

Not Waiting for

Happiness

Trusting that Heavenly Father has a plan for me, I know I don't have to forfeit happiness until I'm married.

By Jessica Howell

I sat glumly on my couch, talking to my roommate. We were discussing the ever-present topic of our marital status: single. Conversation flowed easily as we talked about our familiar predicaments. Why were we still single? What were we doing wrong? Where on earth were our future husbands? Both of us had gone on many dates in the past few months, but nothing had come of it.

I told her that earlier in the day I had been catching up with a recently married friend, who asked me how I was doing and if I was dating anyone. When I responded that I wasn't, she said, "I'm sorry. Hang in there. Don't get discouraged." I accepted the condolences and told her I would be OK, repeating the familiar phrase, "It'll happen when it's supposed to happen."

As I was lamenting to my roommate about my status as a young, very single adult, a thought came to me: Why did I feel like being single made me somehow less of a person?

The Fallacy That Singles Are Miserable

The experience I had with my married friend that day, as well as several others with peers, leaders, and family members, pointed toward the fallacy that being single meant I must be miserable. I realized I had adopted this attitude myself. I often felt like something was wrong with me or I was a failure if I wasn't steadily dating somebody.

Since returning from my mission, I have put a lot of stress on myself to find someone to marry. I've had my fair share of relationships, yet nothing has been lasting. As time passes and I get older, I feel the pressure mounting. As I scan through my social media and see friend after friend get engaged or married, there is a nagging voice in the back of my mind asking why I'm not married yet. What am I doing wrong? How do they make it look so easy? There have been times when I couldn't help but feel that Heavenly Father was withholding the blessing of marriage from me because I was not good enough yet.



A Plan for Each of Our Lives

It is my greatest desire to be sealed in the temple for time and all eternity. I know that the sealing ordinance is very important and necessary if we are to become like our Father in Heaven. But as I have pleaded with God in prayer, fasted, and pored over the scriptures, seeking comfort during lonely times, I have also come to know that He has an individual plan for each of our lives and that He will put people in our path at the exact time they need to be there.

Some get married young; others get married when they are older. That doesn't mean that someone is better than someone else for marrying sooner; it just means that Heavenly Father has a plan for each of our lives. There are lessons to be learned during this sojourn in mortality. These lessons are tailored specifically for us in our individual circumstances, and He "who knoweth all things" (2 Nephi 2:24) knows the best way we can learn them. If anything, these custom-made plans for each of our lives show just how much He understands and loves us.

We Have Been Created to Have Joy

I have come to learn that being single does not mean I have to put off being happy. In 2 Nephi 2:25 we read that “men are, that they might have joy.” I have yet to find a footnote or stipulation on that scripture that says, “Men are, that they might have joy . . . as long as they are not single.” Heavenly Father created us to be happy! I believe that He wants us to make the most of our lives, whether we are single or married, and to find joy in the journey of becoming our best selves.

I have found a lot of comfort from the words of Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

“Never stop striving for the best that is within you. Never stop hoping for all of the righteous desires of your heart. But don’t close your eyes and hearts to the simple and elegant beauties of each day’s ordinary moments that make up a rich, well-lived life.”¹

The chances of my being a happy married person drastically increase if I am already a happy single person. How awful it would be if I waited to start enjoying life until I was married. Then, once I was married, would I notice that all of my married friends were having children and put my happiness on hold until I had a child of my own? or a house? or whatever else it seemed I was missing in comparison with others?

There Is Always Good to Be Found

We can always find something that is lacking in our lives, but there is also always good to be found. Day to day, I notice Heavenly Father’s tender mercies and beautiful reminders that He is aware of me. My ability to feel joy doesn’t depend on my marital status—it comes from knowing and trusting in the Lord’s sure promises.² I can trust that Heavenly Father has a plan for me and that He knows what is best. He will guide my footsteps, but that requires me to move forward.

I know that as we have faith and a positive attitude about our lives as young single adults, we will find more joy in each day and realize that His plan is bigger than anything we could imagine for ourselves. As I strive to live with this perspective in mind, I feel that I can say with Mormon, “And now, I do not know all things; but the Lord knoweth all things which are to come; wherefore, he worketh in me to do according to his will” (Words of Mormon 1:7). ■

The author, who since writing this article has married and taken the last name Barker, lives in Idaho, USA.

NOTES

1. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Forget Me Not,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 122.
2. See Russell M. Nelson, “Joy and Spiritual Survival,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2016, 81–84.

