

## To My Single Friends

*John K. Carmack*

A girl I will call Helen once came to me as her stake president for counsel. Well-meaning friends had suggested that she tone down her activities and assume a lower and less dynamic profile so that she would have a better opportunity to be married. She was professionally successful, well-read, and involved in a multitude of excellent projects, but she was not finding a special friendship leading to marriage in our stake and community. She had come to me because she wanted another opinion on the suggestion that she gear down her approach to life.

I told Helen that I felt she should continue to be dynamic and active so that she would fit in well with the person she would eventually marry. I advised her to fulfill her full potential. She explained that she had been offered an excellent new executive position in the eastern United States that would increase her strong image. I told her that the decision was hers to make, but that my spiritual inclinations were favorable about her new opportunity.

Helen accepted the new position and moved east. There she met a graduate student and married him in the temple. They are both continuing to make a tremendous contribution to the Church and to their community.

Of course, every single adult's life may not turn out like Helen's. It is difficult to generalize about single adults, who comprise about one-third of our adult Church membership. Attempting to give advice to those who are prepared for and desire to marry—other than one-on-one in an interview situation—is hazardous. Still, there are some things that can be said in a general way that single adults might be able to adapt to their specific challenges.

### **Following Your Own Road Map**

A large number of eternal marriage partners will find each other simply and naturally in the normal course of attending a college or university, participating in ward and stake callings and activities, or launching themselves in a trade or profession. For these members, perhaps the advice of President Ezra Taft Benson during the general conference in April 1988 is enough. He counseled single adult brethren not to put off too long the decision to marry. (Ensign, May 1988, p. 51.) I endorse that excellent counsel from a prophet of God.

But what can be said about finding an eternal partner that will be helpful to those of you who are already in your late twenties, thirties, forties, or beyond?

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Challenges in life do not usually come equipped with a set of neat and orderly answers. Guaranteed programs that provide the answer to each question are neither possible nor desirable. Your own inspiration and intuition, as parts of a prayerful, temple-centered, service-oriented life, are probably more helpful than the well-meaning advice, criticism, and solutions offered by some who try to help you toward your goal of temple marriage.

I believe Church programs can assist you, but you bear individual responsibility to follow your own road map through life. The Church's primary mission is not to dictate individual decisions or to provide a matchmaking service or organization. Nevertheless, the marvelous environment of the Church can be a great help to you in pursuing your quest.

### **Some Observations and Experiences**

Over the years many of my friends have been single adults, especially during my time in southern California. That is where my wife and I met at a small, spontaneously organized single-adult party in Westwood.

Because my own marriage came through an unofficial single-adult activity, I have always felt sincerely interested in and at home with single adults. In the years I have served as a Church leader, literally thousands of single adults have been an important and valued part of my ministry. My wife and I have been enriched by these wonderful associations. I have served as an adviser for stake and regional Special Interest and Young Special Interest groups and for other groups of single adults. By authorization of the First Presidency, the Los Angeles Stake organized the first single-adult unit in southern California during my term as stake president. Because of these cherished experiences and because of my love for single adults of the Church, I offer a few observations which may be of value to you who are single adults.

#### *1. Marriage is more likely achieved as a by-product of pursuing other useful activities and goals.*

If I were single and had no prospects for marriage, after a reasonable time in one location and a careful weighing of my job opportunities, I would probably explore other possibilities that could open new vistas for friendships and growth. But while temple marriage and family life would be my ultimate goal, whether in this life or beyond, I would be careful not to make it my central focus. Marriage is more likely to come naturally, from living life fully, than by a direct and pointed campaign to achieve that long-range goal.

Author C. S. Lewis said that if you make good health one of your direct objectives, it is easy to become a health crank and also to imagine that there is something wrong with you. Good health, he advised, is more likely to be achieved and experienced if you want other, related things more. If, for example, you enjoy good, nourishing meals; games that provide regular exercise; work; and open air, good health is the likely by-product.

