

**Angry at Her Singleness: Christ-Centered Counseling for the Despairing Single Woman**

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## Abstract

Title: Angry at Her Singleness: Christ-Centered Counseling for the Despairing Single Woman  
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This research project is designed for the biblical counselor who is counseling a woman angry about her singleness. Many times, the person does not recognize her own anger because it is justified in her eyes and does not necessarily show itself in physical aggression. However, sinful anger may be evidenced by such problems as despondency, despair, heaviness, sadness, discontentment, lack of confidence, shyness, or relational aggressiveness, bossiness, physical symptoms, stubborn rebellion, etc. But the ruling, unmet desire which is producing the angry response, needs to be identified and corrected. The counselor needs to be convinced of the beauty and joy of the Savior and living sacrificially for Him in order to help the counselee do so as well. I am beginning this project with the unashamed profession of the Gospel of Jesus Christ as being powerful for salvation, sanctification, and glorification. The biblical view of God, man, sin, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit's work in the believer are all starting points for developing a counseling approach, methodology, and solution to the problem of sinful anger in the heart and mind of the discouraged single woman. Because of this Gospel-centered approach to the problem of her anger, this project surpasses the goals and purposes of secular anger management classes and other secular solutions to anger, despondency, etc. This project is my hope of reigniting the power of the Gospel in the hands of the church to minister to its single women, many of whom suffer with sinful anger on a daily basis. This anger might be displayed in superiority attitudes, or inferiority attitudes. It may be displayed as envy towards others and failure to rejoice with their given marital status. The angry single may isolate from many church events, believing she has no place among the marrieds and child-rearing women of the church. She may thus fail to develop her gifts and not use them for the good of the body, thereby also forfeiting her own joy in giving. She may harbor resentment and bitterness. She may frown, worry, become despondent and even despair as she continues to interpret her singleness as undesirable. She may struggle physically with digestive issues or fatigue as a result of continual despairing, worrying, etc. She may turn to excesses for comfort such as over-exercising, over-eating, or over-involvement in activities. She may become sexually active outside of marriage, or indiscriminate in marrying.

In order to help biblical counselors and the church to minister to women who are struggling with being single, I will be searching the writings of biblical counselors and biblical scholars on the topics of anger, womanhood, and singleness. I will look at the empirical evidence of the manifestations of anger. For comparison purposes I will also research the current secular philosophies and methodologies of helping people with anger problems. In the counseling plan, I will use the Gospel-centered pattern in counseling a case of a young lady angry at God for her singleness. I am looking forward to this project for my own edification and prayerfully for the edification of others.

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## I. I. Introduction

- A. Topic. Anger is common among men and women alike. Some say their anger is justified. Some deny that they are angry or minimize it saying that they are just “frustrated.” Some blame other people for their anger and do not take responsibility for it. Some say they can’t help their anger and cannot change. One type of anger that is common among women, is the anger a woman might have when she finds herself in the state of singleness for longer than she expected. This can easily escalate into a counseling problem if the anger is not biblically dealt with. This type of anger in the heart of a single woman will be the topic of this research project.
- B. Purpose. I propose to show, that anger at one’s singleness is always tainted with sin and in need of redeeming through faith in Jesus Christ. This redeeming is ironically accomplished by the angriest act ever to be committed: God’s act of exacting payment for sin from the One Divine Human Being who never sinned, Jesus Christ. Without understanding and embracing this gift of God’s redeeming grace for the woman’s rebellion against God, she remains under the just wrath of God for her own sin. On the other hand, once her eyes are opened and she believes the truth of God’s great redeeming love and thereby turns in faith towards Christ Jesus, her new life is begun and the old ways are to be put off. For the Christian woman, anger must be understood in these terms. It is only by the woman’s relation to the Triune God, by faith in Jesus Christ, that anger can begin to be put away properly. Without this relationship, it is impossible to be pleasing in God’s sight (Heb. 11:6). Eventually all sin in the Christian will be put away at the Revelation of Jesus Christ. These foundational truths must be at the heart of every biblical counselor’s conviction and taught with compassion and love for the counselee. It

is my intention that the following pages will help the counselor compassionately minister to their counselees from a robust, biblical understanding of unrighteous anger, its fundamental rebellion against Holy God, and its redemption found only in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

### C. Definition of terms

1. *Righteous Anger of God*: For the purposes of this project, I will define the anger of God as righteous anger that is pure, without sin, properly targeted at all of God's enemies and every sin ever committed or will be committed, for the ultimate purpose of ending all wrongs and sin. (Rom. 1:18).
2. *Righteous Anger of Man*: As James 1:19 infers, some anger is meant to be acceptable to God, such as the anger that properly seeks justice for wrongdoing. But even then, we must be careful not to play God. God has left us clear instructions in His Word for understanding and experiencing anger. I will call this type of anger righteous anger or the righteous anger of man. It is distinct from God's righteous anger and is to be carried out solely based on God's directives in his word. (Exod. 18:15-27; Lev. 19:15; Deut. 1:16; 17:8-9; 25:1; John 7:24, 51; 1 Cor. 5:12-13; 1 Cor. 6:2-3; Heb. 10:30; Rom 13:3-5)
3. *Unrighteous Anger of Man*. This type of anger belongs only to man and is always tainted with sin because it is of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21). It is to be repented of in all cases whether in thought, word, or deed. This third type of anger is the focus of this project as it is specifically experienced by a woman who is angry about being single, whether she realizes is or not. This anger does not glorify God and it is to be put off from the life of the believer (James 1:20; Eph. 4:31).

- D. Audience and Scope. This project is directed to help the church leaders, biblical counselors, and lay persons who want to help those who struggle with being single. It is also directed to help the women who are struggling with their singlehood. I will be limiting my discussion to Biblical instruction on how to recognize and repent of sinful anger as it relates to the angry, discontented, despondent and even despairing single woman.
- E. Research Methodology. The research will focus on the writings of biblical scholars, biblical counselors, biblical commentaries, and the Journal of Biblical Counseling. I will also briefly mention the currently accessible counseling methods and strategies of secular counselors and comment on their congruence with biblical principles as well as their departure from biblical teaching.

