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The Single Adult and the Church

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by ELMER TOWNS
**The SINGLE ADULT
and the CHURCH**



An up-to-date analysis of the
"new generation" of single adults and
their challenge to the church

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Introduction

The young single adult group has been commonly termed "The New Generation." This generation assumes the posture of rebellion in contrast to the conformity of the same age group a decade ago. The young single adult celebrates life, enjoys being alive, and feels that the future has possibilities. The urban revolution in some countries has broken down the community, and traditions have crumbled. The process of becoming an adult has become more difficult.

Outside the church, the young single adult has gone his own way. Sex is often singled out as his major problem. Sex symbols, sex movies, strip and topless clubs are prevalent. The sex code of this age group is often expressed thusly: "We feel sex is a personal matter and is not the concern of the outsider."

The young single adult who is disorganized and ungoverned today was the detached and uncommitted teenager of yesterday. The frustration of adolescence blossoms to anxiety in young adulthood.

The young single adult is described as a "floating generation in a floating world." Mobility ranks as a cause of some of their problems. Forty per cent of this group change residences every year. With no mortgage to tie him down and little furniture to require a large moving van, the young single adult gives his thirty-day notice and moves to "where the action is."

However, there are some young people who rebel at the rebels. While many of them turn their backs on the past, there are some who turn to the security of reaction and embrace yesterday. One has called these people the new generation of "young fogies." They are being charged with being "quiet, flabby and old before their times."

Despite the overwhelming character of the individual and social problems pressing in on the young single adult, he is the forgotten member of the local church. Contemporary society has spent much time and energy studying the teenage subculture. Much time is given to the problems, needs and characteristics of the married couple and young family. But between these two areas of concern is the young single adult. Very little research has been completed on the problems of the young single career person and how the church can meet his needs. When someone from the church seeks help and guidance to minister to this group, little if any assistance is forthcoming. This present study was undertaken because facts are needed to help formulate church plans to meet the needs of the young single adults. Several questions were constructed to guide the research and exploration into his needs and characteristics:

1. What are the problems of young single adults about which the church ought to be concerned?
2. How does the church sometimes create or contribute to these problems?
3. How does the young single adult feel when he is pushed aside in the church in favor of the high school student?
4. Are young single adults really being pushed aside? Do they stay away from the church because the church does not plan activities for them?
5. Are their religious beliefs and activities different from those of the young married adults?
6. Does the young single adult have a purity problem?
7. Does the "religious" young single adult have better personal adjustment than the nonreligious?
8. How do his religious beliefs and activities affect the young single adult?
9. In what ways does the church make a contribution to this age group?
10. How does the church satisfy the basic need of the young single adult?

11. What can the church do to relieve his feelings of loneliness and being unwanted?
12. How can the church offer him support in times of difficulty and crisis?
13. How can church activities furnish an outlet for his need to Participate in a social environment in which he feels welcome?
14. How can the church do more to assist him while he is making the transition from adolescence into adulthood?
15. What else can the Church do for the young single adult?
16. What can the young single adult do for the church?

This book does not claim to have fully answered all these questions. However, some attempt has been made in this direction. Nor does this study attempt to be a complete answer to the problems of the young single adult and his relation to the church.

An expression of concern on the part of the church is the first step to action. Some of these steps have been suggested. If any of these are implemented, we shall feel that much has been accomplished. The contents of this book were gathered by research into available texts, observations of and experience with the ministries of churches to young single adults, and by personal interviews with many young people.

I would like to express appreciation to Dr. Grant Shockley, for his gracious help in carrying out this study and to the "20-30 Club" and its president, Mr. John Drenan, of the First Evangelical Free Church of Chicago, Illinois. The reactions of both Dr. Shockley and the "20-30 Club" to my findings sharpened and improved the study.

ELMER TOWNS

CHAPTER 1

The Enigma of the Young Single Adult

I. TYPICAL YOUNG SINGLE ADULT

When twenty-five-year-old Linda arrived in Chicago three years ago, she had two things in mind: to find a job and a husband. So far, she's found only the job.

After meeting Linda, you wonder why she has failed to reach her second goal. Her attributes are many: A degree (cum laude) from the university, a pretty face, an attractive figure, a pleasant personality, a "snazzy" apartment on the Near North Side. And what's more, she can cook!

"So why can't I find someone to marry?" the slender redhead asks.

Linda is a member of the twenty-to-thirty age group whose members, according to sociologists, are among the loneliest of this country's so-called lonely crowd. Each year, thousands of these young career people flow to the big cities in search of employment and romance. And by the thousands they find that the "meeting game" is difficult to play in a big, strange and aloof city. So what's a poor city girl to do?

"I've tried political groups, church groups, all sorts of groups-but still I haven't met anyone I wanted to get serious about," Linda said.

"Political groups are out," she says, "because every girl has the same idea, and there are about twice as many of them at the meetings as there are guys."

She recalled a Young Republican meeting she attended on the Near North Side: "There were three girls sitting next to me, all looking as if they had had a make-up job and their hair done just to come to the meeting. They couldn't care less about the Republican party. I keep remembering their eye make-up. It was identical-heavy eyeliner, false eyelashes, 'the whole bit.' Any guy who didn't know why those girls were there must have been blind."

Linda said the ratio of men to women at church groups is equally depressing. "The women come to look, the men know it and everyone feels uneasy."

A girl's job is another poor source of eligible mates, said Linda, an advertising copywriter. "Most of the men are married," she said. "And if you date one who isn't, the office gossips soon have you linked with the poor guy. That spoils your whole working situation."

Many firms frown upon intra-office fraternization, and discharge employees who become romantically involved.

A twenty-eight-year-old stenographer said she has met most of her male companions through friends and at parties given by friends. "But you can't expect your friends to come through every time you want a date," she said. "You've got to get out and scout around for yourself, or you'll never get anywhere."²

II. THE CHURCH'S PROBLEM

There are numerous cases like Linda. The young single adult has unique age problems related to his developmental task and age-sex grouping. Very little guidance is offered to help meet the challenge of his problems.

The average church member is not aware of the deep differences between himself and the young single adult who attends the services. He recognizes this young person as one who does not talk quite as much as other adults. Usually he dresses in a little more up-to-date style and a little more expensive taste than his married contemporaries. Church members cannot understand why he is not more regular and faithful in supporting all the activities of the church. When the young single adult first attends the services, he is warmly greeted, and the average church member seems happy to see him become a part of the fellowship. Usually, however, his attendance becomes less and less frequent. The average church member still does not understand the reason for this, namely, that the young single adult is different and is keenly aware of this difference. Church is a family institution and the young adult is single. For the most part, he does not become a vital part of the church fellowship.

Except for a few young single adults who visit the Sunday morning church service, the average young person in this category never places the church service in his weekly schedule. Such a situation is almost completely unknown to the church and therefore the average church seldom attempts to minister to this need.

III. THE CHURCH'S NEGLECT

The young single adult has numerous problems, and in general the church has neglected this age group. However, sociologists of the past ten or fifteen years have begun to give attention to the needs, characteristics and problems of these young people. The earlier tendency, however, was neither to be concerned with nor to reject the young single adult-but to ignore him.

Neglect of the young single adult has been due to various reasons:

1. *Ignorance.* Because many in this group have not attended the services, the church is ignorant of their existence and problems. As a result, the church has no organizational structure to meet their needs or to win their special attention. So, the young single adult has ignored the church. A vicious circle has resulted, with both the church and young single adult ignoring each other. However, suddenly we realize that there are millions of such young single persons in this country who feel lonely and are drifting and in need of the church. Only as the church awakens to this realization will action be taken.
2. *The stereotyped image of the younger person.* The church considers the young single adult as impulsive, immature and unreliable. If a boy is going into the armed services he is not ready for business or church responsibility, and if a girl is not married there is some "lack." But this stereotyped image is beginning to crumble, and the status of the young single adult is being accepted in our society.
3. *The psychological barriers erected between the older generation and the younger.* The older generation tends to stand aloof from the needs, interests and desires of the young single adult. The older generation feels its responsibility for the younger children, but this responsibility is ended when this person becomes an adult. The average older adult considers the young single adult as an "equal," whereas, in actuality, older adults should be ministering to children and young single adults, as well as themselves.
4. *Mistaken ideas about his desires.* There is a tendency to think that all the young single adult wants is financial independence and freedom from responsibility, when in reality he wants a feeling of being useful, being loved and being wanted. Sometimes it is assumed that the loneliness he experiences results from his own carelessness and desire for independence.

5. *An overemphasis on children and youth.* Many churches have cultivated the attitude that education is for the "kids." The young single adult is considered "fast," "flighty" and "free." Time spent on him is wasted, and as one deacon said, "You can't build a mature congregation on these people." However, every individual in our church is a person who has needs, and our ministry is "to communicate the gospel at the point of need."

6. *The emphasis placed on marriage and the family.* The average church program is oriented to the family. The family pew, the family picnic and family altar have long been emphasized by the church. Now many churches are calling their Wednesday night Bible study and prayer meeting "family night." The emphasis on the family is needed, and nothing should be taken away from this emphasis. However, the young single adult is lost in the shuffle and as a result is neglected.

This neglect is a paradox. The unique problems, needs and contributions of the young single adult are neglected while the church tries to pressure him into its mold. Church members from the working world want him to join them. They want him to succeed both at the church and in business life. For the most part the church is more interested in the young adult and his success in business life than in his own personal problems. Business men in the church are glad to see him and will try to sell him insurance, clothing and all kinds of luxuries. They will even extend credit to him-not, however, as much as if he were married.

The average church member puts pressure on the young single adult to get married. This is a pressure of conformity. The church community wants him to be like the majority of them, wants him to watch the same kind of television programs, go to the same athletic events and the same parties. However, his unique problems and needs are neglected.

IV. CLASSIFICATION

There are many kinds of people who fit into the classification of the young single adult. Not all of the groups listed below will be studied in this paper. When we think of a Young Single Adult, immediately we have an image of a person between the ages of twenty and thirty-five who is employed in the business world, is unattached, and probably is living alone. This person is the concern of this book. However, there are other groups of young single adults with the same problems. Some of the principles of this study will also apply to groups of young adults such as these:

1. *In college away from home.* The college student does not think of himself as a teenager or adolescent. In his own eyes he is an adult. He is a member of the young adult division of the local church. Usually he falls into the college and career class. If your church has no specific class for the young single adult in college, he may drop out of church activities. When he returns home at Christmas, Easter and perhaps summer vacation, the church will have no particular age ministry to him other than the traditional church services.

The young single adult in college away from home has unique problems. He has new intellectual pursuits, new interests and a new and significant independence from home. These characteristics may be combined to make the home church appear either quaint or naive for the sophisticated college student. On the other hand, the college student who is lonely and frustrated in college may find the home church a fortress for friendship, old acquaintances and a return to security.

2. *In college living at home.* This young person is a college man or woman (an adult) to himself and a college boy or girl to Mom and Dad. In some aspects a college student living at

home has a different set of problems and needs from the college student living away from home. He may be closer to the church geographically, yet will judge it in the light of his own blossoming intellect. This young person usually has difficulty expressing his independence from home which he feels he deserves.

3. *Awaiting the draft.* The young single adult who is anticipating a call into service has unique problems. Many times he is not able to secure permanent employment and hesitates to make commitments in marriage or other social contracts. As a result he feels aimless and often does not start out on a mature investment of his life. Therefore, he has a rather rootless existence simply marking time until his induction into the service.

4. *In service.* Military life is a new and strange experience to the young people who are probably away from home for the first time. The regimentation of their physical, mental, emotional and social life usually produces unique problems. The problem of maintaining church ties with the home church along with finding a church home in each new location tends to disrupt spiritual growth. Because of the vast problems of military service and the number of studies written in this area, this investigation will not attempt to discuss the needs, characteristics and problems of the young single adult in military service.

5. *Working but living at home.* This person often finds that he is accepted as an adult outside the home but has difficulty in achieving this status in the family setting. The social and spiritual patterns are usually identified with the family, whereas business patterns are completely outside the family. He usually finds some little group identification outside of business and church relationships. The unique problems of this young person will be discussed at length in this book.

6. *Working and living away from home.* A young person is more successful in gaining recognition as a mature adult than the one living at home. However, he faces many problems created by business, church and social life, resulting in loneliness. The young single adult living away from home usually has more difficulty being absorbed into the local church program than the young person who lives at home.

7. *Separated from a mate.* Divorce and separation are increasing. Along with this situation, there is many a young adult who loses his mate through death before the age of thirty-five. This young unattached adult has been separated geographically from his childhood home and has been identified as a married partner. When he began his own family relationship, the community accepted him differently from the young person who has never been married. The community looks upon him as being more stable, placing more responsibility upon him than upon the young single adult.

The young adult who has been separated from a mate will have more difficulty with his self-image. Two radical transitions should have transpired. The first transition was from being a single person to being a partner in a marriage relationship. The second transition was from the marriage relationship back to the role of an unattached adult. The unique problems of loneliness and search for meaning are usually compounded by financial pressures and sometimes social ostracism from the local church.

8. *Separated from a mate and having children.* This person frequently faces the problems of other young unattached adults who have been separated from their mate but he has an added financial burden. Joined to this is the responsibility of rearing a family and playing the role of both parents to the children. Serious tensions are created for this young person. The problems and needs of this group are outside the scope of this paper and will not be considered.

V. THE COMMUNITY

The young single adult is getting started in his occupation for life. He is first of all trying to find his unique inner ability and skill. Then, there is a growing concern for improving his skill and mastering the vocational requirements of life. He must set up his own standard of success and achievement at work. He must learn to handle the problems arising from working conditions. There is pressure for promotion and climbing the "company" ladder of success. Also, he faces the frustration of adjusting to his income.

This young person is just getting started in community life. He is not considered a full adult in the church society and for the most part assumes little social responsibility. There seems to be a lack of desire to contact others outside his own group. He refrains from joining many organizations. The Springfield, Massachusetts, adult education study revealed that '60% of young adults between the ages of eighteen and thirty-four belong to one organization in the community, while 60% of those under twenty-five belong to no organization at all.'² Apparently, with growing maturity, the adult becomes better socialized.

Apparently the young single adult has less organized activity for him than for other sections of our population. The local church reflects our community by having very few organized activities for this group. When in adolescence, the young person functioned in a highly organized high school culture. Now he is in a "vacuum" and is left to drift, cut off from the religious and social organizations. The young adult who marries has easier access to the organizational structure of society than those who do not. A parallel survey was made in Hartford, Connecticut, which revealed that only 15% of the young adults in that community were members of church groups.³ Olds and Josephson quizzed young adults searching for reasons that they were not more active in community organizations. The following reasons for non-participation were given:⁴

1. Too busy getting ahead in a vocation-37%
2. Job takes too much time-26%
3. Had no experience in an organization like this-24%
4. Military service does not give time to participate in such activities-23%
5. Did not see how it would benefit them personally-23%
6. Their friends did not think it was the thing to do-9%

Also, in this survey some factors were listed that appealed to young adults:

Good recreational program-59%

A positive program-50%

Something to do that was worth while-45%

Effective leaders in the group-38%

VI. SUMMARY

These, then, are some of the young single adults who may live in our church community. They need the ministry of the church. They are concerned about their sex life and mating, entertainment, life goals and security. Emotional growth, vocational competence and the pressures of a changing culture are a challenge they must meet and overcome. Their spiritual

development may not concern them, but it should concern you. These young single adults are "rootless" attempting to belong to a society that is rootless.

