

FOLLOW-UP SURVEY QUESTION 23

Please share a specific recommendation for one way in which the church can show its support for single and single-again women.

I am not a fan of singles groups or even women's only ministry but think we benefit from **intergenerational** and diverse gatherings. Church leaders should help foster an attitude of marriage being an "if" not "when"

I think women small groups would be pretty cool. Not necessarily just single women, but women of **different generations** and relationship statuses. There's no need to separate the married from the non-married, we're all women, we all need to support each other in our different phases of life.

Invite and include them in activities especially ones that are **intergenerational** and include families. They don't have a family at home but they may want and need a family and can often feel excluded by so many things in the church that are so family oriented whether it's intentionally family-oriented or not

Not point it out so often, it separates people where there isn't a need for division. I also really hate the small groups that are focused around if you're married or not. Just have a **mixed generational** small group

By viewing single women as having valuable experience and gifts that can be used to bless the body, but also not ignoring the differences. For example, including singles in retreats, teaching classes, and ministry activities of the church; but also occasionally allowing separate single women's classes or activities that will address and encourage them in their differences.

They could show support by having special Bible classes for different categories of singledom. They could have a category for people who choose to be single, those who are single but want to be married, those who are single after being married and now divorced, and those who are single after losing a spouse to death (widowed).

Have some single girl Bible studies

Have the single women go to different functions together, or have classes regarding the Bible with specific topics.

Invite singles to sit with you in church and to go out to eat with your family. I want to be included and be part of a family and not be considered a single. I would like to be in a class of mixed ages instead of classes divided by stages in life.

Help organize classes or a group for them to join, having a particular elder or deacon who checks on this group

Not as many sequestered classes/groups with each life stage. We all need each other.

Maybe for those that are single again that go through the Divorce Care class those people will then form a Bible class and then after the next DC class ends they will join that Bible class as well. Basically people have a place to land after finishing with the DC class. And then if single visitors come and ask about a singles class there will be one that they can attend. "

Have meetings/small groups/service opportunities for us to foster friendship and support. Provide classes geared toward us without later taking it away.

Dedicated support group or Bible study class

Bible class that can create a community for single women to feel that they have a place

By not assuming everyone wants to be married. It always bothered me at my old churches that a married couple always taught the singles class. As if they were there to show us how it's done. Marriage is not my goal. My church now is wonderful in the way it plans & talks about the women ministry. There is no talk of married women, single women, moms, older women. We are just women & invited to all events & loved by all. I would also suggest to stop trying to incorporate women into small groups/classes by life stage. I belong to several small groups at my church & in one we have several couples with kids, me & my daughter & a single man. There has been no talk about us being the odd ones out or trying to pair us up. It's wonderful. I also belong to a special needs parents group with families of all shape & sizes. My ladies group has moms, singles, women with no children, older retirees & it is great to have everyone sharing with one another.

To ensure that single women are not just relegated to activities involving other single people. To be TRULY interested in "how they are doing" - REALLY get to know the single people in your church.

Give women more opportunities to spend time together, and serve alongside others.

Support groups or activities for single women

We have a class called SALT. Single Adults Living True. It is a mixture of men and women mainly from divorce, but we also have widows and widowers, women and men who have never married.

Think about what time you host women's events and what the theme is. I'd love to be a part of a women's group, but I can't meet Tuesday at 10:00am.

They have a single group for certain ages, but you have women over 50 who are single and then you have groups for older women, need to have a group for those who are over 50+ but not that old that they are not active.

Have welcoming events and personally invite one on one

Don't try to stick us in groups with only other single Christian women. We want to know all kinds of people in the congregation...old, young, married, single, families. We should all be doing things and working together no matter our status. Also, it would be nice if everyone didn't **assume** that we are all on the hunt for a man. Haha!

I am in a very small congregation but, possibly ladies' days and ladies' outings

Having a singles Bible study or small groups

Individuals hosting get-togethers for singles, so we can meet single guys from other congregations.

Have singles group

Special classes and babysitting

Have Christian singles get togethers

Having more activities like retreats for single women. A lot is geared towards couples or families.

Devos of encouragement

Include singles in activities

Have an event strictly for single women to connect and encourage one another and talk about these questions in this survey out loud so they know they aren't alone

Have support groups. Sisters want to feel included without being reminded of how single they are.

1) Organizing events for these ladies. 2) Make sure people stop asking these ladies if they meet someone special. The answer is Yes, and His name is Jesus. 3) Inviting these ladies to do normal daily things with them like random dinners at home or going out for a walk.

Offer activities that encourage positive activities and support friendship. That their opinion is valued.

More groups of women supporting women

My cousin's church has a Bible study specifically for single and single-again women. That would be a good space to voice specific things they struggle with.

Be aware of her needs and don't make her feel bad for needing help.

guide us where to turn for financial help

Either help with their car or teach them about cars any where from minor maintenance, to how to handle car salesmen.

