

Singleness and God's Deliverance: My personal experience

Betty Vivian

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By Betty Vivian

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Foreword

Foreword - Singleness and God's Deliverance

This short book deals with some critical questions on Christian singleness. It primarily deals with how to effectively live as a single Christian throughout God's intended season for it. Betty Vivian covers on singleness from her experience in a very Christian and cultural way that believers can easily learn from.

Her trials of viewing singleness as a burden descended from the cultural pressures she faced. What the bible said about singleness seemed to matter less since most of what she encountered in church embraced the cultural influences rather than biblical influences.

God's deliverance from despairing singleness to celebrating it came through her personal devotions and walk with God. Betty Vivian discovered its true Christian treasures and singleness ceased to be a burden. The biblical perspective replaced the cultural influences and pressures. The scriptures became clear words of God in showing that singleness is God's gift, like family and marriage, with its own unique advantages and disadvantages, privileges and hindrances, opportunities and sacrifices, etc.

Singleness was a cultural curse as well as a Christian inadequacy during her time among the baby boomer generation. It is far less so now yet a lot of what she covers is still being experienced today.

Just as family and marriage has its privileges, Christian singleness has its own share of privileges and advantages. And just as family and marriage has its challenges, singleness has its own share. Vivian notes that the secular media increases the challenges of singleness by playing on the senses of belonging and intimacy.

Unfortunately the church is not free from the misinformation. Being a Christian single would be more fruitful if this social area received a balanced biblical teaching. This is particularly a problem from some married Christian authors and ministers.

Betty Vivian says, "The vast majority of single Christians are preached at almost entirely by married men." Some have glamorized marriage using selective scripture as the ultimate to happiness and completeness. This influences many Christian singles to constantly feel incomplete and unfulfilled in their singleness.

Through her trials and eventual deliverance, Betty Vivian concludes that, "My happiness lies not in my circumstances, but in my being in the centre of God's will." Knowing and fulfilling God's will is our ultimate end as Christians. Living as a Christian single for whatever length or being married ought to be seen from the perspective of God's unique will for each us per time.

Each of us (married or single) has some form of self-denial we will have to constantly bear with for the sake of the Gospel. We all have a responsibility of carrying the cross of self-denial and sacrifice for the lost.

"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it," Mark 8:34-35.

Each of us can identify with our unique sacrifices per time and see them as opportunities or tools in fulfilling God's will, rather than seeing them as troubles.

Needless to say that each occasion ought to be celebrated and not endured. It is a gift from God: in each occasion are plenty of treasures we'll find and experience if we care to look. Betty Vivian puts it in a better way as she eventually experienced deliverance from enduring singleness to celebrating it.

Foreword by Eric Gondwe at JesusWorkMinistry.com (Jesus Work Ministry), author of:

1. Breaking Curses, Including Generational Curses
2. Breaking Spiritual Strongholds and Healing the Wounded Spirit
3. Hearing the Voice of God and Fulfilling God's Purpose for Your Life
4. Major Spiritual Warfare Principles: Biblical Do's and Don'ts of Warfare
5. Breaking Occult Spells: Protection from Witchcraft and Occult Influences
6. Bible Powered Prayer Guide: Guide for Applying Scriptures to Daily Prayers
7. Major Christian Deliverance Principles: Keys for Self-deliverance and Ministry

1. The Background

CHAPTER 1 SUB-TOPICS:

- Friends and Weddings
- At Home with My Parents
- Inner Feelings
- Other aspects of Singleness
- Church Life
- Parents and Children
- Further Problems
- Inner Battles
- Remarks

The Singleness was a great Goliath that roared at me during the first eleven years of my Christian life. For some people it is not a problem but for a considerable number it is a severe one.

Many married couples carry colossal burdens which are frequently obvious. The trials of singleness are often not appreciated or understood as they are so inward. In writing of my spiritual pathway as a single woman, now 66, I realise married people may read this as well as those who are single.

If I tread on any toes in the first part of what I say, please bear with me and read to the end. My story has a wonderful conclusion due entirely to Jesus Christ, my Lord and Saviour. I give Him all the glory.

I was brought up in Cornwall, in a non-Christian home, by good parents who went regularly to the local Methodist Chapel. As the middle one of three sisters, I had a very happy childhood. My father was a teacher. He and my mother sacrificed a great deal to educate us and we all became Junior school teachers. My mother's father became a Christian late in life and prayed specifically for his grandchildren. My parents were very happily married for which I truly thank God.

When growing up and as a young woman my one and only ambition in life was to be happily married, with my own home and children. I loved housework, cooking and gardening and had a high ideal for marriage, knowing I would never be content with second best. My heart was not in teaching and I did not really feel cut out for it, but had to earn my living.

I came to Southampton to start my teaching career in September 1956 and was converted that Christmas at the age of 21. A verse through which God powerfully spoke to me was "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added to you." Matt.6 v 33.

Being a keen, zealous Christian, I tried to obey God in every way. From the outset I attended church and the midweek meetings regularly and later on taught in a Sunday School and took a young people's meeting one evening a week. A happy marriage I regarded as the greatest blessing in life after conversion. I knew that a Christian should only marry another Christian but no Mr Right came along.

