

Voices of the Movement

World Christian Fellowship Newsletter



March 2009

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Asilomar, Monterey, California

SINGLENESS ON THE MISSION FIELD

By Sandy W.

In this article, Sandy W. addresses the important issue of singleness on the field. While acknowledging the real pain and struggles singleness may bring, she expounds on its many blessings and benefits, as a gift from God. Sandy gives words of encouragement – to both singles and married – to cherish and relish their present gift of circumstance that is “subject to change”.



Enjoying God's gift of singleness

Singleness misunderstood ► Years ago, when I heard of the book *Pain: the Gift Nobody Wants* (by Philip Yancey and Paul Brand), my immediate response was: “Really? I thought that was singleness.”

Truly, singleness gets a bad rap – when confronted with the idea of lifelong singleness, most people immediately clamor, “I don’t have the gift of celibacy!”

However, as both a Christian and a missionary home on furlough from her first term overseas as a single, I believe that a negative attitude towards this gift that God has given many of us will cause us to miss out on the many blessings of singlehood. We deny God the praise, thanks, and glory that He deserves for this wonderful gift when we denigrate and misunderstand it.

The gift of singleness ► Let me clarify that I don’t believe that singleness is exactly the same as the gift of celibacy, as alluded to by Paul in 1 Cor 7:7. Singleness and celibacy do (and should) overlap in practice, but since most singles deny having the gift of celibacy and yet can’t deny currently possessing the gift of singleness, I won’t go into celibacy here, but will rather focus on singleness.

First of all, singleness IS a gift – one with its blessings and its challenges. Someday, one may be called to exchange that gift for another gift called marriage, which comes with its own set of blessings and challenges. But until then, we should not be like the envious child at playtime who drops

her own playthings and grabs at her neighbors’ toys. Singleness and marriage are equally good gifts. They are gifts of circumstance – where God has put you right now – rather than spiritual gifts that are cultivated, grown, and lifelong.

Subject to change ► I once met a missionary who joyfully promoted the Three S’s: “1) Single, 2) Satisfied, 3) Subject to Change.” While the third characteristic often provokes laughter, really this is true of any of our circumstances. Just as singles can be called into marriage, married people can at any moment become single through the death of their spouse. Missionaries on the field can at any moment become people called to come home for whatever reasons. Senders and mobilizers can also at any moment be called to the field. Like a soldier awaiting orders, we all should be willing and ready for whatever circumstance the Lord sends us, whether we desire that circumstance or not.

Benefits on the field ► Singleness on the missions field means special mobility and flexibility that a married couple or family doesn’t usually have. The lives of singles are not cumbered by the needs of multiple people. I find that my single colleagues leave for the field years before my married colleagues who began the missions journey at the same time. What a blessing to be able to pick up and go so quickly! While everyone’s situation is different, I personally left for the field within two years of joining a missions agency, including one year of training and a year to raise support and deal with family issues. I know some who have left as early as a few months later.

Flexibility ► On the field, this mobility is invaluable as well. A few years ago, when a huge tsunami struck different parts of Asia, my team leader released my whole team to take a month off to volunteer in the disaster-stricken areas. All the singles on the team immediately picked up and went to become translators for the numerous medical teams that were pouring into the country, unable to communicate with the disaster victims. Meanwhile, our married colleagues, whose family responsibilities tied them to home, stayed at our base and held down the fort. While their work was just as much of a blessing and necessity, we singles definitely enjoyed the benefits of our mobility.

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“Truly, singleness gets a bad rap – when confronted with the idea of lifelong singleness, most people immediately clamor, ‘I don’t have the gift of celibacy!’... I believe that a negative attitude towards this gift that God has given many of us will cause us to miss out on the many blessings of singlehood. We deny God the praise, thanks, and glory that He deserves for this wonderful gift when we denigrate and misunderstand it.”

PRAYER: THE FUEL OF THE MOVEMENT

REGIONAL WORLD CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP PRAYER GROUPS

The prayer groups listed below meet monthly. For more information e-mail prayer@wcfellowship.org

• **Seattle (Tukwila, WA)**

Meets 3rd or 4th Saturday of the month (typically).

