INTRANSITION GROUPZINE • CHAPTER EXCERPT

The InTransition Workbook/Magazine equips and prepares graduating seniors to transition to post-graduation life and make an impact for Christ in the world.

Single life, finances, life-transitions, the will of God, a theology of work, evangelism in the real world: InTransition addresses all the critical issues of a successful transition from campus—a resource for the last and most neglected phase of campus discipleship.

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Granted, I haven’t always seen this life as a gift, and honestly, I would like to be married one day. But I can’t control that. Bonnie Raitt sings, “I can’t make you love me if you don’t... I can’t make your heart feel something it won’t...”

So while my heart waits to feel something for someone whose heart feels the same for me, there’s a lot of life to explore and experience. I don’t want to waste this life by pining away for something different.

But you could get stuck with a whole lot worse than singleness. Really. You could be married and wishing you were single! That’s not as rare as you might like to think. And—who knows?—maybe within a year or five you will be married. But for now you’re as singular as I.

It hasn’t been as hard or scary as you might think. In fact, I have a great life—lots of fun, lots of travel, lots of learning, lots of friends, lots of life. And isn’t that what Jesus came to give us—abundant life? I think so. And so I try to live like that. Here are my thoughts on singleness and living out your life with meaning for as long as you find yourself happily single.

ATTITUDE AND PERSPECTIVE

In The Secret of Loving, author Josh McDowell talks about that very thing. (Spoiler alert: The secret of loving is you.) He says that we should think about what kind of person we want to be with and then take time to incrementally grow into the kind of person whom he or she would want. Makes sense. While I can’t control how others react to me, I can live life to become the kind of person whom the kind of man I want would want.

**CAUTION: Beware of trying to become someone else. God created you for a purpose, with a plan. Don’t try to become less than you are for someone else. Grow to become all that God has purposed for your life and character. Dream of partnering with someone who is a good match with who you are.

How do you respond when someone asks you to write an article on singleness? “My life’s goal! Of course I will! This is my purpose!” Is receiving such a request acknowledgement and affirmation? I’m not sure what it is, but here I am. Single. Sitting in the kitchen with my laptop, dinner clothes pushed aside, while wearing an ex-boyfriend’s sweatshirt. Apparently I’m an “expert” in being single. I’ve been single for 31 years. So, yeah, I guess I have some experience in this arena.

But you’re only 21. Or 22. Or 23. If you’ve made it this far, standing on the edge of graduation, about to take that big leap into the realm of adulthood (salary, car payment, rent/mortgage), then you look at my life and maybe dread becoming me: 31 and single. Perhaps your secret prayer is something along the lines of “O Lord, anything but that!”

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By Sarah Gale

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So while my heart waits to feel something for someone whose heart feels the same for me, there’s a lot of life to explore and experience. I don’t want to waste this life by pining away for something different.
We live in a fallen world. Sin started destroying the world, so now Kentucky bluegrass. ried and kidless. If you doubt me, try making spontaneous plans with something that interests you.

I've traveled the world, crashed a party of gourmet food and wine makers. And you'll feel more normal. People who are at different life stages will help you connect with others. And you'll feel more normal. We don't have to wear a happy-go-lucky mask when our hearts are sad. We don't have to feel alone. We can experience life now—the life of the resurrected Christ within us. And we can do a redemptive presence in the world.

Singleness and marriage were tainted by the Fall. But what does it look like to redeem singleness—to live a single life with the hope of Christ? It means I don't have to go to bars and get drunk to meet people. It means I can use my life-stage freedoms to help others, volunteer, be a blessing, enjoy God. I can focus on others rather than being self-ab sorbed like so many in our culture. It means I don't have to give in to sexual temptation and lust, defrauding myself and others. I can walk in self-control (a fruit of the Spirit).

And what does it look like to grieve a broken relationship? We don't “grieve like (non-Christians), who have no hope” (1 Thessalonians 4:13, NIV). While I have yet to find a verse that promises I will be married, I do have a gracious God who is merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, and relenting in disaster (Isaiah 40:1, Joel 2:13). Is the disaster a bad relationship? Maybe. But God is still faithful.

We don't have to wear a happy-go-lucky mask when our hearts are sad within. We can walk through sadness and disappointments in an honest way. Like the psalmists, we can be frank with God about our broken dreams and hopes. So look at your list of goals or dreams. (Remember, you wrote them down a while ago, probably!) Do you want to learn an instru ment? Look online to find someone who gives lessons. Jen wanted to meet people, so she went to craigslist.com and found a book club to join. Susan took French classes from an adult continuing education program that her local school district offered. Bill joined a volleyball league he found on Yahoo! Groups. Be resourceful. Don't waste this time you have. You can become whoever you want, but you have to do something. You won't grow if you sit at home and watch TV every night.

**CAUTION:** Beware of eating your dinner in front of the TV and staying locked in your room all day long. Get out and go! For example, I started a weekly “happy hour” to hang out with coworkers in the evening. At my first gathering, I invited 10 or 12 women from church who are at different life stages—singles and marrieds. And we have someone else to lean on or to introduce you. And sometimes I didn't even hit that goal!

