

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

UNDIVIDED

JESUS FELLOWSHIP/
MODERN JESUS ARMY

CELIBACY
INSPIRATIONAL
NEWSLETTER

OCT 2006 NO.23



FROM THE
EDITOR ...

Web site 'blogs' – personal journals posted on the internet - have become an increasingly popular means of communication. I here quote from one based on celibacy written by a member of the Jesus Fellowship, called 'The Celibate Life Unveiled'.

'Celibacy isn't an end in itself. It's just one way – a bloomin' excellent way, I might add – of expressing the kingdom of God. When I decided to be celibate, it was because I had seen the kingdom. It wasn't because I had found this wonderful lifestyle called celibacy; it was because I wanted the amazing treasure that is the kingdom of God and I knew I had to 'sell everything' for it. So really it's the kingdom of God I want to go on about.

But I've found myself getting frustrated. On the one hand, having just recently started a blog, I need to explain what celibacy's all about; on the other hand, (I'm starting to rant now...) why should I spend all my time going on about something that just makes me sound like I'm blowing my own trumpet? And what's the point in telling people about how wonderful it is to live single, when all they really want to do is get it together with someone like the rest of humanity? And what's the point in making a big deal over something that doesn't appeal to anyone in the slightest? Something that's unpopular! Something that's unnatural! Impossible! Even darn right weird.

I'll tell you what the point is. The point of it all is the kingdom of God. When people truly see the kingdom of God, they tend to want to give up everything for it. They want to live for it with everything they've got. And often, for some, celibacy is just round the corner.

So I'll go on about it less from now on. I'll go on about the Kingdom. And my life.'

Huw Lewis

www.celibatelife.blogspot.com

The single women of the Chinese Inland Mission

Western single women missionaries made a huge impact on the small but growing Chinese church of the 19th and early 20th centuries. They found that being single carried huge advantages: without the ties of family, they courageously worked to spread the gospel and establish and grow the Chinese church. Risking their lives, they crossed the vast tracks of inland China, passing through the inhospitable Gobi Desert and Tibetan foothills, often visiting places where no European man – let alone a woman - had ever visited. On the way they faced treacherous weather conditions, bandits, civil war, anti-western feeling, superstition and misunderstandings. Many died of cholera and dysentery and others underwent a violent death.

China had been closed to foreigners before the Treaty of Nanking in 1843 and it was closed again in 1949. For just over 100 years western missionaries were allowed to enter China to spread the gospel. In these years various missions operated, including the China Inland Mission founded by Hudson Taylor in 1865. The mission's ethos was radical. Missionaries were to respect and follow Chinese customs, wear Chinese dress and eat Chinese style – but none was more radical than the encouraging of single women as well as men to go to China as equal members of the mission. It was unthinkable for single women to go abroad alone. If women felt called to go overseas, they had to find someone to marry with the same vision! Missionaries were always men – and usually ordained. Hudson Taylor's policy to recruit single women as missionaries scandalised Victorian Britain and was bitterly criticised by some of his fellow missionaries. In 1866 he landed in China with the first group of missionaries and this included 8 single women.

The single women missionaries (many of whom were in their early twenties when they arrived) taught and evangelised, both in the churches and the many schools they founded. Unlike the male missionaries, they were able to enter the homes of Chinese women who spent most of the time in their homes as semi-invalids, following the centuries-old foot-binding tradition. These missionaries brought many Chinese women to Jesus and enabled them to

tell their neighbours and families about Jesus.

Hudson Taylor wanted to encourage an indigenous church and the single women missionaries were able to support and encourage local pastors. Women carried an advantage in that they were not seen as a threat. If missionary men were around, the Chinese leaders expected them to lead. Florence Young, one of these single missionaries, relates how the mission work was 'carried on by single ladies, assisted by Chinese pastors and evangelists ... it gives the Chinese workers fuller scope and responsibility; and yet provides the oversight, teaching and directions which is so necessary ... vigorous native churches were formed; school opened for boys and for girls .. and in the country districts many out-stations were opened.'

D.L. Moody's evangelistic campaigns in the UK in the early 1880's stirred great increase in evangelism overseas and in 1890 Hudson Taylor appealed for people around the world to pray for 1000 new missionaries

'By 1900 women missionaries outnumbered the men two to one'

for China. The numbers of single women joining the mission steadily increased and by 1900 women missionaries outnumbered the men two to one.

It is impossible here to do little more than mention the names of some of these single women missionaries: Mary Ann Aldersey was the first single woman to go to China in 1843. She opened up a school for very poor Chinese girls. Nellie Marchbank, a missionary to the interior and trainer of other women missionaries, wrote that when riots ransacked the town 'our peace and our safety lies (under God) in the fact that we are women.' Mildred Cable, Eva and Francesca French (see Undivided no.17) shared a ministry for over 35 years before they died in the 1950s and 1960s. Their work spread across the 4 northern provinces of China and beyond. Susie and Annie Garland from Australia were evangelists and teachers, spending most of their years in China in the distant border provinces, cut off from the western world. Susie was a key figure in developing a phonetic script that was accessible to the Chinese; this was then used throughout the churches so that the Bible became accessible to far more people as it used 39 characters rather than 4000! She also developed Braille figures suitable for Chinese blind people.