Similarly, you may enjoy life through work, friendships, travel, hobbies, temple attendance, institute classes, and further education. In the course of these activities, you may meet a number of suitable potential partners.

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There is little direct advice on marriage found in the records of the Savior's mortal ministry. The Lord's emphasis was on service to others and on treating people with love and respect. His counsel led primarily to spiritual growth rather than directly to marriage. His parable of the talents was a powerful injunction that energy should be invested in increasing the talents one has been given and in employing those gifts granted to all of us. Those who fearfully hid their talents and brooded over the risks involved, he cautioned, would reap a bitter harvest. The parable was not for married people alone, but for all of us. It has been, for me, an eloquent imperative.

Life is rich, stimulating, interesting, and challenging. "Men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness;

"For the power is in them ..." (D&C 58:27–28.)

One of my favorite mottoes is, "Do it, fix it, try it."

President Spencer W. Kimball reduced this to "Do it!"

The Savior advised us to ask, seek, and knock. (See Matt. 7:7.) The result, He promised us, would be that we will receive, find, and have doors opened to us.

President Kimball has said: "I suppose if I have learned anything in life, it is that we are to keep moving, keep trying—as long as we breathe! If we do, we will be surprised at how much more can still be done." (Ensign, Nov. 1980, p. 76.)

He also said, "To be passive is deadening; to stop doing is to die. Here then is a close parallel with physical life. If one fails ... to nourish his spirit and mind, his spirit shrivels and his mind darkens." (The Miracle of Forgiveness, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969, p. 93.)

One comedian observed, "Eighty percent of success is showing up."

I have spent so much time on this point because it is the central point. Enjoy life, be involved in the good things that interest you, and find satisfaction, joy, and happiness, whether or not you find a marriage partner in this life. Your opportunity to marry may come indirectly rather than by directly focusing on that objective.

*2. Keep a long-range, spiritual perspective.*

The second major point is to keep a spiritual perspective on life. Paul wrote: "For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." (1 Cor. 13:12.) He also said: "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." (1 Cor. 15:19.)

Judging by surface appearances only, we may sometimes see life as cruel and unfair. I do not find complete fairness in my life or in the lives of those around me. It would be easy to become angry and bitter if I took a short-sighted or temporal view of these things. But I know by inspiration and by scriptural authority that God is both merciful and just. (See, for example, Alma 42.) We just need to see things from his perspective.

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Corita Kent observed, “To believe in God is to know that all the rules will be fair, and that there will be wonderful surprises.” (Mary Corita Kent, *Sister Corita*, Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1968, p. 59.)

Only in the long view do we find justice, righteousness, and fairness. Somehow, to understand, accept, and live with the reality of unfairness as only a transitory thing makes it tolerable.

Sometimes we find members of the Church concerned about apparently unfulfilled patriarchal blessings. President Harold B. Lee once explained that a patriarchal blessing is an eternal document. (See *Ye Are the Light of the World*, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1974, pp. 305–7.) Some, perhaps many, promises contained in the blessings will be fulfilled in another sphere of existence. Life is a continuum, and many of its treasures and joys await a better world.

One common concern is that there are more single women than single men. This in itself seems unfair. For some, opportunities to marry are limited by this factor, but many women still have a good chance to develop a special friendship that can ripen into marriage.

### *3. Maintain a loving, tolerant mortal perspective, too.*

You may want to marry a man or woman just like the father or mother, the exemplary priesthood leader or outstanding woman you idealize. But remember that even spiritual giants begin in embryo. If you are not careful, the ideal—what you hope your spouse will be—can blind you to the numerous good qualities in potential partners. Many eligible Latter-day Saint singles who now might not measure up to your checklist will someday be fine fathers and mothers and respected Church and community leaders. Sister Camilla Kimball wrote: “When people ask what it feels like to be married to a prophet, I tell them, ‘I didn’t marry a prophet. I married a young returned missionary.’ ” (Edward L. Kimball, ed., *The Writings of Camilla Eyring Kimball*, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1988, p. 114.)

