



REFINING THROUGH RELATIONSHIPS

Arguably one of the biggest challenges of living life as a single person is learning how to navigate legitimate emotional and relational needs. While the intensity of the need varies from person to person, God has instilled a desire for connection within each one of us. In *Genesis 2:18*, God said, “*It is not good that the man should be alone,*” and in response, He made Adam a helper. Likewise, God has placed different individuals within each of our lives to be our “helpers.”

When emotional needs are not being met, people tend to go in one of two directions: they either seek to find additional support through relationships or they put up barriers, isolating themselves from additional hurt. Singles need to recognize the healthy ways they are dealing with emotional needs, as well as admit the unhealthy ways they are coping. Take inventory of your life. How well am I dealing with my emotional needs? Where are areas of growth needed? If you are struggling in a particular area, are you seeking support? Are you actively pursuing growth in your life or are you stagnate, waiting for circumstances to change?

Asking for Help

Gal. 6:2, “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.”

Each of us has been designed with different gifts and abilities. Whether married or single, we should be aware of our needs and our limitations. For example, individuals who have lost a spouse can find learning to live life again as a single extremely difficult. Perhaps there were responsibilities your spouse tended to you must now figure out how to do on your own. While it can be humbling to ask for assistance, it is essential you do so, not allowing pride to become a stumbling block. Perhaps your greatest need is companionship. While this need may not be met in the same way as it was in marriage, by sharing this need with others, you are demonstrating openness and vulnerability, allowing others to walk beside you during your loss. Remember *Ecclesiastes 4:9-10*, “*Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up.*”

When singles don’t have other people to share life with, discouragement and loneliness can set in. Because of this, it is essential singles learn to be proactive, reaching out to others for accountability and support when needed, being willing to admit limitations and accept help from others. Likewise, it is important for the church to do their part in reaching out to those who are alone, showing our single brothers and sisters that they are very loved and valued (*1 Cor. 12:26, “And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it...”*, *Phil. 2:4, “Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others”*).

If you are struggling and don't know who to ask for help, talk to your elder, mentor, a trusted friend, or a family member. They may be able to help or give you some ideas. While your needs may not end up being met in the same capacity as you originally hoped, the Body of Christ will still be willing and able to help.

Consider the following questions:

1. Can and will you ask for help if there is a need? If not, what is getting in your way?
2. Who are the helpers God has placed in your life? Are you using them for practical, emotional or relational support? Are there others you are overlooking?

Engaging Relationships when it's Hard

Prov. 27:17, "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend."

Younger individuals tend to go through periods of time when friends frequently marry, move, or have children, resulting in great changes to the person's core group. After a while, a person can tire of trying to build new relationships, as they feel they will be short lived and they don't want to go through the additional pain of losing yet another close friend to marriage or transition. When a person starts to notice these feelings, it is important to remember that just as we are all called to grow in our relationship with Christ, so also are all earthly relationships intended to evolve and change over time. Even when it's difficult, we are called to reach out to others, as often God uses those individuals to teach us about Himself.

Without question, God can use marriage as a refining process in a person's life, but it's also important to remember this is not His only tool. God refines us through many types of relationships – through exhibiting patience with a difficult coworker, through selflessly caring for aging parents, through setting aside today's plans to help a friend in need – there are many opportunities for refining if we are open to them.

While God will allow relationships in our life that will challenge us, we should also be intentional about allowing people in who will speak truth. We see this example set before us in *2 Samuel 12*, when Nathan confronted David's sin. In our life, we should be intentional about having "Nathans" who we are open with and who see our daily lives. They are individuals who are willing to call out our behavior for our good.

To consider:

1. Are you allowing God freedom to refine you in your current relationships? Or, do you live in bitterness and frustration for the difficult relationships God has placed in your life, desiring something different?
2. Do the people in your life speak truth to you, calling out sinful or fruitless behavior in your life? Do you listen?

Refining through Christ

In each of the disciples' lives, God used Jesus to sharpen and strengthen them for the time that was to come. Just as Christ ministered to the disciples here on earth, so do relationships with other believers minister to us today. However, in the end, our most refining relationship should be our relationship with Jesus Christ, taking our cares and concerns to Him and pursuing a deepening relationship with Him that will last. He is the only one who

will ever truly see all of our needs and be the all-sufficient remedy we crave. His love is deeper than any earthly relationship and His truth greater than any refining circumstance. Continue to grow in your relationship with Him today.

“But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.”

2 Peter 3:18

ACCFS continues to develop resources to help singles in their walk with the Lord. These resources can be found on our website at www.accounseling.org/singleness. If you would like more information or have requests/comments, please contact ACCFS at (309)263-5536 or singleness@accounseling.org.