

Singleness / Loved by Jesus

Jess: Most girls dream of falling in love. I often get distracted daydreaming about that, when I'm supposed to be concentrating! Are you single? If you are, I wouldn't be surprised if you've already thought about what kind of wedding you would like to have, and what kind of man you would like to marry. I would like to marry a handsome man with lots of muscles!

Tammy: Hello and welcome to *Women of Hope*. I'm Tammy, and Carol is here too.

Carol: Hello...Well, I'm already married. He may not have lots of muscles but he sure makes up for it in so many other ways! But Tammy, I can remember what it was like when I was single and hoping to find a handsome husband. Can you?

Tammy: Yes, I can, but it seems a long time ago now that I've been married for 27 years and have grown up children.

Carol: Today we're so happy to have Jess with us to tell us more about how she feels being single. Thanks for coming to spend some time with us today, Jess.

Jess: It's great to be here Tammy...and Carol...and with you too as you listen and join in.

Carol: Tell us a little about yourself Jess.

Jess: Ok - I'm 26 years old and you might be surprised to know that I have never even been out on a date. I don't know if I'll ever get married. Maybe I will. Maybe I won't.

Carol: And how does that make you feel?

Jess: Well, some days I feel so sad and lonely. My heart aches for somebody to lovingly share my whole life with. ...Someone to care for me...and for me to care for in the same way. Now Carol, we have a friend, Stevie who is single too don't we!

Carol: That's right Jess. She has cerebral palsy... and she's not able to care for herself. She lives at home with her parents. You may remember she shared with us a while ago about how lonely she sometimes feels.

Jess: That's right. Stevie and I have talked a lot about being single. Although her body doesn't always work properly, she has a very clear mind and can express how she feels so well. She writes beautiful poems. She told me that she would love to have somebody to share tender affection with. She wrote this poem about how she sometimes feels. Shall I read it to you?

Tammy: Yes, please do Jess.

Jess:

Loneliness tinges the days
but at night
it consumes me
like darkness consumes the sky
I lie in silence
aching for a loving touch
from the hand of one
whose eyes see me...
beyond polite conversations...
beyond wit and cheek...
beyond my ungracefulness
when friends can't be there
I want somebody closer

Carol: Oh Jess, You're right about Stevie. She expresses so well how she's feeling. I love her poems. She says here she really wants to have someone closer than a friend...someone who can see into her heart and love her for who she is. Is this how you feel too?

Jess: Yes, sometimes, it just really hurts. If you're single, do *you* feel like this?... Are you scared that you might not get married?... Do you fear that if you don't get married, then life will be too painful, and not have any real meaning?

Like me, you're probably surrounded by people who have a partner, and by books, songs and stories that are about being in a romantic relationship. They tell you that marriage is the best thing that life has to offer, and that you're missing out if you are single.

Maybe you wonder *why* you're still single? Some women think that nobody will want to marry them because they're unlovable. They might think that they're too ugly...too fat...too boring...or too hard to get along with? The truth is that you *are* special. God made you just the way you are, and he loves you so very much.

Tammy: It must be very difficult sometimes to be single when you would really like to be married. But you know sometimes there are difficulties in marriage too. My husband doesn't always make me feel loved or happy...and I probably don't always make him feel loved either! He doesn't always understand me, and he can't meet all my needs. God is the *only* one who can do that. He *never* misunderstands me, and he provides *everything* that I need. Not everything I want – but what I need.

Carol: Yes, marriage relationships are not always easy. We have different personalities, desires, needs and ways of thinking. We don't always agree. We make mistakes. And sometimes we hurt each other, and we become sad or angry. Then we need to forgive each other, and find solutions to our disagreements. Sometimes that's very difficult and it can take some time.

On *Women of Hope* today we're talking to Jess, who is telling us how she feels about being single.