Friends and Weddings

About a year after my conversion I started to share lodgings with a Christian girl friend. Soon after this she became engaged and talked incessantly about her wedding. I was her bridesmaid and it took all my spare money that summer to buy my dress, shoes, wedding present and train fare to her home. She sailed off to a rosy future and I returned alone to my lodgings, resolving never to be a bridesmaid again. I continued my young people's midweek meeting. After a day of teaching and a discouraging session, I often felt desolate and lonely on returning to an empty room. It drove me to read my Bible and pray.

Another Christian then lived with me. She helped me a great deal but it was not the same as having a husband. At the end of two years she moved away to teach elsewhere. This I found very hard and I remember thinking that married couples had their partner for life whereas, with single people, friends may come and go.

Later on my younger sister, who had become a Christian and was engaged, shared my lodgings. She was very considerate of my feelings but it was hard to watch her making her wedding dress, knowing that shortly my lot was to be on my own once more. However God impressed upon me that if I did not love my sister I did not love Him. It was as simple as that.

Some time after my sister's wedding another young Christian woman joined me. She soon started courting and never had time to talk. It was always "I must hurry, my fiancé is waiting," and off she would go in the car while I was stuck in marking books. I made up my mind never to live with another young woman again.

During my twenties nearly all my friends and cousins got married. Going to weddings was a great ordeal. I tried to smile and look happy, but inwardly felt sick at heart. It was never my turn. Then came the babies to be smiled at and admired. I longed to have a baby of my own, but could not say so. Giving wedding and baby presents seemed endless.

At Home with My Parents

One Christmas, my older sister spent her honeymoon with my parents. I was home at the time. That was not easy either. My two sisters subsequently each had three children and every school holiday when I went home my mother talked about them continually.

I loved my nephews and nieces, but it rubbed in the fact that I had no children of my own. I used to reproach myself for being envious, but the story of Hannah was a great comfort to me. The Bible does not condemn her for being envious, but says she was provoked.

When visiting certain friends of my parents, the comment from the husband would usually be, "Where's your young man then?" It hurt deeply.

I found it extremely hard to live as an adult, single daughter with my parents. They were kind, welcoming and considerate, but I so longed to have a husband, a companion and soul mate of my own age, and felt frustrated and discontented at being "stuck with mum and dad", and a number of elderly uncles, aunts and friends.

I have also noted over the years that parents often treat married children with more deference and respect than they do a single son or daughter.

Each holiday I attended a chapel in the village, run by my old schoolmaster. I loved his ministry and the small midweek Prayer and Bible Study meeting. The congregation consisted of 15 to 20 people, some of whom were Christians and some were not. I had no friends as there was no one younger than me or around my age. Some elderly ladies were kind and hospitable.

Inner Feelings

I was unhappy inwardly and desperately lonely, but clung to the Lord and my Bible. Many Scripture promises were very precious to me, one of them being "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you and you will honour Me". Psalm 50 v 15.

The only relief and pleasure I found was in Christian service; this helped me not to be self-pitying. I was a hard working, active church member and often visited people worse off than myself as this restored my spiritual perspective.

Being a Christian I tried to do my job well at school, but did not enjoy it. My longing was for Mr. Right to come along and whisk me off, but he never did. I felt resentful at having to work so hard to earn my living

while many Christian wives could stay at home supported by their husbands. I hated always having to make decisions on my own, and to have no one to lean on for comfort, support and companionship.

At school I was often a hard, unloving teacher. It is very difficult to give love when one does not receive any or when one's circumstances are negative.

Other aspects of Singleness

When shopping it was very hard to view couples holding hands and having their arms around each other. It emphasised my loneliness and that I didn't belong to anyone. No one ever held my hand or hugged or touched me. Hugs from Christians or relatives are not the same as those of a husband.

One year I went to Switzerland on a Christian House Party, at which I hoped earnestly I might meet someone. My younger sister did meet her husband to be but there was no one for me. 80% of the party were single women, 5% were single men, and 15% were married couples. I was deeply disappointed and fed up. I did not enjoy the holiday.

Another problem for single people can be that, as soon as one's friends start courting, one is immediately dropped like a hot potato.

Of course, it is understandable that couples need time together to prepare for a life-long partnership, but it is very hard to be on the receiving end of being left alone. In recent years I have known of some Christians who, once married, have not given their previous friend – now very lonely – a phone call or an invitation to a cup of coffee. I appreciate that some couples do make an effort to consider single friends and many Christian families are very hospitable and kind to lonely people.

There is a stigma about being “an old maid” or “on the shelf”. I think “spinster” is one of the ugliest words in the English language. It also seems unfair that single women are publicly labelled “Miss” all their lives, while single men are not similarly treated. “Ms” does try to rectify this, but I dislike it and would never use it. Particularly in today's moral climate, the attitude is, that if you haven't had sex you've “never lived”. To carry all these labels is very humiliating.

Many married people are wonderfully caring of their elderly parents, but I have known in my lifetime a considerable number of cases where the burden of elderly parents has fallen heavily on a single daughter or son.