FOOTNOTES

1. Judy Klemesrud, *The Chicago Daily News*. Monday, March 21, 1966, p. 23.
2. Springfield (Massachusetts) *Looks at Adult Education*, p. 27.
3. Edward B. Olds and Eric Josephson, *Young People and Citizenship*. (New York: National Social Welfare Assembly), 1953, p. 102.
4. Ibid.

CHAPTER 2

Who Is the Young Single Adult?

I. PROFILES OF THREE YOUNG SINGLE ADULTS

Let us look at three young single adults-Brian, Ann and Sue. We shall note the unique features of their age-sex grouping, and also attempt to determine the characteristics that might be typical of such young people.

1. *Profile of Brian.* Brian is a young eligible bachelor still searching for identity. He works as a clerk in an advertising firm, hoping to become a layout man in the near future. A higher position will mean better income and a degree of stability in the firm. Brian is considered the "catch" by all the young secretaries, but he is not interested in settling down. He dates regularly and ardently, yet has no deep, long-lasting interest in any one girl.

Brian is the youngest of three children, born during the Second World War. He tells his friends he majored in "sports" in high school and as a result won a lucrative scholarship to a recognized university. After failing sophomore geometry three times, he dropped out of college and returned home seeking to avoid the draft. For one year he worked as a steeple jack, considered by many a "dangerous" job. Now he has settled down to office work and is looking for some stability and security in life.

Brian lives in the large family home with his mother. Brian's father passed away two years ago leaving him the responsibility of caring for his mother and the family home. In childhood and adolescence Brian was very obedient, but now it is quite evident that he is the head of the home. His mother takes extremely good care of him and he reciprocates by caring for her.

Brian's older brother and sister are extremely religious. His brother is an ordained minister and his sister attended a Bible college looking toward the mission field. Brian is a "good" boy although not as interested in spiritual things as his brother and sister.

The Christian concept of "being somebody" does not appeal to him as much as "doing something." He is always willing and ready to perform tasks at the church when asked. Last year he took over teaching a junior boys' class and enjoys the challenge. The junior boys idolize Brian, and he is having an apparent good influence on young lives in the church.

Financially, his spending habits are regarded as conservative. His friends consider him a "sharp" dresser. He has only a few clothes but all the latest styles. He prefers to pay cash for everything and does not like to go in debt even though he bought a new car on time payments. There is no mortgage on the old homestead and bills for upkeep are not exorbitant.

Each year Brian faces the possibility of draft. As long as he has the care of his mother perhaps he will not be called.

What does the future hold for Brian? Will he be content to take care of his mother and live at the homestead? Will he desire to marry, have a family and make a life for himself independent of his mother? What is his future?

2. *Profile of Ann.* Ann is thirty-five years of age and feels as though she is on the "shelf" socially. During her college days she was considered fun, bouncy and the life of the party. Now after 15 years of teaching in the public school she is a little chubby, bookish and looks middle-aged.

Ann feels she is losing her youth and as a result hangs on to her position as youth chaperone in the local church. She attempts to form deep friendships with the high school girls and considers herself an excellent counselor. Some of the girls resent Ann's prying and ignore her. These girls drop out of young people's or else "blow up" and tell her off. In either case the high school girls who show their emotion get the "maternal" attitude from Ann. She is willing to forgive if only the high school girl will repent and come back to the Lord.

Ann has favorites in the youth group. The young people who laugh at her jokes, seek her spiritual advice and respond to her devotional messages get special treatment. They are invited on special week-end excursions. The "special young people" have found that they must continue to compliment and "play the game" to continue to get special attention.

Ann lives with her parents although she is her own boss. When she first came out of college, she left home and went to another city to teach school. Here she broke her parental ties and cut the "apron strings." When she moved back home, her parents rebuilt the basement and furnished an apartment for her. Now she has the independence of a professional girl, yet the conveniences of home.

Ann's parents charge her a token payment for room and board. Most of her money is spent on her car, clothes and supporting the church work. She considers no sacrifice too great for the work of the Lord.

Ann has taken two trips abroad. One summer she toured ten European countries with a denominationally sponsored youth tour, and another summer she toured the Holy Land through an alumni-sponsored tour by her college. Other than that, each summer is spent at a Christian camp, serving as counselor or sports instructor.

Lately Ann has been having doubts. After 15 years of satisfaction in the teaching profession, she no longer feels a challenge. Physically, she realizes she doesn't have her former stamina and durability. Every morning she sees another gray hair. A "spare tire" around her waist tells her that middle age is knocking at her door. Earlier in life the problem of being single didn't bother her. Now she asks herself the question, "Why didn't I get married?" Up until now, Ann has always felt that she could "snare" a man if she wanted to. Now she questions her ability. What do you think is Ann's main problem? Does Ann have a "self image?" How long will Ann be able to call herself a "young single adult?" Ann will once again have to face the question, "Who am I?"

3. *Profile of Sue.* Sue recently moved to Chicago and lives with two other girls in an apartment on the Near North Side. She came from a small town in Iowa, where she was graduated from high school four years ago. She is attractive, thin and her roommates say she has that "wholesome" look about her. She does not drink alcoholic beverages even though she feels that drinking in itself is not evil. Both of her roommates will take a drink socially and have given her six months to tip her first glass.

Sue got a job right away. Within the first three months she advanced from general stenographer to private secretary. She is an excellent typist, good stenographer and efficient around the office. Mr. Maxwell, production coordinator, requested her because of her output of work. Sue likes to finish all work before leaving for home and the five o'clock quitting time means nothing to her. Mr. Maxwell is a hard-driving business executive and has told Sue that one day she will be secretary to the president-him.

Some of the other girls at work are a little jealous of Sue because she has stepped over their beads in the totem pole of seniority at work. As a result she feels socially ostracized at work. This

feeling, however, is all in her mind, since only three girls give her a hard time. However, Sue has isolated herself from all the office staff because of her social insecurity.

Sue was graduated from high school at the top of her class, a major in English. She went to the state teachers' college and made above average grades but decided not to go back after the Christmas break. She had difficulty making friends and was always seen eating alone in the school cafeteria.

Upon returning home she went through the local business school, taking a secretarial course. For a year and a half she worked as secretary to a building contractor but was miserable. She made few friends her own age in her home town. During this time she went out only on one date, that with a Latin-American construction worker who was more interested in sex than in her. As a result of this distasteful experience and the prospect of going through life "single," Sue came to Chicago seeking romance, purpose and friendship.

However, Sue has been lonely, miserable and homesick. She hasn't had a date since coming to the city. How to meet a man is her greatest concern.

What is Sue's biggest problem? How can she find companionship among male friends? Why does she have difficulty making friends? How can the church minister to Sue spiritually?

Before an analysis can be made of these problems, the term "young single adulthood" must be defined. An implicit definition will begin to reveal the unique problems of the young single adult.

II. YOUNG SINGLE ADULTHOOD-DEFINITION

"Adulthood" is very difficult to define, but to add "young single" to the definition compounds the problem. A boy at eighteen may be considered by some an adult because he dropped out of school and is now holding down a job. His older sister who goes to college may be considered an adolescent. A private secretary, age thirty, who is pre-maturely gray and mature may be considered middle-aged, whereas the bookkeeper in the same office who is thirty-six may be considered a "kid." What is an adult? When does adulthood begin? What does the word "young" include when linked to the word "adult"?

There are three reasons for the lack of clear-cut definition on what constitutes a young single adult. The first is the relativity of youth. Professional baseball and football stars are "old" by the age of thirty or thirty-five, but at the same age a junior partner in a law firm is considered "young." A recent magazine advertisement from an insurance company indicated, "You can retire at age thirty-five." Others feel that "life begins at forty." The profession or occupation of the young single adult often dictates the age at which he becomes "middle-aged."

A second reason that the term "young single adult" is difficult to define is the relative position from which the judgment is made. Children in the grade school consider a twenty-one-year-old soldier 'old,' whereas his parents consider him a "kid." Most young single adults who arrive at the "ripe old age" of thirty-five consider themselves young. The person doing the judging determines the worth of age.

The third source of difficulty in defining the "young single adult" is found in the tremendous variation of individual differences. The process of aging does not affect all alike. Because of the physical make-up and the amount of pressure that brings maturity, people give the appearance of being older or younger than they really are. One person is "old" at thirty-four, while another is still "young" at thirty-one. Some young men are "bald" in their twenties and some young women are turning gray. Then, what is an adult?

1. *What is an adult?* Paul B. Maves, in his book, *Understanding Ourselves As Adults*, defines adulthood as follows:

The word “adult” comes from a Latin root meaning “grow-up.” However, when we ask, “Who’s grown up?” we find a wide range of opinions. The criterion of “grown up” changes from time to time and is variously defined by law, custom, and circumstances Generally those who work with adults have found it most satisfactory to determine whether or not a particular person is an adult by the application of multiple criteria. We ask, for example: has he reached his legal maturity? Has he finished his schooling? Does he live away from the parental home? Is he self-supporting financially? Does he make his own decisions? Is he married? Does he carry adult responsibilities? Does he look upon himself as an adult? Is he accepted as one by other adults? If he can answer “yes” to a goodly number of these questions, then we can classify a person as an adult Probably it is safe to say that most persons growing up in American culture achieve this transition somewhere between the ages of 18 and 25.¹

Therefore, we see that adulthood is more a matter of attitudes, actions, and achieving a certain developmental task rather than chronological age. Earl F. Zeigler, in his book, *Christian Education of Adults*, has given added criteria to determine what is adulthood.

Adulthood is growing up, not “grown-up.” Adults never arrive: they are always arriving: the map of their life is a series of goals to be achieved. Entrance into adulthood is determined by the demands of life. Adulthood begins when life compels growing persons to accept adult responsibilities. A boy seventeen or eighteen who is drafted or enlisted into the armed forces has to be an adult. The girl of seventeen who marries leaps into adulthood in a bound. The young man who is graduated from high school and chooses to enter a vocation instead of going to college has entered adulthood. If the high school graduate decides to go to college, he may not become an adult immediately upon matriculation, but he is going through a transition stage that is more adult than youth.²

A good summary in defining adulthood is given by Idris W. Jones. The seven criteria suggested by him for determining adulthood seem to be universal in most books dealing with the adult. Seven experiences are regarded as transforming youth into adulthood. These experiences include leaving school, self support, getting married, permanently leaving the parental home, political maturity, service in the Armed Forces and chronological age.³

2. *Definition of “young adult.”* We have just defined the word “adult,” but now the problem is compounded with the term “young.” Young adulthood could be called a transition period. Yet, the young single adult has just gone through adolescence, which is called a transition period. Most teenagers feel when they reach this step in life development—young adulthood—they have arrived. However, life is “always striving and never arriving.” The teenager in the transitional adolescent period might be described as one hovering between childhood and adulthood with one foot in the junior department and one foot in the adult department. Yet, young adulthood is also a transition period. The young adult must sever all former family relationships and launch out into an independent life into which he realizes the final plan which God has for him. This transitional period also has its problems. Lowy, in *Adult Education and Group Work*, says, “In a sense, some of the greatest problems many young adults face are carried-over, unresolved problems of their adolescence.”⁴ Different authors have given different age spans to determine the young single adult. Jones for example, uses twenty-one to thirty-five.⁵ Maves begins young adulthood with age twenty and continues it till age forty. Then he adds, “We can give or take three or four years

either way on both the beginning and ending age of the young adult, according to the individual, his environment, and circumstances."⁶

An absolute age span to determine young adulthood is difficult if not impossible. Therefore, for this book a standard set by Betty Goding in her book, *Young Adult Handbook for the North American Baptist General Conference*, will be used:

- a. You are relatively new at the business of being an adult;
- b. you are within the 25 to 35 year age bracket;
- c. you are under 25 and married. (Marital responsibility seems to accelerate maturity, or at least to modify interest in the direction of adulthood);
- d. you are self-supporting, having left home or school permanently;
- e. you have served or are now serving in the armed forces and are within or recently close to the age bracket indicated.⁷

III. TO MARRY OR NOT TO MARRY?

The 1960 census of the United States revealed that some 28,133,000 men and women over twenty years of age were living without a mate—that is, single, widowed or divorced and not remarried. This involves a vast number of unmarried people in our nation. Perhaps the question should be asked, "Should every young person marry?" Since marriage is very normal, our answer should be "yes." Yet, according to Jameson Jones, only 92 percent to 93 percent of the people who live to be fifty are all that will eventually marry.⁸ Yet if all who are eligible for marriage were to be married, that would be an abnormal situation. Mr. Jones says further, "In America today, the seven to eight per cent who never marry are the normal expectation."⁹

The average married adult in the church considers it a tragedy to be single. For some young single adults, yes. For others, no. There is a tendency in the church to compare a good marriage with unhappy singleness, which is as wrong as comparing a happy state of singleness with a miserable marriage. Whether married or single, a young adult can have a meaningful or meaningless existence. Personal adjustment, not a marriage relationship, will ultimately determine the quality of life.

Why is it that some young adults never marry? Actually, the first question to ask is, "Why do people marry?" Let us ask both questions, and begin positively.

1. *Why do people marry?* This is an age-old question with many and diverse answers. Perhaps Jameson Jones has best summarized it:

Love. Loneliness, which is sometimes a desire for emotional security. Money, which is sometimes a desire for economic security or a better life. Sexual attraction. Desire for children. Escape, which can be escape from many things but often is escape from parents or a home situation. Protection. Advent-Lire. Common interest and likes. Social position or improvement. Parents' wishes. Pregnancy. Pity. Spite. The rebound. Or simply to conform—it's the custom to marry in many a young crowd.¹⁰

We could generalize and say that there are many good reasons that people marry. These marriages usually enrich life and result in meaningful relationships. But there are negative reasons that young people marry. The summary word for negative marriage is "escape." Such "escape" marriages do not necessarily have to be bad and result in broken homes and lives. However, they begin on a pessimistic and selfish basis that should cause concern in the church.

2. *Why don't young adults marry?* Physical attraction does not contribute an answer. Some of the best-looking, talented, well-rounded personalities go through life single. At the same time some of the most homely, sour, selfish and unattractive people are married. Basically, young adults who are not married can be divided into two major groups: those who want to marry and cannot, and those who do not want to marry.

a. *Those who want to marry and cannot.* This group of young single adults deserve our compassion. Early in childhood they begin to formulate a mental image of themselves as a part of a happy marriage. This image is carried through adolescence and now in adulthood is not realized. These people usually live lonely lives. The reasons they are not married apply both to men and women.

The young single adult who wants to get married and cannot may be physically unattractive. "Being fat," having scars or other physical deformities may be a physical barrier resulting in a psychological or sociological inhibition. Some of these young people may be dowdy and have not been taught how to present themselves attractively. Others may not be able to get married because of their lack of social adjustment. They may be shy, selfconscious and find it difficult to meet people. Healthy relationships with those of the opposite sex have long been considered the path to marriage. Some young single adults may be socially retarded, ill, or in need of institutionalization. Still others may have responsibilities which prevent marriage, such as care of an elderly parent. For some reason they do not get married because of a physical, mental or social limitation.

