

'... 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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"I need something majestic to love"

"God wants celibacy because He wants to be loved... O infinite Majesty, even if You were not love, even if You were aloof in Your infinite Majesty, I still could not help loving You, for I need something majestic to love... There was, and still is, in my soul a need for majesty, which I shall never grow tired or weary of adoring. In the world I found nothing of this majesty for which I yearned."

So wrote Soren Kierkegaard about his own choice to remain single for Jesus. He had found human love too confining and restricting and sensed his need to love the divine and endless majesty of God. This upward calling of God's love was to prove a powerful motivating force for the rest of his life.

It is an amazing thought that God desires our love and longs that we please Him with our whole lives. As Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 7:32 – "An unmarried man is anxious about the Lord's affairs – how he can please the Lord...An unmarried woman is concerned about the Lord's affairs: her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit."

There will be those whose desire is to please and honour the Lord and see celibacy as the best way for them to do so. For them they will never be satisfied for anything else. The gift of celibacy is there for all with such a heart longing to receive.

Huw Lewis



P A T H F I N D E R S

PAST AND PRESENT HEROES AND HEROINES OF CELIBACY

MARY SLESSOR (1848-1915)

MARY SLESSOR, celibate pioneer-missionary in Nigeria in the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Mary Slessor, born in Aberdeen in 1848, became a legendary figure in her own lifetime. Her faith in God, coupled with an overwhelming desire to tell people about Jesus and right the evils and injustices she saw around her, led her into breath-taking adventures, danger and the fullest life imaginable for a woman of her time. Undaunted by the fearsome and unconquered rain forest, tropical diseases that took a heavy toll on Europeans and violent tribal practices, she undertook to take the gospel to the people of West Africa – as an unmarried woman who was often alone.

Mary's father was an alcoholic and her mother a Christian. Mary herself was converted in her teens and later worked at bringing unruly young city lads to Jesus.

In 1876 Mary went as a missionary to Calabar in West Africa, known at that time as 'White Man's Grave.' The mission bases were around the coast but Mary longed to take the gospel inland. Many questioned the idea of a young white woman travelling alone in such dangerous territory but Mary, with the dauntless courage that marked the whole of her life, could not be deterred.

Once inland, Mary started a school, acted as district nurse and began an orphanage in her own home. At that time in West Africa, when twins were born, one was thought to be the offspring of evil spirits and both were killed. Mary began rescuing these twin children and many abandoned babies were brought to her. She adopted some of them and took them with her on her travels. She also arbitrated in bitter tribal squabbles and intervened where ancient customs required the torture or death of their victims. She sometimes stood between rival gangs of men or tribes and persuaded them to lay down their weapons in front of her!

Mary had great influence on the African chiefs and they came to her for advice. She was appointed magistrate (remarkable for a woman in those days: there were no women magistrates in England until

after her death) and became virtual ruler of the people for many years. Often she walked through the forest alone at night, braving the wild animals and unfriendly tribesmen in order to sort out a dispute, rescue a child or go to help someone dying. Wherever she could, she told people about Jesus.

At the age of 42, Mary became engaged for a short time to a fellow missionary. However, he was unable to join her and she felt she could not leave the work God had called her to. Mary Slessor's thoughts on her broken engagement are not known for she destroyed most of her personal papers when she was dying but towards the end of her life she wrote: "I'm a witness to the perfect

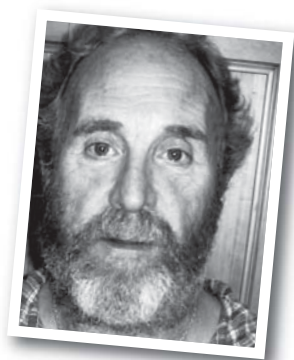
joy and satisfaction of a single life - with a tail of human ragtag hanging on. It is as exhilarating as an airplane or an airship or whatever they are that are always trying to get up and are always coming down!"*

Mary lived closely among the African people in a simple way. She identified with them and her understanding of their customs and culture won their trust. She was full of good humour although stern at times and very shy. Her lifestyle was extremely flexible and, because of this, many missionaries found her impossible to work with - one of the reasons why she so often worked alone.

Mary's faith grew as she sought God for each step of the way. In the margin of her Bible next to the words, 'I will not fear the tens of thousands drawn up against me on every side,' (Psalm 3:5) she wrote: "God and One are always a majority." She always believed pioneer work was best done by women!

As she grew older, Mary developed a more strenuous ministry, travelling further into the country by foot, canoe and even bicycle! Never careful for her own well-being, after several fruitful years she was brought to a mission base because of her deteriorating health where she died in 1915.