Jess: Sometimes my friends ask me if I have a boyfriend yet. That annoys me, because I would rather talk about what I *do* have, and what I do *enjoy*. Marriage is just one of the many wonderful things that God has given us to enjoy. Like food, nature, a home, family and friends, working, hobbies and resting. There are some *good* things about being single. You have more freedom to enjoy these things than a married person does. You can make unplanned *decisions*...or even *life-changing* decisions without having to talk it over with your husband. You might decide to take a new job, or study, or travel.

Tammy: That's so true Jess...I remember what it was like before I was married. But of course, that doesn't make me want to be single again.

Jess: No... Sometimes there are things about being married that I really want. The more time I spend thinking about those things, the unhappier I become. But if I choose to focus on the things that I can enjoy *now*, it's not so hard.

Carol: We all need love, and we can find it in many different relationships. You seem to have a lot of friends Jess. Why don't you tell us about them.

Jess: Yes, I do. ...Some are close, and some are not so close. Some are with other females, and some are with males. Some are married and some are not.

I have *some* friends who I love very much. I have spent a lot of time with them and we've shared happy things, funny things, sad things. We have cared for each other, helped each other and comforted and encouraged each other. We have earned each other's trust over a long time, and so now we're really *close* friends.

My married friends and I have made an effort to get to know each other. We've been truly blessed by our friendships. Other married people and single people can experience this joy too. But try to be mindful of each other's feelings and needs when you plan activities. Try not to say things that suggest that marriage is better than singleness, or that singleness is better than marriage. You can easily do this without even meaning to.

Carol: You seem to be pretty comfortable with your feelings about being single. Did anyone help you with this?

Jess: Yes...I've shared some very personal things about my struggles with singleness with my close friend. She listened to me with compassion. That was a great comfort to me. It made me feel very loved and grateful for the special relationships that I do have. It's very good to tell a trusted family member or friend just how you feel.

My close friends understand that I don't get hugged as often as I would like, so they make sure that they are affectionate towards me every time they see me. They know that that makes me feel loved. They pray for me too.

Carol: I'm sure Stevie feels that way too. She always loves to be hugged doesn't she – and my goodness, she hugs so hard!! Her arms work ok when she hugs you!

Tammy: If you have a loved one who is single, what do you think you could do to make them feel loved? Maybe you could hug them if you know that they like that. Or you could compliment them. If they look pretty, tell them. Perhaps you could spend time with them, or give them a little gift, or help them with something. And you can always pray for them.

Jess: When I'm sad about being single I tell God exactly how I feel. He always listens to me. He understands how I feel, and he comforts me. My friends give me so much of what I need. Sometimes I think that my married friends have all that they need in their husbands and their own families.

I know Stevie feels the same. She said this to me the other day:

'I've realised that I am God's only and very special 'Stevie'. No-one can touch his world like I can. And I am my friends' only 'Stevie'. God has given me as a special gift to them, which can't be replaced by anyone else. They do hold me precious.' She is a very precious friend to me...

Carol: ...and to me! Jess has something special to share now from our friend Stevie.

Jess: She wrote down one day how she was feeling about being single...and her relationship with God. This is what she said...

"Have you ever felt really sad ... like you just wanted to cry...but you didn't know what was making you so sad? You tried to work out what the problem was, but you couldn't find the answer. Have you felt like this for a few days in a row?

I felt this way for about a week last year. I wondered what was making me feel so sad. I thought about all the things that I had done...or talked about...or thought about in the last few days. I asked God what the matter was. Eventually I realised that I was so sad because I was single and I *really* wanted a partner.

I went outside and sat in my backyard and looked out over my beautiful garden – my favourite place to talk to God. With tears in my eyes I said to God, "I'm so sad because I don't have a partner, and I *really* want one "Please God ...Please give me a husband."

I felt like I heard God ask me, "What is your greatest desire. What is it that you live for?"

I searched deep into my heart for the answer. I realised that what I wanted the *most* was to encourage other people, and to help them to get to know God better. Because God loves them, cares about them and understands them so much more than anyone else can. I was surprised that that was my *honest* answer.

