



Jesus Fellowship/
modern Jesus army
Celibacy Inspirational
Newsletter

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Complete in Jesus

Once aimless and insecure, Craig has found fulfillment in living single for Jesus



Craig - now confidently pushing through barriers

LOOKING back Craig says, "My parents got divorced when I was 10 and I was brought up by my mother. My teenage years were mixed up and confused and I found myself searching for a father's love. I began mixing with a crowd who were older than me and I soon followed them into drugs - LSD, speed and marijuana. I fell in love with a woman and the relationship lasted about a year. When it broke up it left its mark. I was still longing for rest, security and acceptance and I looked in many directions."

Around this time Craig joined a band as a drummer which took him on tour abroad. "It was a great experience," he says, "but, on visiting Portugal, I saw many sights of injustice that I felt powerless to do anything about. I saw the poor treated with no dignity. I saw violence - it was awful. It all made me feel very uncomfortable. I was living in luxury land! I was breaking up inside and I could no longer be satisfied with my way of life."

"I can't live like this anymore. I've given my life to Jesus." Jez, who was in the same band as Craig, was speaking on the phone. Both men had experienced similar feelings in Portugal. Now Craig felt God speak straight into his heart in what he can only describe as "a great big sweep, one big mo-

ment." "I'm calling you and I died for you," he felt God say. "You've been seeking Me. Receive Me as your Saviour." I was aware I was a sinner. I felt set free from my pain and knew God was making me His son."

Craig split up with his girlfriend who he had been with for three years when he came to Jesus. "Before I found God," he adds, "I was not happy with myself. I was either overconfident and egotistical or I did not like myself at all! In relationships with women I never found fulfillment. I was always longing for something deeper. When Jesus came in I found Him to be the missing piece in my life. I didn't need anything else! I had been fatherless and now He had become my Father. I can only say my whole soul felt complete - and what is more - a new nature of loving was within me. I could love as God loved!"

"Craig, did you know you're moving in the gift of celibacy?" a friend remarked to him one day. "All I knew," said Craig, "was that I loved Jesus and I loved His church. 'You're probably right!' I said." After this Craig began asking God, "Are You really wanting me to be a celibate?" He began what the Jesus Fellowship call a probationary period of celibacy and two years later he made a celibate vow.

"Since becoming a celibate, I've been through painful times when God has rooted out lots of old things. These days I feel so much more stable and much of that self-rejection has gone. God has dressed me! I feel confident!

"There are temptations with women," Craig adds. "But I have found at my weakest times the Holy Spirit is at His strongest and He reminds me of what I am and what I've vowed. I've found it so important to keep open with others when I feel weak in the gift - and to be honest with myself, too.

"The gift of celibacy really excites me. It's got so much to do with relationships! It's poured out for people. God has given me deep companions and I treasure them. But there are so many more to come. I get so

excited about that! Lots of people see me as a spiritual father. On the building site where I work, they are just everyday guys, with no thought of God, but they come and talk to me and ask me for advice and I tell them about the gospel! There are so many people like them who are spiritually thirsty.

"I find being single for Jesus an amazing experience. It beckons me to push through the barriers that hinder me and I sense the Spirit surging inside, yearning to forge, to conquer, to break new ground. It's the prophetic gift stirring within me. There's a daring kind of reckless, passionate, fearlessness that goes on inside at times, just wanting to see His will accomplished within and around me."

'There's a daring kind of reckless, passionate, fearlessness inside me'



From the
Editor ...

The impossible Jesus

MUCH THAT Jesus spoke and lived on this earth seemed impossible and unreasonable to those around Him. He challenged the norms of His day and upset the expectations of friends and enemies alike. His life of celibacy was just one such area.

Jesus spoke of those who could 'receive' the call to be eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 19:12). The word 'receive' can also be translated 'make room for', 'adopt', 'achieve' or 'dare'. In other words, He issued a radical challenge to His followers to oppose the normal expectations of married life and abandon themselves to a single life of sacrificial devotion.

This unreasonable call comes as clear to us today as 2000 years ago. More than ever He needs those who will leave aside the natural desires for family life, making themselves available for the work of reaching the nation for Jesus. Let's go on doing the impossible for Him!

Huw Lewis
Huw Lewis

Visionary Motherhood

I USED TO want a large family with seven or so children, but when I was 26 I heard God's call to a different type of motherhood.

Celibacy for me as a woman is all about motherhood to a church - and to a vision. All mothers are 'poured out' people. My call is spiritual motherhood. Being 'poured out' in this way means no reservations for self and that includes self-consciousness, inferiority, self doubts and selfishness. These things block our ability to love. I've often found that to help someone truly I have to overcome one of these things.



Lesley Cutts, a celibate sister in the Jesus Fellowship

Pathfinders!