Offer assistance with kids, chores don't expect to be asked, we'll go without. Nobody is trying to steal your husband.

Don't treat us like we did something wrong because we're single & don't have a man to represent us.

Adopt a single mom and her children as you would do for a niece in your family. Invite her in your family for lunch, take her kids to school or after school, teach them to bake cookies, or help with homework. Hang their drawing on your fridge so they see you value them when they come over. Invite a single mom for coffee so she can have a time to vent out (no need to fix anything, sometime we just need to talk it out like a married woman would talk to her hubby at the end of the day. come at her house and help her clean things up WITHOUT comment or judgement! Compliment her often, tell her children good things about their mom, tell her good things about her children.

JUDGEMENT/ASSUMPTIONS: I believe the church (especially church of Christ) has an especially difficult time showing support for single-again woman. Meaning divorced woman. The first thing I was asked after my divorce was if I had a "biblical reason" for it. Meaning did he had committed adultery because that is the only way it is not a sin to get divorced. Instead of insuring that the freshly broken-hearted woman it "biblical correct" or in need of condemnation herself by your human understand, why not ensure you are loving her as Jesus would have?

Single-again women need **shame-free resources**. Male preachers, pastors, and elders should frequently suggest PROFESSIONAL (not simply a mentor) connections to women going through anything difficult related to the female experience, but especially divorce.

Provide those casseroles for moms going through a divorce even if you aren't sure "who's at fault". And don't put us through a questionnaire. We've been through enough! We're drowning & trying to keep our kids from drowning!

Simply include them and don't make church so family oriented. Churches tend to be geared towards young families excluding not only singles, but Senior Citizens as well.

Be more open to the idea of being single and having discussions about it.

Having the leadership care about my opinions when having surveys, committees, etc.

Don't doubt our role as ministers. See beyond the pulpit and be open and see value in having women on staff.

Treat us as equal to married women.

Develop gifts in women, the many gifts in them. They will clean your church bathrooms and they will vacuum after events and do all the work. Often, though there is more than this gift of help available from them to the body.

While everyone needs community, single adults often feel this need more acutely as they don't have the support of family nearby. This can be a great opportunity for the church to be the family of Christ in real and tangible ways. Invite singles to have lunch with you - leftovers on paper plates are fine, we just want to be a part of your family. Invite singles to sit with you during worship- it can be really intimidating to see all of the couples and families sitting in neat little rows. If you know a single is out with the flu, offer to pick up a prescription or bring them a meal. If a single misses church, send them a text to check on them- we might need help, and even if we don't, it's nice to know that someone notices whether or not we are there.

Stay away from male-chauvinist comments

Encourage their single men

Put them to work.

Stop negative commentaries in churches about single women.

Treat them as any other. Does not matter whether you are single or married. In fact, I believe being single is better if you are strong enough for that

Involve them in various committees, i.e., missions, search committee for minister, planning education curriculum.

Include us in opportunities to serve

Don't create singles groups. We don't want to be "singled" out. We want to be a part of the group. There are other things you can have in common with people than just whether you are married or not.

Have a ministry for single women, especially older ones.

When speaking publicly (sermon, announcements, communion meditation, etc.) and giving examples, use examples of friendship, roommates, and siblings—not just marriage/spouse or relationships with your kids.

To get out of a comfort zone. Really care about someone beyond yourself & your immediate family. Have a greater understanding about what abuse looks like. Then stand up against it.

Give us support as single moms and let us serve in the congregation

To talk to us and maybe be our friend. Show us the same love that is shown to married women with kids. Don't shove marriage down our throats because even the sweetest of honey can become poison to the body if one is forced to eat too much.

Maybe have a group/or individual just check in on them.

Divorced women need to be included and kept “in the loop” — don’t **assume** they don’t want to be included just because they aren’t part of a couple. Invite them and allow them to make the choice for themselves and **don’t seat us at the “singles “ table unless we prefer to be there**

Be more inclusive in church - invite us over, include us in family events, don’t use marriage-language exclusively.

Maybe have community gatherings for single people split up by older and younger single people.

By offering more teaching or support groups for single women on growing spiritually that isn’t focused on preparing for marriage someday.

Don't be condescending. Let us help in everyday things

Just filling that void as a community

It would be great if families would invite singles to lunch or dinner on Sunday. Also to be invited to be a part of the youth activities.

Ask what kind of help I need and how I am doing in a serious manner, not just in passing.

Talking about singleness as much as they talk about “marriage and the family”.

Acknowledgement

Celebrate all women and their service without doing so through the lens of marriage and children. The highest calling we have is to serve God, not to be married and have children. Those are bonuses in this life and are not guaranteed to anyone. But we tend to elevate that above all other callings, especially for women.

For me personally, “single” groups are NOT the answer. I have found the greatest encouragement in church when I am recognized as a human first, not a single woman. I should also say that I have a wonderful church home that does exactly that. And I didn’t realize how desperately I needed that until I experienced it.