Other young single adults may not be married because of a shortage of eligible marriage partners. Employment conditions may be such as not to bring them in contact with the opposite sex (night employment, overseas employment, etc.).

b. *Young single adults who do not marry because they have no desire.* Women who do not desire marriage usually give their career as the largest single reason. They desire professional advancement or to make a contribution to the world. Especially women foreign missionaries fall into this category. Among men, desire for independence and freedom, when contrasted with the responsibilities of marriage, is given as the main reason for remaining single.

Other reasons are given that young single adults are not married. "The right person hasn't come along," is often heard. Usually we hear someone say to a girl, "Your standards are too high." A warning should be issued to those who "Push" the young adult to get married. Don't force your standards on the young single adult. He simply has not met the person who is good enough for him. This statement may convey conceit or it may be a very honest statement-the young single adult does not want to get married unless "the right person comes along."

Other young single adults do not get married because they feel that matrimony is too big a risk or gamble. They are usually very happy in their single state and feel that marriage would not contribute basically to their desires in life. Also, some do not get married because they feel themselves to be emotionally or psychologically inadequate for marriage. This may involve the person who dislikes the opposite sex or is having problems with heterosexual relationships.

Also, some young single adults have a bitter taste about marriage. Perhaps they have observed a poor marriage either in their neighborhood or in their parents at home. Some have gone "sour on sex" because of promiscuity or their experiences in sex.

Occasionally we meet the person who says, "I'm just not interested in getting married." Perhaps this person is telling the truth and we in a church do them a disservice by putting pressure on them to enter into something that is unappealing to them.

The church should realize that some people choose not to marry. To these young single adults their reasons are very valid and often admirable.

Some people in the church remain unmarried because of Paul's admonition, "I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I" (I Cor. 7:8). The reason for remaining unmarried is the work of the Lord. "He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, that he may please the Lord" (I Cor. 7:32). However, it should be noted, just because a person is unmarried doesn't mean he cares for the things of God. It means he has the time and ability to put the Lord's business first.

Respect the young single adult as a mature person able to make a mature decision based on the needs of his life and the circumstances involved. Marriage is not a "must." Perhaps the church should have some "I enjoy being single" testimonies. Any individual should be free to remain single by choice, without social pressure or stigma.

IV. SUMMARY

Who, then, is a young single adult? He represents many things to different people. He is a person in transition. He has learned many lessons from his parents, school and community. He still has many problems to overcome. Robert Clemmons has given a good summary of the hurdles of the young single adult:

1. Leaving home and achieving freedom from parental authority.
2. Leaving youth patterns and learning the task and role of adulthood.
3. Forming new relationships and finding a sense belonging.
4. Realizing the freedom to examine, to evaluate, and to decide.
5. Learning the meaning of existence and determining one's destiny in life goals.
6. Making decisions as to styles or patterns of life: middle class standards, organization man, playboy sophistication, etc.
7. Choosing or changing one's vocation.
8. Achieving economic independence and determining the use of one's material resources.
9. Finding a mate, marriage, and parenthood, or adjusting to singleness.
10. Achieving sexual maturity and learning one's sex role.
11. Making moral decisions based on religious beliefs and experiences.
12. Searching for meaningful beliefs and experiences.
13. Finding one's place in the church and participating in its mission.
14. Assuming responsibility for developing and maintaining world community.
15. Learning to accept oneself where one is at a particular moment in life.
16. Finding life meaningful and having a sense of purpose or destiny.¹¹

FOOTNOTES

1. Paul B. Maves, *Understanding Ourselves As Adults* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1959), pp. 9, 10.
2. Earl F. Zeigler, *Christian Education of Adults*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press. Copyright 1958, W. L. Jenkins. Used by permission).
3. Idris W. Jones, *Our Church Plans for Adults* (Chicago: Judson Press, 1952), p. 9.

4. L. Lowy, *Adult Education and Group Work* (New York, Whiteside, and Co. and William Morrow and Co., 1955), p. 75.
5. Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 11.
6. Maves, *op. cit.*, pp. 142.
7. Betty Goding, *Young Adult Handbook* (Forest Park, Illinois: North American Baptist General Conference, 1958), p. 7.
8. Jameson Jones, "Some Remain Single," *Christian Action*, Vol. 21, No. 9, (May, 1966), p.1 (Graded Press).
9. *Ibid.*, p. 1.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 1, 2.
11. Robert S. Clemmons, *Adult Education in the Methodist Church* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1961), pp. 51, 52.

CHAPTER 3

The Young Single Adult and His Problems

Growth at any age involves problems. The final growth stage from the teens to the twenties could involve the most serious problems in life. The transition to young adulthood from adolescence is not like crossing a street. There are a vast number of experiences necessary for an adolescent to experience before entering into adulthood. Some adolescents go through some experiences earlier and others later. Some adolescents enter all of the experiences early and other adolescents enter these experiences late. These elements of transition are called developmental tasks.

Implied in a developmental task is a problem. The young single adult must overcome more barriers and problems in the march to maturity. The developmental task for this young person involves skills, knowledge, and appreciations that must be mastered to give a satisfactory adjustment to the next level of life. He must have a satisfactory response both with respect to his inner needs and as regards the outer social pressures, if he is to continue to develop to maturity. The young single adult's tasks are all related in a developmental way—meaning that he must advance from one to the next for proper development. Also, these tasks are inter-related. The emotional life of the young single adult cannot be separated from his spiritual and mental development. The insights of knowledge learned in one area of development must be correlated with skills he hopes to learn in other areas.

The leaders in the church must have insight into the problems or developmental tasks of the young single adult. Problems can become the growing and cutting edge of this young person's personality.

I. A SEARCH FOR A NEW IDENTITY

When the young single adult was a teenager one of the basic mental developmental tasks facing him was finding an answer to the question, "Who am I?" The emerging self-concept or ego was seeking a self-identification. The basic means whereby we find out, "Who am I?" is through identification. Prior to puberty the child identifies with his mother or father. The girl learns her feminine role in life by identifying with her mother and so the boy learns his masculine role by identifying with his father. In converse, the girl was oriented to the male role by relating to her father and the boy by relating to his mother. Almost every child is the product of a home and as such identifies within the family relationship. Even though the young single adult doesn't verbalize the desire, he has perhaps had a life-long ambition to be married and participate in his own family life. Now he finds himself unmarried and perhaps passing the age when most of his friends have gotten married.

Martha has held three jobs since graduation from high school, four years ago. She has never been fired. She gets disgusted at her fellow employees or mad at her boss. Her demands for fringe benefits are excessive and she abuses the absentee quota. Martha is immature. Yet, the thing she wants most in life is a man—any male. She flirts with all the men in the office, married or not, and will date anyone who asks her.

Martha is frantically searching for something she can't explain. She acts like the high school girl she was five years ago. She hasn't learned to accept her role as an adult, nor her role as a single person. Martha needs to answer the question, "Who am I?"

The young single adult has a compound problem in searching for identity. First, he is searching for his identity as an adult. Second, he is searching for his identity as an unmarried person. The young single adult who finds a proper self-role and self-identification will usually come to a healthy adjustment. Those who rebel at their role of being unmarried may cause themselves severe personality problems. Some may live in the future, hoping even though they are single, that out there in the future they will become married. Those who always live in the future and never face the present reality live unsatisfied lives.

Many times desperate frustration comes to the heart of the single girl. She may want very much to be married and as a result comes to the place where she will accept any man who will ask her. Clyde Narramore has stated:

The girl who starts labeling herself "distress merchandise" is to be picked up cheaply by anyone. She should realize it is far better not to marry at all than to marry the wrong one. Being single never wrecked any girl's life; but being married to the wrong man has utterly destroyed many women.¹

Other young single adults may react negatively to not getting married. Feelings of inferiority can creep into the life and impair ego strength. They may attribute their singleness to what they think are personal lacks. One might think, "I am not married because I am not worth having." An inferiority complex can damage the personality and cause the young single adult to become withdrawn and uncertain of himself.

Self-pity also may grow in the life of those who feel neglected because they are unmarried. When people fail to attain what they want in life they may blame others, or, even worse, they may substitute self-pity. Self-pity can be like a cancer once the infection has set in. The young person who feels sorry for himself probably will not seek a cure but will indulge himself in always complaining as an emotional release.

The young single adult must honestly face the prospect, "I may not get married." Perhaps this is God's plan for his life. Each must readjust to his place in life and ask the question, "How can I find meaning in life as a single person?"

The young single adult will find other problems with self-identity. Because he is at the bottom of the business ladder he may feel inferior and view himself as a second-rate citizen. Robert S. Clemmons has summarized the self-image of the young person who is just starting out in his vocation:

1. Feels that he is at the bottom of the economic ladder.
2. Feels that he has more skill and ability than he is called upon to use.
3. Wants to succeed in his work but finds competition disturbing.
4. Feels a great sense of loneliness.
5. Feels strange in a new situation with new responsibilities.
6. Must make independent choices that can bring sorrow or joy.
7. Finds difficulty in breaking family ties.
8. Must make ends meet, pay his own bills, live on a budget.
9. Must begin to think through values of life on his own.
10. Must learn how to handle social pressures.
11. Must learn to get along with himself.²

A few suggestions are offered to help the young single adult find answers in the search for identity:

1. *A true appraisal of one's spiritual condition before God.* The young single adult, whether Christian or not, whether spiritual or not, must realize who he is in God's sight. He must realize that he is a member of the human race and as such in need of redemption. He must realize that he is one for whom Christ died. "He [Christ] is the propitiation for our sins" (I John 2:2). Also, the young single adult must realize that he is a child of God and a special concern for God's love. "These things have I written to you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life" (I John 5:13).

2. *A knowledge of one's abilities and gifts.* "Know thyself" has been a by-word for human development since the days of Socrates. The young single adult must have a true appraisal of his own "station" in life. The girl should have some idea of her physical appearance to others—especially to the opposite sex. If she is appealing and does not know it, she may be hindered from reaching her potential or finding a mate. If she is unappealing, she should know it so she can change her outer life.

In business, knowledge of one's abilities will bring happiness. The ten-talent person in the five-talent position will bring frustration, also the reverse. The five-talent person in the ten-talent job will be unhappy. Pity the young clerk who has the ability to become an assistant manager but will not take the initiative because he doesn't trust himself. Inner security comes from a true knowledge of one's abilities. Therefore, when the young single adult has a true appraisal of himself he will probably be happier and better adjusted to life.

3. *A knowledge of the needs of young single adults.* Some young people are thrown into a tailspin when they face the problems of young adulthood. They expect adulthood to solve all their moral, emotional and vocational problems. Now, they find themselves lonely, rejected, unmarried and without all the money they want or need. First, the young single adult needs to know that others are going through the same problems. Next, he should realize the cause of these problems—transition from adolescence into adulthood. Finally, he should know there are solutions to these problems.

II. LONELINESS

Another great problem facing the young single adult is loneliness. Some of the following quotations express the life of a single adult.

There comes a time when you want somebody all your own. You're just tired of being alone. Tired of going around with one person after another without anything seeming to be serious. You begin to wonder if you are ever going to get married, and so forth, and then it gets pretty lonely. But it's not so much a loneliness from lack of friends, but an inner kind of loneliness.³

The life of the young single adult is filled with clothes, travel, job and freedom. He is in the transition period from the home ties of adolescence to the freedom of adulthood. Freedom, material possessions and independence make up life. Yet these things wear thin. Life finds deep meaning in close relationships. Every person needs a close friend to bring out his best. There is no closer friend than a mate in marriage. Roommates can be lasting friends, but the intimacy provided in marriage is usually missed by the young single adult.

Loneliness exists in the life of a single adult. In one sense we can quote the words of Sartre, "Man was not born to share in hatred but in love." Much of life is spent in searching for "the one other," whether that "one other" be a close friend of the same sex or a potential marriage partner. When I feel lonely, I feel that there is no one I can talk to who will realize that I am me. So there is not much use doing anything worth while if no one cares. Loneliness takes the heart out of much that we would do. When I'm lonely I feel purposeless, tired, confused, weak and trapped. I picture myself as caught in a hard shell from which I speak in hollow tones. There is an opening through which I reach out my hands to grasp food, say words, and occasionally grasp quickly the hand of another. When I feel I'm peeking out desperately from the shell—then I feel lonely.⁴ The problem of loneliness is especially acute among single adults in city life. The *Chicago Daily News* told of the loneliness of the young single adult living in Chicago:

City living is another enemy of Dan Cupid.

Although more people live in high-rise than in an entire Iowa town, few young people meet their neighbors. And it's almost the same in the small brownstones, where a female tenant has lived for almost a year "without seeing a neighbor's face."⁵

We live in a mobile society and the young adult is constantly entering into new social, complex relationships. When it comes to friendships, he does not make premature commitments to a relationship that may turn out to be a dead-end street if not detrimental to him.

Loneliness is most acute for the young adult because the rest of the young adults have each other. Always when I'm lonely, I bear other people doing things and I know that they aren't lonely.⁶

These quotations on loneliness reflect the search by young adults for identity. "Who am I?" questions the young person. "When I was a child my knowledge of older adults didn't include young single adults and my parents weren't single." The average young single adult always planned to be married. "How can I find happiness in this new role of single life?"

I suddenly felt very far away from everything familiar to me—there was no one within a thousand miles who really knew about me. No one knew of past accomplishments, successes or failures. I felt as if I had no identity. I had a feeling of standing apart from the past. I was nobody.⁷

Frustration and despair are other names for loneliness. Many times the young adult feels that he is in a situation which is "un-get-at-able. He is lonely and can't do anything about it." If he lives at home, his parents don't really understand his needs. If he lives away from home, the problem is compounded. There is no one to whom he can talk. The church should help minister to the lonely adult.

Loneliness is not the same as solitude. Solitude may be very creative. Solitude is being alone and liking it. However, loneliness is an unwelcome separation from other people. No one desires to be lonely, so the one who is lonely is by the very fact proven to be incapable of controlling his existence.

One young adult said, "I dwell in mystery." He didn't understand his place in life, his future in life; the only thing he knew for sure was his past—where he came from. The young adult needs to see Christ in whom "all things consist -cohere, are held together" (Col. 1:17, Amp. N.T.). Also he needs to see himself in relationship to the church, "members one of another" (Rom. 12:5).

The church can minister to the young single adult who has the problem of loneliness. Some of the following suggestions are offered to both the church and the young single adult.

1. *The church can provide fellowship for the young single adult.* When a young person shares his life with others who have the same problem, he may build lasting friendships and develop his own spiritual life. He may even find his mate in the church. Although the church is not a "match-

making society," what better place is there for young people to find their life partner than in the fellowship of God's people?

2. *The young single adult should develop a well-rounded life.* He can find enjoyment and satisfaction in his own activities by doing as much as possible within the limitations of his own strength, resources and desires.