The media was also very difficult. It only needed one picture to stir up sinful desires. This is now a far greater problem for young people than it used to be. There was a constant emphasis on smart weddings as THE great aim for couples. Often newspapers carried articles about “poor couples who so wanted a baby”. Their longing was understandable, but I used to think how thankful they should be, and how wealthy they were compared with single people. They did have a partner in life and were not continually lonely, lacking in companionship and physically frustrated.

As I have got older I have talked with a number of widows or divorced women. They have said that they did not realise how hard it was for single women until they were alone themselves.

I know a highly intelligent disabled single man in his early forties who says he has found singleness a far greater trial than his disability.

Over the years I read a number of books on Singleness. Instead of helping me they irritated me. They invariably talked about what fulfilling lives single people could lead. Nobody had tried harder than me to be busy and active, but I did not feel fulfilled and was lonely and frustrated. When one is basically unhappy, no hobby is a pleasure, and it is very difficult to relax at home.

In a book about stress on the mission field, it was interesting to read that a large number of single missionaries found that their greatest trial was singleness.

Church Life

Much of my twenties was spent in a small church which I loved. Spiritually, in general, I was very happy there, and worked enthusiastically. I admired the love, kindness and unselfishness of the minister and his wife and knew that, if I had been happily married, I would never have been as self-sacrificing as they were. The congregation was very well taught and cared for. The married couples were kind and hospitable.

However, church life was hard as a single woman. The minister and elders were happily married men and they and their wives had little understanding of the trials and viewpoint of single people.

Consequently they frequently, unwittingly provoked them and then went on to misunderstand and misjudge them. They expected single people to accept their preaching, counsel, decisions, and correction, but were not always prepared to listen likewise to single people. "You're not married, you don't understand" tended to be the attitude. Some of the sins which specifically apply to married people were not targeted from the pulpit, because the minister and elders did not see them in themselves. This is also true in other places of worship.

In the majority of churches today, single people are poorly represented among the church leadership, although they frequently make up a considerable proportion of the congregation. It seems to be forgotten that Jesus, Paul, John the Baptist, Jeremiah and Elijah were all single.

The married couples frequently talked about their trials and problems, especially concerning their children. They seemed to think that single people had none. I felt that couples had chosen to be married and have children, whereas very few single people choose to be single. The Bible clearly speaks about "The gift of singleness" I Cor. 7 v 7, but it is often a gift that is not welcomed nor wanted by most young Christians. I note too that very few Christian couples covet "The gift of singleness" for their own children.

There were other single women in the church, and married people seemed to assume I therefore had friends, but they were not my type. For a number of years I had no special friend, and was very lonely. There were a few single men, but they did not interest me, nor did I interest them. It was hard to remain loyal to the church and not succumb to wanderlust.

As a single working woman I had little in common with the married women who were in the majority and mostly talked about their husbands and children. Scarcely any were interested in my trials. I did, however, have more in common with their working husbands, some of whom were teachers like me, but I quickly realised that talking with them could be misconstrued by their wives. This made me feel very isolated. It is, of course, understandable that mothers, shut in with small children, had a totally different set of problems from me.

I often felt I was "used" by the married couples as a convenience in bringing up their children. Single people were very useful in taking children's or young people's meetings. The burden on them was not always realised. They worked hard all the week and sometimes did not have support at home.

Some couples were marvellously unselfish in sharing themselves, their relationship and their home with single people, but there were many times when I felt excluded, unwanted and in the way when spouses were around.

On one occasion, I was asked around for the evening by a young married woman. This was a surprise as she had never asked me before. On arriving, the true reason was obvious. Her husband was away for two weeks, and she was lonely. I was never asked again. Clearly it did not occur to her that I was permanently lonely.

Services and meetings were the only chance I had to talk to Christians as, for a number of years, I lived on my own with an unconverted landlady. I used to hang around after the service and talk to anyone available and was often the last to leave.

Many people were thoughtful and did stop to talk. Usually we spoke of general matters. The deep inner trials I lived with daily I kept to myself. Most Christians understand that the church doorstep is not a suitable place for confidences. Some couples rarely spoke. I thought it very likely, however, that they would readily chat to their families over Sunday lunch. I went home to an empty room and no more Christian conversation until the next meeting.

For nine years I lived in shabby, old fashioned, cold lodgings, with a bossy, domineering landlady. However I knew it was where God wanted me and also knew I had to learn to be submissive to my landlady and to accept my living conditions.

The married couples in the church were very hospitable, which I much appreciated. I was grateful to be invited to meals as it was largely the only contact I had with small children and family life, but it was hard comparing their comfortable, happy homes with my own situation. I believe they thought that by having me to tea they got to know me. They did, but only to a superficial degree. There was no way I was going to speak of my innermost trials to them in front of their children.

Parents and Children

Many of the children of Christian parents were well brought up with love, discipline and much prayer. They were in general a pleasure to teach. However, I always felt very vulnerable. Parents usually believed their children's version of events not mine.