## II. Definition of the Counseling Problem

- A. Unrighteous anger/anger of man. "...anger always makes a value judgment."<sup>1</sup> But the anger of man does not produce righteousness. James 1:20 "for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God." The angry single person judges that something is wrong with being single. The single woman may judge that there is something wrong with herself. Or she may judge that God has withheld good from her. She may judge that God should have allowed her to be married earlier. She disagrees with His plan for her life, denying His Sovereignty, goodness, and mercy. She may judge that she is unhappy because she is unmarried, denying God's sufficiency in all things (Phil. 4:11-13). There are many judgments the woman makes concerning her singleness. When these mis-judgments are held strongly, they motivate the woman to do something about the wrongs

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<sup>1</sup> David Powlison, *Good and Angry: Redeeming Anger, Irritation, Complaining, and Bitterness* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2016), 41.

she perceives. Since “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” her ability to judge is skewed, corrupted, imperfect, self-centered more often than not and reaps the consequences of not judging rightly (Matt. 7:2). In fact, her judgment needs redeeming just like every other aspect of her life. It is through the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the believer that the angry woman can be transformed in her judgments, putting them off and conforming her judgments to be in line with God’s truth (Zech. 8:16-17). This is a life-long process of spiritual growth to maturity. The single woman with anger due to her mis-judgments about herself, her God, her marital status, her future, and her past can have hope for change from the inside out. She needs to confess her wrong thoughts and put off her unrighteous anger (Eph. 4:31). As she does so, she is becoming and living as the person God has blessed her to be in His presence and in the fellowship of the saints (1 Thess. 5:23).

- B. Righteous anger/anger of God. Anger is judgment against a wrong and its basic purpose is to destroy the wrong and set things right. Jones defines anger as, “our whole-personed active response of negative moral judgment against perceived evil.”<sup>2</sup> Only God’s anger at wrongs is always just. Only his anger at sin can actually set things right, which is to bring about the righteousness of God. This is because only God is without sin, good, right, and Holy. We see God’s anger described in Exodus 34:6-7. Powlison helps us understand this passage. “God is good—justly angered at all who turn against him and others. God is good—incalculably merciful toward all who acknowledge their need.”<sup>3</sup> Jesus’ judgment

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<sup>2</sup>Robert D. Jones, *Uprooting Anger: Biblical Help for a Common Problem* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2005), 21.

<sup>3</sup>David Powlison, *Good and Angry: Redeeming Anger, Irritation, Complaining, and Bitterness* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2016), 59.

is just, being very God in the flesh: John 5:30, “I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.” Jesus is the Righteous One (Acts 7:52). He was offered up on sinners’ behalf to reconcile them back to God and His Kingdom reign and rule (Rom. 5:8, 17). Romans 1:12: “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.” It is God’s anger at sin aimed at His sinless Son that changes the world (Isaiah 53:5, 10). Christ says, “I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness” (John 12:46). It is to this just and righteous judge that the single woman needs to turn. Her judgments of herself and her God need to be corrected. Otherwise, her mis-judgments will lead her to despair. Her anger, whether at herself, God, others, or her situation, are built on faulty judgments and revolve around the kingdom of herself. This self-ruled kingdom is built on the faulty belief that she can and knows how best to control all of her life and it rejects the truth that she needs God’s Kingdom rule in her life. The righteous anger of God is actually what she needs to come to terms with, in all areas of her life (Zech. 8:16-17; John 3:16, 36).

### C. Secular Definitions of Singlehood Issues

1. *Noted Increase in Singleness in America.* Approximately 38% of men never marry and 30% of women never marry.<sup>4</sup> These numbers are significantly higher compared to 1950 rates of roughly 28% life-long single men and 20% life-long single women.<sup>5</sup> Reasons for the increase vary including “the decreased

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/stories/unmarried-single-americans-week.html>. Accessed 3/9/22.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

availability of ‘marriageable’ men and the increased economic standing of women.”<sup>6</sup>

2. *Secular Origin of Marriage Theory: Evolution*. Article: “Singles’ Reasons for Being Single: Empirical Evidence from an Evolutionary Perspective.”<sup>7</sup> This research article considers marriage as fundamentally increasing “the survival chances of one’s progeny.”<sup>8</sup> This view has a false contrived view of man, marriage, and God. It promotes evolutionary theory to social behavior, thus redefining the marriage relationship and reduces sexual relations to mere animalistic survival of the species. The article goes on to say, “...it would be evolutionarily beneficial at times for men to adopt a short-term mating strategy and to seek casual sex with different women instead of committing to a long-term intimate relationship (Buss and Schmitt, 1993, 2019).<sup>9</sup>
3. *Psychologists Views Including the Psychoanalytical View*<sup>10</sup>
  - a) Voluntary vs. Involuntary State of Singleness. “Therefore, it is plausible to assume that individuals who perceive their singlehood as chosen may experience greater freedom in making their own choices and taking actions regarding their single life than individuals who perceive their singlehood as being beyond their control. As a result, chosen singlehood

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<sup>6</sup> <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/action/doSearch?AllField=marriage+rates+in+the+United+States>. Accessed 3/10/2022.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7218110/>. Accessed 3/9/22.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7218110/>. Accessed 3/9/22.

<sup>10</sup> Items b through r in the following list are taken from an article whose sources are Dr. Babita Spinelli, L.P. and Megan Bruneau, M.A, both trained in psychoanalysis.

might be accompanied by greater positive mental health and lower levels of mental health problems and romantic loneliness.”<sup>11</sup>

- b) Being single strengthens your relationship to yourself<sup>12</sup>
- c) Being single lets you figure out what you truly want
- d) Singleness empowers you to hold yourself accountable
- e) Singleness allows you to have strong friendships even superior to romantic relationships
- f) Singleness allows you to have more time for yourself
- g) Singleness allows you to call all the shots.
- h) Singleness is a catalyst for self-care mentally and physically. The reason quoted for this is that the single person doesn't have to navigate between their own needs and those of their partner.
- i) Singles need to be proactive in connecting with people for their mental health.
- j) Love yourself.
- k) Engage yourself in activities you like to do.
- l) “Make and spend time with single friends.”
- m) Focus on self-care and prioritize it.
- n) Learn about yourself so you can create the life you want and deserve.

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<sup>11</sup> K. Adamczyk, “Voluntary and Involuntary Singlehood and Young Adults' Mental Health: An Investigation of Mediating Role of Romantic Loneliness,” *Current Psychology* 36, no. 4 (2017): 888-904. doi:10.1007/s12144-016-9478-3

<sup>12</sup> Items b through r: <https://www.mindbodygreen.com/articles/how-to-be-happy-single>. Accessed 3/10/22.

- o) Be spontaneous. “There is a lot of freedom when you are single to design the kind of life you want to create.”
- p) “Set goals and focus on your growth.” (See Spinelli quote).
- q) Keep perspective that singleness can be a wonderful period of your life.
- r) “Remember, you won’t be single forever if you don’t want to be.”

