

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

Undivided



FROM THE
EDITOR ...

JESUS FELLOWSHIP/
MODERN JESUS ARMY

**CELIBACY
INSPIRATIONAL
NEWSLETTER**

OCT 2007 NO.25

I quote from a recent article written by one of the J Gen (aged 15-35) leaders in our church concerning the radical call to celibacy in this year which we have called the 'Year of the Fighting Spirit'.

Celibacy and the Fighting Spirit

He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord (1 Corinthians 7:32)

No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs, rather, they try to please their commanding officer. (2 Timothy 2: 4)

If you're of the fighting spirit you won't be saying "What I want is my natural life, my family unit, the security of a husband".

You won't be saying "pleasure, sex, babies, a wife to wash my socks-that's my priority".

You'll be saying "take me to the front line! I want to spend myself fully in the service of the king!" The fighting spirit says "How can I make myself more available?" "How can I serve You more, Lord Jesus Christ?" "Can I be more at Your service?"

It looks at Jesus bleeding, dying, giving His all for us and says "Yes- I will follow Him in His sacrifice. Let Him have my all- all my time, my love, my attention."

It doesn't demand that God provide it with a cosy domestic scene. It doesn't crave the security of a warm semi-detached box with all mod cons. It doesn't centre on its own desire.

So, the question for us all is age-old; it runs like this: "Are we the soldiers of the cross, the followers of the Lamb?"

Or are we actually pretend Christians who simply lie to Christ when we sing about offering Him our lives?

Face facts: do we really need to carry a real cross to follow Jesus? Yes.

Can an army advance without loss, risk, blood? No. Did Jesus deny himself marriage? Yes.

Why? Because He was totally fixed on fulfilling His mission and winning the fight to bring in the new life of the kingdom of heaven. Turning the world upside down!

Huw Lewis



Lilias Trotter belonged to a generation of Victorian women for whom the life of singleness, carried immense opportunities as a way to fruitfulness within a missionary call.

Lilias Trotter, described by her biographer as the 'Mother Teresa of Algeria,' was born in London in 1853. Her father was a successful stockbroker and Lilias enjoyed all the privileges of a wealthy upper class upbringing in London's fashionable West End.

Lilias' parents were Christians and the young 'Tiger Lily' as she was known because of her fighting spirit and determined nature, was brought up in a secure and loving home. However, her father's death when she was twelve plunged her both into great sorrow and a personal journey to find a deep relationship with God and His purposes for her life.

In 1875 the American evangelist D.L. Moody held a campaign in London and the young Lilias acted as a counsellor for enquirers. In this time she learned lessons in evangelism that she would never forget. She became involved in the early movement of the Y.W.C.A. and evangelised prostitutes, helping them find shelter and employment. She also established the first public restaurant for London's working women. Lilias' choice to work amongst the most despised of society separated her in some ways from the kinds of people she had been brought up with as they liked more fashionable social work.

From an early age Lilias had showed great artistic talent and in 1876, on a European holiday, she chanced to meet the celebrated philosopher, art and social critic, John Ruskin. He immediately recognised her talent and chose to personally mentor her, telling her that if she devoted herself to art she had a brilliant future and could become the greatest living painter.

Lilias faced a hard and difficult choice; she could hardly eat or sleep. The choice was this - hard work in Christian ministry? Or fame and fortune plus a highly stimulating life amongst the artists and intellectuals of the day?

To the disappointment of some of those around her and not least John Ruskin, in May 1879 she wrote: I see as clear as daylight now, I cannot give myself to painting in the way he means and continue still to 'seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.'

Lilias continued her outreach work in London and in her twenties suffered a serious illness what permanently affected her heart. It was in her early thirties that she began to sense God calling her to the French colony of Algeria but when she applied to a mission society she was turned down due to bad health. Undeterred as ever, in 1888 at the age of 34 and accompanied by two other single women, 'Tiger Lily' left for Algeria.

The three women set about learning Arabic and meeting and identifying with local people. "Oh, to get down amongst them as Jesus did," she wrote. They found the going tough in a country strongly entrenched in Islam; converts were sometimes given brain drugs by the local people, producing a paralysis of mind and will, often followed by the casting of spells. At times they met resistance from the French government and spies followed their trail; converts

were made and lost, fellow workers left the field. Lilias and her companions, sensing God's call to continue, battled on, braving bandits, desert storms and intense heat as they entered deep into the heart of the Sahara. Here they met Arab people who had never seen a European, let alone a European woman!

