



Welcoming Every Single One

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My desire in this message is to offer opportunities for development and happiness for all members, whether married or single. To be in control of your life, to be a success regardless of your marital situation, I recommend that you come to know your Father in Heaven.

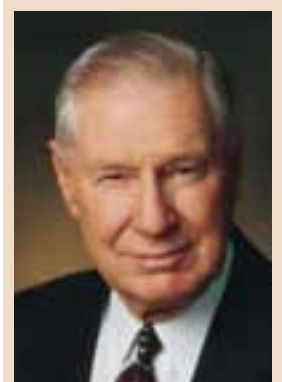
You can best do this by prayer, study, and keeping the commandments. Always remember that He loves you and will give you guidance and support if you will invite Him into your life. Include Him in your decision making. Include Him when you take inventory of your personal worth. Pray to Him when you are discouraged, because I testify that He does hear our cries for help. In his insightful discourse on prayer, the prophet Zenos observed, “And thou didst hear me because of mine afflictions and my sincerity” (Alma 33:11).

We are deeply moved and sobered as we hear a common thread running through the expressions of many of our single members. For some, loneliness and discouragement are their most constant companions. One great soul who has a good bishop, a good home teacher, a good position, and comfortable circumstances said, “I don’t need more to do;

I just need someone to do it with.” This becomes a matter of great concern when we consider that at least one-third of adult Church members are single.

Without downplaying the ache of loneliness that some singles feel, President Gordon B. Hinckley offered something of an antidote when he advised: “I believe that for most of us the best medicine for loneliness is work and service in behalf of others. I do not minimize your problems, but I do not hesitate to say that there are many others whose problems are more serious than yours. Reach out to serve them, to help them, to encourage them. There are so many boys and girls who fail in school for want of a little personal attention and encouragement. There are so many elderly people who live in misery and loneliness and fear for whom a simple conversation would bring a measure of hope and brightness.”¹

Please remember that we have all been single, are now single, or at some time may again be single; so being single in the Church is not extraordinary. Being married also carries challenges and responsibilities. Perhaps you have heard of the young bride who said, “When I get married, it will be the end of my troubles.” Her wise mother replied, “Yes, my dear, but which end?”



Heavenly Father, who knows you best of all, knows your talents and strengths as well as your weaknesses. He has placed you here on the earth at this time to develop and refine these characteristics. I promise you He will help you.

Measuring Our Progress

It does not help to become so obsessed with the desire to be married that we miss blessings and opportunities for development while we are single. I also believe it would be helpful to set goals; without goals you cannot measure your progress. But don't become frustrated because there are no obvious victories. Some things cannot be measured. If you are striving for excellence—if you are trying your best day by day with the wisest use of your time and energy to reach realistic goals—you will be a success whether you are married or single.

Speaking of single members, President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973) once said, “In your ranks are some of the noblest members of the Church—faithful, valiant, striving to live the Lord’s commandments, to help build up the kingdom on earth, and to serve your fellowmen.”² Too often we are thoughtless and insensitive to the feelings of these choice souls among us. One


well-meaning priesthood leader, concerned about one of these choice single women whose heart was aching for companionship and a more fulfilling life, asked, “Why don’t you get a husband?” She replied in good humor, “Brother, I would love to, but I can’t go pick one off a tree.”

Although many single adult members are well-adjusted to life and its problems, they still need loving attention from the Church and its members to reaffirm their usefulness and the love that God has for each of them. The proper and rightful focus of the Church on the home and the family frequently causes some single members who have no companion or children to feel left out.

One writes: “Many members of the Church treat a divorcee as if she had leprosy. I have lived in a certain LDS ward in Salt Lake for several years, where they had a widows’ and widowers’ party every year at Christmastime. I was never invited. I have always lived a good life and believe the Savior would have invited me. I am acquainted with some who have experienced both death and divorce, and they say that divorce is worse than death.”

Still another writes: “Believe me, with the Church emphasis on families and children, we are already thoroughly aware that we are ‘oddballs.’ It has been a real pleasure to be accepted as a normal person.” No one should feel isolated because he or she is single. We want all to feel that they belong to the Church in the context of Paul’s message to the Ephesians: “Ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God” (Ephesians 2:19). We belong not only to the Lord’s Church but also to each other.

All society, including single adult members, has a vested interest in fathers and mothers and families. A few years ago, President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, said to the single members of the Church: “We talk a lot about families. Sometimes in bitterness, you will want to say ‘all this talk about families, but I don’t have a family,



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and . . . stop there! Don't add that extra phrase. 'I wish they would stop talking so much about families.' You pray that we do keep talking about families; about fathers and mothers and children and family home evening, temple marriage and companionship and all of the rest, because all of that will be yours. If we stop talking about it, then you, among all others, will be the losers."³ I echo that sentiment. By and by, all of that will indeed be yours.