Contact: Seattle-prayer@wcfellowship.org

• **L.A. (Temple City, CA)**

Meets 1st Sunday of every month (typically).

Contact: LA-prayer@wcfellowship.org

• **Mid-Penninsula NorCal (San Mateo, CA)**

First meeting scheduled for 3/14/09.

Contact: midpeninsula-prayer@wcfellowship.org

NEW!

• **S.F. Monthly Missions Meeting (San Francisco, CA)**

Meets 1st Sunday of every month (typically).

Contact: SF-prayer@wcfellowship.org

• **East/South Bay NorCal (Fremont, CA)**

Meets 2nd or 3rd Sunday of every month (typically).

Contact: SouthBay-prayer@wcfellowship.org

Recently re-established !! • **South Bay NorCal (Mountain View, CA)**

Meets 2nd Sunday of every month (typically).

Contact: sbay-mtview-prayer@wcfellowship.org

“Prayer does not fit us for the greater work, prayer *is* the greater work.” – Oswald Chambers

PRAYER GROUP SAN FRANCISCO UPDATE

by Ralph L.

Quick quiz ◦ What makes the SF WCF Regional Prayer meeting unique is because it's:

- ___ 1. not just for WCFers
- ___ 2. not your regular Wed. evening church prayer meeting
- ___ 3. Ray's professional cooking and desserts
- ___ 4. all the above

If you answered 4, you're right! The SF WCF-MMM is the monthly mission meeting for everyone who shares a passion for the glory of God among the nations. In our first Sunday of the month meeting, we always start with a meal. Everyone gets to be part of the fun by bringing a dish, or contributing \$10 and enjoying a sumptuous meal, which always includes a special main dish or desserts from chef Ray. Maybe that's why we've been averaging over 30 people every time.

Like-minded support needed ◦ But we never start on time. That's because the first hour is for networking and building community. It's easy to see how without mutual encouragement, the once hot passion for God's glory can quickly grow cold, not having seen or met others who are like minded. You are not alone; we share your yearning to see God glorified in us. We recognize that as a movement, we must be sustained by prayer. Yet prayer as a discipline is difficult on

our own, without fresh input from the field. And as much as we hate to admit it, "out of sight, out of mind" is particularly true for missionaries in the field. So as a regular feature, we always ask some people to share about their ministry, their experiences, and of course, ways we can pray for them, and God's work.

“Intel” from the field ◦ For the past year, we have had the opportunity to pray for the work in, among others – Morocco, India, China, Sudan, Macau, Japan, Philippines, Thailand, as well as locally among international students, and the poor in our midst. These sharings have enlarged our understanding of what God is doing all over the world. The resulting praise for what God is doing, and prayer for God's kingdom to expand, rise up as a fragrant offering pleasing to God. Join us in San Francisco!



San Francisco Ferry Building

“We recognize that as a movement, we must be sustained by prayer. Yet prayer as a discipline is difficult on our own, without fresh input from the field. And as much as we hate to admit it, ‘out of sight, out of mind’ is particularly true for missionaries in the field.”

WCC 2009 HIGHLIGHTS



Yield. Submission to Harvest ■ Under the cover of pouring rain, tall trees, and prayer, conferees gathered together for three days at Alliance Redwoods located north of San Francisco for the 24th annual World Christian Conference over the Presidents' Day weekend in February. Like other years, conferees reveled in the fellowship of a like-minded community through plenary sessions, corporate worship, prayer for the nations, testimonies, commitment time, workshops, small groups, networking opportunities, appointments with ministry consultants, and exposure to mission organizations. Over 100 churches were represented by this year's conferees and more than 45% of them were first-time attenders of WCC.

Targeted messages ■ Both main plenary speakers prepared their messages to address the Asian American Christian demographic and spoke directly to the Biblical context surrounding the conference theme verse of John 12:24. With Jesus' singular purposeful drive towards the cross as a

model, pastor and missionary Sebastian Huynh challenged conferees to consider if they had a vision to die for and to live unto, and what might their "hour", the specific role God wants them to play, look like. Plunging the conferees into the tragic reality of exploited women and children all over the world, Michelle Rickett of Sisters in Service (SIS) integrated the mandate for compassion with the strategic nature of going to the least reached as a main emphasis in her exhortations.