Including in meaningful ways, invitations to lunch, etc. Service that uses your talents.

Families don’t always match. More awareness with events and sermon topics.

Not just focusing on marriage or the “hope” of marriage in the future. Listen when we talk of our desires, which may include marriage, but don’t only focus on marriage. If you are teaching about living for God while single, let the lesson be taught by someone who is single. If it’s not just about singleness, let’s just all be women together, don’t just divide us into “single” and “married”

Individually reaching out to women who may be hesitant to go to a small group or participate in a ministry that more naturally attracts couples/families or something they may not want to go to alone.

I think the church should be more vocal about its single members, especially their older single members. Coming to college, I had never met someone over the age of 30 that wasn't married so getting to meet people that chose that lifestyle was so encouraging to see. Not getting married is never the "worst case scenario" like I grew up thinking, in fact there are infinitely more ways God can use single women to do His works. I think the church should have single women speak to high school and college aged girls regularly to show them that they do not have to be married and they do not have to be ashamed about it.

This is a challenging ministry no doubt. I have thought a lot about this and really cannot think of any.

By not pitying. If people are capable of having a conversation about something other than children and husbands that helps. Being truly welcomed into the lives of families in the church (not just some planned event full of awkward small talk) and not as just a babysitter.

Not to make them feel insignificant. That it doesn't matter if you are an elder or elder's wife who loses their spouse with all the support systems you provide for them, we need it too. Don't make us feel like we aren't as important as your fellow elder or elder's wife. Our loss is as hurtful as theirs is. Also, don't be afraid to be involved with singles/singles again. An Elder and their wife could meet with us monthly for a meal, so step up and guide, interact with us like you do with the College age and younger couples of our church.

Remember that single people don't have anyone who prioritises them. If a single person invites you round, she might really NEED you, not just extra socialising as it might be for marrieds. Don't expect us to attend every event. Come round our house! Don't expect us to entertain you, just come and slouch with us sometimes.

Have an area in which they can be involved; don't make them feel like they're not normal if they don't have a husband to share life with

By encouraging the men to ask the women out.

To not feel sorry for us and understand that most of the time single Christian women are super strong and could add a lot

Even though we act strong, just like the widows, we sometimes need help. I know that sometimes I need help with projects at home, but feel like I am too "young" to ask for assistance. It would be nice to know that there is someone to call on to help the single people too....

Make more activities for young people, encourage man to grow, to prepare and to teach them how to introduce a girl.

Women who had experienced times of singleness telling their stories and giving advice about how to trust God concerning the future. Also, not too much discussion of marriage relationships and some talk about the value of waiting and strengthening your relationship with Jesus is very encouraging.

The word family implies a lot. When you have an event that is meant for everyone at church, say that instead of “family xx”. When there is a “family” event, that does not feel like inclusion of all members.

A safe place to gather and support each other.

My congregation needs a support group for older singles. They're good at marriage help & divorce care, but after the divorce you're left to find your way on your own.

Support group for widows

Simply being accepted and included

Have deliberately heterogeneous community groups, where single women (widowed, divorced or otherwise, with children and without, of all ages) are mixed with married couples of ALL ages as well as single men of all types and ages, so that each small group mimics the overall demographic of the church body on a smaller scale, and people learn to relate to and support and love each other in community - like it used to be before someone came up with the horrible model of hanging out with your own kind 24/7. This is why we have such ignorance and judgement, and is the only way to not have cliques; and singles need to spend time with healthy married couples, each other, and be mentored by and be mentors to women/men who are older/younger than them.

Not acting like we're totally broken because we're not dating anyone.

Support groups! My single moms' group has literally crawled out of the darkness with me. They are such an amazingly understanding group of women that I will be forever grateful for.

Creating a real place between college and young marrieds for single people to belong. Or creating a church culture not based on life stage.

Recognition that being single is not a disease that needs to be cured.

I've heard more marriage sermons than I can count. I have heard one preacher say in a sermon on Mother's Day how mothers appreciate having single women of all ages to pick up slack where necessary and help them raise their children. It would be nice to have more encouraging sermons like that. That one comment in that sermon made me feel like I was actually a part of the congregation and useful, not just someone waiting around to get married.

Talk about being single!

Talk about Scriptural teachings on being single. Talk about it as a valid life choice, an important state, an offering to God. Scripture says that it is GOOD to be single and serve God with undivided attention... but we don't act that way.

And talk about it to the kids-- I came out of high school ready to get married, with a well-developed theology for being a wife and mother... but Life looked like long-term singleness... I felt very alone and didn't have any kind of theology for understanding it. And there's just no reason for that."

Have more things available that aren't for married people specifically

Don't comment on our single or feel compelled to fix is up with someone.

Three comments of "I don't know" or "At this point and time I'm not sure what suggestions I would give."