A powerful experience of God in India set Jake on a totally unexpected course

No pain, no gain!

JAKE ORGAN (35) was born in Tooting in south London. His parents had been part of the hippie movement of the 60's and Jake describes his upbringing as "wild and surrounded by promiscuity." In Jake's early years, his father slipped into serious drug addiction and his mother drank heavily. His parents divorced when he was four.

He became a communist and began experimenting with drugs and alcohol. He also led a street gang. "I had a mad life," he said, "and I was very promiscuous."

Speaking of his life in his early twenties Jake said, "God began revealing Himself to me. At times, as I looked into the sunset and into starry nights I thought, 'there is more to life than this.' I longed for purity. I went to India and had a powerful experience of God speaking to me. I became aware of the emptiness of the world and didn't want to play the game anymore. Coming home, I went to rehab and had a vision of Jesus in a yoga class!"

Shortly afterwards, Jake was invited by members of the Jesus Fellowship in Oxford to the

Christian multimedia production, "Bleeding Life." During the evening there was a slot on celibacy and Nathan White, 19, stood on stage and said, "I'm a celibate for Jesus!" Jake thought, 'This is ridiculous! It's humanly impossible!' It was certainly a challenge.

Jake joined the Jesus Fellowship in January 1995 and later that year moved into a Fellowship community house in Oxford. He said of this time, "I was developing a love relationship with Jesus. I worked in a bookshop in Oxford and a book came in about the life of St Theresa of Avila from Spain (See Undivided no. 7.) I read it and it gave me a hunger to be celibate, a longing to lead a pure life for God alone. I got into contemplative prayer and found a great love for God."

After over two years as a probationary celibate, Jake made his celibate vow in 1998.

Jake continues the story: "After my vow all hell broke loose. The old twisted stuff began to come back. I went through long periods of being the only single brother in the house. There was temptation, pain and loneliness. I screamed at God - I felt so angry with Him. 'I can't take any more!' I cried. I kept on trying to build up the brothers' scene in our house and it collapsed again and again. There were loads of women at work to tempt me and then I fell

in love with someone we had met evangelising.

"I became bitter and discouraged. Then I began working for Atmos (a Jesus Fellowship church business) and my need of companionship started to be met.

"I have found restoration and felt whole as a single person. I have formed strong friendships and have grown a lot in terms of spiritual fatherhood. In 2003 another single brother, Jason, came to join us in Oxford. Now I can envisage being celibate for the rest of my life – once it was for just one day at a time!

"As a celibate you need all sorts of different people around you who are of the same Spirit. I'm glad community is more than a male brotherhood! In community there are old and young people and you find mothers and sisters, sons and daughters.

"The pain of celibacy helps us understand the human condition e.g. you can connect with the pain of people going through divorce and widowhood, who are left on their own.

"I was never fathered when I was growing up but I've found a father's love in God and I convey that to younger men.

"Celibacy opens you to God's gifts but you have to go through the cross to get there. Celibacy is not a ticket to fruitfulness without pain."

"Celibacy opens you to God's gifts but you have to go through the cross to get there"



QUOTES

How much better it is neither to marry nor to burn! You ought to choose things which are good for you rather than which are nearly not bad for you...By celibacy you will buy up a great stock of holiness, by making savings of the flesh, you will be able to invest in the spirit.

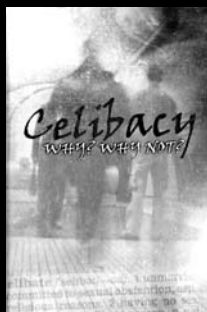
Tertullian (160-220)

I am a witness to the perfect joy and satisfaction of a single life, with a tail of human ragtag hanging on behind.

Mary Slessor (1848-1915)

FEEDBACK

We are always pleased to hear from any who read '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.lewis@jesus.org.uk



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

AVAILABLE FROM JESUS PEOPLE SHOP, NETHER HEYFORD, NORTHAMPTON NN7 3LB, UK

TEL: 0845 166 8172 www.jesus.org.uk



Seven Silver Rings



NEW SEVEN SILVER RINGS OUT SOON!

An updated and enlarged Seven Silver Rings will be published shortly. This will include new chapters on the history and biblical background to Celibacy as well as answering some of those frequently asked questions about living single for Jesus. Comprehensive and challenging, it sets out to show how a radical lifestyle of undivided love for Jesus and His

church is possible in the 21st century. This voluntary choice is far removed from the institutional forms of celibacy.



For info/help contact:

Jesus Fellowship Central Offices, Nether Heyford, Northampton NN7 3LB, UK

Tel: 0845 123 5550

Txt: 07969 679 501

www.jesus.org.uk

e: info@jesus.org.uk

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