Learn to see potential in people and to help them develop it. That is what you would want a loving partner to do for you. One young woman found her responses to the man she had been dating were altered when she changed her own perspective and looked at his potential. Their friendship blossomed into love, and they were married.

It helps also to recognize that some things are “musts” in a spouse and that others may simply be matters of preference. Women, for example, will want to be firm about marrying an active, committed priesthood holder. But if you love the symphony and he prefers sports, it couldn’t hurt him to sample the action in Beethoven or you to cheer a bit for the home team.

Sometimes people and relationships will disappoint you. When that happens, be resilient enough to remain open and trusting. It may be painful to overcome the hurt, and it surely can be frightening to risk having that kind of pain again. But shutting other people out—building barriers to prevent someone from crossing into the tender territory of your heart—means locking yourself inside a shell. Be realistic, be judicious, be prayerful, but be willing to trust the right someone. That is what must happen in a good marriage.

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When a cherished friendship does not develop into romance leading to marriage, learn to live without regrets. You can't accurately predict what might have been, if only you or he had said or done something different. Avoid constantly looking back—it retards your forward progress.

*4. A word to those who may never marry.*

Some of my closest and most admired friends have not married. One of my mother's dear friends, who served as her counselor in the stake Relief Society presidency, was a retired lieutenant colonel from the United States Army. She was a beautiful, cultured, intelligent woman whose encouragement was of great value to me and many others. She died with faith and poise, having earned a great reward. I know she yet will have an experience equivalent to that enjoyed by women in choice mortal families. No joy, priesthood ordinance, or family experience will be denied her.

Think of all who have been cut off from life in infancy, in war, or through disease. Heavenly provision is made to ensure that they will enjoy all the fruits of the gospel.

If it begins to appear that you will not have the opportunity to marry, continue to be active in good causes, to develop your talents, to improve your mind, to love and serve your friends, and to stay strong and secure in your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Be active in the Church.

Quorum leaders, Relief Society leaders, bishops, and stake presidents should feel free to call single adults to any position for which their background has prepared them, according to inspiration from the Lord. The value and capacity of single Latter-day Saints are too often overlooked, yet these members are not a whit behind those to whom marriage has come.

Great things are in store for you if you have righteous goals and live worthily. There will be wonderful and satisfying surprises and compensations for you.

*5. Look outward and away from yourself.*

Many of us develop the habit of constantly thinking about ourselves, about how we feel and look, or about how we are perceived by others. Constantly looking inward and talking about ourselves is as dangerous as it is boring for those who spend time with us.

The Spirit reminded Joseph Smith while he was languishing in Liberty Jail, "Thou art not yet as Job." (D&C 121:10.) This was one way the Spirit kept Joseph thinking outwardly, even while he was in jail. Three sections of the Doctrine and Covenants were extracted from one of Joseph's epistles to the Church written from the jail. Clearly he kept a good part of his focus outward, even from his cell.

Try not to beat yourself with undue concern for your own problems. Thoughtless people may make hurtful comments about you, give judgmental opinions about why you are single, or identify your supposed mistakes. If you take all of these comments to heart, you can become mentally and spiritually depressed. I suggest that you ignore the slings and arrows cast your way and go about your business.

Look up from your life, and look outward to what you can do to contribute. Strive for balance in your life, and blessings you need will be added to you. Balance includes friendship and love for family

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and associates, goals and directions, stability and control, good external support systems (family, friends, and Church leaders), obedience to gospel standards, maintenance of high morale, and substantial outward contributions to others.

Think of your blessings, your talents, and your strengths, rather than your problems. I used to teach missionaries serving under me to awaken a little early and thank the Lord for their wonderful blessings. It was a good start to what was often another day of pointed rejection. We have much for which we can be grateful. Let us focus upward and outward to blessings, contributions, and service.

