

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

Undivided



FROM THE
EDITOR ...

JESUS FELLOWSHIP/
MODERN JESUS ARMY

**CELIBACY
INSPIRATIONAL
NEWSLETTER**

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SACRIFICE – THE OFFERING OF LOVE

We so often get the wrong idea about sacrifice as celibates. Sacrifice can be seen as forcing out of us something we don't want to give up, full of pain, suffering and anguish, agony and distress. Behind this mindset is a view of God as an overbearing tyrant, intent on making our lives as miserable as possible. Or it sees a God who constantly forces us beyond what we are capable of doing. Seen from this perspective the sacrifice of a celibate can easily become a burdensome drudge, breeding a stifling resentment.

The Biblical view of the sacrifice is far different. There we see the vision of offering to Jesus the gift of the best thing we have. It is a joyful releasing of our lives to the God to whom we owe everything and without whom we have nothing. This is a God who has called us and gifted us for His purposes in a way that releases us to build His church with freedom and confidence. The celibate sacrifice must daily carry that fragrance of a willing love service to the King and His Kingdom. God is viewed as the glorious Saviour King who has rescued us, forgiven us and loves us unconditionally.

As David Livingstone said:

"People talk of the sacrifice I've made in spending so much of my life in Africa. Can that be called a sacrifice which is simply paying back a small part of the great debt owing to our God, which we can never repay?... It is emphatically no sacrifice. Say, rather it is a privilege!"

Huw Lewis

PAST AND PRESENT HEROES
AND HEROINES OF CELIBACY



RICH MULLINS
(1955-1997)

“You’re my one thing”

Rich Mullins was born in Indiana, USA, in 1955. His family were Christians and he found himself drawn to the gospel from a very young age; at the same time he was discovering a remarkable talent for music.

As a teenager and a young man, life was a struggle for Rich. His relationship with his father was not an easy one and he often felt he did not quite fit – either into the culture around him or the Christian scenes he moved in. Extraordinarily sensitive by nature, poetic, unconventional and often deeply struggling with his own humanity, Rich’s life was filled with conflicts. He read about Jesus in the gospels and wanted to be like Him but often found some of the brands of Christianity he saw about him anything but Jesus-like.

Rich’s creativity in writing lyrics, coupled with his musical talent, brought him early in life into the fore of Christian public life and he began making recordings of his songs and staging live concerts.

Fame did not carry with it the desire to conform – rather the opposite - and Rich used his public ministry to express his thoughts in word and song. His audiences were often taken aback by his candour, both in sharing the depths of his personal conflicts and pain and in exposing some of the compromises of certain sections of American church life - such as the prosperity gospel with its notion that God gives us what we deserve, that riches are a sign of His blessing and can be enjoyed selfishly. With prophetic fire, he voiced his disquiet, too, as to why so many churches were more interested in pointing out one another’s weaknesses or splitting doctrinal hairs than following Jesus’ commands to love one another and care for the poor and marginalised.

As a young man, Rich had a fiancée but

she broke off the engagement after a ten year relationship. Although very broken by this, Rich went on to live his life to the full and, towards the end of his life, he wrote: “Right now I can’t imagine that life could be happier married than it is single so I’m not in a panic about getting married. And I think, you know, maybe God wanted me to be celibate and the way that He accomplished that was to break my heart. So that’s the way it goes.”

In his thirties Rich became both fascinated and inspired by St Francis and, with a friend, formed a small, semi-monastic community called, ‘The Kid Brothers of St Frank.’ Other men joined them and together they worked on living out the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience in a non-institutional setting. They lived and travelled and performed together, pooling their resources and giving away all they could.

Rich never really put down his roots anywhere. His final years were spent living on a reservation in New Mexico for North American Indians. He found a deep love and sympathy for these displaced people and did what he could to support them – particularly the children.

Sadly, Rich Mullins died in a car accident in 1997 but the legacy of his life and recordings lives on, a powerful challenge and reminder to the contemporary Christian scene of what it can mean to live ‘out and out’ as a radical for Jesus and His Kingdom. Some of the words of one of his songs, words that every celibate can echo, are as follows: *Everybody I know says they need just one thing and what they really mean is that they need just one thing more still I want to love and serve You more and more.. You’re my one thing ...save me from those things that might distract me.... please take them away and purify my heart*

**Save me from those things
that might distract me...
please take them away and
purify my heart...**

† WORDS of inspiration



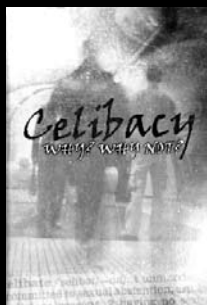
Jesus lived what He proclaimed. That is precisely what made His teaching convincing and trustworthy. That is also what makes His celibacy so interesting. Jesus and His associates led a life of ceaseless journeyings on the roads of Palestine. Jesus lived as a celibate and never thought of marrying, for which He was rebuked as a eunuch (Matthew 19:12) His disciples, too, had to be prepared for such insults. Many of them, for example, Peter, were married. But even for these there was no question of continuing their former married way of life. They left their wives back home. There they were cared for by the extended family, so that their husbands could follow Jesus unreservedly.

Stefan Heid – Celibacy in the Early Church



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.

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PUBLICATIONS

Seven Silver Rings



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