3. *The young single adult should cultivate friendships.* As he enlarges his circle of friends he will gain satisfaction and develop a healthy personality. Christianity is a relationship. The death of Christ "bath broken down the middle wall of partition" (Eph. 2:14). When a person becomes a Christian, he establishes a relationship with God the Father. Then that relationship is to be worked out in *relationship* with others. It has been said, "You can't be Christian alone." Friendships bring out the best and complete the personality. So the child of God who forms deep relationships with others finds meaning in life, as well as in ministering to his friends.

4. *The causes of attitudes should be examined.* The young single adult should ask himself such questions as "What makes me lonely? Why do I tend to minimize the friendship of others? What keeps me from seeking out friendship with other people?" Most people who do not seek friendship with others do not understand what is inhibiting their actions. When they uncover the basic reason, they can commit their social life to God and build a well-rounded life.

5. Learn *the creativity and meaning of solitude.* The young single adult can make his times of solitude an opportunity to learn more about himself. He should spend time reading the Scriptures and establish daily prayer habits. Devotional books are helpful. Biographies of great men can help to structure his ambitions and desires in life.

6. *Take opportunities for travel, adventure and broadening of horizons.* Being single has its advantages. Coupled with independence is mobility, the opportunity to pull up roots and go somewhere else-to travel. Since there is no one else to make financial demands on the pay check, money can be saved for vacations and travel. Air travel and guided tours make Europe, the Holy Land, or the Near East accessible to almost any young single adult.

In contrast, the young married adult cannot pick up and leave, for his children are in school during the year and in many cases he has heavy financial obligations. Usually it is too expensive and inconvenient to go far with a family. Also, two or more are trying to live on the salary of one. The security of the young married couple may be their prison, whereas the independence of the young single adult is his doorway to adventure.

III. INDEPENDENCE AND FAMILY RELATIONS

The social pattern of the young single adult is changing. Many years ago he was to live on the "old homestead." There he was to look after Mom and Dad while the others in the family got married, left the family home and started life on their own. Now the pattern has changed. The average young single adult no longer lives at home. He has moved from home and set up an apartment and housekeeping all his own. The popular opinion is that he moves to the large city to seek employment. Moving to the city is still done but not at the same rate as in the past. Between 1950 and 1960, Chicago's percentage of 20 to 30 age group dropped 24 per cent, while in New York City the figure was down 21 per cent. Los Angeles lost approximately 10,000 persons in this age group despite a gain of 400,000 in its overall population. Small cities did not fare much better. Portland, Oregon, lost 30 per cent of its young in the same decade and Oklahoma City 15 per cent.⁸

What has happened? The young single adult is leaving home but remaining in the town of his childhood. Here he seeks a job while keeping his family and home relationships warm. Perhaps he is recognizing the dangers of loneliness and thus stays in the home town where life and friendships can remain more meaningful. However, many young single adults still go to the city to work. The church must be concerned about them!

The young single adult living in the city tends to segregate himself from the few contacts he has had with children, adolescents, married couples, grandparents and the home town. He has been taught by numerous teachers that to become an adult he must cut himself off from his parents. He feels that he must make his own moral code as he lives in the city, disengage himself from traditions, and detach himself from civic life. Snyder gives a summary quotation from such a person:

I found myself in a strange city, having no one with whom to talk. I began to think hard of the new problems facing me, wondering if I would respond to the new challenge; and I became very anxious ... I suddenly felt very far away from everything familiar to me—there was no one within a thousand miles who really knew about me. No one knew of past accomplishments, successes or failures. I felt as if I had no identity. I had a feeling of standing apart from the past.⁹

What does the young single adult do about the problem of becoming independent, yet keeping good family relationships? The following solutions may help in this problem:

1. *Keep home relationships warm.* The young single adult should try to visit his parents' home on special holidays and on long week ends. Letters to the parents are an obligation and occasional long-distance telephone calls will help to keep parents in close touch.
2. *The church should be aware of the family needs of the young single adult.* On some of the week ends, holidays and special days young single adults like to gang together for outings with their own group. However, there are certain times when they enjoy getting invited to a home situation. The young person who had special family days back home will enjoy being with families on these same days. When families of a church entertain the young single adult, make sure the fellowship is warm and sharing, but not paternal.
3. *The young single adult should establish a relationship of 'autonomous responsibility' with his own parents.* He must become autonomous, that is, responsible for his life. Yet, he must shoulder his fair share of the *responsibility* for his parents. Perhaps there will be financial burdens or other services he can render to his parents.

In the past the unmarried daughter was expected to stay at home and live with her parents. Many Christian parents are reluctant to have their unmarried daughter move out and start "housekeeping" on her own. They forget that the daughter is a mature person, capable of thinking for herself. All too often she is expected to stay home and fit into the thinking and demands of her parents. On some occasions, the authoritarian and dominating attitude of the parents has hindered the daughter from getting out and meeting someone whom she might have married. When such a young single girl speaks of moving out, the parents usually try to strengthen their domination and keep her at home. A young single girl is advised to stand up for her rights and move to another location. Such a move might cause hurt feelings on the part of the parents, but in time they will recognize their daughter as an individual who has rights of her own. Some Christian parents are against their daughter's moving out into her own apartment for "morality reasons." They feel something terrible might happen to their daughter and that she will be exploited. Such parents should realize that the "apron strings" have to be cut. The daughter who remains "mother's girl" will never grow up and be the person God intended her to be.

However, some young girls remain at home and nevertheless establish an independent relationship with their parents.

IV. PLANNING FOR AN UNDEMANDING FUTURE

Most young adults who are married plan for the future. They buy houses so the children will have a place to be reared. Life insurance is bought so the wife may be protected in event of the death of the bread winner. All the obligations of married life demand that the young adult think about the future.

The young single adult may have little thought of what the future holds. Why buy insurance when there is no financial responsibility to a mate or children after death? Since there are no children, he doesn't have to save for a college education. Also, why buy a house when there is no one to help "occupy" it when retirement comes? The *present* and now become bywords for the single adult. Seldom does he think of *there* and then-the future.

I have been to several parties over the holidays. The character of these parties is directionless movement. You never even know who will be there; there is no history or future that can be shared. The party is a one-time affair. Somebody else will have the next one and a new set of faces will appear around the drinks. You leave anonymous and again lonely, expecting no future out of this.¹⁰

The future is an unknown commodity with which one lives. The young single adult never knows what tomorrow, next year or the next 20 years will bring. However, the future is in God's hands. If it is his plan for the young single adult to marry, he will lead a couple together. There is no age limit to marriage. As Dr. Narramore says, "True, there is an age span when most girls become married. But there is no age at which one must marry."¹¹

Some solutions to help the young single adult solve the problem of planning for an undemanding future are:

1. *The young single adult can attach himself to some responsibility (Christian service) that can help to mature him spiritually.* Service is one of the unique opportunities of the young single adult. See Chapter 7, "Young Single Adults Their Opportunity."
2. *Plan your life as a "single" person.* The young single adult who is past the period when most of his friends are married should make definite plans to accept and be happy in the role of a single person. The young single person who considers every member of the opposite sex as a potential mate only frustrates his life and lives in keen disappointment. He should accept his state in life and adjust accordingly.

However, young single adults can never tell when their "Cinderella" or "Prince Charming" may appear. A bachelor boss and a widow secretary, or two close friends at church, may one day fall in love. Then they can invest the rest of their lives as a family.

3. *Make wise investments of finances.* Since the young single adult has fewer financial obligations than his married contemporary, he will have more money to spend and invest. He should invest his money wisely, for one day he may marry. Then, when the economic struggles of life come, he can enjoy the happiness of a family. Also, he should remember his church, the denominational work, and other Christian organizations in his financial giving. The young single adult, who has no children or family, should especially remember Christian organizations in his will and/or life insurance.

V. THE MEANING OF WORK

What is the purpose of work to the young single adult? The young married adult works to take care of a family. If the couple has no children, the wife can work. If there are children, the wife may not be able to work and there are more mouths to feed on the single salary. The married young adult has to work; others are dependent on him. At the same time, the single adult may earn the same wage as the young married adult; yet the young single adult could live as well as the young married adult on half the income. Does the young single adult work for more money or for a better standard of living? The young married adult may have to be a "moonlighter," yet we seldom hear of a single person holding down two jobs.

What is the meaning of work? The married man has the enjoyment of seeing his earnings further the education of his children, increase the happiness of his spouse or see him safely through retirement. Who will enjoy the "fruit of the labor" of the young single adult? Is working for more money a satisfying aim? Is working for an advanced position satisfying? How can the young person put purpose into his work?

Some solutions to the problem of the meaning of work are as follows:

1. *The young single adult should make sure he is in the right job.* Because of the financial burden of supporting a family, the young married adult finds it difficult to switch from one job to another. When the young single adult finds himself in the "wrong" slot in life, he should quit. Since he is more mobile, he has the opportunities to pull up roots and to go somewhere else and look for employment.
2. *Be ambitious.* The young single adult should determine by God's grace to become the best person possible within the limit of his capacities and talents. There are two faults that lie with ambition: (1) Being under-ambitious, some do not attempt a work in life commensurate with their abilities. As one said, "The worst thing in life is not aiming high and missing the mark, but aiming low and hitting it." (2) Being over-ambitious, some try to do more than they are capable of doing. The young single adult would be wisely counseled to attempt projects in keeping with his abilities. However, if the young person is going to "stray" from his abilities he should try to do more than he is able rather than doing less.

VI. FINDING MEANING IN LOVE

Love is considered more than physical contact. We are attempting to get at true meanings. Love is not sitting in the back seat of a car "necking"; nor is love only physical intercourse. Love may be expressed thus among marriage partners, yet love has a deeper meaning. Without going into a long and involved discourse on the nature of love, we can simply say that: (1) Love is giving ourselves to the one we respect and in that gift finding meaning, satisfaction and intimacy. (2) Love is sharing our life with the one we love and in that sharing relationship giving ourselves physically, mentally, and emotionally. And everything we give, we receive. (3) Love is communication of meaning where there is a *meeting of* meaning in the act and art of love. (4) Love is respect and admiration for the one we love.

Too often love is making the person we love an extension of ourselves. That is, the boy wants the girl to be everything he has desired in an ideal girl. He tries to make her the kind of cook,

housekeeper, and companion he desires. This is not love. In true love, the boy respects the girl for what she is. He respects her for what she has to offer to the marriage, She should be respected for what God has made her. In true love and communication, the two find a ministry of nurturing and building up each other. Love is not treating the other as an extension of ourselves. How is the young single adult to find love in life? Love is as basic to the personality as air is to the physical body. Without air the body dies; so without love the soul deteriorates. The young single adult needs to give and receive love. Yet, he cannot socially fill this need. If a young single adult says he loves his roommate, people will accuse him of homosexuality. However, in the true Christian meaning of love, he can form a true friendship of love with his roommate. If the girl attempts to satisfy this need for love and establish a wholesome relationship with other men at work or at church, people accuse her of being a flirt. Yet, there is a natural need and desire for heterosexual love-which is apart from the marriage relationship. "One is lonely only when he is unable to relate to anything with love."¹²

Loneliness seems always to be centered around the "I," and it is an "I" different from the one commonly experienced. Loneliness is the opposite of love.¹³

The solution to the problem of love' for the young single adult is not easy. However, some of the proposed answers are as follows:

1. *The young adult should risk himself.* The young single adult will have to venture his feelings, opinions and desires to make friends and establish wholesome relationships. There is nothing more magnetic than a warm, outgoing personality. The Bible says, "A man that hath friends must show himself friendly" (Prov. 18:24). The best way to cultivate friendships is to be a friendly, outgoing person.
2. *He should work with other young single adults where there is a chance to (a) give, (b) share, (c) communicate (d) respect.* When the young single adult expresses the aforementioned qualities, he is expressing love. New Testament love is not emotional but will result in the display of emotions.
3. *The young single adult should avoid being narcissistic (self-loved).* The proud person who is interested only in himself cannot love or be loved. The young single adult who is thoughtful and gracious endears himself to others. This person is always in demand. The best way to forget about one's own troubles is to take an interest in the troubles of others.

VII. ACCEPTANCE AS AN ADULT

The burden bearers of community life are usually family people. The young single adult away from home is usually excluded from community life unless he happens to be a school teacher or a community worker. The one who stays in the home community usually has more access into community life than the single person who moves into the community, yet not as much as his peer who is married. The young single adult is thrust into a world of "isolation." Since the burden bearers of the community are the already married people, they usually call on their friends to perform civic duties when help is needed. This usually excludes the single person, who is sometimes viewed as one "without roots" or a transient. Seldom does a single adult buy a house or condominium. Usually his largest capital outlay is for a car and wardrobe. However, the young single adult is being accepted into our society with the growth of cities. He is being forced out of the farm and small towns into the large city where the jobs are available.

Sociologists are viewing this new phenomenon of a "young single adult sub-culture" with characteristics all its own.

Some solutions to the problem of acceptance into the community are as follows:

1. *The young single adult should make definite efforts to establish "roots" in the community.*

When he purchases a condominium, home or a business, the young single adult becomes accepted into the community life. His interest in service clubs or community affairs will bring him acceptance into the married society. Living in the same apartment for a long period of time will help establish solidity in the community.

2. *The young single adult should assume responsibility in the church.* As mentioned in other places he can become involved in the administration, ministry and support of the local church.

3. *The young single adult can volunteer for Christian service outside the church.* He is an ideal person to help establish branch Sunday Schools, carry on gospel teams and do mission work. The young married adult feels that he should be in Sunday School and church on Sunday morning so that his children can receive the systematic teaching of the Word of God. The young single adult, however, who is without home responsibilities and has extra time during the week, is free to do mission Sunday School work.

VIII. PERSONAL PURITY

An unsaved medical doctor who was teaching a class of student nurses at the hospital said, "If you cannot get married, at least have an affair."¹⁴ This reaction typifies the irresponsible attitude of many non-Christians. The Word of God is plain on this subject. 'Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body' (I Cor. 6:18). "But fornication and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints" (Eph. 5:3).

When a young single adult does not have a marriage partner there may be a subtle temptation to submit to a sexual arrangement. The young single adult who loves the Lord should avoid the appearance of evil. He should be discreet in his relationships, giving no opportunities for anyone to suspect dishonorable intentions.

Another serious problem which occasionally may befall the young single adult is homosexuality—the unnatural expression of love from one person for another of the same sex. The young single adult may be starved for affection and love. This constant pressure causes tension within the individual and drives him to unworthy relationships. Such a young person is susceptible to relationships with one of his own sex. Sometimes roommates may fall into this association.

A few principles to help the young single adult deal with the problem of purity are as follows:

1. *A proper understanding of the nature and purpose of sex.* By the time a person reaches the age of young adulthood he should understand the nature and purpose of sex. However, some who reach this stage are ignorant and naive in their approach to sex. The church should bear the responsibility for its negative teaching on sex. Some churches are more progressive than others. The wise pastor will use counseling to help the young single adult in these matters. Also, programs for young single adults can be planned around problem matters so that they can have a proper understanding of the scriptural teaching on sex matters.

