

FOLLOW-UP QUESTION 6

Tell us a little about your story as a single woman

Single, never married

From a young age, I aspired to be a single women missionary. I still held marriage and children as a high calling (and planned to have lots of kids if I ever got married), but I told my mom as a child that I didn't think I would get married, or if I did it would be late in life. While on one hand I love babies and children and did have a desire to have a family someday, I also felt a very clear desire and purpose to be a missionary nurse and felt that God had given me the capacity to do that on my own. My plan to work in overseas missions and my focus on school and gaining experience were more important and kept me from beginning relationships that didn't align with what I felt like God was allowing me to prepare toward. While it may have involved personal trust/control issues as well, I never progressed beyond the initial get to know you dates into a long-term relationship. But I also never felt a draw that was stronger than my plan of being a missionary nurse. While there have been periods where I have felt a longing to have the intimacy and partnership marriage could bring, I have also grown to love the time and freedom I have to devote my personal resources to whatever and whomever God brings into my path. I have reached a point in my own life where, despite mourning the loss of possibly never knowing the privilege and joys of marriage and mothering, I feel the great privilege and joys of being able to go where the Spirit prompts and have the privilege of partnering and mothering in the spiritual sense. To me, my status of singleness is a privilege that is different from, but no less fulfilling than, the status of married.

Well, I've been single my whole life. I've never dated anyone (but people keep praying about it for me). I serve in the children's and youth ministries and on the worship team. I try to be as involved as possible with church because that's how I was brought up.

What a question! I need to decide how transparent I should be in the scope of this survey. I am one of those individuals who loves the company of other people. I draw hope and life from community. I have lived in....how many.....5 countries? Every community I have lived in has been life giving to my soul. But in a similar way, I love singleness. I don't sense that any loneliness I experience as a single woman is different to the loneliness of my married friends. In fact, I sense their loneliness is particularly

heavy coupled with the duties of family. I haven't ever had regrets. When I look over my life, my first thought is one of immense joy. I can't describe how joyful life has been. I feel immensely loved.

I have had a life full of blessings and friends. When I was younger I was raised to expect to find a husband and to find my worth in honoring God, by being a wife and mother. That is not the path that God has chosen for me thus far. I feel that this has helped me to be a servant in ways that being married or being a mother never would have allowed. There are so many responsibilities as a mother/wife that time can get away from you. I do probably work more than most for a paycheck, because I am my sole provider, and that does get tough sometimes as well... However, I am always able and willing to help out and to coordinate events going on around me with my church family and community. Because of these opportunities, I have been adopted into more families than I know what to do with. Being single has moments where you question the why of missing out on companionship, but the joy that I have found in service to my God far exceeds the want of that desire. I do not have any biological children, but because of the work that God has allowed me to be a part of, I now have 10 that call me Aunt Erica and love to have sleepovers and bible studies at my house. The best thing is, they want to invite all of their friends. I never feel alone. I once thought that I would feel so alone and that I was scared to die alone without having a companion...but truthfully that is never a guarantee either. I have sat with a few older women who had been married with families, and their husbands had previously passed. In many ways they were still facing all of the same fears that I thought that I would face in remaining single. Through this, I have learned that happiness is found through the contentment of being what God has called you to be during your present state, and to seek his will joyfully with the aroma of Christ.

I went to China at age 22 and stayed most of my adult life. I've dated plenty of guys but haven't found the right one. Don't want to get married just to get married.

I decided a long time ago that it is better to be single than to be with someone just so I am able to say that I'm not "alone". I also decided from a young age that I didn't want a man who served another God than mine to be my head. I am an introvert so being alone is a pleasant thing for me, not that I would not like being a part of a couple or having a family. But I want to do it at the right time for the right reasons, and that is why I am still single.