Purposeful time ■ True to the event's designed purpose, conferees had the space and time to grapple with the question of how might their lives fit into what God's heart and purposes for the world with other World Christians who are on a similar journey. The last session of the conference included a special commissioning time for those in the WCF community who were launching out full-time this year to the field such as Cambodia, East Asia, and the Middle East.

by Estber W.



VOICES FROM WCC 2009



Many conferees expressed their experience of WCC 2009 in a sampling of testimonials. Some of them are printed here, with more to share in future issues.

◀▶ "In the gathering of like-minded believers and listening to personal testimonies, God reminded me that I'm a forgiven sinner who is surrounded in His immense love. I'm deeply challenged to see so many brothers and sisters living their lives on the edge, completely sold out for Christ. I realized that there are still areas of my life that I'm trying to control instead of letting Christ reign the whole of me. The conference opened my eyes to see beyond my own story and made me yearn for more of Jesus."

◀▶ "I came to WCC almost skeptical, not knowing what to expect. I never felt a heart for mission, but I was open to God's stirring. These last few days have really grown my heart and I see how many opportunities there are around me to share the gospel. The speakers helped to dispel all the fears of self-consciousness and I'm so challenged and encouraged to trust in the Lord and do His work through my flawed self."

◀▶ "I love how God continues to give me time and space at this conference to re-evaluate my life in light of his love and longing to be reconciled with the world. I believe God's given me courage to look at some of my closest relationships in a different light and take steps to be more reflective of God's love for each of them."

◀▶ "I was truly shocked this weekend. I came with no expectations and God met me exactly where I am. He used Sebastian, Michelle and other testimony speakers to convict me and open my eyes to ALL God has in store for me. I'm so excited and rejuvenated to go back and share Jesus!"

◀▶ "As part of the WCC leadership, I sometimes worry about whether God is still doing something through this movement or we've missed something. When God provided, in a unique combination of ways, the exact amount to cover the conference and organizational financial concerns, I was 'blown away' and deeply encouraged that God is still working in our midst."



12 IDEAS FOR “SENDING” WELL

By Ron M.

Beyond financial support ♥ Picture this: The missionary has been called, commissioned, and sent by their home church, other supporting churches, family, and friends. Now what? Is our job done as senders? Does the missionary become “out of sight, out of mind”? Hopefully not. *It is important to think of missions and the sending of missionaries as teamwork.* The team consists of those who are sent and those who send. As senders, there are a lot of things that we can do to support, encourage, and care for those who are sent — our missionaries — besides just giving our financial support.

Ideas for senders ♥ Here are some possible ideas for helping our missionaries on the “front line” as well as to care for their needs. Of course, with some of these ideas, what we do would depend on the missionary or missionary family, the country that they are serving in, and the respective situation.

- 1. Prayer calendar** – have each sender sign up for days to pray for the missionary. For example, a person commits to Monday or a certain day of the month such as the 15th.
- 2. Spiritual teaching** – If sermons aren’t available online, then send sermons on CDs. However, make sure this is permissible in the missionary’s host country.
- 3. Tech equipment** – Provide a laptop computer for the missionary to use.
- 4. Missionary Support Group (MSG)** – Prior to leaving, have the missionary form an MSG, Missionary Support Group. People in this group are from the home church and are selected by the missionary. Most likely this group would consist of close friends so that the missionary can share freely. The MSG would meet regularly to pray. They would be the advocates for the missionary at their home church. They would help set up talks with church groups when the missionary is on home assignment. They would help find housing and a car for the missionary to use during home assignment.
- 5. Email** – This is a quick way to correspond with the missionary. However, don’t expect a response. Correspondence can take up a lot of time, especially if a lot of people are writing. The missionary is there for the people in that country.
- 6. Skype or other VoIP services** – Only have certain people use this Web application for contact since it again, takes time.
- 7. Care packages** – this is sent by the MSG on behalf of the church. Find out what the missionary likes or needs. These can be sent on birthdays and Christmas.