One Christian mother whose children had sorely provoked me for years, was upset when I eventually spoke to her about it. She did not believe me and her husband supported and comforted her. I had no one to support and comfort me, but I knew I had been long-suffering, spoken the truth and judged fairly. She omitted to thank me for giving up my free time to teach her offspring or to say sorry that her children had upset me for years.

School teaching was very hard work and often stressful. I had many battles, struggles and failures in handling children, but was not in immediate contact with parents. In church life the whole area of parents and children was very difficult as we were all in such a close relationship. It was like treading on eggshells. Having taught hundreds of junior age children at school I knew something of what they were like. I could often have given helpful advice but knew I dared not do so.

One mother did frequently ask my opinion and was helped by it. Some Christian mothers were extremely naïve and gullible. Their child had only to put on an expression of wide-eyed innocence. "What me mummy?" and the mother was completely taken in.

On one occasion a Christian mother declared emphatically to me, "My son would never tell a lie." Having never yet met a child who hasn't, I thought how little this woman knew of her own heart, let alone that of her son.

One mother had an adult son who, I considered, was not a Christian. The mother was fiercely defensive and protective of her children. She was so anxious for them to become Christians, that she jumped at flimsy evidence. When I hinted at my doubts, she looked at me with horror, as if I was the devil himself. I thought she was harming her son and the church.

In general my opinions were written off because, "I did not understand a mother's love." That was true, to my sorrow, but I did try to have the love of a spiritual mother and look at things from God's viewpoint. I discovered both at school and at church how biased and blinkered parents could be.

Further Problems

Celibacy was so difficult that the only way I could cope with it was through prayer and fasting. I learnt that if I thought in psychological terms and said, "poor me, I am repressed and that is bad for me," the battle was lost. If I called sinful desires "sin" and asked God's forgiveness and help, the victory was won.

For many single people, sex can become an over-important issue because of the fact that they do have to live a celibate life 365 days a year, year in year out. Where food is concerned people who have regular meals and a full pantry usually do not think excessively about eating. Starving people do. My feeling in the church was that married Christians seemed to think single people had no sexual feelings, whereas celibacy can make them a

great problem for many, especially younger people. I would think this matter is much harder for men than for women. I also recognise that it is not a problem for some individuals.

It was very hard to be preached at by a happily married man, "You must be content, you mustn't grumble," and "Sex is only for married people." However I sought to accept the preaching as God's Word to me and struggled to ignore the circumstances of the messenger.

A faithful minister is required to preach the whole counsel of God whatever his personal situation, whether it is palatable to his listeners or not. Before married people condemn my reaction too swiftly they might stop to consider how they would feel on a human level if a single man were to preach to them some Bible truths they found hard to accept about their marriage relationship and sex lives. The vast majority of single Christians are preached at almost entirely by married men.

Sexual problems within marriage are undoubtedly legion and can affect the best of marriages. Single people have an easy life by comparison with many fraught relationships. However, I am seeking to write from the viewpoint I held as a young Christian.

Another matter I found difficult to accept was that I had to put up with the monthly inconvenience of being a woman for years, all to no avail.

A happily married Christian once said to me, "What you've never had you don't miss." But that is only partially true. If one has never had a mobile phone, one would not miss it. Insufficient food or water, one would miss. Likewise, the desire for companionship, a physical relationship and for children are, in most people, innate desires and one does miss them if they are withheld.

Facing scripture was another aspect of singleness which was very hard. Gen. 2 v 18 "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." God Himself said that, and yet I was alone year in, year out.

I also read Phil. 4 v 19 "My God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus," but God seemed unconcerned about my needs.

Then there was 1 Cor. 7 v 9 "it is better to marry than to burn with passion." Whatever my natural feelings were, there was no one for me to marry. I had to accept that God's Word was infallible, that He was all wise and knew what was best for me. This was desperately hard to do.

The Bible institutes, upholds and protects marriage. When one is happily married it is therefore easy to defend and promote the Bible. It is not so easy to do this when the God of the Bible orders circumstances that are the opposite and a prison in which you would rather not be.

I found it exceedingly hard to come to terms with the fact that so many Christians could do God's will AND be happily married, with their own home and children. For me it was always either – or.

Inner Battles

I did not show my inner feelings and never spoke of them to anyone. The damage some people did by openly complaining and being sour was obvious. Outwardly I appeared a normal, active, keen Christian but had terrible, incessant, inward spiritual battles.

I was desperately lonely and longed for companionship. I was restless, discontented, bitter, resentful, sour, envious and utterly frustrated. I felt plain, unattractive, unloved, unwanted and thought I must be odd or peculiar. I could not come to terms with God's will for my life. Being a spinster schoolteacher, living in lodgings, was the exact opposite of what I would have chosen. God seemed to be blessing everybody else and never me. It was like banging my head against a brick wall. God's answer to me was always, "NO".

I tried to battle against my sinful attitudes, and sought God's forgiveness. I hated myself for feeling envious of Christians who were so kind to me and who had helped me so much in spiritual and practical ways, but time and time again just when I felt my inner spiritual state was improving, a thoughtless remark from a happily married Christian would knock me flat and stir up discontent and envy. I realised they did not mean to be

hurtful. They just had no clue as to how I felt or how I viewed them. I never said anything because I knew that if I did, I would have been labelled a sour, frustrated, old maid, who was jealous of married couples.