Slowly the tide began to turn and fifteen outposts were founded throughout the country. The number of converts steadily increased and helpers joined the work. Lilias, using all her artistic and creative skills, devised methods to communicate the gospel in ways that the Arab people could understand. She wrote well over 100 publications, plus many shorter leaflets. In her last years, Lilias' heart problem confined her to bed. From here she continued to intercede, direct what was now called the 'Algiers Mission Band,' train future leaders for the mission work and write books.

Her gift of singleness meant she could give herself without distraction to the things she was most passionate about – bringing Algerian people to faith in Christ and building an indigenous church within their country. Having learned utter dependence on God, she saw the seemingly impossible become a reality.



Chris Smith is a celibate leader at 'Crown of Life,' a Jesus Fellowship church household in Sheffield.

Chris 'Compassionate' as he is known in the Jesus Fellowship was born in Barnsley in 1953. His parents were nominal Christians and it was while he was studying philosophy at Cambridge University that he first heard and later responded to the discipleship call of Jesus.

After his conversion Chris came across the Apostle Paul's advice to the Corinthian Christians about the advantages of a single life, realised that this was an option he could choose in order to serve God in an 'undivided' way. In response he said goodbye to his longstanding girlfriend and the future prospect of marriage.

A celibate lifestyle was not an altogether new idea for Chris. Two of his great aunts had been amongst the intrepid band of single women missionary pioneers of the China Inland Mission (see Undivided no. 23).

In 1977, Chris visited the Jesus Fellowship in Northamptonshire and, sensing God's call, moved into the newly formed New Creation Christian Community. Lifelong celibacy as an alternative lifestyle to marriage was being embraced by some in the fellowship. A chance conversation

'Turning the world upside down'

with a friend caused Chris to consider the matter more seriously. It did not take him long to make his decision. Chris said, "I went down the garden. 'Lord, do you want me to be a celibate?' I asked. The answer was straightforward – 'YES.' I said 'OK, Lord' - and that was it. That was in 1983."

Chris quickly found his ministries blossoming as he took on the leadership of an evangelism scene in Milton Keynes. He relates: "The next three years were amazing. Then I fell in love with a sister. It threw my celibacy into abeyance. Through this experience I lost my brashness, much arrogance and self righteousness. I'm glad I went through this as I can understand now what other people go through." Chris added, "I learned at this time the importance of my friends. If I had not had celibate friends to help me through I would have really struggled and probably foundered."

Speaking of 'spiritual

"I lost my brashness, much arrogance and self righteousness."

fatherhood' Chris said, "A lot of people in today's society do not know who their dad is or perhaps he has left or maybe they didn't get on. Last night I prayed with four different people who had come to seek help and prayer – they had all experienced a tragedy with their parents, having

had a nightmare of a childhood with a parent dying, committing suicide or being murdered. Spiritual fathers are not a replacement for God the Father; however people, especially young men, need to have human spiritual fathers to love and guide them. Spiritual fathers give directions and boundaries.

Chris spoke of the importance of teamwork. Having no wife as a support, he has to rely heavily on younger men, fellow leaders and sisters in the church to help him fulfil his fathering and shepherding duties. "As a celibate I could not survive without a relationship with God. Our passion for Jesus has to be nurtured by Bible study and prayer. I like the prayer found in the Psalms that says, 'My soul clings to You; Your right hand upholds me' (Psalm 63:8) For me this says God does His part – we have to do ours!"

Chris continued: "My passion and vision is to see my little bit of the world 'turned upside down' and to be surrounded by disciples. The more I see it happen the more I know it will happen. I can't leave off this vision while people still have a chance to hear of God's love."

"Celibacy," concluded Chris is a positive, not a negative thing. It's a valid way of life, a lifestyle well worth living for the sake of the kingdom of God and for the sake of the lost." Chris's response, 'OK, Lord!' has indeed been worthwhile.



QUOTE

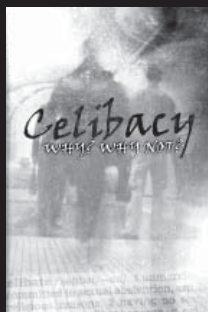
"I was attracted to the idea of God as lover. And then I began to experience God as lover, and quickly I became attracted to the Lover. I started meeting with a Catholic monk, who had taken a vow of poverty and celibacy. He told me, 'We can live without sex, but we cannot live without love, and God is love.'

I had come to see God as lover and provider and to desire a life of singleness and poverty – not very reassuring to my parents, who had sent me (their only child with no cousins) to college to get a top-notch education, meet a wifer-for-lifer, and become something important."

Shane Claiborne, The Simple Way Community, Philadelphia, USA (The Irresistible Revolution)

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 NOW!

An updated and enlarged Seven Silver Rings has been published. This includes 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

© Jesus Fellowship 2007