

The Blessing of Being a Single Missionary or Working with One

“Each has his own gift from God”

1 Cor. 7:7

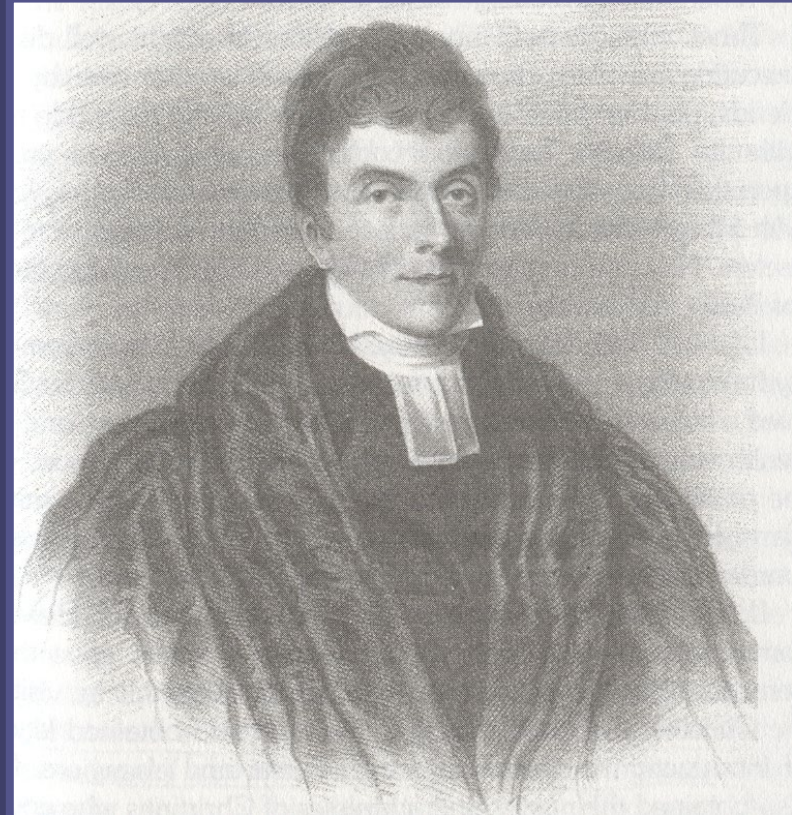
Opening Facts

- The statistics are not precise, but the general consensus is that slightly under 1/3 of the missionary force is singles.
- GFA's numbers = 75 units (married couple is a unit),
 - 20 are single and one is a widower.
 - Counting the widower, GFA has $21/108 = 19.4\%$ who are now serving singly.
 - These numbers do not include others such as short-termers and special assignment. Many of those are single ladies.

Examples from Missions History



David Brainerd



Henry Martyn

Examples from Missions History



Mary Slessor



Irene Webster Smith
(Japan)

Examples from Missions History



Mary Reed
(Chandag, India – leper colony)



Liliias Trotter



Margaret Clarkson

wrote this song while working as a teacher in a logging camp in Northern Ontario; later revised its gloominess

<http://www.wheaton.edu/learnres/ARCSC/collects/sc33/bio.htm>

So Send I You

So send I you to labor unrewarded,
To serve unpaid, unloved, unsought, unknown,
To bear rebuke, to suffer scorn and scoffing-
So send I you to toil for me alone.

So send I you to bind the bruised and broken,
O'er wand'ring souls to work, to weep, to wake,
To bear the burdens of a world aweary-
So send I you to suffer for My sake.

So send I you to loneliness and longing,
With heart ahung'ring for the loved and known,
Forsaking home and kindred, friend and dear one-
So send I you to know My love alone.

So send I you to leave your life's ambition,
To die to dear desire, self-will resign,
To labor long, and love where men revile you-
So send I you to lose your life in Mine.

So send I you to hearts made hard by hatred,
To eyes made blind because they will not see,
To spend, tho' it be blood, to spend and spare not-
So send I you to taste of Calvary.