Seeking Those in Need

We all recall the parable of the good shepherd who left the multitude and went out in search of a single sheep who was lost (see Luke 15:3–6). Some of our members who are single may become lost unless we reach out to them. Seeking out the one who needs our help involves reaching out in many ways.

What can we do as individuals to reach out to singles? One way is to make an effort to be more inclusive. When we see someone

sitting by him or herself in a Church meeting, we can either go and sit with him or her or invite him or her to sit with us. We can all offer the hand of friendship. Indeed, it would be well for us to remember the advice of President Hinckley concerning converts and apply it to those who are alone: they need a friend, a calling, and nourishment by the good word of God. I think we could add one more to this list—a good home teacher. Diligent home teachers will gear home teaching messages to the needs of single members. They can also provide friendship, encouragement, a feeling of acceptance, and, particularly for single sisters, the opportunity for priesthood blessings.

It is easy to label someone as single and then not be able to look past the label. Singles are people and would like to be treated as such. Not all are single by choice. Let us, as the Psalmist said, “be a father of the fatherless” and remember that “God setteth

From *guidelines for Church leaders: “Single members should be offered stake and ward activities such as firesides, dances, choirs, priesthood preparation seminars, temple preparation seminars, temple visits, cultural events, and sports.”*

the solitary in families” (Psalm 68:5–6). We all belong to the family of God and someday will return to Him, to the mansions He has prepared for all His children.

How Leaders Can Help

Here are some guidelines for Church leaders: “The bishopric [or branch presidency] may organize one or more home evening groups for single members who do not have children in the home and do not live with their parents.”⁴ In addition, “single members should be offered stake and ward activities such as firesides, dances, choirs, priesthood preparation seminars, temple preparation seminars, temple visits, cultural events, and sports.”⁵

Church leaders should ponder the needs of single members regularly in leadership meetings and include them in meaningful callings, assignments, and activities. Quorum and Relief Society leaders should be sensitive to the needs of single members, particularly when lessons include topics such as marriage and children. Single members need to be remembered and nourished.

Being Happy Now

Being single does not mean you have to put off being happy. As President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973) once said: “Happiness does not depend on what happens outside of you, but on what happens inside of you. It is measured by the spirit with which you meet the problems of life.”⁶

I remind you that many who are single bring much-needed strength to family members and others, providing support, acceptance, and love to nieces and nephews, brothers and sisters, and extended family members. Thus, in a sense, singles can do much parenting in their own right. As they do so, they can have a great impact because so often they can say things parents cannot say to their own children.

Lastly, my advice to those of you who are single is to pray often because our Heavenly Father, who knows you best of all, knows your talents and strengths as well as your weaknesses. He has placed you here on the earth at this

time to develop and refine these characteristics. I promise you He will help you. He is aware of your needs, and by and by those promised blessings of companionship will come to you. ■

NOTES

1. “A Conversation with Single Adults,” *Liabona*, Nov. 1997, 20; *Ensign*, Mar. 1997, 61.
2. *Strengthening the Home* (pamphlet, 1973), 8.
3. Melchizedek Priesthood MIA Conference, June 1973; quoted in James E. Faust, “Happiness Is Having a Father Who Cares,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1974, 23.
4. *Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 1: Stake Presidencies and Bishoprics* (2006), 125–26.
5. *Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 1*, 126.
6. “A Sure Trumpet Sound: Quotations from President Lee,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1974, 78.

IDEAS FOR HOME TEACHERS

After prayerfully studying this message, share it using a method that encourages the participation of those you teach. Following are some examples:

1. Discuss President Faust’s admonition to seek out those in need. Challenge the family to visit with a single member or non-member. Have the family suggest other ways they could help that person feel more welcomed and valued. Encourage them to spend time getting to know him or her better.
2. Start the lesson with a discussion or game. During the activity, ask an individual to leave the room for a few minutes. Call the person back before sending out another. After everyone has been out of the room, discuss how it felt to be alone. Explain that “we have all been single, are now single, or at some time may again be single.” Discuss how each of us can make our lives happy and meaningful regardless of our circumstances.
3. Bring a ruler or measuring tape. Show it as you share counsel from the section “Measuring Our Progress.” Discuss how we should be measuring our lives. Testify that if we strive for excellence, we can be successful.