**How to solve the problem of single people in the church**

by Vicky Legge, [His Heart Ministry Training](http://www.hisheartministrytraining.com.au/blog/10-ways-to-alienate-and-drive-divorcedsingle-again-people-away-from-your-church/), AU

Following on from my little roar last time about [**10 ways to alienate and drive divorced/single again people from the church**](http://www.hisheartministrytraining.com.au/blog/10-ways-to-alienate-and-drive-divorcedsingle-again-people-away-from-your-church/); let’s look at the problem of single people in the church.

**Why are there so many?**

Statistically there are more single people now than at any other time in history. Here’s why:

When you look back at history, marriage was the norm and expectation of almost all adults.1 People married younger, with shorter life expectancy and most of the adult’s life was a married life. Following the Second World War, society began to change and the rate of singleness increased especially after the 1960’s.

Some of the reasons attributed to this change are:

* An increase in living together
* Choosing to remain single longer with a delay in marriage
* Remaining single longer due to more opportunity to study or change careers
* Creation of the no fault divorce which had a double effect – more divorces and
* Children of divorce shying away from marriage
* Changing financial situations especially women achieving financial independence
* Change in attitude to having sex outside of marriage
* Change in attitude to having children outside of marriage.

As a Christ following single again person I would add:

* Difficultly finding a person of similar values and I’ll admit I have list of what I want!

**How many are there?**

Society is changing and singles make up an ever increasing proportion of it, in fact about half the population. The ‘problem’ of single people is growing.

In the 2006 census in Australia 50.4% of people aged over 15 were single – that was 8,017,392 people and 33.2% had never married, 11.3% were separated or divorced and 5.9% were widowed. Looking at the statistics for families 15.8% of families or 823,254 families were one parent.2

To reflect society your church should have about 50% single people. Singles are not a homogenous group they include:

* Never married
* Separated people
* Divorced people
* Widows/widowers
* Single parents

*Does your church reflect the statistics and diversity of single people?* Or does it have the self-fulfilling prophecy where a single person walking into your church and not seeing people they can relate to in leadership or in any great numbers means they are less likely to stay, and they move on?

**So what’s the problem with single people – there is no problem!**

The problem is not with single people but with churches that only focus on marriage and families, and believe the myths about singles.

Why do churches have a bias towards marriage?

* Most pastor/board members are married
* Therefore it is not part of their personal experience
* Lack of awareness and understanding of single people
* Viewing singles as only someone waiting for a mate
* Buying into stereotypes and using labels – the problem of singles, kids from single parent homes are ‘too hard’ (this will be my next blog)
* Reluctance to take on ‘additional needy people’3

To check some of the myths [click here](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/bella-depaulo/single-people-myths_b_846461.html). Not all single people are desperate to hook up, self-centred, lonely, needy, and pitiable or must have ‘something wrong them’. Singles are not half people, waiting for another to complete them.

I am not denying that some single people have problems and needs, but so do people in a couples relationship.  In fact we all do. It’s part of our humanity. Therefore the church should support those needs and be family to those who don’t have family (Psalm 68:6) see [**2 steps for the church to outwork ‘God places the lonely in families’.**](http://www.hisheartministrytraining.com.au/blog/2-steps-for-the-church-to-outwork-god-places-the-lonely-in-families/)  Last blog I talked about having support for grief at the end of a relationship, building identity in Christ and providing practical assistance if required as some ways to support single again people, see [**10 ways to alienate and drive divorced/single again people away from your church.**](http://www.hisheartministrytraining.com.au/blog/10-ways-to-alienate-and-drive-divorcedsingle-again-people-away-from-your-church/) The church should be a welcoming and safe place for all people.

Single people have strengths. They may:

* Have great resilience and problem solving skills
* Be inclusive of others such as married people
* Have time and freedom to serve (but they are also the only person in their household so they have to work, do the housework and gardening etc which can restrict their time)
* Have a well defined sense of self

*There is no problem to solve with singles. The problem for the church is they are missing out on having singles as part of their congregation.*

’*Many single adults are not in the church body because of the lack of an organised opportunity for relationship with other single adults who have interests and issues similar to theirs. A targeted ministry for single adults can attract them and bring them into a loving fellowship of believers.*4

Here are some resources to help you grow your churches inclusivity of single people:

* Join the Single’s network <http://www.thesinglesnetwork.org/> Sign up for their newsletter, lots of articles, resources and connections for singles, and for ministering with them
* Read *Reaching Single Adults* by Dennis Franck (available through the above and Koorong)
* There’s a growing movement overseas to form a prayer group for those who want to get married called Pray for a mate <http://www.prayforamate.com/about.html> Kris Swiatocho says,  ‘The church needs to help single adults meet each other in a healthy way, directing them toward godly friendships and teaching them the principles of courtship and marriage preparation. Otherwise, they will find other ways to find a spouse, often outside the church and possibly, with someone who isn’t a believer.’

**Putting legs on it**

Is your church representative of your local community?

Are you alienating single people?

How can you change this?

**Resources**

Franck, D (2007) Reaching single adults, Baker Books U.S.A

**References**

1. Franck, D (2007) Reaching single adults, Baker Books U.S.A p37
2. Australian Bureau of Statistics
3. Franck, D (2007) Reaching single adults, Baker Books U.S.A p44
4. Franck, D (2007) Reaching single adults, Baker Books U.S.A, p73

DePaulo, B (2011) The 10 Ten Myths About Single People <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/bella-depaulo/single-people-myths_b_846461.html>

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