#### D. Biblical Definitions of Singlehood Issues<sup>13</sup>

1. *Choice*. How much of our lives are actually our choice and how much is not? That is a theological question. Prov. 19:21; Job 42:2. How do we relate to God’s revealed will vs. God’s ordained will (Deut. 29:29)? Our response to both requires right thoughts of God, ourselves, and others. Job was confronted by God about his viewpoint and self-defense (Job 38:2). His heart was comforted by the rebuking words and presence of the Lord because they led him to repent (Job 42:5-6). Job confessed that he uttered what he did not understand (Job 42:3b). They were things too wonderful for him to fully grasp. The book of Job may thus serve to help the single who “didn’t choose” being single, just as Job did not choose tribulation.
2. *Gift*. James 1:17a, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights...” Both marriage and singleness are ultimately from the Lord’s sovereign hand. They should not be viewed as one better than the other. Each state has its own powerful life experiences to reflect the love of

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<sup>13</sup> Items headings in D. 4-10 parallel the items Jay Adam’s used to discuss issues of marriage in his work, *Solving Marriage Problems: Biblical Solutions for Christian Counselors*. I simply used the same items to discuss the issues of singleness. Content of each item is not from Adam’s work.

Christ. Katie Heckel observes how both states “portray elements of the gospel.”<sup>14</sup> They are both temporary states this side of heaven. There is no human marriage in heaven (Matt. 22:30; Mark 12:25) and there is no human singleness either (1 Cor. 12:12; Rev. 19:9). When Paul speaks of giftedness in 1 Corinthians 7, he is referring to the differing gifts that God gives to individuals. Not all have the same gift. As regards remaining single, 1 Corinthians 7 is addressing a crisis in which the Corinthians found themselves (1 Cor. 7:26). The crisis most likely was a time of famine.<sup>15</sup> Gifts, whichever ones are received, are to be received gratefully. It is not a sin to remain single nor to marry (1 Cor. 7:8-9; 26-28).

### 3. *Call.*

- a) **Effectual, Primary Call.** Every Christian, male, female, married, or single has received and embraced the effectual call of Christ to belong to Him (WCF Ch.10, “Of Effectual Call;” Acts 13:48). That is sufficient for salvation and for ordering the rest of their life to be lived under the care and authority of the Lord as revealed in His Word. Os Guinness describes the effective call of Christ saying, “First and foremost we are called to Someone (God), not to something...or to somewhere.”<sup>16</sup> Guinness stresses the importance and over-arching context of the primary calling:

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<sup>14</sup> <https://seedbed.com/10-biblical-tips-for-christian-singles/> Accessed 3/14/22.

<sup>15</sup> New Bible Commentary (IVP-NB Commentary) © 1953, 1954, 1970, 1994 by University and Colleges Christian Fellowship, Electronic text hypertexted and prepared by OakTree Software, Inc., version 2.5, 1170.

<sup>16</sup> Os Guinness, *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 31.

“Secondary callings matter, but only because the primary calling matters most.”<sup>17</sup>

- b) **Ordinary Secondary Callings.** Guinness defines secondary callings as *“Our secondary calling, considering who God is as sovereign, is that everyone, everywhere, and in everything should think, speak, live, and act entirely for him.”* Secondary calling is the actual life or station in which one particularly lives out the primary calling. In this sense, the secondary calling is ordinary. With these definitions, every born-again believer has the primary call to follow Christ and it is lived out in the particular Christian’s life as their secondary calling. It is my interpretation that Paul was referring to ordinary secondary callings in 1 Cor. 7:26, 35. This view explains why the Apostle could say in the broadest terms, “Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches” (1 Cor. 7:17).
- c) **Special Secondary Calling.** However, there is a type of secondary calling not common to all Christians and can be noted as a special calling or a special secondary calling. Probably fewer than most ever receive special callings. Guinness defines the special call (distinct from every Christian’s primary calling and ordinary secondary callings) as follows: “A special calling refers to those tasks and missions laid on individuals through a direct, specific, supernatural communication from God.”<sup>18</sup> No matter what

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 48.

marital state the Christian woman finds herself, no matter who she is, no matter what she does, in all things, she is to do all for the glory of God (1 Peter 4:11; 1 Cor. 10:31). One's marital state is a secondary ordinary calling. Few experience a secondary special calling to their marital state, such as Hosea (Hosea 1:2). In counseling the single woman who fears her singleness as possibly being life-long, understanding callings is beneficial. But even more fundamental is her call to follow the Lord (primary call) and live out that call without fear. She is free to marry if she has not received a special call from God to remain single (few receive this call).

- d) **Providence.** If God ordains her to live her primary call in her secondary calling as a single person and she is miserable doing so, where is the fruit of the Spirit in her life? What will she present to God as an account of her life? Did she live her life grumbling, angry, depressed, jealous, fearful, fruitless? Did she insist on having her own way, ignoring her primary call and seeking a man unbiblically instead of biblically? A single woman living out her primary calling in faith and humble reliance and joy in the Lord, is free in deed. A single woman living in fear of never getting married is in bondage and betrays her primary calling to follow Christ. This displacement of Christ in her life and her turning to the idolization of marriage ironically makes marriage more likely to be missed or misused. But more than that, her relationship with Christ is eclipsed.<sup>19</sup> Lane and Tripp: "The irony is that when we reverse the order and elevate creation

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<sup>19</sup> Romans 1: 22-23.

above Creator, we destroy the relationships God intended—and would have enabled us to enjoy.”<sup>20</sup>

4. *Origin.* No one is born married (Gen. 2:24). Everyone is born single and with that simple truth, everyone is called (ordinary secondary call) to singleness for at least some portions of their lives. Yet it is true for all persons, whether married or single, that they are designed by God for companionship with others and fellowship with God (Eph. 2:10; 1 Cor. 12:4-7).
5. *Essence.* The essence of our individual personhood is that we are made in the image of God, to live our lives in His presence, in fellowship with Him and for His glory (Gen. 1:26; Rev. 1:5-6). Sin has broken the fellowship that Adam and Eve had with God. For us, as their descendants, the need for reconciliation exists the moment we are conceived (Psalm 51:5; Rom. 3:23). (See the WCF chap. 10.3 regarding infants and incapacitated persons.) Life is in the Son (John 3:16). Whether married or single, we are to live for God’s glory (1 Cor. 7:35; 10:31). Our purpose is found in God, not in self.
6. *Obligation.* Single or married our obligation is to follow the Lord’s Word. We are to love God and love others (Matt. 22:36-39). This is every believer’s primary call.
7. *Commitment.* The Christian’s commitment to Christ is for life. The married person’s commitment to marriage is lifelong until the death of either spouse. The single person is not biblically required to commit to singleness for life. A better

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<sup>20</sup> Timothy S. Lane and Paul David Tripp, *Relationships: A Mess Worth Making* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2008), 11.

way to think of it is that the person is not committing to a particular marital state, but the person is committed to following God's word as concerns their particular marital state and for as long as that state requires them.

