parents for entertainment, chose for herself where she wanted to go, and appreciated her family’s encouragement and interest in her trip.

Learning Skills of Emotional Connection

Initiating friendliness, responding to others’ invitations, and enjoying people of different ages are all social skills of adulthood. Young adults may sometimes feel anxious in social interactions.

In extreme cases, some have turned to unhealthy behaviors as a distraction or defense against their fears. More commonly, some withdraw.

Learning to make conversation, deepen friendships gradually, and solve interpersonal conflict can help overcome unwarranted anxiety about closeness. Allowing others to know us more honestly can help counter the feelings of shame, embarrassment, or inadequacy we may harbor because of what we see as personal weaknesses.

THOUGHTS FROM SINGLES

“Having parents remind me of the faith I’ve already gained is such a blessing. Their encouragement stirs up memories of all the tender mercies that have solidified my faith. Their showing faith in my faith is a huge help,” says Russ, age 24.

Dani, 32, says, “I loved living in a ward where the stake and the ward recognized me as ‘Dani the individual’ and expected things from me accordingly. How important those expectations and that recognition of me as an individual were to my personal growth!”

Building a Community

Young single adults can make a real difference for good by building a community of friendships





and getting involved in appropriate service opportunities that draw on their talents and abilities, making their lives richer and more meaningful. Volunteering, taking someone to dinner, buying Christmas gifts for others, throwing a party for someone, inviting others over, doing home and visiting teaching, joining a sports team, voting, magnifying church callings—all are ways to build our communities, making our lives richer and more meaningful.

Often the Lord helps through others when young adults seek to be actively involved. When Warren, 27, decided to return to activity, he says he was “befriended by a family who had been married for many years but were without children. Their dinner invitations made me feel welcomed and helped keep me interested in church attendance while I nurtured my testimony.”

Supporting the Next Generation

A sign of maturity among adults is shifting from being taken care of to being the ones who take care of others. Young adults bless lives by passing their knowledge, experience, and care to younger people who look up to them. Appropriate activities with nieces and nephews, neighborhood children, or Primary and youth classes encourage relationships that are meaningful for both generations. We can also support the next generation by mentoring new people at work, contributing to our profession, getting to know investigators, or doing missionary work.

Growing in Spiritual Responsibility

One of the best ways to mature as a single adult is to expand spiritual responsibilities.

One bishop of a young single adult ward recommends many of his members as temple workers. On Friday nights they provide most of the staff for their small temple, giving valuable service and enjoying a spiritual feast together.

The temple emphasizes the importance of family across and between the generations. It also makes clear that God knows and loves each of us as individuals.

We learn in the temple the principles of spiritual maturity: obedience to God, willingness to sacrifice for His Kingdom, and the importance of organizing our lives to prioritize prayer, scripture study, and doing our duty in the Church. Qualifying for a temple recommend of any kind means we are welcome in God’s house, where we can continue to “grow up” in Him.

Building the Kingdom

The spiritual maturity that emerges from committing to build the kingdom is one of the ultimate markers of adulthood for all members of the Church. Regardless of our marital status, we can grow up in the Lord as we organize our lives according to His laws and constantly seek His Spirit to guide and comfort us. Then, whether or not we currently have everything we want, we become worthy heirs of Joseph Smith’s prophetic blessing—that they “may grow up in thee, and receive a fulness of the Holy Ghost, and be organized according to thy laws, and be prepared to obtain every needful thing” (D&C 109:15). ■

*** The authors are counselors who work regularly with young single adults. They are also parents of young single adults.**

IDEAS FOR PARENTS AND LEADERS

- Celebrate milestones marking the transition into adult roles and status.
- Share strategies for making decisions, setting goals, and sticking with hard tasks.
- Acknowledge demonstrations of maturity rather than criticizing perceived shortcomings.
- Let adult children experience the consequences of their choices.
- Ask about friends and projects, not just marital prospects.