Remarks

Married people might say “What sort of remarks were so upsetting?” Here are a few examples.

1. A very godly married man, who had helped me greatly, spoke to my sister and her husband when I was in the car along with their three small boys. “What a lovely family! When the children are little, there is no time like it. It is heaven on earth!” To say that in front of me, albeit unwittingly, was absolutely cruel. It was just the sort of remark that would stir up envy, discontent, a feeling that God was depriving me of happiness, and it would stick in my mind for years, causing me endless spiritual battles.

2. A well-known preacher “Christian marriage grows more wonderful everyday.” I thought how nice that was for those who were married. My single life was not wonderful, and the older I got the harder it became.

3. A Christian woman, “I like being married.” I certainly did not like being single.

4. A married Christian woman who had just moved to a larger house. “I was so happy in my first house.” I was deeply unhappy in the bedsits and lodgings where I had lived.

5. Before going on holiday to Switzerland. A happily married man, “How nice for you single people to go off on holiday abroad.” I would gladly have exchanged 2 weeks of holiday abroad for 52 weeks of companionship at home year after year.

6. A middle-aged single man started courting a young woman who came to the church. On hearing the news a married Christian woman commented, “Surely not! So and So isn’t interested in getting married!”

I had never spoken to this man about the trials of singleness, but had greatly admired his humility, meekness and devotion to the Lord. I was 99% certain he had found singleness a huge trial for far longer than I had. It struck me how little this woman understood the feelings of single people. I was sure she had often hurt him in the past as she had me.

To these remarks and many, many more, I said nothing, and did not show my feelings but they caused me countless inward battles. What added to the conflict was that all the speakers were Christians whom I loved dearly. They had greatly helped me spiritually and been very kind to me.

People may think me negative and over-sensitive but, as a single person. I was in the minority and was swamped with married people in the church, among my relatives and at school. I was constantly bombarded with their talk, attitudes and views. When a sore spot is continually pricked, it is extremely hard not to react and feel critical.

Also, what is written is specifically dealing with my battle over singleness. It is not an autobiography, nor is it a general picture of church life. I could write pages in commendation of this particular church.

2. The Turning of the Tide

CHAPTER 2 SUB-TOPICS:

- **My Altering Views**
- **Looking at Marriages**
- **Looking at Myself**

Having been a Christian for four and a half years, I had a nervous breakdown. This was brought on largely through overwork. Ignorance, spiritual pride and stubbornness also contributed as did genuine suffering, truth and some good motives.

A happily married Christian friend had tried to warn me about doing too much, but my thoughts were, “You can relax and enjoy home life. If I stay in I am lonely and self-pitying. You have no idea of my feelings.” So I took no notice. I should have listened to her.

My breakdown was a nightmare. It made me understand something of what hell was like. I made many mistakes at that time which I afterwards bitterly regretted, and brought much trouble and worry to my family and Christian friends. I was deeply grateful that they stood by me and helped me to recover.

While I am aware that such conditions can have medical causes, in my case I knew primarily it was a spiritual breakdown and God’s judgement upon me. It was the great turning point of my Christian life. It humbled me to the dust, and taught me more lessons in six months than I would otherwise have learnt in 50 years.

Before, I had been unhappy, but now things were far, far worse and I felt in a spiritual dungeon. I had the stigma of a nervous breakdown and being a public Christian failure to add to that of being a spinster.

It took me some time to fully recover. I did not look ill, but often felt rotten. School was a great struggle. It had all largely been my own fault. I had made mistake upon mistake and had not listened to God. Having thought I was helping God so much, I had instead deeply wounded Him and spoilt His work. I wept and wept in repentance and tried to put right the damage I had caused as far as I was able.

One Bible truth was a great anchor for me at this time. I believed the doctrine of election and that God was Sovereign. No matter how big a mess I had made of things I knew, that if God had chosen to save the people I had caused to stumble, nothing I had done would prevent them from being saved. God could overrule.

I had to rest a great deal and I spent hours praying and reading my Bible and Christian books.

My Altering Views

I began to carefully listen to God and to judge my own self. God helped me to see and understand where I had gone wrong. More and more I came to value my time with the Lord, to think and to reflect. Gradually the realisation dawned on me that as far as my own soul was concerned, my breakdown had been the greatest blessing that had ever happened to me since my conversion.

During the next few years God took me through one situation after another in which I had to re-learn my lessons and correct past mistakes.

My view of my lodgings changed. They were not de luxe but I had all that was needed, if not what I liked. I had peace and quiet in the evenings and at weekends. Another advantage was that other Christians did not envy me. I tried to be a good lodger and learnt to be submissive to my landlady and respect her wishes. She mellowed a great deal as time went on, and so did I!

Although I still did not enjoy teaching, and no Mr Right came along to rescue me from it, I was now very thankful to have a job at all and to be able to earn my own living.

Looking at Marriages

Previously I had thought that happily married Christians lived in beds of roses. They were happy in this life, and would also be happy in the next. By comparison I felt I lived on a bed of nails.

