



Celibacy and the Jesus Fellowship

The Jesus Fellowship began in the early seventies following a move of the Holy Spirit amongst people attending Bugbrooke Baptist Chapel in Northamptonshire. Arising out of this new move was a community lifestyle for some and also a call to celibacy. Today around 250 men and women in the Jesus Fellowship nation-wide have made the choice to stay single for Jesus. They include single parents, divorced people, widows and widowers as well as single people of all ages and sexual orientations.

FEEDBACK

We are always pleased to hear from any who reads 'Undivided' and will always try to answer any questions directed to the Editor. Address correspondence to: The Editor, Undivided, Jesus Fellowship Central Offices, Nether Heyford, Northants NN7 3LB or email: huw@jesus.org.uk



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'... to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord' (1 Corinthians 7:35)

UNDIVIDED

JESUS FELLOWSHIP /
MODERN JESUS ARMY
CELIBACY
INSPIRATIONAL
NEWSLETTER

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FROM THE
EDITOR ...

An expansion of love

At the heart of Christian celibacy is a losing of oneself for a greater cause - laying down personal desires in order to create a stronger church. Such genuine sacrifice always leads to an enlargement of the heart and a greater capacity to love.

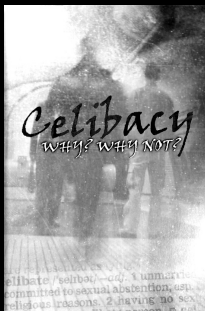
Celibates can avoid what John Wesley called, "the greatest of all entanglements - the loving of one creature above all others," by being available to serve all.

Undivided love is an expansion of love not a restriction. It closes down some options in order to open up others. There is a freedom in this sacrifice and a joy in loving the many, serving the people of God, rather than focussing on one or expecting any one person to fulfill our needs.

This abandoned life must reject the temptation to look back with regrets or seek to resolve unfinished business and unexplored territory. This gift must be invested again and again in the church.

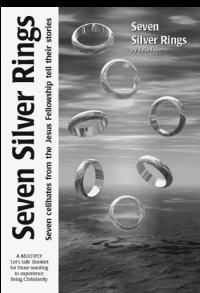
Huw Lewis

HAVE A LOOK!



The video, 'Why? Why Not?' Six men and women speak about what it means for them to have chosen to be celibate for God and the path that led them to make that decision

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Seven Silver Rings

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

Francis Xavier (1506 - 1552)

A single-hearted passion for souls

FRANCIS XAVIER has been described as 'The Apostle to India and its surrounding regions'. Celibate pioneer, evangelist, miracle worker and church-planter, he laboured with tireless energy and great power and effectiveness, travelling thousands of miles around India and Japan before attempting to cross over to China. One of his biographers estimates that he preached, personally, to more people than anyone else since New Testament times.

Xavier was born in Navarre in Spain, the youngest child of a very large aristocratic family. Ambitious, fiery and in possession of a full-blown passionate Spanish temperament, he grew up to love sport and physical activity but, whilst a teenager, decided against the military career his elder brothers chose and went to Paris University instead. Here his ambition and self-seeking was challenged. He brought with him nothing but his consuming love for God and the souls of his fellow men' who agreed to put him ashore secretly but, while awaiting his arrival, Xavier was taken ill and died.

Although only 46 at his death, Xavier's ambition for the conversion of many people and the building of the Church in India and Japan had been richly rewarded. He left behind him many flourishing churches and the effects of his work still remains today.

Xavier's ambitious nature had been truly transformed from that of a self-seeking man to one possessed of single-minded passion to gain others for Christ and to His Kingdom. He wrote in a letter to Ignatius Loyola: "Many, many people hereabouts are not becoming Christians for one reason only: there is nobody to make them Christians. Again and again I have thought of going around the universities of Europe, especially Paris, and crying out to the scholars: 'What a tragedy: how many souls are being shut out of heaven, thanks to you!' This thought would certainly stir most of them to listen actively to what God is saying to them. They would forget their own desires and give themselves over entirely to God's will and his choice. They would cry out with all their heart: 'Lord, here am I! Send me. Send me anywhere you like - even to India.'"