Okay, Sarah, you have to say hi to two people (and give them a name). It can be distracting and disheartening. I know.

In one place I lived, I discovered a few older couples who liked me. So I'd invite myself into their peer, creating other people to sit near these couples. But in another place I lived, I had to set goals for myself to engage at church. Okay, Sarah, you have to say hi to two people before you can go home. And sometimes I didn’t even hit that goal!

If you go to church, just sit in the pew, and then split after the service, I do. It’s tempting to find the other singles in church and then create a post-college Cru (Campus Crusade) environment. But by doing so, you miss out on the holistic life of the church—all that the body of Christ has to offer.

How will you learn about healthy marriages if you don’t spend time with marrieds? Or how to raise kids in the church if you aren’t around families? And what about dealing with the pressures of your career in a Christian manner? I’m sure there is someone else with a similar job in your church. Try to connect with older people, too. The small group I joined at church has a healthy mix of people, including a retired couple in their 80s. They have wisdom with God for decades, nearly three times as long as I’ve been alive. I have so much to learn from the different people in my small group.

Yes, a good single life requires some initiative and effort. You don’t have someone else to lean on or to introduce you. And sometimes people just don’t know how to interact with singles. They can make awkward comments, and sometimes I don’t know what to say in response. “What’s it like to date you single?” “Just don’t want to settle down, do you?”

These people are really just trying to figure out how to connect with you. So I can offer common ground by asking about their life (what they do, what they like about the church, how long they’ve lived in the area), and that can get the focus off me.
Make a list of your dreams and goals. Go ahead! Put marriage and fam-
ily on your list if they are important to you. But you’ll notice that those
aren’t your only goals, right? Maybe you want to go somewhere to see
beautiful scenery, travel the world, learn a language. Learn a language, an instrument. Visit all the pro baseball fields. See as many U2 concerts as you can. There are lots of adventures waiting for you.

I think we are too quick to look at the one thing we don’t have and
accuse God of not caring about us or not loving us. Our pouting heart
will say, “God, if You really loved me, You’d give me a husband!” But
what does that do to my theology? The test of God’s love for me then
becomes getting a husband. But really, the ultimate test of God’s love
for me is the cross.

God gave His only Son; He gave me Jesus! Of course God loves me. But
just as He fixed her eyes on the one thing God said no to, so too, I
often fix my eyes on what God has said no to, or at least “not yet.”

And that thing then becomes an idol. I long for it. I love it, and throw
tantrums when things don’t work out the way I want. immersion. Jesus
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The single life doesn’t have to be some humdrum holding pattern. No, it’s an adventure, full of possibilities and potential. Life doesn’t start when you’re married; this is life. Right now. Part of experiencing life is to enjoy and experience God, the author of life. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth and the life.” (John 14:6)

Our life with God is vital. How are you doing with that? Do you know God? Know what’s on His heart? Are you reading the Bible? When you’re married; this is life. Right now. Part of enjoying and experiencing God is to enjoy and experience God, the author of life. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth and the life.” (John 14:6)

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periencing life is to enjoy and experience God, the author of life. Jesus
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My sister gave me her rules for meeting an online date for the first time:
1. Don’t give out your address, meet at your house, or go back to your
home with your date. Let your home remain anonymous.
2. Don’t kiss on the first date. As Julia Roberts said in Pretty Woman,
“Kissing is too personal.”
3. Don’t buy any new clothes for the date. Your blind date hasn’t seen
your wardrobe yet, so don’t waste time and money on anything new.
4. Bonus: Ask one of your friends to meet the date too—at the movie
theater, at the bookstore—so that your date knows you have backup
and so that your friends can check out your date. It’s a safety thing. I’m
a safety girl!

But eHarmony isn’t the only one I get to thank. I asked my friends and work as-
sociates to pray for “M&Ms” for me: money and men. I needed financial support
(I’m on staff with Campus Crusade) and I wanted dates. So people all over the
country were praying for me, asking how it was going, and setting me up on
dates. And in the end that year with a boyfriend. Not bad, eh?

My year actually changed the trajectory of my life. As I was single, I spir-
ally decided to help others. A few friends needed help. I knew I wanted to
keep traveling, I knew I wanted to help others. So I did what I could to help
others. You could start a campus ministry at the college near you, or
work got together and we made plans to go down to the destruction
of Hurricane Katrina, I knew I wanted to go and help, so some people
from Campus Crusade and I went to Louisiana. I didn’t have to check in with
anyone, ask for permission, or arrange meals or child care. I knew
I could help, so I went. After Hur-
rricane Katrina, I knew I wanted to go and help, so some people from
work got together and we made plans to go down to the destruction
area. We can pick up at a moment’s notice and go. We are unencum-
bered in the pursuit to help fulfill the Great Commission.

In 1 Corinthians 7 Paul talks about the freedom we singles have right
now. He says married people are anxious about worldly things, such as
how to please their spouse, but single people are anxious for the things
of the Lord, how to please the Lord. This is so true! What a gift we’ve
been given through singleness. It’s not a holding pattern, with us waiting
for clearance to land at the altar and start life. No! This is the journey.

Last year was my best dating year ever, hands down. The best of all my dat-
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