Past and present heroes and heroines of celibacy

Hilda of Whitby

(614-680AD)

'A blaze of light'

WHEN AIDAN arrived in England in 635 AD at the invitation of King Oswald of Northumbria he founded a monastery on the little island of Lindisfarne. This was to be a very successful mission and training centre for men.

But Aidan's vision stretched much wider than this. Around the year 647, the great Anglo Saxon historian, Bede, tells us that Aidan met Hilda, who was intending to depart to France to join a convent for celibate women. He saw her great potential and persuaded her to stay in England instead. She was to be instrumental in bringing the gospel to the English.

Hilda was born into an aristocratic family, her great uncle being the powerful King Edwin of the Northumbrians. While she was still very young, her father, Hereric, was for some reason banished from the royal court. Her mother, Breguswith, at this time had a dream that her husband was suddenly taken away, and though she searched for him, no trace of him could be found. Then suddenly, she found a most precious necklace under her garment which seemed to spread such a blaze of light that it filled all Britain with its splendour. Shortly after she found out that her husband had been poisoned and she was left to bring up her daughter.

Edwin was a heathen king, but several years before Aidan came to England a missionary called Paulinus arrived at Edwin's court and the powerful king was converted. Hilda, who was 13 at the time, was converted, too, and baptised. However, the times were stormy indeed, and when she was still only 19, Edwin was killed in battle and the new-found faith was driven underground.



From the age of 19 to 33 we know little about Hilda's life. Then we hear of her living in East Anglia and planning to sail to France to become a nun. Aidan was an opportunist. Having persuaded Hilda to stay, he acquired for her some land on the north of the River Wear where she lived a communal life with a small band of companions. After a year or so, she was made abbess of a monastery at Hartlepool. With the characteristic energy, industry and visionary enthusiasm which were to mark her life, she began establishing a Rule of Life.

Aidan and 'other devout men' visited her frequently to instruct and help her and they loved her heartily for her wisdom and devotion. Indeed, so successful was she that after several years a greater task was assigned to her. She was commissioned to go to Whitby, either to establish or set in order an existing monastery. She set up the same Rule of Life as at Hartlepool, teaching those in her care to concentrate on justice, devotion and the strength of celibacy as well as living steadfastly in peace and love.

Whitby Abbey quickly gained a reputation as a place of spiritual vitality and uncompromising zeal. Hilda vigorously insisted that it should be based on the lines of the early church where they had all things in common.

All who knew Hilda used to call her 'mother' because of her outstanding 'devotion and grace', Bede tells us. Her great wisdom became so renowned that not only ordinary people but kings and princes trekked to Whitby for counsel and many in the land came to the Lord through her far reaching influence. As Aidan had trained her, she trained others well, helping both men and women find their place in the rapidly expanding church. Several of England's most influential church leaders of that time were trained under her.

Towards the end of her life, although afflicted by a very painful disease, Hilda showed the same unremitting vision and determination that marked her earlier life. In the year of her death she founded a monastery at Hackness and, when about to die, she summoned the sisters of the Abbey and urged them to live at peace with each other and all men. 'Even while she was still exhorting them, she joyfully saw death approach,' as Bede writes. 'This dream (of her mother's) was truly fulfilled in her daughter Hilda; for her life was an example of the works of light, blessed not only to herself but to many who desire to live uprightly.'

Single-minded

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE to imagine a more single-minded person than He. Throughout His ministry He knew His business exactly. He could not be dissuaded from His agenda by the concerns of the crowds, the criticisms of the Pharisees, or the fears and hopes of His disciples.

He 'set His face' as He went toward Jerusalem, to His own death. This picture of Jesus steadfastly choosing to give His life is the greatest sign of the kingdom; everywhere that the kingdom has been preached, the cross has been used as a shorthand symbol for that single-minded self-sacrifice.

Tim Stafford (1989) Article in Pastoral Renewal

An overflowing life

LIFE MUST BE poured out one way or another - it cannot be contained. We single people will either overflow in service for God or in pity upon ourselves...The closeness of our fellowship with Christ on earth determines our capacity for eternal enjoyment of Him. The more time and thought and love we give Him now, the richer and deeper and fuller shall be our experience of God in eternity.

Margaret Clarkson (1978) Single

A Thorn and a Crown

CELIBACY IS a thorn, but also a crown. A crown to my sexuality. It lifts, redeems, purifies, heals, and makes holy the gift of the sexuality that God has given to me. Celibacy is a choice, a daily cross, a constant decision to yield that part of me to God - a gift shared with the Giver.

Sue Nicholls, a celibate sister in the Jesus Fellowship

Dedication

IF YOU'RE AN astronomer or athlete and celibate because of your dedication to the stars or sport, society doesn't label you negatively as it does the Catholic priest or nun. Those who are critical of celibacy in the religious life should be aware of its value and prevalence in other fields.

Teresa Bielecki (1990) Holy Daring

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.



Seven Silver Rings

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

80 pages. Price £2.99 (£3.50 by post).

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