So Send I You By Grace Made Strong

So Send I you – by grace made strong to triumph
O'er hosts of hell, o'er darkness, death and sin
My name to bear and in that name to conquer
So Send I you, my victory to win.

So send I you, to take to souls in bondage
The word of truth that sets the captive free
To break the bonds of sin to loose death's fetters
So send I you, to bring the lost to me

So send I you, my strength to know in weakness
My joy in grief, my perfect peace in pain.
To prove my pow'r, my grace, my promised presence
So send I you, eternal fruit to gain.

So send I you, to bear my cross with patience,
And then one day with you to lay it down,
To hear thy voice, "well done, my faithful servant –
Come share my throne, my kingdom and my crown

As the Father has sent me, so send I you.

Martha Cochran,
Betty Loudermilk --
Japan





Rebecca Crain,
Belinda Richter,
Karen Hall , Rachel
Langendorfer--
Papua New Guinea





Jennifer
Pearson in PNG



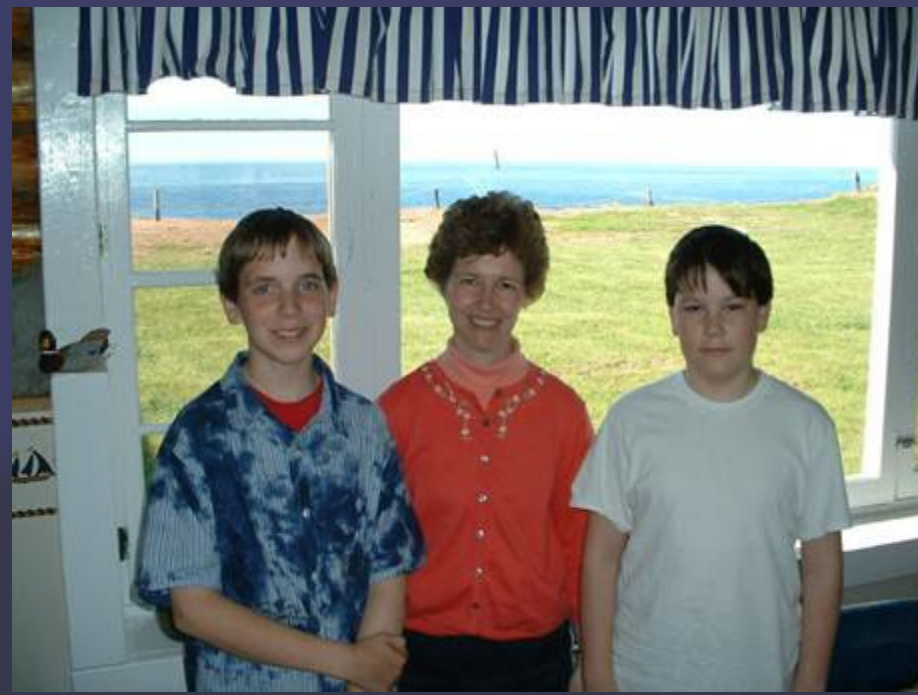
Ellen Doyle in Cameroon



Rosemary Craven in Cameroon



Chris Hess in Nova Scotia



Joanne Landon (Craft) – Scotland



Miranda Horn, Diana Boss, Norma Helle -- *Mexico*



Cyndi Grover in Cameroon then Lebanon



Biblical Background

Women were not allowed to be priests.

On rare occasions God did send prophetesses to His people.

