



Jesus Fellowship/  
Jesus Army  
Celibacy Inspirational  
Newsletter

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# 'I got a real buzz just hearing about celibacy'

For Jenny Priestley, becoming a celibate changed her life as much as her original conversion

"WHEN I WAS 17 and an art student, I remember watching a film on the destruction of the rain forests," says Jenny. "I was into vegetarianism and very sensitive to green issues, but for the first time became aware of the pain that we'd caused God because we'd hurt His world. Although not a Christian at the time, I felt a shame inside and found myself crying out to God." Jenny had begun her spiritual journey.

She later got baptised and was filled with the Holy Spirit. Soon afterwards, she attended a revival meeting in Devon, where she knelt down with many other young people as they gave their lives to God as instruments for revival in the nation. Surprising herself, Jenny also said to God, 'I'll even stay single for the rest of my life, if that's what you want!'

She moved to London to go to college and here she met some people from the Jesus Fellowship. She was gripped by the radical vision and moved into 'Battlecentre', one of the Fellowship's community houses in London.

"I was experiencing the power of first love for God and celibacy was something totally new to me," she adds. "But I saw it as something beautiful from the start, especially the way it was expressed through the brothers and sisters I met there. Something stirred within me as I saw their sold-outness for Jesus, their devotion, their sacrifice. The strength and life of their celibacy just drew me to them.

"Before, I'd had lots of friends, but now it was as if we all had the same goal and I had an overwhelming sense of fitting in. Whenever I heard about celibacy, I found an incredible buzz. I got so excited! I just wanted to know more about it! I found myself saying, 'I want spiritual children! Not natural children! That's me!'"

Jenny decided to try celibacy for a time and, for two and a half years, she tested it out. It was a time when high emotions drained away, worship lost its sparkle and she found God strengthening her mind and will. Jenny questioned God: 'What do You really want?'

As time went by, this became more and more clear. One night, lying in bed, she heard a quiet



Being single for Jesus has released Jenny's humanity

voice say, 'You can take your vow of celibacy now!'

"It was unemotional," she says, "but afterwards I found I carried a real sense of destiny. I seemed to change as much after making my celibate vow as I did when I was converted. Conversion changed my desires but celibacy changed something deeper in my character. I discovered an inner confidence I'd not known before and I began to feel for others in a new way. I found myself crying for friends that were struggling, just like a natural mother would for her children. I was beginning to gain a mother's heart.

Other people became part of me!

"I have found celibacy a great motivator. It makes you live from your spirit. Recently, I've been keying into what God has said, that a great harvest is ready in the UK. I believe celibacy puts you in touch with the heart of God. I've found as God has stripped me at times and tested my selfish motives, that somehow I've felt more in touch with Him and I know I've had more to give to others. Celibacy releases our humanity!"

## 'Celibacy puts you in touch with the heart of God'

From the Editor ...



## Freed to build brotherhood

IN *THE CELIBACY MYTH* by Charles Gallagher and Thomas Vandenberg, they write: "Celibacy is ultimately for the building up of the church as a community of faith. Of its nature, celibacy is not meant to be lived in private, it is a call to relationship."

This touches on what is at the heart of a celibate commitment. A poured-out life for the sake of others is the key to the costly choice to live unmarried. Celibacy frees people to build brotherhood friendships.

Celibacy is not there to show that it is possible to live alone, but rather to help us live with others. It is the gift that enables relationships to be forged.

This is a day when many are looking for genuine family and intimacy. God has provided this gift to help create community in a fragmented world. ■

## We are your servants

'HOW PRECIOUS virginity is to those who have grown up in this permissive society and have been mauled by its impurity and so-called "freedom". Those whose natural family has been deficient, sense in the celibate someone who has placed themselves at the disposal of all the lost and broken of mankind.'

Debbie Thornton,  
a sister in the Jesus Fellowship

## Fulfilled

'IF THE ONE who was 'tempted in every way, just as we are - yet without sin' (Hebrews 4:15) could live a fulfilled single life, he can enable His followers to do the same.'

Heather Wraight:  
Single: the Jesus Model

# Pathfinders!

Past and present heroes and heroines of celibacy

## David Brainerd

Missionary to the native American Indians  
(1718-1747)

DAVID BRAINERD was passionate to see the native American Indians converted to Jesus. His powerful love for God also took him through countless battles with depression, despair and self doubts. He also experienced severe physical suffering.