Xavier believed in the power of Christ to change people's lives. Wherever he went he told people about Jesus and his life reads rather like that of Paul's. He healed the sick, raised the dead, even calmed a storm and preached the gospel to people in a language unknown to him, as Jesus' first followers did at Pentecost. Thousands were converted through his preaching - in one month alone he is recorded as baptising 10,000 people.

About the outset of his journey, one of his biographers writes: "He saw a vast new world opening before him and his one desire was to win it for Christ. He brought with him nothing but his consuming love for God and for the souls of his fellow men.

Xavier was a Christ-like man who believed in showing his single-hearted love for Christ in practical love

for others. As a missionary he poured his energies into visiting the sick in the hospitals and those in the prisons and he ate the same food as the poorest people. The oppression and exploitation of the Europeans towards the Indian people wounded him deeply and he was outspoken and fearless in his criticism of their ways.

He was a man of fervent prayer, often spending the greater part of the night in prayer and sometimes had to pray that God would not overwhelm him with too great an abundance of joy and spiritual life!

After seven years in South India and the surrounding regions Xavier moved onto Japan and again saw hundreds converted through his ministry. Not content with this, his ambition was to take the gospel to China, a country at that time closed to foreigners. He found the captain of a Chinese junk who agreed to put him ashore secretly but, while awaiting his arrival, Xavier was taken ill and died.

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<http://www.cin.org/xavier1.html>



a garment that fits!

Vanessa Smith (31) lives at the Jesus Fellowship house, 'Gates of Praise', in Kettering, Northamptonshire and works as an accountant for Mason Bullock, the Fellowship's firm of solicitors. She will have been a celibate for 10 years later this year and speaks about her calling.

When we make a commitment to someone for the rest of our lives we can never really appreciate what this means until we have travelled a bit further on into the journey. It is now nearly ten years since I made my celibate commitment and, like any relationship, it has taken many setbacks and been through many trials but they have only ever served to strengthen and deepen my resolve to live fully for God in this way.

When I first made my vow it felt so right that I naively thought I would never kick against it. How very wrong I was! Over the years I have kicked, screamed, ranted and raved and, at times in my heart, totally betrayed this beautiful gift of God. God was having to show me that it would only ever be His grace that would keep this gift alive in me.

I came to a place where I felt utterly helpless in being able to keep the gift alive in me. It seemed like everything in me was opposing it and yet I said, as Jesus did in Gethsemane, 'Father, if You are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but Yours be done.' (Luke 22:42). This was the experience that led me through the cross and out to the other side and I have never been the same since. For the

first time since I made my vow I can sincerely say with all my heart that the garment of celibacy finally fits - it is really me. It is not superficial, or a dream, or something that will fade; it is absolutely amazing. I have begun over this last year to know the reality of being married to Jesus and to 'Zion', His church, His bride and the intimacy of being possessed by the Holy Spirit (there is really nothing to compare with this.) I have also known the deep heartache of being a mother in Zion and longing for the church. I have felt so free to move with the Holy Spirit, how He would direct me.

I feel happily 'married' now and I also have many spiritual children and yet there is always room to love an extra one. Celibacy gives you the freedom to love everyone. There never needs to be any limits as to what you give. It is a gift from God to bless and serve others and, as you find new faith to live in it, you can reach into so many things. It only becomes dull, boring and hard work if you live it for yourself.

Relationships with other celibates have been vital to my continued growth. I have also valued the married friends I have - and their children too. I believe you

need a real balance of friendships as a celibate from small children to older people. Each one will bring you something you need that makes the gift more beautiful.

Celibacy is an amazing gift of love that has the power to enhance all you do in living for Jesus. I have many heroines who have trod this way before me and have really inspired me: Mother Teresa and Basilea Schlink amongst others. Their greatest influence upon me is to show me the need for a consistent contemplative and prayer life that matches my service for God. This for me has been one of the real secrets of how I keep going and how I keep discovering more of Jesus. Prayer is the oxygen for my

"Celibacy gives you the freedom to love everyone"

celibacy. If I stop communing with God, I die, spiritually.

I am nobody special; it's a miracle of God's grace that I am celibate. I have tasted the dregs of failure but I've learned to keep running. I have known my deep need of my brethren more and more. I could not be what I am without their love, their covering and their constant encouragement.