- Miriam (*Exodus 15:20*)
- Deborah (*Judges 4:4*)
- Huldah (*2 Kings 22:14*)
- Anna (*Luke 2:36-38*)
- Four daughters of Philip (*Acts 21:9*)

Biblical Examples of Both Married and Single

- **Married: served the Lord but not without major challenges**
 - *Adam and Eve (quickly made a mess of things!)*
 - *Abraham*
 - *Moses – Zipporah said “You are a bridegroom of blood to me”*
 - *David*
 - *Solomon*
 - *Hosea*
 - *Peter*

Biblical Examples of Both Married and Single

- **Single: served the Lord with distinction in difficult ministries**
 - *Elijah (nothing said about him being married)*
 - *Jeremiah (commanded not to marry or have children – 16:1-4)*
 - *Daniel (probable but not certain he was made a eunuch)*
 - *John the Baptist*
 - *Paul*
 - *Timothy*
 - *Titus?*
 - *Luke*
 - *Do not know about the marital status of most NT women*

Pertinent Biblical Teaching

- Jesus' words about eunuchs
 - *Mt. 19:12, "For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let the one who is able to receive this receive it."*
 - Some believers are called to singleness specifically for the sake of Christian ministry.
 - Some can "receive" this as their calling.
- Requirements for elders – assumes most married
 - *1 Tim. 3:4, He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, 5 for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?*

Jesus' Example

The fact that Jesus himself found it preferable to live and do his work as a single person is significant. Marriage was not a requirement for perfection of personhood or fulfillment of the highest purpose in his life. It is the privilege of the single adult to identify with him in his singleness.

(Evelyn Mumax, quoted in Thomas Hale's *On Being A Missionary*, p. 351.)

Pertinent Biblical Teaching: Paul's Instructions in 1 Cor. 7

- Paul does not *command* singleness but recommends and wishes it (7:6-7).
- Marital status is a matter of gifting, not godliness (v. 7). Both singleness and marriage are God's gift ("*each has his own gift from God*").
 - Singleness is "good" on functional, practical grounds, not moral (v. 9).
 - Singleness is not an option for those who cannot control their sexual passions (v. 9).

Pertinent Biblical Teaching: Paul's Instructions in 1 Cor. 7

- Later Paul gives some practical benefits of singleness:
 - Complete freedom to serve the Lord
 - *“free from [‘worldly things’ – v. 33] anxieties”* (v. 32) that married couples face (vv. 25-28, 32-34)
 - Less worry about persecution (v. 26)
 - Fewer hindrances to giving *“undivided devotion to the Lord”* (v. 35).
- Paul commends singleness for some like himself (7:7, 38), but in another place he tells young widows that they should *“marry, bear children and manage their households”* (1 Tim. 5:14).

Pertinent Biblical Teaching: Paul's Instructions in 1 Cor. 7

- The question is which state best enables the person to avoid sin and live a useful, godly life.
- Recall that “each his own gift from God” (7:7).
- These observations do not negate God's statement that normally it is not good for man to be alone (Gen. 2:18) and that believers are to be fruitful and fill the earth with children AND with the Gospel – Mt. 28:18-20.

Advantages of singleness

1. More free time as free from family responsibilities and those preoccupations. (Does not mean not plenty busy!)
2. Able on the average to get closer to the nationals. They can adopt a lifestyle closer to that of the nationals
3. More flexible. This can be taken advantage of, but moving or changing plans is generally easier for them.
4. Cheaper to support (and do more work!).

Practical advice

1. Singleness may not be one's final calling. John Wesley was not married until he was 47.
2. A single person called to be a missionary should beware of marrying someone who is not.
3. Singleness is not a yardstick that measures righteous living, but a key that unlocks unique opportunities.
4. Singleness will allow one to take more risks.

Practical advice

5. Singleness will generally give more flexibility for ministry and will give access to national people that others may not meet.
6. Singles can expect to be asked some awkward questions –
 - E.g., “Found anyone **yet**?”
 - Other annoying questions?
7. Singles may face the question of marrying a national. The greater the cultural difference the greater the probability it is not wise. Also, some mission boards have stipulations about this.
8. Singles may face the question of adopting a national.

“Singles are often the most competent, stable, fruitful, Spirit-filled missionaries on the field. If someone fears that kind of life, then let that person not volunteer for missionary service.”

Thomas Hale in *On Being a Missionary*, p. 352