



From the
Editor ...

Early call for Jens

God's answer to the heartfelt prayer of Jens was totally unexpected

"TELL ME about the future, God!" Jens prayed fervently as he lay on his bed one day. "Almost immediately," he says, "I was aware of the reply. 'I want you never to get married.' I'd never even heard of staying single for God before! In an instant I replied, 'Yes, OK!'" Jens, a young man of sixteen, was taken by surprise. "I realised," he says, "It was the clear, deep voice of God."

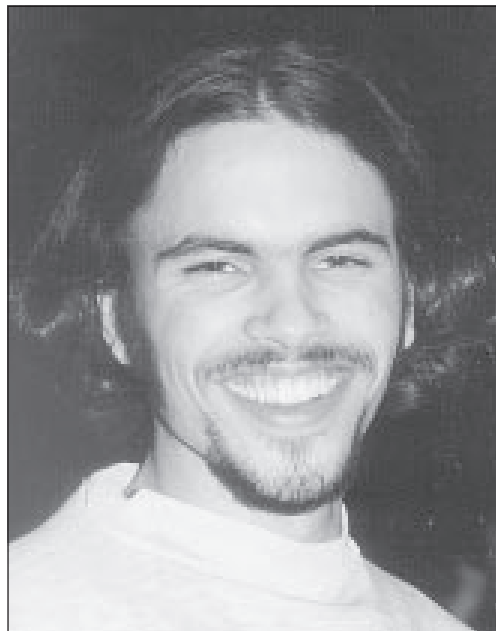
Jens Seidler's mother was a Brazilian and his father a German and Jens spent several years in South America as a young boy until his parents' marriage broke up when he was eight. A 'tug-of-love' ensued and young Jens experienced a time of great instability, torn between two parents and two countries for the next three years, before finally settling with his mother in Germany.

Ambitious and determined, Jens threw himself into schoolwork and sport and it looked like the future held much promise in terms of a career. Yet, as he entered his teens, he found himself above all, longing to find God. After much searching and waiting he had an experience of being filled with the Holy Spirit, and he found this seemed to whet his appetite even more.

He was overtaken with such profound and intense longings for God at this time that he spent hours praying, seeking for a deeper experience and knowledge of God. A turning point came when he realised that God was his Father. Until this point he had carried a great fear of God and an intense determination to follow Him. Now, he grasped much more the significance of God's love towards him. It was this time, too, that Jens felt the call to celibacy.

In 1994 Jens came over to England to stay in a Jesus Fellowship house for a year before he decided to move in for good and here he discovered many others who had received a like call to celibacy. Finding others of a similar heart was a strengthening experience but often painful, too.

In Germany, he had found a strong relationship with God, but celibates, as Jens so readily acknowledges, need strong bonds of brotherly friendship, too. "Iron sharpens iron,"



Celibacy has been a journey of discovery

(Proverbs 27:17) he adds, smiling. "I was used to being a very independent Christian. In community you can't avoid people! Every agape (the weekly special meal in each Jesus Fellowship household) I and the brother who worked with me had to be reconciled before we took the Bread and Wine. We were always repenting and saying 'sorry'. In the end God forged a deep friendship between us."

In the 13th century St Francis, the famous Italian Friar, lived as a committed celibate. He was both outgoing missionary, church builder as well as a deep contemplative and Jens has found depths of inspiration from his example. "Most days when I can, I go evangelising," he continues. "I love sharing the gospel with people."

For Jens, there is so much to explore, to discover about God and living life before Him as a celibate. "I'm on a journey of discovery," he says. "I still find a dissatisfaction within me and I'm hungry for more. There is more! I want to go deeper with God and I want to discover myself and what I can do in God. This is part of being celibate - you're still searching."

Jens is twenty-three. The unsettled years of his early life have been overtaken by those of a young man who has put his roots strongly into God - a God who has called him to both community brotherhood and celibacy.

'I realised it was the clear, deep voice of God'

Beyond the selfish gene

MANKIND'S BIOLOGICAL drive to reproduce is immensely strong. Richard Dawkins, the evolutionist, claims to have explained all life and behaviour as a selfish strategy of genes to copy themselves in order to ensure their own survival. Biologically, the real master of our choices is said to be based on genetic replication.

But disciples of Jesus have another 'Master' who has first claim on our lives and inspires us to live by our God-given spiritual genes more than our biological DNA. God is Spirit and His life releases a whole new spiritual dimension.

The radical church - where these disciples are joined together - is God's antidote to the selfishness in man and celibacy has a vital place in this.

For the celibate the choice is one of spiritual self-denial in favour of God's life, reproducing the spiritual and eternal, rather than the natural and temporal.