8. *Love* is a matter of giving to others. The single person gives to one another in the body of Christ and to his or her neighbor as Ephesians 5:1-21 outlines. The command to love is not only for couples. It is a command for all believers. It is described in 1 Corinthians 13. Further motivation for the single person is given in such passages as 1 Cor. 7:8-9, 32-35; Proverbs 2.
9. *Effect*. The effect of living as a Christian single brings particular challenges to the single. As all trials are brought to the Christian for her good and her transformation into more Christ-likeness, these challenges are to be handled according to God's word. Doing so strengthens her faith and puts Christ's grace and power on display. Because the faithful Christian single is being transformed more and more into the likeness of Christ, she becomes better prepared to enter into marriage, should that be her desire and the Lord's will for her life. She does not need to be anxious about this. That anxiety must be addressed biblically. The faithful Christian single woman who remains single for her lifetime has a lifetime of devoted service to the Lord to be presented to Him with a clear conscience and confidence to stand before Him and give the account of her life. This is the common call belonging to all Christians. The call to faithfully live in covenant with God and His people, serving Him and participating in His work is a rich life of love, joy, and peace. It is better to be sought than fine gold (Prov. 8:18-20).

10. *Unity.* The unity of believers can be fully enjoyed by singles. The church needs to fellowship with singles for this unity to be realized and the single needs to fellowship with the church body. Both the single and the church need to recognize and employ the gifts of the single woman for her spiritual growth and the good of the church. The church also needs to minister to the particular struggles common to the struggling single woman for her spiritual good and the good of the church.

#### E. Self-Control.

1. *Biblical definition.* Self-control is a fruit of the Holy Spirit's work in the believer's life. It is measured and attained by the standards and means set by God. These standards and means are revealed in the Word of God and are fully available to all believers (1 Cor. 10:13; 2 Cor. 9:8; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). Chad McKinley observes, "Reminding yourself of the goodness of abiding in Christ is essential to self-control."<sup>21</sup> If the single believes they are being withheld some good when they pursue Christ, they will lose self-control over the flesh and pursue the deceptive desire instead of Christ. We pursue what we treasure (Matt. 6:21, 24; Gen. 3:6).
2. *Secular definition.* Self-control is attributed to the individual's ability to manage their emotions and desires for their own purposes and preferences. One online dictionary defines self control as "the ability to control oneself, in particular one's emotions and desires or the expression of them in one's behavior, especially in

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<sup>21</sup> Chad McKinley, "Freedom of Self-Control - Association of Certified Biblical Counselors." March 16, 2022. <https://Biblicalcounseling.Com/> (blog), <https://biblicalcounseling.com/resource-library/articles/freedom-of-self-control/>. Accessed March 19, 2022.

difficult situations.”<sup>22</sup> Psychology Today recognizes the importance of having goals when it comes to self-control.<sup>23</sup> Non-Christ-centered goals omit the goal of the Lord Jesus Christ to conform the believer into His image and the goal of the believer to please the Lord (Romans 8:29; 2 Cor. 5:9).

### III. Research: Secular observations of anger in man.

- A. Physical Effects. “Anger is a natural response to perceived threats. It causes your body to release adrenaline, your muscles to tighten, and your heart rate and blood pressure to increase. Your senses might feel more acute and your face and hands flushed.”<sup>24</sup> “Some research suggests that inappropriately expressing anger — such as keeping anger pent up — can be harmful to your health. Suppressing anger appears to make chronic pain worse, while expressing anger reduces pain.”<sup>25</sup> “There's also evidence that anger and hostility is linked with heart disease, high blood pressure, peptic ulcers and stroke.”<sup>26</sup>
- B. Relational Effects. “Anger can cause lasting scars in the people you love most and get in the way of friendships and work relationships. Explosive anger makes it hard for others to trust you, speak honestly, or feel comfortable—and is especially damaging to children.”<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Google search engine of definitions, which uses Oxford Languages dictionary.

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/self-control#willpower-as-a-finite-resource>. Accessed 4/24/22.

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/anger-management/art-20048149>.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. Accessed 3/4/2022.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. Accessed 3/4/2022.

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/relationships-communication/anger-management.htm>. Accessed 3/21/22.

C. Emotional Effects. Anger can “lead to stress, depression, and other mental health problems.”<sup>28</sup> One study of anger in teenagers showed anger produced guilt feelings, remorse, calm, fear of losing friends, fear of frightening others, feeling hurt.<sup>29</sup>

D. Secular Strategies Offered to Help.

1. *Congruence with biblical principles*. There are some strategies that are similar on the surface to biblical principles. For example, the strategy to think about the “advantages” that come with singleness. This sounds similar to the biblical principle to think about whatever is true and honorable (Phil. 4:8). But on closer examination, the “advantages” fall short because they do not necessarily, please Christ. One example is the “advantage” of singleness empowering the person to find out what they really want. Does singleness actually have this power? Is what the individual wants the greatest, best thing for them?
2. *Incongruence with biblical principles*. The principles and goals of the secularists’ strategies to help the suffering single are fundamentally dissimilar from the biblical principles. The secular reason for an individual to think positively about being single may be simply to rid herself of misery and have a “healthy” outlook on life, to be happy, healthy, and pleasing to others. Whereas the biblical reason is to put on the mind of Christ and be of one mind with the believers (Phil. 2:2, 5). The purpose is to be “filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God” (Phil. 1:11).

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Rohany Nasir and Norisham Abd Ghani, “Behavioral and Emotional Effects of Anger Expression and Anger Management among Adolescents” *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2nd World Conference on Psychology and Sociology, PSYSOC 2013, 27-29 November 2013, Brussels, Belgium, 140 (August): 565–69. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.04.471>.

3. *Significance of these findings.* The bible's counsel addresses the woman's personhood, purpose, and eternal state in relation to her relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. The biblical counsel is a sure foundation the woman can grasp for all of her life, whether single or married, as well as her eternal state after bodily death. Her confidence is not built on opinions of herself and the world she wishes for, but on the truth of Christ's work on her behalf and His work in her and through her.