**I'm a witness
to the perfect joy
and satisfaction of
a single life**



Chris Clark is one of the leaders of 'Jewel House', a Jesus Fellowship community house in Northamptonshire. He speaks of events leading up to his choice of celibacy and its effects upon his life.

Chris (58) came from a settled but troubled home. Chris's mother took lots of prescribed drugs and his father had relationships with several women outside the marriage. At 16 Chris made a deliberate decision not to go to the Catholic church he had attended. He left school with no qualifications, followed his mother into taking drugs and began stealing drugs from chemist shops to feed his habit.

In 1972 he was jailed for this. When he left prison Chris enrolled on a college course, gained some O levels and eventually went to university and completed a First and then a Master's degree. Despite his climb up the educational ladder Chris's life was still driven by his desire for drugs - and sex.

Having long since abandoned his boyhood faith, Chris held the widespread view that different religious paths all head up different sides of one mountain to the same God. While at Liverpool University, in 1987, he was eventually persuaded by some fellow Christian students that Jesus is the only

“ I COULDN'T DO IT IF I WAS MARRIED! ”

way to God and he gave his life to Christ. "At this point," said Chris, "I became celibate and immediately stopped sleeping around."

Chris's life of drugs continued for a while but in 1991, with the help of a Christian friend, he destroyed his large stockpile of drugs, took the scales used for weighing them back to the pharmacist shop where he had stolen them from and was baptised.

In 1993 he joined the Jesus Fellowship and in 1995 made a vow of celibacy. Chris had read the following words of Jesus recorded in Matthew's gospel and, since the time he was converted, had always wanted to be celibate: *Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. For some are eunuchs because they were born that way; others were made that way by men; and others have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it.* (Matthew 19: 11-12)

"Celibacy is vital to my ministry. It would be quite impossible to do what I do without being a celibate," said Chris. "If I had a wife and family I simply would not have time!"

Chris is an evangelist and regularly visits the streets of central London to tell people about Jesus. Trips always begin with a food run for homeless people but, as Chris explained, "Our task is a

multigenerational and multiracial one. Once I aimed at reaching drug addicts. Now I go to all sorts of people in every part of the city. During the time of the serious bank crashes a team of us went to the City and told people not to put their hope in uncertain riches!" Chris added, "I feel more comfortable, though, among the poor."

Chris often brings people home to 'Jewel House' from the streets of London but, as he explained, it is one thing to bring them home but quite another thing to bring them to Jesus and shepherd them in their new found faith. Often it is here that the really hard work begins and Chris said, "I am learning to listen and give myself to them."

Chris finds that, "Keeping in step with the Holy Spirit, developing a relationship with Him and holding it fast, maintaining and developing an ever deepening relationship with the Lord is vital to fruitfulness as a celibate."

"We are also commanded," he explained, "to love the brotherhood (1 Peter 2:17). We learn to love our brothers and sisters and then go out and pass on that love to those outside the church - the masses that walk around without a shepherd."

The vision to find and shepherd the lost, love those within the brotherhood and find a closer walk with Jesus are at the very heart of Chris's vision - a vision fuelled by his choice of celibacy.

A Celibate sister's dream

Some years ago, I had a dream in the spirit. I was walking through an old country church yard. On the right there were ruined, broken down, dirty tomb stones and on the left side there was a group of very dejected looking people. This part of the dream was in black and white. Then I walked through a country church door and everything was in colour. I was dressed in a beautiful, white wedding dress and carrying lilies of the valley. The perfume was so intense that I actually got out of bed and went into the lounge to see where it was coming from, but I had no flowers there.

I walked down the aisle and the seats either side were completely empty; I wondered where the people could be and also where the groom was. The sun, streaming through the windows, was forming rainbows like a colourful avenue. I was so happy and joyful, it was indescribable.

The black and white part with the grave stones represented my old life and the people on the left were my old friendships. In the church the white dress was for a bride of Christ and the lilies represented faithfulness and purity. The rainbows represented covenant.

It was about moving into the gift and calling of celibacy - to be married to the church. At first I thought, 'What? For me? - Don't be silly - you don't know me!', but gradually it sank in and when I realised the freedom of it all, I was so grateful to be chosen as a bride for the church!



Have a look

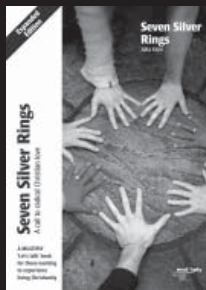
The video, 'Why? Why Not?' Six men and women speak about what it means for them to have chosen to be celibate for God and the path that led them to make that decision.

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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.

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



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