However, I began to consider marriages more carefully. Many unconverted people were happily married, but they were on their way to hell. Other couples remained married but were not really compatible.

Some people were unhappily married and that was far worse than being single. In some marriages one person had irritating habits that were obviously a great trial to their spouse. Some couples had dreadful problems with their children, some had worries about their health, or their job, or money, or unwanted pregnancies. Although I enjoyed housework myself, I could appreciate that mountains of washing, ironing, cooking and cleaning week in week out was a huge chore.

Many Christian marriages I regarded as mediocre and did not envy them. Some Christian couples were not spiritual equals and the weaker partner hindered the stronger one. The life-work of some Christians was totally ruined by an unsuitable marriage. Some couples had clearly taken a wrong spiritual pathway and had encouraged one another in it. Other Christians had married for physical attractions only, with disastrous results.

Then I looked at couples who were very happily married, particularly well suited, and greatly used by the Lord, but even the best of them were sinners. Although they might help each other greatly, their sins and weaknesses also influenced their partners.

Obviously married couples know each other better than anyone else, but it is also true that they often "cannot see the wood for the trees." They can be totally blind to their own sins and the sins of their spouse. Outsiders can often see this easily. This is why we need the church.

Then there was also the constant problem in Christian families, of divided loyalties and having to put God first.

I came to see that the beds of roses, were not so rosy after all.

Looking at Myself

I began to reflect upon my advantages. Under God I could spend my free time and money as I chose and had peace and quiet to wait upon the Lord. My job was secure. Meals for one were easy to get. My landlady's garden provided an interest. More and more I grew to love my time with the Lord resulting in a greatly improved inner attitude.

I began to look at myself more carefully from God's point of view.

Married Christians had been very hurtful and thoughtless to me, but so had I been to them. They did not understand my trials, but neither did I understand theirs. They were marvellously forgiving, forbearing and kind when I had my breakdown.

I had treated God like a convenience, someone who was only there to provide me with the happiness I wanted, so why shouldn't others treat me as a convenience?

My sins prevented God from having spiritual children, so why shouldn't I be childless?

I had not listened to God about my sins, so why should I expect married people to listen to me concerning theirs?

I had been a poor helpmate for God for years and years, so why should I complain at not having a helpmate?

My sins made God unhappy, so why shouldn't I be unhappy?

My soul was a cold shabby, inconvenient home for God to live in, so why shouldn't I live in a home like that?

I kept bossing God around, telling Him what He should do with my circumstances, so why shouldn't I live with a bossy, domineering landlady?

2. The Turning of the Tide

My sins kept on hurting God and knocking His work flat, so why shouldn't other Christians knock me flat with hurtful remarks?

I had often made God feel lonely by preferring the company of people rather than talking to Him, so why shouldn't I feel lonely?

If I felt plain and unattractive it was only a just chastisement for having been vain and conceited as a teenager.

My sins had made me a miserable companion for God, so why shouldn't I suffer from lack of companionship?

The state of my soul was the opposite of what God would have liked, so why shouldn't my circumstances be the opposite of what I would have liked?

Other Christians did not understand my trials and viewpoint, but I did not understand what Jesus had suffered on the cross or how He viewed me. The hurts I had received from Christians were pinpricks compared with the way I had hurt God.

Jesus had been single, so had John the Baptist and so had Paul, so why shouldn't I be?

God also burned into my soul that I had no rights. Sinners have no rights whatsoever. I had no right to the air I breathed, the food I ate, or the clothes I wore. I had no right to a husband, or children, or happiness. The only right sinners have, is eternity in hell. Any blessings or gifts in this life are given by God's free bounty and grace alone. None of them are deserved. In hell they will all be gone forever.

God also said to me over and over again, "Aren't you prepared to do for Me what you were prepared to do for your own selfish ends?" I began to see how self-centred and warped my motives had been for years. So little of what I had done had truly been for His glory. Many of my good works and much of my obedience had been done to twist God's arm into doing for me what I wanted.

As I thought along these lines, my spiritual attitude improved, but my weakness remained. I had a deep inferiority complex. I was still desperately lonely and longed for companionship. It kept me a spiritual cripple.

3. The Crisis Point

CHAPTER 3 SUB-TOPICS:

- Joy
- School
- Three and a Half Years
- Revival
- Afterwards
- Further Comments
- Concern for Single Christians
- I Owe Everything to Jesus

We When nearly 32, having been a Christian for almost 11 years, I was reading my Bible one evening. The words of Jeremiah 16 v2 stood out to me. “You must not marry or have sons or daughters in this place.” I knew without question that God was speaking to me.

After all the years of loneliness, struggling, hoping and longing, it was exceedingly hard to read those words in black and white. I could not understand why most Christians were allowed to marry so easily and I was not. It was extremely difficult to accept.

On reflecting deeply about the matter I weighed up my thoughts about marriage, how good God had been to me and how I had grown to appreciate Him for Himself. I told the Lord that, at any rate, of my own accord, if I had to choose between marriage and God, I would choose God.