2. *The young single adult should be convinced of his own convictions.* The young single girl may encounter compromising situations at her place of employment. Also, men with low moral standards may even circulate in Christian circles. The young Christian girl who is a negativist or

who has unnatural protective attitudes will only weaken her own personality. Some young women feel that every young man trying to be friendly is suggesting an "affair." On the other hand, some young girls are too naive, not knowing how to handle the advances of young men. The young Christian girl should be convinced of her own standards and have a healthy attitude toward life. In speaking of healthy convictions Dr. Narramore has said, "If she is frustrated before the 'affair,' think how depressed, how defeated, and sinful she NAII be when she has sacrificed her purity-and still the man does not want to marry her."¹⁵

IX. THE CHALLENGE OF PROBLEMS

This chapter has been concerned with problems-personal problems. One might generalize and say, all life is concerned with problems. However, problems are the pathway to maturity. A problem-less life may appear to be utopia, but the life without problems is life without growth, life without hope, life without success and life without maturity. The young single adult has personal problems and is a problem to the church. One might add to the Beatitudes, "Blessed is the church that has a problem."

FOOTNOTES

1. Clyde Narramore, *The Unmarried Woman* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1961), p. 16.
2. Robert S. Clemmons, *Young Adults in the Church* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1959), p. 34.
3. Ross Snyder, "To be lonely: Its Experience and Structure for a Young Adult," *Religion in Life*, Summer, 1962, p. 13. Copyright by Abingdon Press.
4. Snyder, *op. cit.*, p. 14.
5. Judy Klemesrud, *Chicago Daily News*, Monday, March 21, 1966, p. 23.
6. Snyder, *op. cit.*, *Religion in Life*, p. 15.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
8. *Chicago Daily News*, *op. cit.*, p. 23.
9. Snyder, *op. cit.*, p. 16.
10. Snyder, *op. cit.*, p. 21.
11. Narramore, *op. cit.*, p. 38.
12. Snyder, *op. cit.*, p. 23.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Narramore, *op. cit.*, p. 21.
15. *Ibid.*

CHAPTER 4

Helping Young Single Adults Solve Problems

Harry left a small southern town and moved to Washington, D.C., four years ago. He lives with a college student in a walk-up flat. The roommates spend late evenings discussing evolution, Bible authority, and the "God is dead" movement. Harry regularly attends the morning service of a downtown metropolitan church. During the week, he works as an order clerk in an auto parts warehouse. "I really don't believe in Christianity or Christ," said Harry. Yet, he is not antagonistic to the gospel. "I attend church because many young people go here. The worship service is refined and the pastor seems intelligent, not like the minister back home who was always yelling." Harry was reared in an evangelical church but now is slipping into "contemporary agnosticism." His main problem seems to be academic, but perhaps he has a deeper need. If we are going to minister to Harry, we must relate the gospel at the point of his need.

Martha, a young single adult, moved to Cleveland seven months ago. Her first job in the big city was the same as she had had back in her home town, a car-hop in a drive-in. After three weeks she landed what she thought was a stable job as an elevator operator in an office building. The corny jokes about the "ups and downs of life" along with boredom soon got to her. She found a job "where the action is." Martha became a hat check girl in a nightclub. The tips were good and flirts were always asking her for dates after working hours. This job was exciting, yet her conscience bothered her, so she quit. A week ago she became a file clerk at the City Gas Company. Here her salary will be as large as any of the previous jobs, and the fringe benefits promise some stability. Yet, she is looking in the want ads for another job. Nothing has made Martha happy yet. She is not sure what she is to be in life. Her main problem seems to be a "purposeless" life. If we are to help Martha, we must relate the gospel to the point of her need.

Sandy is a claims agent at a mail order house in downtown St. Louis. She has been employed at the same company for twelve years and has lived in three different apartments during the time. Each time she has received a raise in pay, she has moved to a more expensive apartment. She enjoys sophisticated living. The company has told Sandy what they expect of her as a claims agent. She must be "honest yet firm." Her sixth sense sniffs out fraudulent claims. Because of her ability to deal "briskly" with the public, she saves the mail order house more than the price of her salary each year. Sandy's main problem—her briskness—is carried into every area of life. She treats people as things. She doesn't have any close friends because she seems to "talk down" to everyone. As a result, she is extremely lonely. She has been drinking since her sophomore year in high school but only socially.

Lately, she has a drink before breakfast and usually two martinis during lunch. Sandy won't admit to herself that she might be an alcoholic. She has many problems. Each problem is related to other problems; all contributing to her spiritual need. If we are to minister to Sandy, we must relate the gospel to the point of her need.

I. COUNSELING YOUNG SINGLE ADULTS

Counseling has many approaches: clinical counseling, nondirective counseling, eclectic counseling, or inductive counseling. These are all valid services but are usually reserved for the

trained pastor, youth worker or professional person in the church. These people should be used to counsel with the young single adult in the church. Also, when the personal problems are beyond the capacity of church leaders, the young single adult should be referred to a professional counselor. Some problems in their lives cannot be handled by the average trained church worker, much less the layman, But there are many young single adults in the church who can receive help from church leaders or other mature Christians. Helping the average young single person with average problems is the point of this chapter.

A spiritual ministry is relating the gospel to persons at the point of their need. Therefore, the point of this chapter deals with establishing a spiritual ministry to the average problems of the average young single adult.

When we think of helping young people solve personal problems, we usually think of counseling. In our society, counseling has become a very technical service. The qualified counselor must undergo intensive theoretical and clinical training. The counseling process is usually more than a talking, listening session, but rather a deep inter-personal relationship resulting in therapy for the counselor. This chapter emphasizes the spiritual ministry which many are able to do.

Spiritual ministry is not something you give to young single adults or you even do for young single adults. Spiritual ministry is what you are. Too often we tell people how their problems can be solved. We give them the answer. Some feel problems can be solved if they quote the right Bible passages to those with problems. The attitude is, "If we tell them the right words, they are helped." However, a talk approach is not always effective. Paul understood spiritual ministry as more than talking to people. "We were gentle among you ... willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls because you were dear unto us" (I Thess. 2:7,8). Here Paul indicates telling the Thessalonians the truth of the gospel was not enough. He had to give them his own life—his own soul. This is the first step toward spiritual ministry. Some counselors become problem-centered in attempting to help people. The emphasis should really be people-centered. Of course, people have problems. The counselor who is concerned with problems may not be concerned with the person who has them. But the counselor who is concerned with people, will be concerned with their problems.

Our task simply stated is helping another person analyze and solve his problems. There are two basic approaches to solving problems taken from the world of medicine.

1. *Band-aids*. The bandaid approach is giving advice to an immediate problem that is surface in nature. A bandaid has a twofold function: one, to give immediate help; two, to protect from future infection. The bandaid approach emphasizes the present rather than the future. When the young single adult comes and desires advice, the bandaid approach may be best. Here a counselor in all good conscience communicates the best answer, in keeping with an understanding of the problem. Some people believe if you apply enough band-aids, you can keep the patients from surgery. This is a naive attitude. Life is not always that simple. Some may be helped with a bandaid, others won't be. But even in a "one encounter" there will be opportunity for a young single person to feel the impact of your life. You probably will not have time for an extended conversation. You will have to evaluate the immediate problem by listening. Give what needed suggestions you dare. But be careful. Some have used a bandaid because they are fearful of surgery, and permanent harm has resulted. On the other hand, band-aids were made to help temporary "hurts."

2. *Surgery*. When there is a malignant growth and the health of the patient is in danger, the physician operates. Not everyone can perform surgery, so, not everyone in the church can give

counseling. Only those who have professional training should delve into cases demanding extensive and intensive counseling.

II. THE NATURE OF SPIRITUAL MINISTRY

What then is our spiritual ministry? To relate the gospel to persons at the point of need. Carroll Wise has given the following definition of pastoral care: "We have defined pastoral care as the communication of the gospel to persons at the point of their need." This definition will be expanded from the scope of the pastor to include a ministry that can be performed by many in the church. This is spiritual ministry whether on a "one encounter" conversation or over an extended time. We shall divide our definition of spiritual ministry into three sections. The last part of the definition is dealt with first: the point of need. Second, we shall deal with relationships—a path to maturity. Third, we shall attempt to answer the question, "What is the gospel?"²

1. *The point of need.* The adolescent (age 12-19) faces the conflict of identity. His parents want him to go to college. The boys with whom he buddies want him to join the army. His steady girl may want him to drop out of school and get married. The adolescent sees himself as a contradiction of many desires. Sometimes the adolescent calls a moratorium (a period of time when he puts off making decisions). In young single adulthood (age 20-35), the moratorium is over and a young person must face the problem of identity, Who am I? What shall I be in life? As the young single adult struggles with the problem of self-identity he feels, "I am a face in search of an identity." This search may cause the young adult to be unsure of himself and insecure in group gatherings. Many times he feels a wall between himself and other lives. He feels alone or isolated. This psychological need is evident, but man has a deeper need—spiritual. Man is a sinner (see Rom. 3:23). Too often, the consequences of sin are confined to life after death, but the consequences of sin to the young single adult become "felt needs." Sin results in isolation or separation from God. The sinner cannot come into the presence of God, "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God" (Isa. 59:2). The isolation of the sinner from God destines him for eternal separation. But spiritual isolation has a daily repercussion. Man finds himself in a struggle against isolation from other men. The separation between man and God is sometimes reflected between men and men. A person who cannot relate to others in the human race is suspected of adjustment problems. The healthy person is one who can relate to others and to himself.

The basic need of the young single adult arises from isolation. As he moves from the world of adolescence and high school into the world of the young single adult, a radical transition takes place. High school was filled with clubs, activities and home rooms. High school was a place of many friendships. But now, the young single adult is cut off from many relationships. In the large impersonal city, people are reduced to digits on an IBM card. The young single adult by his very nature "unattached" lacks deep meaning from relationships that build healthy personalities. Separation of the immaterial man can lead to a disassociated personality. The fractured personality is not whole or complete, and the whole or healthy person is called mature. The isolated young person is a potential drop-out to the church.

In the spiritual ministry, conversation is important, but the relationship that undergirds the conversation is more important. Never depend on the magic of words. Just because the right thing is said at the right time doesn't automatically help the person. Sometimes you have a spiritual ministry through a warm friendship, where life and spiritual struggles are shared. A

college professor was struggling with a deep problem. A close friend came into the office and said, "I have not come to ask or to tell you anything. I simply want you to know I am with you." This relationship perhaps helped more than all the "talking" of many people or counselors. Since separation is the main problem of the young single adult, restoration of relationship is apparently the answer.

2. *Relationships-a path to spiritual maturity.* We should never handle people in terms of counseling techniques. The most important approach to a problem is the undergirding relationship. Our attitude is far more important than our method. Some counselors insist on the Rogerian method, others use an eclectic method. However, if a counselor understands people and establishes meaningful relationships, he is likely to help them regardless of what techniques he uses.

Spiritual care is communicating the gospel through relationships. Christianity is a relationship. First, man must establish his relationship with God through Jesus Christ. After this relationship is established, then man reaches out in relationship with other men. As man is shut up to himself he stagnates and grows sour. Every man is a potential loner. As we reach out of our shell for a meaningful relationship with another person, we risk ourselves. From the vantage point of God's observation, we could probably see the other reaching out of his shell toward us, also risking himself. If only more lonely persons could see others reaching toward them, more worthy relationships might be formed. A man's worth is measured by his friends or the deep relationships he makes with other people.

The young single adult can sit on the jammed commuter train, or push his way through a five o'clock rush hour crowd, yet still live in an isolated vacuum. People live in the same apartment building for ten years and yet do not know the other person beyond a name on the mail box. Mary, a young single adult from Missouri, indicated she wanted to go home. "When I walk down Main Street back home, I nod to people and they smile back, and I feel good. I realize home has second-rate shops, no entertainment, little excitement, and a nine o'clock curfew for teenagers. When I walk down the street in Chicago I feel the excitement of the crowd, the anticipation of looking in the shop windows, and the thrill of being something big, but I'm lonely, and Chicago is an awful place in which to be by yourself."

Mary doesn't need talk counseling nor does she -need to be lectured. The gospel is communicated to her when a Christian reaches out and touches her life. Mary needs to know: She is a sinner but—

Christ has paid the price for her sin and—

Her heavenly Father accepts her and wants her to grow in—

The community of believers which is the church.

The average young single adult has a mental image of the church as a building with a steeple, announcement board out front, and a large auditorium. Church is a place where he listens to a sermon, hears soft organ music, and feels the warmth of the sun ray glistening through stained glass windows. If this is what the young single adult thinks-he's wrong. The true church is a community-a body. As the body is made up of many members and depends on each member to do its job, the church is made up of many individuals and depends on each to perform his function. Both the community and body are a maze of interdependent relationships. People need other people as muscles need bones. The church needs young single adults who can help other young single adults.

In a sense, the isolated young single adult can appreciate the church more than can his married counterpart. The young married adult has the family, civic organizations, PTA, and a host of other groups all bidding for his time. The young married couple have many opportunities to form friendships. Many of these relationships are forced upon them. As a result, the married couple may look at the church as just another activity in a busy schedule. Church relationships can get lost in the pressures of life. But the young single adult can find meaning and significance in life through relationships in the church.

3. *The gospel-content of relationships.* We have talked of man's need-isolation, and the means to solve the problem-relationship. Now the content of relationship, the gospel, must be analyzed. The gospel has two aspects: a proposition and a person. The average church member has only one concept of the gospel: it is a proposition or a statement of faith to believe. Since the gospel has two major aspects, the average church member is limited to half a ministry.

a. *The gospel—a proposition.* The gospel is a concept which we must preach for a person to be born again. Paul outlines explicitly what this gospel is: "I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand ... that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (I Cor. 15:1-4). The gospel is simply the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This gospel is written in our doctrinal statements or traditionally included in the church's creeds. Without believing in this gospel, a person cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. But the gospel is more.

b. *The gospel—a Person.* The gospel is more than a proposition; it is a Person-Jesus Christ. When the gospel enters our lives, it involves more than giving mental assent to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. The gospel enters our lives when Christ enters our hearts. "But as many as received him [Christ], to them gave He power to become the sons of God" (John 1:12). The definition of spiritual ministry includes the phrase, the communication of the gospel. How do we communicate the gospel? We not only sit down and tell the gospel to a young single adult. The gospel in the person of Jesus Christ is in our lives. As we form a meaningful relationship with the young single adult, we communicate the gospel of Christ. Therefore, we can have a spiritual ministry by accepting the young single adult as a person. We may sit for a time without conversation, but spiritual meaning can be communicated through an understanding or rapport. The emphasis on relationship of meaning and understanding does not take away from the ministry of talking and listening. In counseling, both the young single adult and the counselor talk and listen. Words are the vehicle of expression. When the spiritual ministry through counseling is effective, there is a deep non-verbal communication of being.

Spiritual ministry "Good Samaritan style" is needed in the twentieth century. Little is recorded of the words spoken by the Good Samaritan, but much is recorded of what he was and what he did. There was an empathic relationship; the Good Samaritan revealed himself as being kind, selfless, and full of the love of God. A person who has Christian love shares his life with others.

Since the main problem of the young single adult is isolation and loneliness, spiritual ministry through a meaningful relationship can communicate the gospel. If healing of the personality is found in relationships, then spiritual ministry cures the sickness of isolation.