#### IV. Exegesis of selected core passages

- A. Be Angry and Do Not Sin: Psalm 4:4 and Eph. 4:26. The verses are similar. The word "tremble" in Psalm 4:4 (NASB 1995) is noted to mean tremble "with anger or fear." Both verses say to be angry, but not to sin. In context, Psalms 4 is a Psalm of David whose enemies are trying to discredit his honor by looking for lies to say about him (Psalm 4:2). They are trying to bring his name and life down. David's response is to recall how the Lord previously gave him relief in his distress (1). So, he calls to the Lord again in prayer for grace (1). He knows the Lord "has set apart the godly for himself" (3). Therefore, he knows not to sin while he is being provoked to anger or fear. Rather he continues to do good as commanded by the Lord, "Offer right sacrifices, and put you're your trust in the Lord" (5). He thus worships the Lord, trusts in the Lord and can sleep easy (8). In context, Ephesians 4:26 is a reminder of this Psalm and an encouragement for the Ephesian believers to do the same thing. When angry and trembling with anger, or being provoked to anger, believers are not to let their anger (even righteous anger against liars) to manifest itself in wrong-doing. Take note that the anger is lodged internally and is to be handled before it leads to sin. Psalm 37:8 tells the truth that fretting (Hebrew charah:

to burn, be angry) leads only to evildoing (NASB 1995).<sup>30</sup> Also note how David meditates on this before the next day. Ephesians 4:26 follows the same pattern of turning away from our anger before we rise the next day. Also note, this is not a matter of “stuffing our anger” but actually is a matter of the heart and how we relate to God in our anger. It involves our worship and obedience to God in trials when we are tempted to sin in our anger. These verses do not permit anger in the heart with sinful imaginations of vengeance, bitterness, and ill-will. Rather, they command entrusting God with His righteous anger and ordained means for dealing with His enemies (Rom. 12:14-21; Rom. 13:1-5).

- B. Command to Put Away Anger: Gal. 5:19-20; Eph. 4:31, Col. 3:8. Unrighteous anger is a work of the sinful nature of man. This anger, including all bitterness and wrath, is to be put away from the Christian fellowship (Eph. 4:31). Putting away these works of the flesh is accomplished by cooperating with the Holy Spirit in His process of sanctifying the believers (Gal. 5:16-24).
- C. Command to Be Slow to Anger: Prov. 14:29; 15:1,8; 19:11; Eccles. 7:9. These verses teach that anger is to be guarded against. We are not to allow ourselves to become angry quickly because this demonstrates a heart of foolishness (Eccles. 7:9). Good sense and discretion makes one slow to anger (Prov. 19:11). This demonstrates a heart of wisdom and self-control or meekness. Meekness is the character trait of not being easily provoked. It is every Christian’s call to develop this trait (Col. 3:12).
- D. Strategy to Love Enemies: 2 Timothy 2:24-26. God’s strategy to deal with enemies is contrary to the sinful nature of wanting revenge (Rom. 12: 17-19). Rather, we are to

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<sup>30</sup> Accordance Software 13.0, interlinear note.

overcome evil by doing good (Rom. 12:21). The mature Christian is not to be quarrelsome, but kind, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, gently correcting opponents to the truth, and leaving the results up to God (2 Tim. 2:24-26). These principles may apply to the single woman who is discriminated against for her appearance, age, voice, or other individual characteristics and lead her to believe the lie that she is less than loveable, even by God. The suffering of ill-treatment from others needs to be addressed with compassion, wisdom and care. Temptations to retaliate, self-pity, blame God, and neglect her spiritual growth in the beauty of holiness may become issues to address in counseling.

#### V. Biblical and Theological Considerations in Counseling the Angry Single Woman

- A. View of Sovereignty of God Over Her Marital Status. God works all things according to his own counsel (Eph. 1:11; Rom. 9:17; Gen. 50:20). His will is all wise, all powerful, all just, all good, all merciful, and all glorious, deserving of all praise and thanksgiving. We doubt; we don't have full understanding (Isa. 55:9). We don't realize that God is always at work for good and works ALL things for our good and His purposes and glory (Rom. 8:28). That includes the evil we have been subjected to in this fallen world (Gen. 50:20). Many times, we resist God's providence and grumble or fear or doubt or desire to be in control (Matt. 14:30-32; Exod. 17:3). Many times, God uses difficult situations in a believer's life to humble them, expose what really is in their hearts, that they may come to rely upon their God more closely, and be more watchful of future temptations to sin, that they would be blessed in their sanctification to put off the deeds of the flesh and be holy for God's pleasure and their own good (WCF Chap. 5.5; 2 Chron. 32:25-26, 31; Deut. 8:2-3, 5). God does all this and yet He is never the author of sin (James 1:13-14;

17; 1 John 2:16). Sinfulness comes only from the creature, not from God (WCF Chap. 5:4). The single woman who believes differently on these points needs gentle correcting and reminding of who God is and who she is (2 Tim. 2:24-26; 2 Cor. 10:4-6; Acts 20:19-20; 1 Thess. 5:14). As her counselor, pray that God would lead her to repentance (2 Tim. 2:24-26).

B. Gospel Understanding of Her Rebellion and Blindness to God's Ways.

1. **Depravity.** Many Christians do not recognize the depravity of their own hearts (Jer. 9:23-24; 17:9; Eph. 2:1-3). We are to love God with our whole being, heart, soul and might (Deut. 6:5). Jesus called this the greatest commandment (Matt. 22:37-38). The problem is we love other things, people, or self, more than we love God (Rom. 3:10-12, 20, 23).
2. **False Worship.** Breaking the greatest commandment is failure to worship God, but doesn't end there. We are designed to be worshippers of God. If we don't worship God, we are worshipping something else. That is an idol, a false god. Bigney defines an idol as, "anything or anyone that Captures our hearts, minds, and affections more than God."<sup>31</sup> The truth is, sinning is rooted in the heart (Matt. 15:19). Bigney rightly states, "Sin is what you do when you are chasing after something other than God, namely, one of your idols."<sup>32</sup> The single despairing woman may not see her anxiety and depressed moods as coming from a heart that

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<sup>31</sup> Brad Bigney, *Gospel Treason: Betraying the Gospel with Hidden Idols* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing: 2012), 24.

<sup>32</sup> Brad Bigney, *Gospel Treason: Betraying the Gospel with Hidden Idols* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing: 2012), 26.

is worshipping an idol. She may just see it as sadness she cannot help because it is due to singleness she did not want.

3. **The solution.** The solution is not in just telling her all the benefits of being single and change her attitude about being single (as far as secular solutions tend to go).

But to help her recognize she is worshipping a desire above God.