Shortly after this, when talking to Christian bachelor whom I knew well, I told Him what God had said to me and was filled with a wonderful sense of triumph, victory and joy.

Joy

At home I was flooded with happiness and peace. Joy, delight, exultation poured over me in waves. I couldn't believe what was happening to me. I was radiant, transformed and felt like the ugly duckling who had become a swan. For the first time in my life, I was totally happy.

Before this I had known spiritual joy to a much less degree, but it was always mixed with unhappiness and was like a candle compared with the sun in what I now experienced. My Bible, which I thought I knew well, now lit up and became a new book to me. The words were like honey and made my heart melt. I saw Jesus in it everywhere.

Doctrine which had always seemed rather dry came alive to me. Day after day the love of God poured into my soul. I couldn't wait to get home from school to be alone with the Lord. My heart felt bursting with indescribable joy. Every day I prayed and read my Bible by the hour and I knew I had caught the wind in my sails where prayer was concerned. I asked for every blessing I could think of, for my own soul, the family, the church, our country and the world.

Often I woke in the night and was so happy I could hardly stand it. I had never been so alive in my whole life and felt pretty, attractive, loved, wanted and confident.

Loneliness and the longing for companionship totally vanished. I became a complete, whole person. Scales seemed to fall from my eyes, and I saw the Lord's purpose in all the Lord's pathway along which I had come. Day after day I basked in oceans of peace and was living in a completely new world. It was as if I had died and gone to heaven, and yet I was still on earth.

It seemed as if a gigantic wave had suddenly bowled me over. The intensity of God's love for me was overwhelming and I wanted to hug and hug Him in my soul. I was filled with gratitude to all the Christians who

had preached the Gospel to me and had helped me on my journey to God. Heaven, the Promised Land, was God Himself.

My heart was set free like an eagle escaping from a cage and soaring into the sky. It was as if I stood on the summit of a high mountain with a breathtaking view before me and I couldn't wave hard enough to other Christians to encourage them to climb up to see it as well.

In my soul it was as if I was dancing on the roof-tops, as if I wanted to do cartwheels and handstands all over the place, as if I was a windmill that had suddenly caught the wind.

In my spirit I felt absolutely irrepressible and unconquerable. I could have stood alone against an army. When shopping I was so happy I could have whizzed my bag around my head for sheer joy. I did not actually, physically do any of these things, but it is the only way I can attempt to speak of how I felt in my soul. There are insufficient words in the English language to describe what I experienced.

Outwardly I appeared perfectly normal. My landlady saw nothing unusual in me. A fly on the wall of my room would only have seen a woman quietly reading her Bible and writing her prayers and thoughts.

School

I had a completely new interest in school and felt a great love for the children. As I rode to and from work on my scooter I sang hymns. Every gift I had was enhanced and my mind seemed to expand into a mountain. I saw God in everything. The whole world came alive. I drew diagrams, wrote poems and saw marvellous spiritual patterns and pictures in maths, literature and science. Nature videos and music absolutely lived to me. Jesus was the key which had unlocked my mind; I had laughs and laughs with God about the things I could see.

When I took assembly and told Bible stories in my R.E lessons, the children listened like mice and every eye was on me. My quarrel with God over being single was entirely gone, as was my resentment over having to earn my own living. During this period I had the hardest class in the whole of my teaching career, but God's love was so marvellous it carried me through, and it was one of the happiest years of my life.

Three and a Half Years

This unbroken joy, day and night, lasted for three and a half years from January 1968 to June 1971. It absolutely transformed me and completely healed me of all my old wounds. It was the most wonderful honeymoon imaginable. No happily married couple can ever have known the heights of delight, pleasure and joy I experienced. It was heaven on earth.

Revival

In previous years I had read many books on Revival, and knew what had happened to me was what I had read about. I knew too that I was not deluded because of the way the Bible came alive to me and, increasingly, sin was overcome in my life.

In the months prior to this experience, I had sought earnestly to judge my own self and put right any wrong I might have inflicted on another person. Anyone who had hurt or wronged me I totally forgave. I had felt revival was coming and did not want to be guilty of hindering it.

What I came to realise as time went on was that this blessing had happened only to me. It was personal and private. I tried to tell other Christians about it, but they did not believe me. It did not affect the people I mixed with nor did they see anything unusual about me.

I do not know of anyone who was converted through me at this time. This was not how I had pictured revival happening, but at that time I was unable to pass on the blessing I experienced and enjoyed, and had to leave the matter with God.

During this period of revival, God impressed upon me 1Cor, 14 v.32, “The spirits of the prophet are subject to the control of the prophets.” Nothing I did at that time was bizarre or strange. I did not clap, dance, wiggle, wave my arms, shout hallelujah, fall down, go into any kind of trance, experience any physical kind of glow or tingling, or show any lack of self-control.

I read my Bible and wrote my prayers and thoughts every spare minute I had. The intense joy and delight I experienced were in my spirit, soul and mind, This led to a wonderful sense of physical calm, well-being and wholeness. God also impressed upon me that I must not neglect any of my normal duties; so I carried on at school, and behaved towards my landlady and parents as usual. A booklet by Madame Guyon edited by Mrs Jessie Penn-Lewis, entitled “Life out of Death,” greatly helped and reassured me. I knew that what she had written about had happened to me.