- 8. Supportive materials** – Send supportive materials on behalf of the church such as worship CDs or Christian resources. Again, be sensitive and wise to the policies of the missionary’s host country.
- 9. Church news** – If a church newsletter is written and not available online, send it or write brief updates about news from the home church.
- 10. Bible studies from home** – If the home church is going through a Bible study series, send materials so the missionary can stay connected with church.
- 11. Photo directory** – Send the church photo directory if one exists. Include the missionary in the directory, even if they have to send their own photo.
- 12. Devotional booklet** – For short-term missionaries who go for a few weeks, the MSG can organize people to write a devotional booklet that the missionary can read each day.

These are just a few ideas of ways senders can care for, support, and encourage their missionaries. Based on past testimonies of active MSGs, the missionary felt highly supported in the spiritual realm as well as in practical needs. In other words, the missionary felt the love and support of the home church through the MSG.



“Together, through the power of the Holy Spirit in prayer and the guidance of God’s word, we prayed for seeds to be sown and grown through our missionary sister. We met regularly to pray, emailed, Skyped, and sent care packages to bridge the continental divide. It was a great joy to receive news of triumph as well as tribulation. After two years of support through the MSG, we were overjoyed to hear of newborn believers growing in the Word and potentially helping to share the gospel to their native people.”

— A member of an MSG in a local Bay Area church



Ron and Carol M. served as missionaries in Japan for 10 years with American Baptist Churches, USA. Ron is an associate pastor at Evergreen Baptist Church of San Gabriel Valley. Carol is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker at Asian-American Christian Counseling Service and a Christian coach.

SINGLENES ON THE MISSION FIELD

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Advantages of dependency ► Even though in some cultures, singles of (or past) marriageable age traveling abroad alone are considered strange, often I have found this fact work to my advantage. I was a 27 year-old single female when I moved into a village in Southeast Asia. Because I had no family, I was immediately “adopted” by a family. They watched out for me, took me to all their family and cultural events, and brought me home to feed me. I even fasted and broke all the fasts together with them every day and night during Ramadan. Culturally, I was in a unique situation envied by many of my married friends, who were regarded as “self-sufficient” as a family unit and left alone. I learned the language faster than most (with the exception of my friend who began dating and later married a local Christian).

Lies from Satan ► Singleness has its challenges because it is vulnerable to attacks from Satan, who tries to convince us of particular lies that would rob our joy in singlehood. Here are some of the lies I’ve heard.

- 1) *“My ‘real life’ hasn’t started yet. I can’t do real ministry until I’m married.”*

Many feel that they would do wonderful ministry if only God would give them a spouse. They ignore the lives of singles like Jesus and Paul, whose single-ness probably allowed for, not hindered, their ministry. I find it dangerous when people begin “bargaining” with God, offering their service to God “if only” God will bring along a perfect spouse. There is nothing wrong with praying for a spouse, but when we use our ministry as a bargaining chip, we are denying the sovereignty of God.

- 2) *“God is withholding something good from me. He hasn’t given me what would be best for me right now, which is a spouse, not singlehood.”*

Discontentment is a dangerous trap for singles. It leads to resentment and bitterness, and usually a questioning of one’s faith. Unfortunately, I have met many bitter single missionaries who could not understand why God hadn’t sent their spouse yet. It is okay to pour out our legitimate loneliness and desires to God in prayer, but when we grow angry at Him and distrust that He has our best in mind, we step on dangerous ground and risk bearing no fruit on the field.



Singles heeding God’s call to missions

Loneliness ► Another challenge of singleness is legitimate loneliness. The answer: Have a community of all ages and walks of life. Make friends, not just with other singles, but with married couples, families, and grandparents. You have much to learn from people in all stages of life, whether it is the older missionary, married or unmarried, or your single peers. Go outside your own organization and have friendships with other expats, even nonChristians like embassy workers, NGO workers, and businesspeople. Find people you can share culturally appropriate hobbies and interests with. Have an accountability group of same-gender likeminded friends with whom you can share your deepest heart issues and who can help you with issues of purity. If you are an older single, mentor a group of same-gender younger people. Give them the benefit of your experience as a single.