Born in Connecticut, USA, both his parents died by the age of 14. When he was 20, he knew a very powerful conviction of his sinfulness that led to his own conversion. It was a turning point in his life.

"One night I had opened to me such a view of my sin that I feared the ground would cleave asunder under my feet, and become my grave; and send my soul quick to hell, before I could get home."

He went to Yale University where he joined in with the spiritual awakening that was influencing the college. However, rash words about a tutor led to his expulsion in 1742.

In November 1742 he was accepted as a missionary by the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge. They sent him to work among the Indians living in New York and New Jersey.

For the next three years he laboured among the Indians without seeing any real fruit. "I lodge on a bundle of straw, my labour is hard and extremely difficult, and I have little appearance of success to comfort me."

Much study, with days of prayer and fasting and many attempts to communicate with the Indians, became the pattern of his life. Weak in body – at times not able to stand when preaching – he



carried on with faith and courage. "Rode several hours in the rain through the howling wilderness, although I was so disordered in body, that little or nothing but blood came from me."

He came to Crossweeksung (New Jersey) in June 1745. It was here that he made a real breakthrough. On one memorable occasion, the Holy Spirit moved strongly. "The power of God seemed to descend upon the assembly 'like a mighty rushing wind', and with an astonishing energy bore down all before it ... I stood amazed at the influence which seized the audience almost universally; and could compare it to nothing more aptly than the irresistible force of a mighty torrent."

This started a spate of conversions as an anointing of the Holy Spirit was at work.

Powaws or conjurers were so touched by God during meetings that spirits of conjuration completely left them and they were no longer able to use charms. Another effect among those converted was the ending of drunkenness (which was very common amongst the Indian population).

He became engaged to Jerusha Edwards, the daughter of Jonathan Edwards, the revivalist preacher. She was a perfect match for Brainerd, being passionate for Jesus. But when Brainerd considered his calling in Christ, he came to a clear conclusion: "Compared with the preciousness of an enlargement of Christ's kingdom, they [i.e. the joys of marriage] vanished like the stars before the rising sun."

From this moment, he was a committed celibate and saw that his missionary work could only be accomplished by such a sacrificial lifestyle. "If I had ten thousand lives, I would gladly lay them down for Christ!"

Nothing could hold him back. Travelling on horseback (he averaged 3,000 miles a year) in all weather conditions, he relentlessly pursued his vision.

He was finally forced to leave his beloved Indians because of sickness and died soon afterwards from consumption. He was aged 29.

# The Gift

IT IS strength to a father's arms  
As he guides his children on,  
Up through the lofty  
narrow paths  
And on to their mountain home.

It is the gentleness of the  
mother's embrace  
And the richness of her breasts,  
That brings her children  
nourishment,  
Protection, solace and rest.

It is the tenderness  
trembling on the lover's lips,  
Set on fire by the kisses of God.  
It is innocence  
gazing into unseen eyes  
That happily dies for the Lord.

It is sharpness  
to the warrior's sword  
By which the weakest may slay,  
Sure course  
to the bowman's arrows  
To find the heart of the prey.

For those who dare  
it is all these things:  
Single yet manifold,  
mysterious and bright.  
This is the gift of celibacy,  
Come down from  
the Father of Lights.

Wilf Copping, a brother  
in the Jesus Fellowship

## A crucified life

'THE ROOT and flower of celibacy  
is a crucified life.'

John Chrysostom,  
4th century preacher

## A special act of love

'THE FACT that some feel called to remain single for the sake of Jesus points to a special act of love and is a sign of an undivided heart ... such a person suffers for the sake of Jesus because the soul wants to be like Him in all things.'

Heni Arnold: *In the Image of God. Marriage and Chastity in the Christian Life*

## Celibacy and the Jesus Fellowship

CELIBACY is a gift and calling spoken of by Jesus (Matthew 19:12) and recommended by Paul (1 Corinthians 7:25-35). Around 300 men and women in the Jesus Fellowship nationwide have made the choice of staying single. They include single parents, the divorced, widows and widowers as well as single people of all ages and sexual orientation.

Available Soon ...

# Seven Silver Rings

The accounts of  
seven celibates from the Jesus  
Fellowship who tell their own stories  
with passion, humour and courage

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