I'm 22, never been in a serious relationship, never been kissed college student. Some people would struggle being where I am in my singleness, and I won't lie and say it hasn't been a struggle from time to time, because it has, but ultimately it's been a blessing. Yes, my singleness has been a blessing. It's taught me to be independent, it's forced me to do things out of my comfort zone, and it's allowed me to minister to other women because of it. It's taught me the importance of having a strong community of women surrounding me, encouraging me, and spurring me on. It's also taught me the importance of placing my heart in the hands of the Lord, which I'm guilty of not always doing. Some people view singleness as an unfortunate circumstance, but I've found it to be a blessing because it's allowed me to lean into God more and grow and develop myself more as a person.

I have never had a desire to marry and really never seriously dated because I didn't see the need if it wasn't leading to anything. I have fostered 10 kids and adopted one as a single woman & feel very satisfied with God & life. I have encountered pushback from people in every facet of my life in regards to being single but have generally ignored them and kept on.

I never intended to be single—my life goal, when I was younger, was to be married and be a stay at home mom to lots of kids (at least 5!) -- but life has simply turned out differently. I believe that I've followed God with each step I've taken, so this must be where he wants me, but sometimes there's a lot of irony in it.

I spent several years going back and forth between happily single and wondering what was wrong with me, that no man loved me. Now I am content; if God brings someone into my life, I am open to that, but not actively looking or feeling inadequate.

I'm 25 and I've only had one romantic relationship in my life. We dated for over a year and then he broke my heart because he changed his mind. Before that I had almost given up hope that I would ever get married. After this breakup, I'm left with an even greater desire to start a family someday. I still have that fear that I'll be alone forever but I'm striving to get to the point where that's not the most important thing in my life. Heartbreak has drawn me closer to God than I've ever been in my life and I'm thankful for that.

I've had a hard time adjusting to single life, and dating in your 50s is tough. I truly believe the best way to meet someone worth dating is through mutual friends, but that doesn't happen when your friends are all married. For me, life as a single woman is lonely. I've tried online dating and I don't believe it's worth the effort. I've had to work hard to cultivate friendships with women who have time to do things like dinner or a movie. Married friends, understandably, have limited time and other priorities. I do spend time with my kids & grandkids, but they have busy lives and it's been up to me to plan and coordinate time with them. I get discouraged when I look at a future spent alone, and it's easy to be jealous of women whose marriages appear to be healthy and happy.

I am a single, 47 years old African American woman living in Detroit, Michigan and somewhat supporting myself over the last five years. When I was in grade school, I have diagnosed both a learning difference and delayed language development. I became a loner due to ableism discrimination due to a disability condition. As a result, success in learning and social activity did not come easy for me. Working both part and full-time jobs, despite having to overcome both learning differences and delayed language development, I was fortunate enough to graduate high school with Cum Laude honors due to my unending dedication gaining the lasting learning experience to someday succeed in the world of business. This philosophy carried over throughout my college studies. I then attended college at Wayne County Community College receiving an Associate degree. I went on receiving both bachelor's at the University of Detroit Mercy and master's at University of Phoenix. Because of my lack of work experience, I was unable to obtain employment in the field of degrees earned. Finally, I landed my first job in security from Michigan Rehabilitation Services. I managed to drive an automobile, utilized public

transportation, and budgeting my finances without any other assistance. In 2009, I fell on some hard times before graduating with a Master of Science in Administration of Justice and Security. In 2010, I applied for Food Assistance and Medical through the government. I was no longer able to afford my Ford Focus and voluntarily gave up the car. My family clashed with me due to my inability to gain better employment. Eventually I went to a mental health facility to obtain services for supported employment and housing. I didn't want to move out until I was financially able to do so. Putting my mental health state first, I was able to obtain my first apartment living on my own believing God was in the midst of it all. I worked some part-time jobs to support myself and successfully completed Customer Service Training. Whereas I held my first part-time remote customer service professional job working for Elite Business Solutions. The situation was short-lived because I started working for the Neighborhood Service Organization as a Peer Support Specialist. I resigned due to unable to support myself as a single woman. I gave Elite Business Solutions one more try but failed due taking care of my father becoming terminally ill. He passed away last year after I moved to my second apartment and left me a gift. It helped me out and able to pay any outstanding balances and my credit improved dramatically. I then started a small business and accumulated some income in credit cards from my company named, Simple Earthy LLC. I was still unable to obtain any full-time employment elsewhere and have now been living off my checking and savings to support myself.