Attention: married people ► Married people, I hope you’re reading this too. Married couples have a special responsibility to their single friends and colleagues – to invite them into their homes (it is harder for singles to host a family of four) and let them be the aunts and uncles of their children, since they too need the blessings of the intimacies of family. However, don’t regard singles just as free babysitters but as special people to whom you have a responsibility to be a blessing, and who can be a blessing to your family. Regardless of age or experience, they are people you can learn from, and whom you can teach as well.

Subject to change ► Finally, the most complicated part of singleness is the “subject to change” part. Dating is an issue that deserves its own article, so I won’t go into that here. However, I will mention that it is important for singles involved in missions to decide before entering a romantic relationship what their priorities are regarding their calling.

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“Even though in some cultures, singles of (or past) marriageable age traveling abroad alone are considered strange, often I have found this fact work to my advantage.”

SINGLENESS ON THE MISSION FIELD

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Do they feel convicted enough about missions that they would forego, often painfully, a potential relationship, to go? If so, one would need to make the appropriate choices regarding whom and how to date. While it does happen occasionally, it is unrealistic and disrespectful to the other person to think that one can convince a spouse to become a missionary if his/her heart isn't there in the first place.

Hard questions ► I often warn singles preparing for the mis-

sions field that shortly after they commit to being a goer, a cute, godly but non-missions-minded guy or girl is almost sure to appear on the scene, enticing them to give up their vision. Some of my friends stayed home and married the person. Others (like me) gave up the person and went overseas. Every situation is different, and God leads people differently. But I considered it tragic when I heard of a missions-minded friend whose marriage caused her to stay home, later wondering what could have been and wishing she had considered those questions beforehand.



Father God, we thank you for the circumstances you have given us, whether single or married, and how you have uniquely placed us in the best place to give you glory. Help us to maximize our gifts to spread your gospel. Make us truly grateful for your good and perfect gifts, and fill us with all we need for life and godliness. We love and trust You. In Jesus's name, Amen.

VOICES OF THE MOVEMENT

Vision and purposes ✨ The monthly WCF Newsletter serves a few purposes. The first is to function as a regular official communication vehicle from the World Christian Fellowship (WCF) to the WCF community at large. The second purpose is to capture the voices of World Christian journeys and articles that describe how God is realigning hearts and lives for his global purposes, and then sharing these with the WCF community for encouragement and inspiration. Finally, the WCF newsletter serves to archive the history of what God is doing through the WCF movement in order to inform future generations of Asian Americans who are interested in continuing the spiritual legacy of WCF.

Joining the team, contributions wanted

If you are interested in contributing a testimony or article, or want to help serve on the WCF Newsletter Team, please contact us at newsletter@wcfellowship.org. We have need for a graphic layout person, editors, and both regular and one-time contributors.



WCC 25TH ANNIVERSARY



Vision and purposes ▲ World Christian Fellowship (WCF) is beginning to make plans to celebrate World Christian Conference's (WCC) 25th anniversary during the February 2010 WCC. During that WCC and throughout the following year, WCF would like to celebrate the past 25 years by thanking God for what He has already done through the WCF movement; reconnecting with past WCF alumni; recasting WCF's vision; and looking forward towards the future in anticipation of what God might continue to do through the WCF movement.

Celebration preparations: help wanted

If you are interested contributing to the WCC Anniversary celebration in any way, please contact WCF at 25thAnniversary@wcfellowship.org. We are especially looking for people who can and are willing to reach out to previous WCF alumni and be project coordinators/implementers.



Silent Auction: A BIG thank you to all who participated in the silent action at the recent WCC 2009! You helped to celebrate God's given gifts and talents to the WCF community as well as helped the WCF organization continue its mission to mobilize Asian Americans for God's global purposes.

Donations: If you would like to make a charitable contribution, please send checks payable to *World Christian Fellowship* and mail to P.O. Box 256, Mountain View, CA, 94042-0256. Make sure you include a valid address so that we can send you a tax-deductible receipt.

Amazon.com affiliate link: If you already do some of your shopping at **Amazon.com**, you can help WCF receive a small percentage back by **clicking through our affiliate link** at wcfellowship.org/contact.html and making a purchase during the same session.