- C. View of Call of Discipleship to Relinquish Absolute Control of Her Life. The call to follow Jesus and be reconciled to God through Jesus, is not a call to singleness or marriage. It is her primary call to serve the living God (Heb. 9:14). She is to do this whether she is single or married (secondary, ordinary calls). If she puts her desire to be married (or even a desire to be single) above her love and devotion to God, she is no longer serving Him (Gal. 1:10). Relinquishing control of her life, means relinquishing devotion to her sinful nature. Or as Luke puts it, "... any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple." It can only be done in Christ and it is the way to freedom from slavery to sin (John 8:36). Her present autonomous rule is resulting in unrighteous anger (unjust judgments, attitudes, imaginings), despair, depression, anxiety, as well as blindness to the truth about God, herself, and her world.
- D. View of God's Goodness Towards Her as Abundant, Not Stingy. Generosity is a basic character trait of God, which she has been deceived to reject. Who are we to attribute to God those qualities that He does not possess (stinginess or ill-will, for example) (Isa. 29:15-16; Job 40:1-2)? This requires repentance, renewed thinking and confrontation with the truth (Isa. 29:15-16; John 3:16; Rom. 8:32; James 1:17; 42:5-6).
- E. View of Evil: Rebelling and Its Rotten Fruit

1. *Envy*. The idol of being married or being single easily brings with it envy of the happily married, or even the happily single (Prov. 23:17).
2. *Isolation*. Self-rule and discontent with one's marital status affects relationships. Instead of humbly relating, serving, and loving others, one may be tempted to self-isolate to avoid the difficulties of relationships or the fear of them.<sup>33</sup> Guilt over sin, when not properly dealt with, results in isolation (Gen. 3:8).
3. *Arrogance*. "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves (Phil. 2:3)." A common way to hide from one's lack of self-control and other enslavements of sin is "by comparing his life with the lives of other sinners and on that basis pretending all is well with his soul."<sup>34</sup> See Luke 18:9-14, the parable of the pharisee and the tax collector.
4. *Inferiority*. Believing the lie that God is not good to her, she may judge herself less than able or unworthy of a relationship (Job 10:14-16; Prov. 13:18). She desperately desires the approval of others but can never get enough (pleasing others becomes the inordinate, driving desire). This thinking and behaving does not rest in God's goodness towards her and she is more concerned about how she appears to others more than serving God and others (Gal. 1:10).
5. *Lack of Trusting God*. "Only fear the Lord and serve him faithfully with all your heart. For consider what great things he has done for you" (1 Samuel 12:24). A lack of trusting God leads to all kinds of problems: fear, anger, defensiveness, hiding, hopelessness, failure to grow, even physical ailments (Eph. 2:12; Matt.

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<sup>33</sup> For a great study on relationships, see Lane, Timothy S. and Paul David Tripp. *Relationships: A Mess Worth Making*. Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2008.

<sup>34</sup> C. John Miller, *Repentance and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Man* (Fort Washington, PA: CLC Publications, 2003), 83.

25:25; Proverbs 3:5-8). Lack of trusting God is rooted in a mis-judgment of God's trustworthiness and His character. Rather, the believer knows God and meditates on His steadfast love (Psalm 48:9; 100:5; 106:1).

F. View of Self:

1. *Lie #1: The Right to Self-Rule: Autonomy.* This view is propagated by the secular views of how to be single and happy.<sup>35</sup> Basically, with the secular woman at the center of her world, she is encouraged to “call the shots.” Secular advise tells her she is free to decide what she wants and live by those wants. The secular view puts the woman at the center of her world. This self-centered approach tells her to love herself and to do so by looking inside herself, trusting her intuitiveness.<sup>36</sup> Where does God fit into this view of self-rule? Biblically speaking the truth is that human-beings are not autonomous. They have a creator God to whom they are accountable, by whom they have their, “allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place” (Acts 17:26). The single woman is to seek this God (Acts 17:27). God can only be known through Jesus Christ (John 14:6). Once known, Jesus Christ is to be her pursuit (2 Peter 3:18). Pleasing Him is to be her joy (2 Cor. 5:9; Psalm 105:3). Without Christ, there is not glory to be found but only the wrath of God (Prov. 25:27; Rom. 2:8; 2 Cor. 5:10).
2. *Lie #2: She Knows Better than God: Pride and Insubordination.* This lie promotes an unwillingness to submit to God and an exalted view of self. This lie encourages the woman to continue her own designs for her life (just like the

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<sup>35</sup> <https://www.mindbodygreen.com/articles/how-to-be-happy-single>. Accessed 3/10/22.

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.mindbodygreen.com/0-15295/how-do-you-actually-learn-to-love-yourself.html> Accessed 3/28/22.

secular worldview). Unfortunately, by leaving God out of her decision-making and by living by her sinful flesh instead of obedience to Christ, she is in spiritual rebellion. Left unrepented, this presumptuous rebellion leads to sin, a lack of self-control, a lack of lasting joy, poor decision-making, guilt, sorrow, and pain (Prov. 3:5, 35; James 1:15; Psalm 19:13; Prov. 16:18)

3. *Lie #3: Unlovable, abandoned, forgotten: Self-pity.* This view of self denies the truth God's Word tells of her identity in Christ. Being one of the faithful, means being full of faith, trusting Christ and God.<sup>37</sup> The Christian does not need to pity self but rather needs to turn to the Lord, resting and patiently living for Him (Psalm 37:7-9). Grumbling and complaining express the idea that we deserve better from the hand of God and we do not trust God to lead us through our difficulties and trials. Thankfully, Jesus has endured suffering according to God's will (Matt. 26:39). He suffered the ultimate difficulty to be truly abandoned by God on his cross (Matt. 27:46; Heb. 5:8-9). Therefore, we can hold fast to our confession of faith in Him and appeal to the throne of grace for help in time of need (Heb. 4:16; Psalm 22:1-3). He is our sympathetic High Priest able to help us in our weakness (Heb. 4:15-16), even the temptations we face as singles.

G. View of Biblical Hope: Waiting as Part of Sanctification. "Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices!" (Psalm 37:7). The best is the deposit of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9). The completion is yet to come, the saints, fully sanctified, living with

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<sup>37</sup> Easton's Bible Dictionary (Easton) M.G. Easton M.A., D.D., Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Third Edition, published by Thomas Nelson, 1897. Electronic text downloaded from the Bible Foundation e-Text Library: <http://www.bf.org/bfetexts.htm> Accordance edition hypertexted and formatted by OakTree Software, Inc. Version 3.5

the Triune God in glorified bodies in the new heavens and new earth (Rom. 8:18-19, 23; 2 Peter 3:13). “For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God” (Heb. 4:8-9). Rejoice therein and look forward to this future promise to God’s people (1 Peter 1:13).