I said to God, "If I would share your love more effectively as a single person, then please don't give me a husband. If it would be better for me to get married, so that my husband and I could help each other to share your love with others, then please give me a husband. You know which would be best.

I asked God to help me to be content with being single and to help me to see the blessings of being single. And I read a book and I talked to my friends about it. I discovered that there are special blessings in being single. After this I became settled in my heart about the fact that I was single.

I have more freedom to do what God asks me to do. There might be someone who needs my encouragement and I can spend time with them without worrying about neglecting my husband's needs. There might be a time when God asks me to go on a trip somewhere, or even to move somewhere, and I'll be free to go without having to discuss what my husband needs or wants.

In God's word, the Bible, a man named Paul wrote about these things. Paul was single. He loved God and he wanted to share God's love with others. He said " ... An unmarried man can spend his time doing the Lord's work and thinking how to please him. But a married man can't do that so well. He has to think about his earthly responsibilities and how to please his wife. His interests are divided ... " (1 Corinthians 7:32-34 New Living Translation). Paul thought that marriage was a wonderful gift from God. He thought that singleness was an even better gift. He also said, "We are not all the same. God gives some the gift of marriage, and to others he gives the gift of singleness." (1 Corinthians 7:7 NLT)

Tammy: Thanks Jess for sharing what Stevie said. Here on *Women of Hope* today we're talking about being single. Some people think that God wants everybody to get married. They may put pressure on single people to find a partner. But Jesus never got married and the Bible says that he pleased God in every way.

Jess: That's right. Jesus said, "I assure you, everyone who has given up house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the Kingdom of God, will be repaid many times over in this life, as well as receiving eternal life in the world to come." (Luke 18:29-30 NLT)

Stevie talked to me about this. She said, "And so...in my heart, there is nothing more important to me than sharing Jesus' love with other people, then Jesus promises to give me an amazing and fulfilling life." ...And as a single person I feel the same.

If we give up things for Jesus, then we become more loving, and so we are more able to share his love with other people. Jesus gave up his life for us. He died on a cross to take away the punishment that we deserve for all the wrong things that we have done. He did this because he loves us. He forgives us when we ask him to so that he can have a relationship with us. Then we can tell others about him...and they can ask him to forgive them too. To love Jesus, and to be loved by him, is far more special and intimate than being married.

Carol: That is so true. But of course, this doesn't mean that we can't have this intimate relationship with Jesus if we *are* married.

Jess: Oh no – you have someone very close to you that you can share with and pray with. You can enjoy your relationship with Jesus together.

Everyone who has a relationship with Jesus is God's child. And they are all members of God's family. People might be married for most of their lives, but God's family will live together in heaven forever. So, if we love Jesus, then our relationships with other members of God's family are very special. In heaven we will experience far deeper intimacy than anyone can experience here on earth.

Tammy: Thank you Jess for sharing how you feel about being single...and how Stevie feels too. Those of us who are married need to make sure our single friends feel welcome in our circle of friends too.

Jess: Yes, I love spending time with my married friends. We have a lot of fun together...and sometimes I can help them by taking care of their children. I would love to have children, but as I'm still single, why not enjoy spending time with my close friends' children. Then they can go out and enjoy some time on their own.

Tammy: That sounds good...would you like to come and visit me soon?

Carol: Before we go today I would like to pray with you. Would you like to join me?

Dear God, thank you for what we've shared together today. Thank you for sending your son, Jesus, to die for me, to take away the punishment for the wrong things I've done. Thank you for loving me and wanting me to be your child. Please help me to trust you with my life. You know what is best for me and I know that you will provide just what I need. Help me to love others as you love me. We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Tammy: We would love to hear from you any time. You can email us. Or you can visit our website. I hope we'll hear from you.

Carol: Good bye and have a great week filled with God's blessings.

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