The argument is sometimes heard, "If we don't tell them what to do, how can we know whether they are helped?" This problem faces the person who establishes a relationship yet does not talk with the young single adult. The answer is simple: to watch for growth, watch for changes in relationships.

WORKING THROUGH PROBLEMS TOGETHER

Let's observe a few practical observations of our spiritual ministry. This list is not complete. Other suggestions might be added. These are included to "spring" our principles from the textbook to the 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. world.

1. *Establishing rapport.* The young single adult brings his problem to you, expecting help. Your attitude toward him and his problem will set the stage for your relationship. If you try to structure a formal counseling situation, you may drive him away. If you take his problem lightly, he may be offended and not trust you. You must establish a permissive situation where he feels freedom and trust to "reach out to you."

Rapport is that intimate harmonious "peak" where people have a close understanding. It accepts people for what they are. The young single adult does not have to "pretend" be is something he knows he is not. When two good friends fellowship over a late cup of coffee after a meeting, they are not concerned with impressing the other. They understand and accept the other. The inner nature of one speaks to the inner nature of the other. This is rapport.

Your basic attitude toward the young single adult is the arrow "pointing to growth in both of your lives. A warm empathic relationship is more important than the techniques you use. You may use a non-directive-self-talk-therapeutic type of counseling, but if the young single adult does not feel accepted you may do him little good. You may use directive counseling, even give advice at times, and if "basic trust" has been established, the young single adult may work through his problems and grow in Christ.

2. *Work on problems together.* Your attitude toward the young person's problem will set the 'tone." Tell him you don't know all the answers. Don't play God. Be very slow to give an answer, especially until you know both sides of the issue. The young single adult may be very frank and very honest; however, you have only one side of the problem. Let him know you plan to work with him on the problem. Don't solve problems for people, solve problems with people.

You and the young single adult must realize that problems are normal. He may feel inferior because he is having problems. Mass media has created the "image" of a life that can be "problemless." This is not true. Growth produces tensions, frustrations, and problems.

Attempting to live in the will of God brings trials and temptations. Let him know, "If you are having problems, you are in the same boat as other young single adults." All people (even Christians) have problems, but those who can deal with their problems are happy, and growing.

3. *Creative listening.* Help does not come through your talking to the young adult, but in his talking to you. If you talk, you might not help him because:

He may not hear you.

He may not understand you.

He may not want to follow your advice.

He may do what you say without understanding your reason.

When the young single adult speaks, you can determine whether he understands the problem.

You can further question His motives or faulty insights. If he comes up with an answer to his problem, he is more likely to follow through to a solution.

When you use creative listening, be understanding. How can you know the problem without bearing him out? How can the real emotional difficulty be uncovered unless you skillfully ask

questions and listen patiently. You must express confidence in the young person so he will have confidence in you.

The simple “talking out” of a problem may be a major step in helping the young single adult. Some have come away from a time of “unloading the burdens,” indicating that help has been received. The listener has given no advice or direction. What has happened? The listener has been a sounding board. Since problems are subjective, the young person cannot put things together. So to speak, “He can’t see the trees for the forest.” In unloading His problem he “nailed it as a picture to the wall.” Then he stepped back and got a total picture of the problem. He objectified the situation. The mere talking out of a problem may solve it—but there has to be a listener.

The creative listener is the second half of a relationship. As there must be a good catcher for the major league ball pitcher, so there must be a good listener for a “spiritual care relationship.”

4. *Help find the “root” problem.* So you have listened. What do you do now? Sit there like a sponge? No! If your “relationship is to communicate the gospel at the point of need,” you had better “dig” till you find the root problem. Remember, many surface problems are *results* not *causes* of behavior. Try to find the causative problem. You are not a therapist, so don’t try to psychoanalyze the young single adult. But, if you have a warm relationship, your acceptance may give him the liberty to face problems he could not have faced in a threatened situation. Simply, if he trusts you, he may face a problem with you that he could not face alone.

5. *Find possible solutions.* The young single adult should understand the problem before a solution is attempted. Since problems are complex, solutions will not always be easy to find. The first solution “popping” in the mind of the young single adult is not always the best. Therefore, attempt to explore or list *all* possible solutions before making any decision. Suggest all that come to mind. The simple listing of solutions may help encourage the young person. As he thinks through the problem and possible solutions, he is probably growing.

6. *Examine possible solutions.* The young single adult should realize his responsibility to solve his problems. Be careful of offering advice or “pushing an answer” off on him. If you pressure a decision on the young adult:

- a. He may lose confidence in you if the results of your decision are not as anticipated.
- b. He may decide against your decision.
- c. He may follow your “cure” and next time a problem faces him, become increasingly dependent on you.

Realize that you do not know God’s will for everyone. Solve problems *with* the young adult. Respect the maturity he has, and you may develop more maturity. Your main ministry of relationship is to point out the strong and weak points of each solution to a problem.

7. *The Bible in counseling.* The Word of God is not a substitute for your spiritual ministry, nor is it a supplement. The Word of God is the heart of spiritual ministry. First, the Bible is in your life. As stated before, the gospel is personal. Christ, the Word of God, lives in you. You communicate Christ to the young single adult through relationship. You must be to him “in the stead” of Christ. You must be all that Christ would be to the young single adult. He is lonely; you must be to him a friend. He is searching; you must be to him a guide. He is seeking self-identification; you must be an answer.

But there is more. The Bible is propositional truth. The Word of God speaks to the problems of all—including those of the young single adult. The Bible is a revelation that needs a response.

So, if you would help young single adults solve problems, you must interject Scripture at points of insight.

Just as the soil is prepared before the seed is planted, so the heart must be tilled before the Word of God is sown. The following principles may give some guidance:

- a. Communicate Scripture at the point of need.
- b. There must be understanding of the Word of God.
- c. Make sure the young adult can see the relationship between the passage and his problem. Remember, the Word of God is alive (See Heb. 4:12). Therefore, don't treat Scripture as a "dusty truth" to shelve among theology books. If the Bible is active in your life it will "agitate" you to communicate the gospel at the point of need.

8. *Making decisions.* How does a person make a decision? Personally, like swallowing a pill or taking a bath. No one else can do it for you. The same is true in helping young single adults solve problems.

Solving a problem is a personal adventure. A person must eliminate tension, see the problem, examine possible solutions, determine the alternatives, make a decision and face the consequences personally. This is how a person grows.

Do you have a spiritual ministry in solving problems? Yes! Even though the young single adult must "do it himself," you can help. Your relationship will encourage him. He needs to know that he is not alone. He needs to know that someone wants God's best for him. You can communicate the gospel at the point of need.

IV. CONCLUSION

What is our spiritual ministry? Simply, relating the gospel at the point of individual need. This chapter should not be interpreted as techniques or methods of counseling. The intent is to show how one child of God can minister to another child of God—through relationships. And after all is said, Christianity is a relationship—we are related to God as a child to his father. Therefore, we express our Christian concern through relationship with others.

FOOTNOTES

1. Carroll A. Wise, *The Meaning of Pastoral Care*, (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1966), p. 9.
2. The author is greatly indebted to his former teacher, Dr. Carroll Wise, for the definition of spiritual ministry, used by permission.

CHAPTER 5

Program in the Church for the Young Single Adult

Bill White comes home from his job with a local finance company and finds his widowed mother busy preparing the evening meal. Bill is twenty-six years old, is enthusiastic about his job, earns an adequate salary for a single person, and attends church at the prodding of his very faithful church-going mother. He seems to enjoy the quietness of their comfortable home, yet there are times when he is moody and difficult to understand. Tonight is Friday night, and after a quiet supper he will probably relax in front of the television set and watch his favorite spy story. Bill's mother is a little concerned about her only child's future. Frankly, she would prefer a better social life for him, and too she is praying that he will soon realize his Christian responsibility for personal growth and reaching others for Christ.

This home situation is not just a hypothetical one. Many young single adults ranging in age from twenty to thirty-five live a very similar life. How can the church meet their unique needs? The young single adults in some churches number a large group. And this number can be so significant that the worship services alone are not sufficient to meet their needs. When there are enough young single adults in the church, the church is obligated to meet their needs on a group basis.

I. THE TOTAL CHURCH PROGRAM

The church should consider the total needs and problems of the young single adult when planning to meet his needs. When doing so, the church will be concerned with such areas as teaching, training, worship, fellowship and service. Also, a program (evangelism) to reach the young single adult will need to be included in the church's concern.

1. *Determining the program.* Those who plan programs for the young single adult should be concerned about the curriculum. The term "curriculum" comes from the Latin word *currere*, which means "to run," implying a "race track" or "the course to be run." In Goding's *Young Adult Handbook* several principles are given in the selection of programs for young adults:

- a. Does the text include reference to other material?
- b. Does it contain a Christian treatment of the subject?
- c. Is the writer considered a reliable authority?
- d. Does it challenge the group's thinking?
- e. Can it be used advantageously in stimulating discussion?
- f. Will it influence the group toward a more positive Christian stand?¹

When discussing programs and curriculum, Zeigler, in *Christian Education of Adults*, makes the following point: "Programs for young adults" groups must appeal to their interest and address their needs . . . programs of study, discussion and activity will have relevance if they deal with matters that are of vital concern to young adults."²

Perhaps we should point out that what the young single adult *wants* is not always what he *needs*. And what he *needs* is not always what he *wants*. Saffen, in his book, *Young Married Couples in the Church*, indicates the following (Saffen deals with married couples, whereas this study is

investigating single adults. However, method of determining a program is applicable to both age groups):

You and your group should know the difference between the *needs* and *wants*. What young adults *want* is not what they *need*. If they get what they want continually they may lose interest for lack of diversity. So stay out of the rut. However, what they need is not always what they want. If they get what they need continuously when they do not want it, they will lose interest because the program is forced on them. The program committee should be alert to those activities which reach the *needs* and the *interests* of the *most* people.³

At this point, the question may be asked, "How can we determine the interests and needs of the young single adult in the church?" Clemmons, in *Young Adults in the Church*, says there are at least three ways of discovering the real interests and needs of the young adult: (1) personal interviews; (2) group discussions; (3) an interest indicator.⁴

The young single adult matures by his own standards. Therefore, treat him as an equal. Give him the right to determine his own program. The executive committee of the young single adult group should plan the topics and program to be presented.

What about the question of sponsorship? Most young single adults rebel at having another adult (older) along to "take care" of them. However, several groups observed wanted someone to chaperone from outside their group. A married couple from the church was requested to attend one week-end retreat in a Canadian church.

When it comes to program planning, the "chaperone" or "sponsor" should not have any more voice in the direction of activities than any young single adult. The "chaperone" can do infinitely more through influence than through "veto." The young single adult will not tolerate an authoritarian attitude from his sponsor. If he does not rebel and "tell him off," he will lose interest and stop attending the group.

2. *Suggestions for an actual program* (gleaned from travel and observations of young single adult groups). Some of the best points from different churches are suggested in the following program:

I. SUNDAY:

- a. Early morning coffee time-this could be served 30 minutes before Sunday School and both men and women should share in the responsibility of serving.
- b. Sunday School-a series of Bible studies; in depth study; politics viewed through the Bible; personality and character development.
- c. Church services-morning and evening.
- d. Service projects-perhaps the young single adults could sponsor a mission Sunday School. In one church observed, the young single adult group provided most of the staff for four branch Sunday Schools (two had become churches). After the Sunday evening service approximately 80 gathered for their informal fellowship service.
- e. An hour of fellowship after the evening service. This would be a simple gathering for discussion of ideas presented in the services of the day. The stress would be on sociability and not on a prearranged program as such. The place of gathering could alternate between the members' homes or apartments and the church facilities. The refreshments should be light.

II. DURING THE MONTH:

- a. Social event-once a month is recommended during the first week of the month; a social event well planned in advance.

- b. Interest study groups-once each month to be held in the latter part of the month. This would be to discuss an announced topic.
- c. Koinonia groups-renewal of the church may come through such groups. Group dynamic principles are followed, and members share their life with other members of the group.
- d. Sports program-young single adults groups have their own bowling leagues, volley ball leagues, softball leagues, basketball leagues, and hockey leagues and in two cases the church group sponsored a curling league (Canadian sport).
- e. Service projects-young single adults are active and have offered their services to orphanages, hospitals, homes for aged, civic projects, and community service organizations. One group of young single adults spent one Saturday morning a month planning and supervising the play of handicapped children living in an orphanage.

III. OTHER MEETINGS:

- a. The weekly church prayer meeting.
- b. The planned events of the church for the "church family."
- c. Attendance at all regular services and meetings of the church.

IV. FACILITTES:

The group will need a lounge-type classroom where all meetings at the church can be held. The room should have some shelves with books which will be of interest to this age group. Also, facilities and equipment should provide for appropriate music and games. The decorations should be casual and in the taste of those who think young. It is possible the group could be given the room and told to make their own decor with some financial assistance from the church.

One church provided a large room for young single adults and challenged them to decorate it. The challenge was accepted. First they put down wall-to-wall carpeting. One wall was covered with draperies. Behind the draperies there was an audio-visual screen. Lounge chairs arranged in conversation centers, with coffee tables, were placed around the room. Contemporary American furniture was used. Over two dozen large lounging cushions (pillows) were stacked in a corner. The young single adults seem to enjoy sitting on the floor. In another comer was a small kitchenette with refrigerator, built-in range, sink, and cabinets for storage. Pole lamps, original art work and contemporary chandeliers added additional charm and appeal to the room. This illustration is given to show what the young single adult can do when given a challenge.

3. *The yearly program calendar.* (See pages 86 and 87.) The reasons for the various events on this calendar relate directly to the problems previously discussed. This calendar can be altered in many ways; however, the suggested calendar is a very practical one which could be initiated immediately. The purpose of each social event in the year is three-fold: first, personal involvement for each young single adult; second, a group participating together to involve others in their activities; third, serving others. Notice the suggestion at the Halloween Event. The young single adult group will enjoy not only making candy but also packaging the candy and delivering it to a needy organization such as an orphanage.

The "Interest Study Group" has been planned with these thoughts in mind: First, in January and immediately following, the topics are to center around the individual and his effort to find himself. Next, the topics are concerned with relating oneself with members of the group and beginning associations which could develop into mature self-acceptance or a foundation for a Christian home. Beginning in July, the topics present Christ and the mission of the church involved in the

world which is primarily unaware of Christ's message. During the November and December meetings, there would be a study of the local church with an expressed concern for individuals and ways in which the young single adult can serve through the church.

This year's planning calendar is given only to initiate the work of the interested and creative church worker. Given enthusiastic and prayerful support, a young single adult group can become an effective part of the church's ministry and give purpose to the many "Bill Whites" who are being neglected in the local church today.

4. *Suggested titles for the young single adult group.* A few suggested titles are as follows: The 20's and 30's Club, Christian Companionship Club (3 C's), Fireside Fellowship, Fireside Forum, Berean Bible Class, Crusaders, Tri-C's, Campus and Career Club, College and Careers, Ambassadors, Young Single Adult Sunday School Class, Young Single Adult Bible Class, Willing Workers, Co-Uni-Bus (College, University, and Business), Young People's, Christian Endeavor. No specific suggestion will be made in this book for a title for the young single adult group in the church. Each group is left to its own creativity in choosing a title.