Afterwards

After three and a half years the joy faded and was followed by three and a half years of spiritual dryness. The Bible was as dry as dust and I could not pray. It was like the famine in Egypt after the years of plenty. But I still knew my earlier experiences had been real and wonderful, that I was a different person and that God was with me.

In spite of feeling spiritually empty and barren inwardly, God never failed me in any of my public duties. This period clearly showed me that the blessing I had known was totally from God and was not of my doing. Since then, I have lived a normal Christian life, apart from a second period of private blessing and revival from February 1990 to February 1993 which was very similar to the first. This time I had no following dry period.

Since 1968, I have had heavy ongoing burdens and many trials, but have had a new, deep, inner spiritual strength to bear them because I have been so basically happy and contented. The old wracking sins of envy, resentment, bitterness, discontent, and restlessness have never returned neither have my chronic inferiority complex, sense of frustration or loneliness. I have lived a truly fulfilled and purposeful life. God and His children have been my greatest interest and pleasure.

Over the years God has clearly shown me that, although He has greatly blessed and helped me, I am only an ordinary clay pot and still carry a rotten, fallen, fickle human nature within me. Often I have failed and made plenty of mistakes. I have been disciplined, corrected and forgiven much. Also I am keenly aware of the amount I have to learn and at times need to be reminded of the spiritual alphabet.

Looking back I realise that the reason why God kept my revival experience hidden was because I could not have been trusted to be used to help others at that time. It would have made me spiritually puffed up and conceited. I have needed many years of normality, failures and trials to help me have a true, sober estimation of myself and to learn to give God all the glory. “The Lord alone shall be exalted in that day and the idols He shall utterly abolish.” Isaiah 2v17,18 AV.

Further Comments

God has been the most wonderful husband to me since 1968. As He promised in 1956 He has “added all these things” in a far, far better way than I ever dreamed of. He also did “deliver me” – hence the title of my booklet.

I have no wish whatsoever to be married. I love living on my own and can't wait to get home after a meeting. In the house I am never bored or nervous at night. Since the age of 32 I have not known five minutes of feeling lonely. God is my Friend and my Companion. He has been marvellously faithful to me.

While I value good friends at church I have no special friend. I go everywhere on my own, but always feel complete and never alone. All my problems, needs and decisions I talk over with the Lord. Nothing that married people do or say, where marriage is concerned, upsets me. I am free and comfortable with them, and enjoy hearing about their children. I long for them to be blessed as I have been.

Being called- "Miss" does not trouble me one iota!

The more I grow to know God, the more sinful I see myself to be. Certainly I need the ministry, fellowship and correction of God's people. Also I highly value the practical help, good advice, wisdom and needful home truths of my sister and her husband. There are dangers in living alone as well as blessings.

I have found that the more I consider God's wishes and feelings, the more He considers mine. My happiness lies not in my circumstances, but in my being in the centre of God's will.

In 1971, when my landlady died, I bought the house where I had been a lodger, and have modernised and furnished it to my own taste, but I will never forget the time when God first revealed His love to me. My shabby lodging seemed to change into a palace! Mr. Right did come along. It was God Himself. He didn't whisk me out of teaching.

Instead He transformed school and me and stood alongside me in the stress and severe battles of work until I retired in 1994. He has been as dear and precious to me in my retirement as He was at school. I have the joy and security of knowing I shall never lose Him.

Concern for Single Christians

For the past 33 years, I have been inwardly happy, contented and at rest, but have never forgotten how I used to feel during the first 11 years of my Christian life. Nothing since then has been as bad as the old inner trials.

I have a deep concern for single Christians. This of course includes people who are bereaved and divorced. Today's moral climate is far worse than when I was young, but what God has done for me He can do for anyone. There is no sin or mountain of sins too bad to be forgiven. No wounds are too deep for the love of God to heal completely.

I Owe Everything to Jesus

I owe everything to the death of Jesus on the cross. His free forgiveness and His shed blood, which atoned for my sins. I only stand clothed in His righteousness. Any blessing I have received has been solely due to the sovereign, unmerited grace and mercy of God. The Bible has been the means of my salvation and blessing. It has been my guide, my comfort and my anchor.

I thank God too, for the love shown to me through the faithful preaching of godly ministers and the prayers, examples, forgiveness, kindness, patience, long-suffering and forbearance of many Christian friends. Good books too, have been an untold blessing.

I greatly look forward to heaven, having had such a foretaste of it on earth.

Other Helpful Resources

Other Helpful Resources

Our websites, JesusWorkMinistry.com and SpiritualWarfareDeliverance.com, have tones of resources that directly and indirectly relate to social areas of our Christian lives. The websites are interlinked so navigation is simple.

We intend to include free audio sermons on this topic in the near future. Please keep checking back as we continue to add more useful resources to equip fellow believers in the body of Christ. You may also wish to search the web for relevant books and resources on purposeful singleness, Christian singleness, and books on Christian family/marriage.