For Christians who have learned to live like the servant-hearted Jesus there is uncreated life beyond the selfish gene.

Huw Lewis

Support vital for celibates

CELIBACY IS possible and even relatively easy when one is truly sustained by the friendship of others with the same ideal, and when one enjoys the esteem of the Christian community.

*Yves Raguin:
Celibacy for our Time*

'A Pure Being'

IN 1738, the Wesley brothers, Charles and John, were converted. For fifty years, from field to barn, in open squares and private houses, John would go, travelling miles on horseback in his endeavours to bring the gospel to the many thousands that the church had never reached.

It was revival, but no one man could do it alone. Where he left off, others had to carry on the work. From the one fire, many sparks would fly and ignite other fires in different parts of the country. One such spark was a young woman whose name was Ann Cutler.

"Careless of life and so careful for God's kingdom" was the way one historian described the life of this young woman. Born in Preston in 1759, Ann Cutler was converted through the ministry of William Bramwell, an early travelling Methodist preacher. Her life span was short - she only lived 35 years - but during that time she was used by God to bring about revivals in the mining and weaving areas of North England. Bramwell, her spiritual father, was to write an account of her life, some of which is quoted below.

Ann would go to different towns in the North, devoting herself to prayer and intercession for that place. Revival would follow. At Dewsbury in Yorkshire "Ann Cutler joined us in continual prayer to God for a revival of His work." Here, some of the hardest people "were suddenly struck, and in agonies groaned for deliverance" and "great numbers" turned to the Lord. At other places where she travelled to pray, very often, twenty or more were saved in one meeting. "Wherever she went there was an amazing power of God attending her prayers."

Ann was known for her purity, her closeness of walk with God, her tenderness of heart and her relentless commitment and "tranquil" hard work as she laboured to see the Kingdom of God established. She was described as "A pure being" raised up by God "to bless the church in these days of strife." She was part of a large circle of similarly consecrated women who carried "a fragrant spirit of holiness, which was like ointment poured forth about the altars of Methodism."

Due to her great zeal for God and her desire to be totally given over to what she felt He had called her to do, Ann had decided to become a celibate. "I am wholly Thine, blessed Jesus," she wrote in a formal covenant. "I am wholly Thine! I will have none but Thee. Preserve Thou my soul and body pure in Thy sight. Give me strength to shun

**'If Thou wilt be mine
I will be Thine, and cleave to
none other in this world'**

every appearance of evil. In my looks keep me pure, a chaste virgin to Christ forever. I promise Thee, on bended knees, that if Thou wilt be mine I will be Thine, and cleave to none other in this world."

Ann was never a public figure. She seldom spoke in meetings but wherever she went and "prayed behind the scenes" people were converted. "Her power was in her prayers, which melted the most hardened assemblies." She got up at midnight to pray and then, from four to five each morning, she would be up again, interceding for God's work to be established in the land.

On the morning of her death she was awake before the dawn, as was her habit, worshipping and praising God. "She died as she had lived" and looking around at those gathered around her, she exclaimed, "I am going to die. Glory be to God and the Lamb for ever!" They were her last words, a woman who had lived and died as a celibate, "so careful for God's kingdom."

Continual passion for Jesus



"I RECEIVED the gift of celibacy over twenty years ago, when I was thirty.

Looking back over the years, I am so thankful to God for His grace and for so many opportunities to serve Him and build His church.

The gift of celibacy is built into my foundation as a man and fires up my other gifts. I find a continual passion for Jesus and His church. It is great to be set apart for service with few distractions. I would always recommend that every single person considers the gift of celibacy and if they are able, to receive the gift."

Mick Haines

'Being single frees me to care'

"I WAS a single mother and God had a lot of healing to do in me before I was ready to chose my calling.

I felt God beginning to woo me, to say that if I became a celibate I would be more free to seek Him, to spend time with Him. Being single frees me to care for young and old, male and female. I am able to be-

friend people, to form relationships, to support and commit myself to people for life."



Mhairi Campbell-Fowler

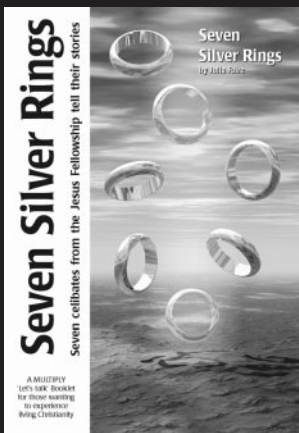
Celibacy and the Jesus Fellowship

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.

For info/help please contact: Jesus Fellowship Central Offices, Nether Heyford, Northampton NN7 3LB, UK

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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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