II. KEEPING PROGRAM MACHINERY OILED

The battle is only half won once a program is put in operation. The next problem is keeping things going.

1. *Discovering new prospects.* A church may have an excellent program for young single adults, but time may defeat the effort. Young people get old. Young single adults are mobile and move from neighborhood to neighborhood. Therefore, to maintain a high record of attendance within such a group, attention must be given to prospect recruitment. The following sources will form a prospect list:

- a. An investigation of the church and Sunday School roll might indicate prospects who should be in the young single adult group.
- b. Study the lists of persons enrolled in the youth division in the immediate past. Perhaps some who should be in the church group dropped out because of the lack of organization and ministry to their needs.
- c. Ask the young single adults' class to "brainstorm," coming up with the names and addresses of persons they think will be likely prospects for their group.
- d. Conduct a religious survey or census of the community. The following places might reveal potential young single adults: apartment buildings, YMCA, YWCA, nursing schools and hotels.

2. *Helping new members get started.* The host or hostess plan for a young single adult group works wonders if it is utilized. Assign a host or hostess of the same sex to every prospective member. See that the new member is introduced to all in the group-both sexes. The host or hostess should sit with the prospective member and make sure that he is brought into the conversation during the time of fellowship.

Assign "greeters" to the door who can spot and greet all strangers. They should be able to interpret the purposes and procedures of the group to the newcomers and guide them to a potential host or hostess who will help them get acquainted easily and naturally. Make sure that the new members are introduced to the leaders of the group and learn both their names and offices. New members need explanation of the organization and program, so they may enter into the activities of worship, study, fellowship and service.

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3. *Creating a climate for learning.* The young adult differs somewhat in his learning manner from the adolescent or the child. The lecture may be used with adolescents and oral presentation (story-telling, etc.) may be successful with children; but these methods do not enjoy the same success with young adults. The young adult has maturity, experience, and accumulated knowledge that the others do not have. He likes to share ideas through discussion. If a person works with the young adult group he must learn that “talking is not teaching” and “listening is not learning.”

Young adults learn through a variety of means. A resource individual may lead off in a discussion, but the young adult may learn as much from the questions or comments of others in the group as from the leader. The dynamics of the group and the role played by each participant in the class are included in the learning experience of the young adult. The study book or other printed curriculum may teach a lesson. Also, the classroom must be considered. The arrangement of the chairs, the decorations of the room and the evidence of planning may communicate the lesson of “concern” more than does the topic of study. The size of the room, ventilation and natural lighting affect the learning of the young adult. The young single adult must find his room appealing and acceptable, so he may communicate with others in a setting that encourages Christian fellowship.

The learning experiences should be spread out over a vast field, approaching the young adult from many perspectives. Also, there is an inner field, governing the amount of learning he will receive. His previous experiences with church school and formal educational activities will determine his learning as well as his motivation to the assigned topic. If he has previous Knowledge of the topic he may be highly susceptible to learning, but if the topic is not related to his needs, he may learn nothing.

When young adults become *involved* with the topic, learning is most likely to occur. The topic need not be comprised of new knowledge. A young adult may verbalize an old truth, and through his discussion gain deeper insight into the problem. “Learning with vested interest” is equal to the rate of involvement on the part of the learner.

III. UNIQUE PROBLEMS IN PROGRAMMING

This section will not attempt to deal with general problems of programming a church meeting. Clemmons, in *Young Adults and the Church*, gives a good summary of adverse conditions involving program planning:

- a. Loyalty to a class or group that supersedes loyalty to Christ and his church.
- b. A tradition of non-cooperation with any other group.
- c. Duplication of what has been done the year before.
- d. Lack of understanding of the nature and mission of the church.
- e. Maintaining a program by use of big-name speakers only.
- f. Lack of planning together by leaders.
- g. Failure to clear program and schedule and to establish priorities.⁶

These general failures will wreck the program for the young single adult. But beyond these failures, there are unique age-sex problems created by the role of the young single adult that will cause problems in programming.

1. *The problem of the smaller church.* A church faces a problem of organization when there are too few young single adults to constitute a group for them. George Gleason, in *Single Young Adults in the Church*, has suggested four possible solutions:

- a. The church may neglect the unmarried young adult.
- b. Single young adults may remain in the youth group with the high school or college-age young people.
- c. They may remain in the young couples' class.
- d. A community group may be organized for the single young adult.⁷

There is a fifth suggestion: Use the young single adult as church leader. However, none of the five suggestions is a satisfactory answer. If you leave him in the high school, college age, or young married department, his spiritual needs will not be met. Also, the young single adult will not invite his friends to a meeting that is not distinctly tailored to his age level. The suggestion of a community group may not have a spiritual ministry to the young single adult.

Apparently the only solution is to start a meeting geared to meet the needs of the young single adult. Perhaps God has a peculiar ministry for the small church to reach and minister to the young single adult. If there are no young single adults in the neighborhood to reach, then use those attending the church as Sunday School or youth-club workers.

2. *The problem of dividing the married and single adults into two groups.* Some older churches find themselves with the problem-not just of organization but of traditionalism and/or provincialism. There are, however, some reasons that those two groups should be kept together. Gleason gives the following list:

- a. A larger group could be formed.
- b. Deepens general church fellowship.
- c. Helps single ones preparing for marriage.
- d. Helps to keep the newly married interested and active.
- e. Married couples (all of whom met at the church) give better balance and stability to the group.
- f. Provides better continuity.⁸

This list of reasons for keeping the married and single young adults together seems impressive, but actually, they are not valid reasons.

Not only is there a lack of advantage in keeping the young single and married people together; there are disadvantages as well. Again George Gleason is quoted:

- a. Their interests are altogether different.
- b. The single person often feels unwanted (in the mixed group).
- c. Topics discussed are not always of common interest.
- d. If the group becomes predominantly made up of single people, married couples will tend to shy away, and vice versa.
- e. More need of free nights at home for the married.
- f. Unmarried desires more hikes, socials, and the like than the married.
- g. The two groups spend their time in different ways.
- h. Married couples are absorbed in family life. The interests of single young people are outside the home.⁹

Therefore, the young single adult should have his own peculiar group, ministering to his unique needs. A church, in planning to make such a division, may encounter some difficulties. But in the long run the total church program for both groups will be more effective.

IV. SUMMARY

The construction of a program will not solve the problems of the young single adult. Nor is a program the aim of the ministry to the young single adult. A program is a means to an end, that end being the spiritual maturity of the young single adult.

However, a program may solve the problems of a church. Young single adults may live in the neighborhood and a church cannot reach them. Young single adults may be in the congregation and a church is not meeting their needs. Young single adults could be wasting their talents and not reaching their potential. If so, the right kind of program may be used of God to accomplish the New Testament results.

FOOTNOTES

1. Betty Coding, *Young Adult Handbook* (Forest Park, Illinois: North American Baptist General Conference, 1958), p. 13.
2. Earl F. Zeigler, *Christian Education of Adults*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1958), p. 97.
3. Wayne Saffen, *Young Married Couples in the Church*, (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1963), pp. 57, 58.
4. Robert S. Clemmons, *Young Adults in the Church*, (New York: Abingdon Press, 1959), p. 58.
5. Prepared by Edward Lanier for use in a local church.
6. Clemmons, *op. cit.*, p. 82.
7. George Gleason, *Single Young Adults in the Church* (New York: Association Press, 1952), p. 43.
8. Gleason, *op. cit.*, p. 49.
9. *Ibid.*

CHAPTER 6

Young Single Adults-- A Challenge for the Church

WHAT THE CHURCH CAN DO

The First Evangelical Free Church of Chicago, Illinois, found itself in a unique position. Located on the north side of Chicago, it was bordered by the well known "Brown Sandstone Apartment Buildings" in which were living many young single adults. These young people attended the preaching services of the church, but that is as far as the ministry of the church went in reaching them. The College and Career Sunday School class had an influx of college students and the academic nature of the lesson tended to drive the young business people away.

Jane, a young switchboard operator who moved to the neighborhood from Iowa, was miserable. She confessed to one church leader her desire to return to Iowa. "I'm lonely, and the four walls of the apartment are like a prison." Jane related her story of frustration in the church. She tried to attend the church social functions, but they were oriented to the family.

"The young girls who are married sit around and talk about their babies," stated Jane. "Or else they always talk about my being single and make some ill-timed remark."

The pastor and director of Christian education were challenged to provide for the social needs of these young single adults. The "Twenties and Thirties Club" was started and met after church on Sunday evenings. Three other churches in the area were invited to participate, and the idea caught fire.

"I have to squelch these people sometimes," related the director of Christian education. "These single career people are so enthusiastic for fellowship, service, and getting together that their program gets out of hand if not supervised. He was not complaining, only relating the exuberance of the young single adult.

The young single adult is a challenge to the church. If the church ignores these people, it is not performing its task. The nature of a challenge lies in the demands it makes upon us. The young single adult demands the attention of the church.

In considering the role of the church's ministry to the young single adult, we must realize that every church is different. No two churches are identical in membership, aims, and cultural tradition. The environment of the church, as well as its administrative leadership, affects the function of getting the gospel out to its constituency. Some churches are in the country; others in the city; still others are in the suburban area. The large church can have a well-organized program for the young single adult, whereas the small church may have only one or two participants. Some churches may have a well-educated lay leadership which might be composed of some young single adults. Other churches may be ignorant of the needs and problems of the young single adults, and therefore neglect them. Some churches have physical plants that are adequate, including educational, recreational and worship facilities; while other churches are completely inadequate to meet the needs of their people. Because of these variations the following suggestions do not necessarily apply to all churches with equal force. What may work well in one church may completely fail in another. These suggestions involve some activities that can be used by a church in behalf of the young single adult.

I. MEETING SPIRITUAL NEEDS

The aim of a church is to meet the spiritual needs of its people. As the church meets needs, spiritual maturity is developed. Thus the church helps to solve or to prevent personal problems in accomplishing its purpose.

Some of the young single adults may have grown up in the church and yet have never really comprehended or understood the doctrines of the church. Some may never have been members of study groups where Christian theology has been systematically explored. Other young single adults may have been exposed only to incompetent teaching, approaching the Christian heritage from a hodge-podge of uninterpreted concepts. One of the basic tasks of the church is to make available Christian education where spiritual and biblical lessons can be learned and applied. In meeting the needs of the young single adult, doctrine alone will not do the job. Life-related teaching must be offered. However, the lecture method alone will not get the job done. Young adults need to discuss their problems, ambitions and needs. They need to know that other young adults are going through the same problems and that the church is aware of their needs and desires. Some young adults are frustrated. They have failed to make sense out of life as they have experienced it. The church can accept them and help to develop in them a sense of security and belonging. The young single adult who is lonely needs to know the assurance of God's continuing love and the fellowship of the local church.

Not only can the usual channels of worship and prayer services help the young single adult, but an effective program of pastoral counseling and care should be used. Some of the larger churches can use publications, as well as special classes, to minister to these young people.

II. HELPING PERSONALITY GROWTH

The young single adult is greatly interested in personality development. Usually, he starts at the bottom of the business ladder and as a result realizes he must change in order to climb the ladder to success. Also, he considers marriage the door to happiness. To find the right mate, he feels the need to develop a wholesome personality. The major thrust of the New Testament talks about Christian character and growth. As the young person increases in self-confidence—or better, God-confidence—he will be able to face his problems more realistically. A man who is "at peace with God" is usually at peace with the world.

Also, the church can help develop social relationships. As the young single adult finds friends in the church, these relationships will help to cultivate his personality. As a result, he will become a more gracious person, poised in other social situations.

Personality includes not only the "present self-image" but also includes the "desired self-image." The young person will attempt to mold his personality in keeping with his desires.

Here the ministry of Christian standards can have a life-long effect. His aspirations should be equal to Christian standards. When he realizes that he is one who was created in the image of God and for whom God gave his only Son, he will develop a sense of individual importance. Christian students in personal fellowship with God's Son will help develop a well-rounded outlook on life. Jesus told the Pharisees, "I came to give you life, and to give it more abundantly" (see John 10:10).

III. MEETING SOCIAL NEEDS

Fellowship has been called "two fellows in a ship." This is naive, yet embryonic of a true definition of fellowship. Fellowship involves sensitivity, awareness, and rapport with another individual. But true fellowship comes when one person realizes his dependence upon the other person for reciprocal growth and maturity. The young single adult grows toward maturity when he comes to depend on other people in the church, including others of his own age and status. Then a deep spirit of fellowship and group participation results.

Fellowship is a needed ingredient among the young single adults. They are basically interested in being good neighbors and knowing other people. Yet, they may have difficulty risking themselves and venturing out into the world of another person.

Friends are the measure of true worth. As the young single adult makes friends among both sexes, he finds himself and as a result becomes a better servant of Christ. There is no true self-made man in the world today because we must all depend on other people in our highly complex and structured society. Just so, the young single adult must learn to depend upon others if he is to grow in spiritual life as well as social competency.

Fellowship will expand the horizons of the young single adult. Those who are lonely and isolated have lost their horizons. There is no challenge to the isolated and he feels the emptiness of life. Life is wasted when lived in a narrow world. The young single adult who has many friends lives in a wide world and hence becomes a complete person.

Don't forget that fellowship is preventive in nature. A young single adult who has true friends will not find himself deteriorating in his spiritual life. He will have someone to watch over his spiritual progress as he reciprocates and watches over the spiritual progress of another.

Authentic Christian fellowship will produce spiritual growth. When a young single adult accepts another person for what he is, ultimately he will examine himself. Self-examination leads to self-improvement.

In true New Testament fellowship there is a sharing of insights, dreams, needs, and even life itself. The young single adult must have the opportunity to express and rehearse these ideals, thoughts and desires that make up his life if he is to grow in spiritual grace.

IV. MEETING RECREATIONAL NEEDS

The average recreational program of a church is organized for children, high school students, or men. Little is done for the young single adult to enjoy recreation. However, he has time, money and energy to spend on recreation and he will. If the church does not provide for his recreational life, his needs will be satisfied through other media. At the same time there are some young single adults who are withdrawn, lonely, and need some organization to care for their recreation needs. There are long evenings of the week between Sundays and a recreational program would help minister to these needs.

Ideally, recreational programs sponsored for the young single adult should be in his hands. Most churches that finally get their recreational program for the young single adults off the ground usually find that this age-group goes overboard. Too much time is spent on recreation to the omission of other worthy areas of life. Therefore, it is important to integrate the young single adult program into the entire program of the church.

When recruitment of new members for the program is attempted, some churches have experienced attendance difficulties because many (especially girls) are reluctant to admit they are "single." They feel, if they attend, that others will accuse them of just looking for a mate. However, once this reticence is overcome, young single adults usually get into the program with zest, enthusiasm, and diligence.

Try to keep the program person-centered, not activity-centered. There should be enough leaders in the group to stay close to the interests of the young single adult. Use such devices as check lists and observation questionnaires to determine the response.

Leisure can be a dangerous thing for the young, becoming a destructive influence in the life, sapping the personality of creativity, energy and initiative. Or it can be the means through which these young people stay young-mentally, physically and spiritually.