I grew up having never met anyone that was single past the age of 30. It just wasn't a thing you saw in the church. Because of this, I went into college seeking attention from guys and putting my worth in whether I was in a relationship or not. My thought was always "What does it say about you if no one wants to be in a relationship with you." Then one day I walked into "singles chapel" and my thought process was truly changed. I saw these amazing women doing things for the Lord that they could have never done if they had a husband or families holding them back. The freedom to follow God with reckless abandon was what really drew me to value my singleness. Right now, being single, I am in a unique position to be able to do crazy things or go to outrageous places that God leads me to because I don't have any strings attached.

I am 22 years old, have never had any adult boyfriends (I had a bus boyfriend in 8th grade), never a first kiss, or any real relationships with a guy. I had a few crushes (That's a lie. I have had a LOT of crushes) growing up, but all my experiences were not great. My best friends growing up were males, and when puberty hit guys got weird, and that basically got rid of any male friends I had. I survived elementary and middle school, only to arrive in high school and be swarmed with weird, wild males who did drugs, drank, or were sketchy. My biggest problem has been my smile because I smile all day every day, and I smile at everyone which attracts some weird yet interesting suitors. Eventually, I became extremely depressed because I couldn't attract any males I was attracted to, so I turned to "singles events." This was how I started down a bad battle with depression that I had to face by myself; I was growing more and more hopeless, even to the point of wanting to end it all. The last singles' event I attended was about a year or two ago and was the worst one I have ever been to. The nicest way I can explain the women who were attending was ladies who were so alone that they had to wine about their loneliness and how they didn't have a man every 5 minutes. This event changed my outlook to "I cannot

be them!" So I started focusing more on my relationship and love for God and only God. I stopped going to singles events, and eventually, I have found certain contentment of being single and having freedom. The ladies in the church are very pushy sometimes, but they're harmless, and I have found myself not feeling like I want or need a man to survive. I do go through bouts of feeling like I need a partner, and a few times I have listened to the dark side of my mind telling me I'm not good enough or not feminine enough. In those dark moments, I have even contemplated having a relationship with a woman instead of a man, but thoughts just such as those and others don't last. What holds my focus the most is reading God's word and remembering that he has a plan for each of us, and if we don't let God lead, we will fail.

Single again

My ex left me when I was 7 months pregnant. My son was born a month early. We got back together for about a 1 1/2 yr. my son was a little over 2 when we finally split. (35 years ago) I was fortunate to have the support of my parents. I worked 3 jobs until I went to Nursing School. I've been a nurse for 29 years. I've been involved with several singles programs over the years and help plan several single retreats.

I came out of abuse - childhood and marital - and knew I needed to get healthy before I could have a proper relationship. Seven years in, I am still doing that. I am ready now, but God has even more healing for me - physically finally, from previous trauma. It's been a beautiful year, and a very liberating past 7 years.

I became single as a 54-year-old widow. My husband of 33.5 years passed away Jan. 14, 2017. I grew up with him and he was my life. I have been a member at [local] CoC since 1984. I was a faithful attender and pew sitter but never really "knew" my brothers and sisters. I had no personal relationship with God. My husband's passing caused me to make a choice. I chose to grab on to God's hand and never let go. It's been a wild ride and God and I have had a great time. I am involved in LST, women's ministry and small groups. My son came back into my life 2 months prior to my husband's passing. This was only possible by God. Our story has touched so many lives because it shows God's faithfulness. Being single has been good for me. I have learned boundaries and know what I truly want should I marry again. God has helped me see that not all godly people get married. It's okay to be single. Serving the Lord is easier and my faith has grown exponentially. Being single has helped me learn how to be a true disciple of Christ.