H. View of Rest: True Contentment and Life. Also Phil. 4:11. The church on earth and in heaven (Heb. 12:22-24). Acceptable worship to God is with reverence and awe (see Heb. 12:28). Reverence, Dr. Kruger says, “is a posture of trust and submission.”<sup>38</sup> Waiting on the Lord is strong and courageous (Psalm 27:14). This character trait of courageous waiting is to be encouraged and practiced in the life of the believer, for the entire life of the believer.

## VI. The Counseling Plan

A. Share and/or Review the Gospel Elements. Ask for the woman’s personal testimony if she professes to be a Christian.<sup>39</sup> Review the basic elements of the Gospel by using the Scriptures for each main point. For example: God is Holy and Just: Psalm 1:6; Rom. 1:18. Man is Sinful and Unjust: Rom. 3:20, 23. God is Merciful and Makes One Way to Escape: Rom. 5:15; 3:22; John 14:6. Jesus Christ is the Unique Appointed King: Rom. 1:3-4; Eph. 1:7, 19-21. Faith in Christ is required for salvation: Rom. 5:1, 16-17. Jesus reigns over the believers as the Good Shepherd: Eph. 2:20-22; John 10:14; Psalm 23:1-6. New Life in Christ: Gal. 1:4, 10; 5:19-20; Eph. 4:31, Col. 3:8, Rom. 12:1-2; 15:5. The Helper, Holy Spirit: Psalm 30:10; John 14:26; Eph. 1:13. Christ must be the center of the life: John 15:4-5.

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<sup>38</sup> Dr. Michael Kruger, Professor at Reformed Theological Seminary Charlotte, notes from women’s bible study in Hebrews available at: <https://rts.edu/resources/the-qualifications-of-the-high-priest/> Accessed 3/28/22.

<sup>39</sup> You may even have her write it out in one page or less as her first assignment.

B. Discover the Driving Unmet Desires and Misplaced Hope.

1. **Taking Inventory.** Where is she struggling? What does she want and treasure, but does not have? Is she willing to sin to get it? What does she do when does not get it, or when she loses her treasure? Does she get angry with herself or others or God? What desire is actually ruling her heart? “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matt. 6:21). We worship with our hearts. The question is, what or who are we worshipping? God’s people are to worship God first and foremost (Matt. 22:37-40).
2. **Idolatrous desires.** As self-centered sinners, even family can be treasured above our love of God. The woman’s dream of having a husband and children becomes idolatrous when she covets these above her desire to love and please God (Col. 3:5, Luke 12:15). If she does not treasure God above all and everyone else, she cannot be his disciple (Luke 14:26-27). False worship, aka idolatry, is the desire for or love of anyone or anything above the desire for and love of God. This includes the god of comfort and a life of ease, or seeking the approval of man, or the demand for marriage and family, or the demand for a perfect life (1 Cor. 10:7; Gal. 1:10). These false idols become the functional god in the person’s life. Since they cannot deliver, the worshipper is never satisfied but discontented, ever straining to have the desire met, weary, losing hope, even despairing, or simply exchanging idols or denying reality (2 Peter 2:18-19; Isaiah 44:20).
3. **Repentance is necessary.** If the woman is a believer, she will be under the discipline of the Lord for her idolatry (Heb. 12:10-11). If so, repentance is required. It is essential to listen to God and turn our hearts to Him (Heb. 2:1; 3:7-

8). The unbelieving heart leads astray and leads to sin (Heb. 3:18-19). The Christian is to flee from idols (1 Cor. 10:14).

- C. Identify Hope in God as Savior and Desire of the Soul. A heart gone astray after false, powerless, deceptive idols is in danger. This counselee needs warnings (Heb. 3:12; Jer. 17:13; 1 Cor. 10:7, 9-12, 14). She needs to be called to turn, once again to the Savior and Lover of her soul, Jesus Christ (John 15:9-10). He needs to be the center of her affections and her prime pursuit (Matt 6:33; Psalm 119:1-3). He alone delivers us from slavery to lusts, sin, false worship, unrealistic expectations, corruptions, death and hell (Heb. 9:26b, 10:14). He is honest about life in this fallen world and prepares us for it with his truth. Persecutions will come to the believer, but so does the abundant life in Christ and in fellowship with His people (Mark 10:29-31).
- D. Identify God as Comforter and Our Strength (1 Cor. 10:13). The believer's confidence is in the Lord, not in self (Isaiah 42:6-9; Jer. 16:9; 1 Tim. 1:12; Phil. 3:3; 1 John 2:28; 4:17). The believer is being transformed by the renewal of their inner person by the work of the Holy Spirit and not without Him (John 15:5; Phil. 1:6, 9-11; Rom. 8:13-17; 12:1-2). Share the Psalms with the counselee as a model of how the believer clings to the Savior (Psalm 73:23-28). It is all of grace that she can prevail in the faith (2 Cor. 12:7-10).
- E. Exhibit Compassion, Relate to the Suffering. Identify real needs. The single woman suffers loss of expectations in life. She may have been discriminated against for outward appearances. She may be experiencing ridicule or oppression or abuse by others. The fallen world in which we live may reduce the number of mature Christian men that she can relate with. Yet none of these things can defeat the woman whose identity and trust are firmly fixed on Christ. Comfort the struggling Christian woman by acknowledging

the difficulties but not the hopelessness she is experiencing. Study 2 Corinthians 4:3-18 together to encourage the fainthearted woman. Pray for your counselee. Help her find her place to serve in the church. Help her develop the social skills she may be lacking.

Encourage her in the faith.

F. Point to the Solution found in Christ and His Church.

1. *God's Word: Her faith must be in God and the Word of God, not in wishful, self-made, self-centered thinking.* Her concept of who God is must be determined by His revelation of Himself in His Word and in His Son Jesus Christ. Her dishonoring thoughts of God need to be confessed as sin and brought to Christ for forgiveness and cleansing (1 John 1:9). Christ must be central and enthroned on her heart as her God (Heb. 8:10b; 10:16). Wanting to be married is not sinful in itself, but as it becomes central to her life, it is a false idol and must be removed. She needs to repent of this idol worship and take up the purposes for which Christ has saved her (Mark 8:34).
2. *One another fellowship, one-another ministry, and one-another commands.* Singleness is never alone in the body of Christ. Ephesians 2:19-22 outlines the believers' purpose as members of the household of God. "...in whom [Christ] the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit" (Eph. 2:21-22). Application includes her building up others in the faith with her words and attitudes in love (Eph. 4:15). She is built up together with other believers in the church by her serving others and allowing others to minister to her.