V. SOLVING PERSONAL PROBLEMS

The young single adult is confronted with many problems that are entirely new to him. Self-discipline, self-knowledge and self-acceptance are major developmental tasks. The well-trained pastor or youth worker will do much to help with many personal problems that confront the young single adult. He can watch for symptoms of problems:

1. The social isolate.
2. Those who manage their finances badly.
3. Depression.
4. Those who have no apparent purpose or aim in life.
5. Those who have no close friends.
6. Those who are frequently transferred,
7. Those who have bad over-protective parents.
8. Those who have a fear of marriage.
9. Those who are over-motivated toward marriage.
10. Those with homosexual desires.

Programs that are problem-solving will appeal to the young single adults. They are not children; therefore the sponsor or youth pastor cannot plan a program for them or dictate their procedures. The young single adult will arrive at his own programs, yet he can be encouraged to keep the plans relative.

The wise pastor can use counseling to help the young single adult. The pastor should profit from the experience of others through reading about their problems and through discussion with others who have come to him for counsel. Some young single adults will need to be referred for professional care. The wise pastor will know when a referral is in order.

Also, the church can assist in promoting the personal adjustment by finding a place of usefulness for each young adult. As the personal abilities and interests of the young people are recruited, a sense of personal worth is fostered. Do not give them too much work but rather significant projects, and they will become happier persons.

VI. EDUCATION

The usual approach for this topic would be that the church should educate the young single adult. However, the thrust of this chapter is “the church educating its members to help meet the needs of the young single adults in its constituency.”

1. The church can educate its people concerning mistaken young single adult. One of these ideas is people are nearly always the same—“girls man, and men are trying to stay single.” the insights of this book concerning the of the young single adult should be communicated to the church. Many of these young people are not married for personal reasons and the church needs to understand this. Some single girls in the church are frustrated because of the continual pressure of the older women concerning marriage.

Also, the church must be educated to realize that the young single adult is a person. He is not to be treated as an overgrown “kid” or an undergrown adult. Some young single adults are very conservative and are tied to their families. Others are independent and broad in their outlook on life. But each is a person with needs. The church should treat each one as an individual in his own right.

The church should be taught to recognize the right of each young adult to make his own decisions—except in cases of obvious and extreme morality problems.

2. The church can correct through education the false idea that the young single adult is through growing-no longer able to grow, learn, adjust and mature. Self-motivation is the key to learning. Of all the age groups in the church, perhaps this is the most highly motivated to learn and change, especially those who are single. Their life is ahead of them and they have yet to live through some of the disillusionments and disappointments of frustration and failure. As a result, the young single adult is perhaps age in the church to teach, because the productivity of his life will yield eternal dividends for the cause of Christ.

3. The church can help correct through education the false idea that young single adulthood is an unimportant period of life. Just because the adolescent does not get married does not mean he ends up on the scrapheap of humanity-the young single adult department. The younger person, especially if he is a Christian, need not think of himself as a second-rate citizen. As long as he lives, he can contribute to the needs of others in the church, no matter who he is. The young adult needs to feel useful in order to be a well-adjusted individual. He is creative with a wide range of abilities. His contribution to the church will be significant if his Christian life remains meaningful and if his interest in church affairs is kept at a high level.

4. The church can help correct through education the false idea that the young single adult wishes to be relieved of responsibility. In general, he has more -financial resources, more time, more energy, more creative abilities and more initiative to carry out leadership responsibilities in the church than any other age group. However, the average church is over-protective and over-indulgent, making him feel incapable of serving the Lord. Inestimable injury to self-respect and the inner sense of worthiness results from such policies.

5. The church can help correct through education the mistaken idea that the young single age in and of itself constitutes a moral problem. There is a false idea in our churches that all young single adults have problems with personal purity. Some do; however, we cannot generalize and say this is a universal problem. This mistaken idea probably arises because young married adults have the marriage relationship to sublimate their sexual desires. As has been said in other areas, the young single adult, like all adults, needs understanding, love and intimacy.

6. The church can provide education to prepare teenagers for young single adulthood.

Throughout high school the adolescent is moving toward graduation. Make sure that he not only

graduates from something but make sure that he graduates to something. The church can help the adjustment at any age. Remember, the church teaches much more by its example than by its pronouncements. Teens will not drop out if the church is willing to use the young single adult, give him a place in the educational program, and recognize his contribution to the church. These teens will look forward to leaving the high school department and joining the young single adult department.

VII. RESEARCH STUDIES

The social and behavioral sciences are beginning to turn their attention to the young single adult. Especially the one who is migrating to a large metropolitan area has become the focus of attention. The church is able to gather data and information on these young people and should be available to co-operate with researchers. The axiom is still true, "You must know the Scriptures before you can communicate their content; so you must know the pupil before you can minister to his soul." As the church better understands the young single adult, it can better minister to him.

VIII. EVANGELIZING THE YOUNG SINGLE ADULT

Many churches are not aware of the vast number of young single adults within their designated "neighborhood." By realizing their potentiality for membership, a church may begin to feel a burden for evangelization. One pastor said, "You don't build a strong church on single people; you build a strong church on married couples." However, the young single adult represents a person for whom Christ died. If he falls within the neighborhood of the church, God's purpose for the church is to make a direct and purposeful effort to reach and win him.

IX. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The average church is not organized to minister to this unique group of individuals. There is an organized young couples' Sunday School class. Some churches may have a "college and career" class, but these are few in number. However, those classes, while they may be the only agencies uniquely devoted to young adults, certainly will not minister to the needs of these young people. The total spiritual, social and mental well-being of the young single adult must be taken care of. If a church does not have a "college and career" class for the young single adult, he is usually put into a place of leadership (teaching a Sunday School class, working with a club program) because there is no place for fellowship with others of his age. When the church becomes aware of the unique needs and characteristics of the young single adult, maybe then an adequate total church program will be inaugurated for the young people in this classification.

CHAPTER 7

Young Single Adults-- Their Opportunity

WHAT THE YOUNG SINGLE ADULT CAN DO

The Grant Memorial Baptist Church of Winnipeg, Canada, has an outstanding program for young single adults. Approximately 80 gather for the weekly program each Sunday evening after the church service. The program features variety with special speakers, skits or plays, panels, films, musical evenings and direct study of the Scriptures. The spring and fall retreats sponsored by the young people are highlights of the yearly calendar. The young single adults also co-operate in denominational conventions and conferences.

"How does a church get so many young single people?" is often asked of the pastor. "Service!" is his oft-repeated answer. The young single adults serve Christ through many different agencies. They help staff the Bird River Bible Camp which is sponsored by the church. Also, many of the young single adults work in inter-denominational camps in the area. Grant Memorial Baptist Church has four mission Sunday Schools and most of the superintendents and teachers come from the young single adults. Actually, the Sunday morning class for young single adults numbers around 25. However, when all of the young single adults return from the mission works to the evening service, attendance swells to over 80.

The young single adult has many opportunities to serve through his church. Like many other Americans, basically he is seeking pleasure and meaning in life. The goal of pleasure is a self-defeating goal, inasmuch as the more a person really sets out to strive for pleasure, the less likely he is to gain it. Viktor Frankl understood this search, "Man ... finds identity (happiness) to the extent to which he commits himself to something beyond himself, to a cause greater than himself."¹ The life of service to others is the happiest of lives. The church is filled with opportunities--opportunities for service, opportunities for fellowship, opportunities for worship, opportunities for growth, opportunities to find meaning and significance in life, opportunities for realization of being. But like all opportunities, the door must be open, a decision must be made and a new start ventured upon.

Not all of the opportunities listed in this chapter will apply to every young single adult. Opportunities are different and the personalities of the young single adult are different. But every young single adult will find many places he can fill in the work of the church.

I. PARTICIPATING IN ORGANIZED GROUPS

Young single adults can help establish and support groups for young single adults. This activity is not purely selfish or self-centered. As the young person helps others he is in turn helping himself. The increased sense of usefulness helps the young single adult find his own sense of worth. He eases his own loneliness as he helps alleviate the loneliness of others. He finds work for himself as he seeks jobs for other young single adults. He makes new friendships for himself as he helps others develop friendships. He finds pleasure as he tries to make other young people happy. His own personal problems are mitigated as he helps others find solutions or help for their difficulties.

II. TEACHING IN THE CHURCH

The young single adult can serve God and the church by teaching others. Usually this age-group is used to teach children and youth classes in the Sunday School. However, some adult classes have asked young single professional persons to guide adult discussion groups, Especially young people who are in the teaching profession can be used in this capacity. Their knowledge and skills often can be valuable sources of insight into practical problems of life and of the church.

Generally, the young adult has a better education than older adults. The education explosion has brought academic acceleration, each generation learning more than the previous. The average member of the older generation recognizes this and many times is willing to follow the leadership of younger adults. The younger adult should always teach from conviction and yet always display a spirit of humility.

The young single adult has the time, energy and initiative to sponsor a youth group or scout group, lead children's worship services or become a counselor in the church's camping program. Leadership is a growing need in the church. Use the young single adults in many places of service. In the past, the young single adult hasn't had his own organization for fellowship. As a result he has become a leader in children or youth groups.

Today the churches with large children and youth programs have moved to the suburbs, where the families are. The young single adults are moving close to their work, the urban areas. In general, churches in the urban areas do not have the highly organized programs of the suburban churches. Therefore, the leaders of the church will have to plan diligently for places of service for the young single adult.

III. THE OPPORTUNITY TO PRAY

The young single adult can pray for himself as well as for other needs of the church. Most people have the concept that the individual in this category is an active, independent person and hence has no time for reflection and prayer. This is not so. The young single adult can become a co-worker with God and with his fellow man as he engages in intercessory prayer.

IV. PARTICIPATING IN THE WORSHIP SERVICE

There are many activities that can be performed by the young single adult in the worship service. His participation can be both quiet and active. Don't put him into a stereotype and accuse him of being active, independent and a part of a perverse "young generation." He can and will worship God. The young adult is searching for meaning in life. True worship will satisfy this demand. He is insecure and lonely for the most part. Fellowship with God through worship will give him inner confidence, resulting in spiritual growth.

The young single adult may be seeking self-identification. Self-knowledge is best obtained when reflected in the light of "God's knowledge." Perhaps the greatest potential worshipper in the church is the young single adult.

When called on to lead in prayer or to give a testimony he can share his faith with others, The young single adult who is musically inclined can present special music, sing in the choir, or even lead the song service. Also, he should be given opportunities to lead in his own group and in other such situations such as the Sunday evening meeting, the mid-week service or opening worship of the Sunday School hour.

Through both quiet and active participation in the services of the church, the young single adult develops a sense of fellowship and belonging that is important to his personal adjustment and hence to his spiritual as well as social well-being.

V. HELPING IN THE VISITATION PROGRAM

The young single adult desires to get out and do things, and be away from the home—even if he doesn't do so. If he lives at home, he is a member of the family circle, although not necessarily a vital member. If a young single adult is living away from home in a rented apartment, usually there is no one to whom he belongs. Looking at four walls is not an enjoyable way of spending an evening. Therefore, the young single adult desires to be out doing things. Use him in the visitation program of the church!

Use the young single adult to welcome and register guests as they arrive at the Sunday School; also to visit the sick, visit newcomers in the community, or invite prospective members to the church. The young single adult can help cultivate his sense of fellowship in the church by visiting with church members.

Through a visitation ministry, the young single adult can play a major part in the missionary outreach—the evangelistic emphasis of the local church. As he gives testimony to his satisfaction with the church growth and spiritual life, he can be a major influence in attracting others into the church fellowship.

VI. HELPING MAINTAIN CHURCH PROPERTY

The average young single adult has one room or a small apartment to keep clean and decorated. Usually he has no yard to keep landscaped. He has extra time and empty hands. If he feels capable of teaching or visiting on behalf of the church he can serve the Lord in those ways. There are others who might serve the Lord through the use of their hands. Many churches need remodeling, painting, or the addition of storage cabinets and other facilities. The young person who has time, energy and talent can serve the Lord in such practical ways. However, most large urban churches where young single adults congregate don't use donated help to improve the facilities. Usually a janitor is employed and a contractor is brought in for minor repair jobs. In like manner, the shrubbery and landscaping are usually kept by the church custodian. In the small rural or suburban churches where donated labor is used to improve the facilities, the young single adults are not likely to congregate. Church leaders should give attention to this matter of using the manual skills of the young single adult when and where possible.

VII. PERFORMING CLERICAL JOBS

The young single adult who has clerical or other white-collar experience often can use his abilities in helping with the clerical work of the church. He can write and edit the church Paper or take care of the church bulletin board. He can be used to keep detailed Sunday School records for follow-up and evangelization. Also, he could help in the addressing and mailing of church announcements. These means of service by the young single adult can save long hours of work for the pastor or director of Christian education.

The young single adults are often creative and can be used to write plays, supervise programs, plan and direct church-wide recreation and/or picnics.

VIII. HELPING CONDUCT CHURCH BUSINESS

There are many aspects of the business life of the church that can be conducted by the young single adult. The young person who has professional training can supervise the securities or holdings of the church, or a young lawyer can look after the wills and bequests where the church is the beneficiary. One who is in a building or architectural profession may save the pastor or members of the building committee many long hours by helping to supervise the construction of a new church building. The young single adult can also help the church engage in buying and sometimes disposing of property. The competent young person can relieve the pastor from much of the tedious detail work that takes energy away from his spiritual investment of time. Also, the young single adult can be the official representative of the church in its outreach into civic and community affairs. Thus the influence of the young single adult and the church is felt in the community.

IX. SERVING THROUGH "HELPING" JOBS

The young single adult can serve in the church's music ministry or speak to various groups in the church. He can be assigned as a church usher or a "greeter" in the Sunday School. He can help decorate the church. A group of young people can be given the responsibility for the interior decoration of a room. They can help direct traffic in the church parking lot or counsel with young people in the selection of vocations. Young single adults like to prepare and serve food for the church's social gatherings. They can become sponsors for high school retreats or act as camp counselors in the summer program.

In these small and various ways the young single adult can provide his apparent "widow's mite" investment in the church. His help may be unnoticed but when these tasks are left undone they become very obvious because the whole program bogs down.

X. REWARDS OF SERVICE

As the young single adult "gives" his life in service to God he usually finds "abundant life." This life is characterized by good personal and social adjustment, once again giving truth to the statement, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

The young single adult can enjoy the first of life for which the last was planned. His life can be a time of happiness and satisfaction or it can be a time of loneliness and despair. The young single adult who gives most in his youth will receive most later in life.

Christ during his earthly ministry would have been considered a "young single adult." Also, most scholars suggest that the disciples were young single adults. Yet, these men became the foundation of the Church.

The influence and service of the local church can be greatly multiplied and extended through the voluntary work of the young single adult. There is almost no financial cost. On the contrary, the church gains financially. As the young single adult "invests" his time and talents, he will see the need and invest his finances.

However, the services of the young single adult in the church will be meaningless and useless unless there is wise leadership in directing the investment of time and energy. As a result, both the church and its young single adult will benefit, the roles of both the young and the older church members will be modified, and the entire program of the church will take on renewed vigor and gain increased respect in the community.

FOOTNOTE

1. Viktor Frankl, essay, from *Are you Nobody?* by Paul Tournier, *et. al.* John Knox Press.

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