#### *6. Achieve and maintain self-esteem.*

It is common to find low self-esteem in the lives of single adults—but it is common among married adults as well. The ineptness of parents, thoughtlessness of friends and associates, and habits we have acquired all contribute to this problem.

In some cases, professional guidance and direction may be needed to achieve self-esteem, especially if the problem has become deep-rooted.

We all need the feeling that we are of value, that we count in life. Single adults need to be especially self-reliant and have healthy self-esteem. Our Heavenly Father can provide that through inspiration and revelation if we stay close to him. A strong testimony born of walking in the light of Christ will help. A testimony brings peace of mind and assurance about life's ultimate purposes for us. Knowing that we are spirit children of a loving Father in Heaven, and therefore heirs of all he is and has, is one of the greatest concepts mortals can grasp.

Moroni taught the great principle that the Lord has allowed all of us to have weaknesses, but he added that the Lord will show us our weaknesses if we humble ourselves and come to Him. Then he added the crowning thought that those weaknesses can become our strengths as we overcome them. (See Ether 12:27.) This is true of low self-esteem. With the Lord's help we can overcome that serious impediment.

### **Finding the Road Map**

The number of single adults in the Church is growing. Perhaps you will find in what I have said some useful ideas or some hope for greater fulfillment in this life.

Most of you will marry. It is amazing that in a world with an imbalance between male and female single adults, most nevertheless find a partner. But some do not. Keep a spiritual perspective on marriage. Remember that God is just and wants you to have all the experiences you need for exaltation. Wonderful surprises await us all. I know that to be true.

Don't focus solely on your primary goal of temple marriage, but let that opportunity come as a by-product of a healthy, balanced life. Be involved in good works, in education, in personal development. Build healthy self-esteem. Contribute in the lives of others.

I wish you well. May the Lord help you find your own personal road map to joy and happiness and,

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ultimately, to an eternal partnership with a worthy companion.

*John K. Carmack, "To My Single Friends," Ensign, Mar. 1989, 27*



To My Single Friends. By Elder John K. Carmack. Of the First Quorum of the Seventy. Over the years many of my friends have been single adults, especially during my time in southern California. That is where my wife and I met at a small, spontaneously organized single-adult party in Westwood. Because my own marriage came through an unofficial single-adult activity, I have always felt sincerely interested in and at home with single adults. In the years I have served as a Church leader, literally thousands of single adults have been an important and valued part of my ministry. My wife and I have been enriched by these wonderful associations. I have served as an adviser for stake The single person can approve what has been written before it goes live, and their friend can also get involved by recommending other users on MySingleFriend to them. The site aims to match make singles through their friend's descriptions of them, building an online community and taking away the hassle and stigma of writing your own dating profile. My Single Friend Limited[edit]. Mysinglefriend.com is owned by My Single Friend Limited, a company registered in England in August 2004. My Single Friend is a chick-lit that contained all the right elements you would expect to find in such a book: it is funny (sometimes laugh-out-loud), it is romantic (in a cheesy sort of way), it is quirky (and cringe-worthy), it is light, witty, and just purely fun. However, for some odd reason, this book I think I'm starting to enjoy reading Jane Costello's books more than I'd imagined I would. My Single Friend is my third for her, and I'm getting ready to pick up the next one as I write this. My Single Friend was just as enjoyable as Jane Costello's previous novels and it goes without saying that I fully recommend this book. Jane Costello is a huge new talent in chick lit and long may she continue writing such fantastic books. Her books are so enjoyable and definitely have the re-read factor that lots of books lack. To: My Single Friends. 18 likes 2 talking about this. Book. Happy Resurrection Sunday my Single Friends! You are radically loved by KING JESUS! They will follow the Lord; He will roar like a lion. When He roars, His children will come trembling from the west. - Hosea 11:10 - Love is patient, love is kind.