

By Landon Hawes

LEARNING TO BE HAPPY WHILE I'M SINGLE



I realized I had been going about dating the wrong way.

Why is everyone else dating and having fun?"
"Why am I not married?"
"What's wrong with me?"

Most single young adults have probably asked themselves these questions at least once! The challenge of seeking an eternal companion can take a toll on the faith and hope of even the most dedicated Latter-day Saints. And yes, also in my case, dating has been particularly difficult.

Marriage has always seemed like a grand adventure to me, and I've looked forward to it from a young age. But I got discouraged when it seemed like I was failing at dating during my college years. Though I went on many dates, had several serious relationships, and met accomplished and interesting women, I didn't marry. And to me, those failed relationships felt like a sign that I was inferior and unattractive.

My feelings toward my singleness only got worse after a few more breakups when I began my career. It was easy for me to ask what was wrong with me and right with everyone else who was getting married. My patriarchal blessing, along with several priesthood blessings, strongly and specifically indicated that I would be sealed in mortality to a righteous woman. So why wasn't it happening?

I started to wonder, "Have I done something to derail God's plan for me?"

Finally, after "wrestling" before God for years through prayer, scripture study, and temple attendance, I received revelation regarding my situation through my friend and counselor, Brad (name has been changed). During one of our counseling sessions, he said: "Your happiness depends on you—not on someone else. When you're happy when you're single, you can be happy in any circumstances." Likewise, President Russell M. Nelson taught, "The joy we feel has little to do with the circumstances of our lives and everything to do with the focus of our lives" ("Joy and Spiritual Survival," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 82).

My entire perspective changed as the Spirit impressed these words firmly upon my soul. And I realized that I had always dated to fulfill a need—in my case, the need to be married simply so I wouldn't be alone.

This definitely wasn't a way of thinking that would lead to an eternally loving companion!

Through Brad, the Lord gently taught me that His plan for His sons and daughters is not for them to marry based on need or cultural pressure or fear. Marriage is based on Christlike love. Then He taught me that my unmarried status could continue to teach me to live life and seek marriage based on pure love and not utility. To seek marriage for the right reasons.

Through this experience, I've learned three truths that I look to whenever I'm feeling discouraged about dating:

- 1. Your worth doesn't depend on your marital status.** Isaiah taught that "[God's] thoughts are not [our] thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8). I thought that being single was a reflection on my lack of worth. However, God helped me see that being single is preparing me for a better marriage than I could have had if I'd gotten married on my timetable. It didn't have anything to do with my worth.
- 2. Preparation dispels anxiety and worry.** The Lord tells us that "if [we] are prepared [we] shall not fear" (Doctrine and Covenants 38:30). Seeking and then following God's will has helped me let go of previous fears and frustrations about my marriage status. It has also helped me focus on preparing myself for whatever comes my way in the future.
- 3. There is joy in being single.** Being single has blessed me with exciting travel opportunities, professional development, and ways to serve in the Church. While I still deeply desire marriage and children, God has helped me to appreciate how much there is to do in His kingdom right now, whether I have a companion by my side or not.

I'm still not married! My wife hasn't magically appeared now that I've had a paradigm shift about dating and marriage, and I know I'll still be frustrated sometimes with dating in the future. But a lot of fear and anxiety about my marital status is gone. And I now know that it's totally fine to be single while the Lord and I work together to fulfill the eternal promises and blessings that He has made to me—both those in mortality and in eternity. ■



Landon Hawes is a globe-trotting urban planner who loves good writing, great books, and exploring the world. You can find him at his local library, cheering on his team at the baseball diamond, or on a backcountry road finding beautiful places where no one else thought to look.