I grew up in a very religious church of Christ family but got pregnant at 17 and married the father a year after having the baby. 4 years later we had our 2nd child and separated 8 months after her birth. We divorced about 1 1/2 years after that. I was completely single for about 5 years. No dating, casual or serious. I was very broken and felt like a failure for not being able to make my marriage work. I am now dating a wonderful man and have been for over a year. He is 11 years older than me but I think that is needed because I had to grow up fast.

My husband died in August 17. We had been in a very difficult marriage 48 years. I'm still trying to work out who I am without my wife and caretaker roles.

After being married for 16 years, the last few being pretty rocky, he left and moved to another country. I now needed to find a job since I had been a stay at home mom for the previous 11 years. I was learning how to juggle working full time, taking care of the kids and the duties of keeping house. It was very overwhelming for a while, but then I learned how to organize things while also learning that not everything would get done. It would not be the same as before. I'm thankful for family and friends that stepped in to help. Now a little over 8 years later I can look back at the path I have been on, of course wishing I had journaled through it all, but I can see how God has been there and provided just what we needed. It has not always been easy, there have been a lot of tears, but I love that new song that's out called, "The God Who Stays". I also love Casting Crowns and feel they have had the right song at the right time through the years for whatever is happening at that moment. He has been my rock, my fortress, the one I'm usually in a daily conversation with.

I am a younger single mom, so balancing between being a single mom and being a single young professional has been challenging. More recently I have put a lot of effort into the church to start connecting with others in a healthy friendship way instead of just trying to seek a husband.

I was mother to 9-month-old baby girl when my husband left us. Shortly after that I lost my job. My ex went to the church I was attending and convinced them he was willing to start over, but he was an alcoholic. They turned against me, so I had to make a completely new start. Uphill all the way. Learned a lot. Fought hard. But with God's help, made it.

All I ever wanted to do was to be married and have children. I made a rather disastrous choice in a spouse and by 32, I was divorced and raising my children alone. This was better than being in an abusive marriage though. I dated a lot in my 30s and made some poor choices. In my 40s, I dated some and had the potential for a couple of long term relationships or marriage which ultimately didn't work out. In my 50s, I've only had one or two dates in recent years. Besides my dating life, or lack thereof, I was busy for many years raising my children and working in ministry. I was determined that my children wouldn't pay the price for my mistakes. So we were very active in sports, church, and other activities. I volunteered in youth ministry until my youngest child graduated high school. At the same time, I was serving in other ministry areas such as divorce recovery, women's ministry, and community transformation. As an empty nester, I have served on the staff of several churches and currently work as Director of Communications for a large nonprofit. I stay busy with other ministry work and the occasional preaching or teaching opportunity.

I have been single again for about 19 years. The Lord blessed me a few years ago by allowing my path to cross with a living Christian man and we plan to marry in a few months. If we can trust him and learn to be content, he is faithful to answer our prayers.

My husband died 2.5 years ago after being married 48 years. It wasn't a good marriage and I'm enjoying my freedom.

I became a single woman after being married for 22 years. My husband left me and decided he didn't want to be married to me anymore and then he found a girlfriend after he left me and married her after

our divorce. My experience as a single mom to two children has been very difficult but rewarding at the same time. The struggle is hard at times but that same struggle makes me so much stronger and able to make it on my own and know that all I need is God and He will take care of me. He has blessed me immensely since my divorce. God is so wonderful!

I was widowed in 2008 when cancer took my husband of 34 years. He was a retired Army Colonel so his military deployments had given me experiences in the single Mom role. We were active in a local church, but I soon become uncomfortable being the 50-something single lady at adult fellowships and choosing to find an unaccompanied friend to sit with in worship or just sit by myself. I sought out a larger church in my area with a single adult ministry and found “family”.