G. Homework to practice new way of thinking, behaving. Study the attributes of God. Praise Him in all her circumstances including her singleness. Steward her singleness for becoming more Christ-like. List what Christ-likeness is based on various Scriptures (ex. Matt. 11:29-30). List the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21). Which ones does she struggle with? List the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). Which ones does she need to cultivate with the Help of the Spirit? Do a study on Psalm 73 for how to overcome envy. Do a study on the godly character traits she needs to cultivate. For example, if she lives to get the approval of man (fear of man), she needs to put this off and cultivate the fear of God instead. Therefore, homework can be to read and meditate on Isaiah 8:13; 1 Peter 1:17; 2:17; Deut. 31:11-13; Psalm 34:11-14; Jer. 32:38-40. Have her select one or two verses to put to memory. Ask her to pray for God's help to develop a heart of reverence and awe for Him and all His perfections. Ask her to prayerfully think of ways to apply and obey His Word in her week. Write out her prayer and application. Write out what she commits to do and what happened when she obeyed God's command. Encourage her to continue hiding God's Word in her heart and mind, doing as it says and becoming more fruitful in life (2 Peter 1:8).

VII. Conclusion: Note the difference between what a secular counselor has to offer and what a biblical counselor offers a disciple of Jesus Christ.

A. The secular counsel may appear good. On the surface, secular counsel given to singles sounds good, even sometimes biblical, such as thinking about how singleness is good (an application of Phil. 4:8). But at the foundational level, secular counsel is not built on Christ, therefore the solutions carry their own problems and faulty thinking. For example, thinking positively about singlehood is good but does not assure anything nor overcome

sin. Similarly, the counsel to keep busy and do things to your liking, to get involved with people and serve others, to get involved with projects bigger than yourself, etc, are not necessarily bad, but they assure nothing and can all be done outside of pleasing Christ (Matt. 7:22-24). A life lived obediently trusting Christ counts now and forever (Matt. 19:29). Without Christ we can do nothing truly good (Rom. 7:18; John 15:5). All other works will be exposed and are not acceptable to God but are viewed as worthless (Matt. 7:22-24; 2 Peter 3:10).

B. Worldly counsel puts the counselee at the center of their own life. This pernicious lie of self-rule potentially leaves the single even more lonely, self-centered, and angry since no one is able to control all of their life's events (James 4:13-14). Secular counsel is fundamentally unable to restore the despairing single to her fruitful position in Christ. Man-centered psychology counsels the despairing single to view their state as their choice if they want to have fewer mental health problems.<sup>40</sup> This claim falsely assumes that the perception of choice leads to mental health. It also assumes a definition of mental health or leaves that up to the individual. The solution to single issues corresponds to the definition of the problem. For example, psychoanalysts in the Freudian school of thought believe the problem is outside of the individual. It is attributed to social influences and upbringing. The natural, uninfluenced person is assumed to be healthy, intuitive, free from inhibition, etc. The solution, according to this view, therefore resides in the inner person, not outside of themselves.

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<sup>40</sup> K. Adamczyk, "Voluntary and Involuntary Singlehood and Young Adults' Mental Health: An Investigation of Mediating Role of Romantic Loneliness," *Current Psychology* 36, no. 4 (2017): 888-904. doi:10.1007/s12144-016-9478-3

- C. Biblical counsel aims to restore the believer's ways and thinking to Christ's ways and purposes. Only with faith in Christ is true rest found, both now and ultimately in eternity (Matt. 11:28, Heb. 4:1-3, 9). The biblical view sees the person as born corrupted, clearly stated in God's word and evidenced by the fact that, apart from Jesus Christ Himself, no one is perfect or sinless. And sin is not left up to the individual to define. It is objective truth belonging to Holy God that defines sin as any lack of conformity to His Word. The solution to the corrupt and corrupting nature of sin therefore lies outside of the individual. The only person that could solve the problem of sin in the human heart, is the Triune God. That theology needs to be understood by hearing the Word of God and its message of salvation. The gospel is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes (Rom. 1:8).
- D. Biblical counsel is the only counsel that leads to redeemed humanity. Man was originally designed by God to be lived in righteousness before Him (Psalm 16:11; 36:9). The angry single woman has a spiritual problem. Her anger, envy, pride, coveting, and foolishness all come out of her heart (Mark 7:20-23). They are not imposed on her by outside influences, but her own desires tempt her to sin (James 1:14). The problem of the deceitful heart is solved by the Person and work of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and God the Father. This is the theme of the Bible, the hope of the nations, and the salvation of sinners saved by grace (Gen. 3:15; Rom. 4:18; Eph. 2:8-9; Rev. 22:2). Repentance (initial and subsequent) is key<sup>41</sup>. The counselor needs to understand that repentance is a gift of

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<sup>41</sup> To help yourself as counselor and your counselee understand repentance, see C. John Miller, *Repentance and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Man* (Fort Washington, PA: CLC Publications, 1980, 2003). This is a small booklet of 8 short chapters and 111 pages.

the Holy Spirit and comes through the Word of God applied by the Holy Spirit (John 16:8-9). Leading the counselee to the scriptures with the truth is the way to help.

E. Singles and the church.

1. **Proper view of singles.** Singles struggling with their singleness need care and counsel to be thriving in their faith, or to be introduced to the true faith as delivered by the Apostles. In the United States, approximately 30% of women never marry (and 38% of men). With all that the Bible says about fulfilling our call to follow Christ, and saying nothing against being single and sexually pure, we should not view the single woman (or man) as a second-class Christian. Rather, the church should work to build them up in the faith as much as anyone. Perhaps we erroneously think that singles don't face temptation as much as others. Perhaps we hold other wrong attitudes and beliefs about singles. Paul warned and taught everyone, in all earnest, so that all would reach maturity (Col. 1:28). Let's not forget the singles. Rather let us get to know them and help them in their struggles so they can fulfill their calling to follow Christ, bearing fruit for Him and His bride, the church.
2. **Ways the church can serve singles.** Offer to mentor a single person. This is not to be done with a motive of "fixing the single" and helping them find a marriage partner. This mentoring is to help the person grow as a Christian. Doing a particular bible study would be appropriate. Befriend, include, appreciate, serve, and give ministry opportunities to singles as much as to married persons. Invite singles into your family gathering to get to know them and discover particular ways to serve them. Accept the gifts and talents of the single person.

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