

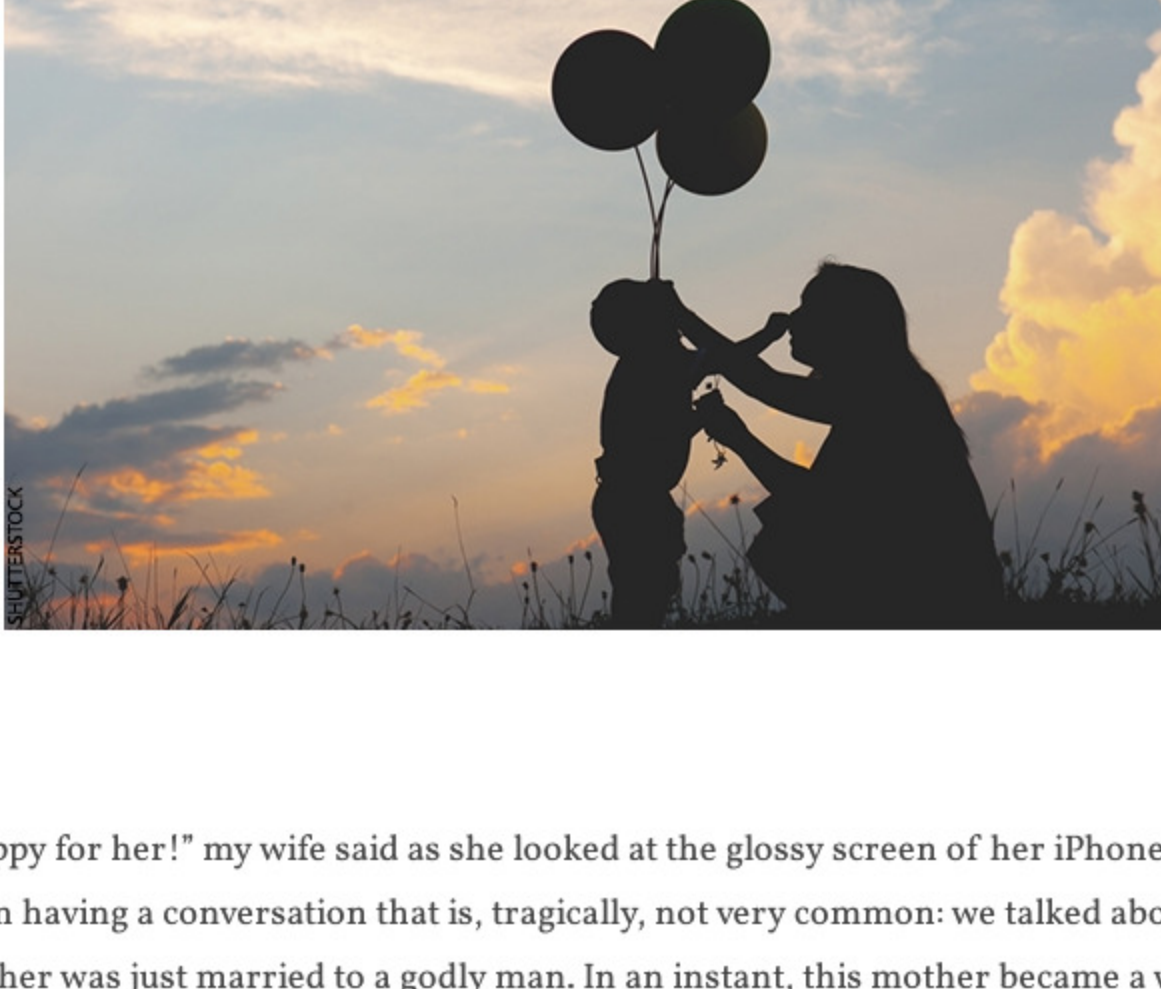
Samuel Parkison

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Single Men, Consider the Single Mothers In Your Church



"I'm so happy for her!" my wife said as she looked at the glossy screen of her iPhone. We sat in our kitchen having a conversation that is, tragically, not very common: we talked about how a single mother was just married to a godly man. In an instant, this mother became a wife, and this husband became a father. Every wedding marks the beginning of a family, but these kinds do so in a uniquely palpable sense.

Many mothers in our churches need husbands, and their children need fathers, yet for all the pro-family, pro-marriage, pro-life talk among Christian young men, weddings like the one I just mentioned are uncommon. I know, I know, even asserting something so novel as "children need fathers" runs in direct conflict with our moral revolutionaries' delusional rhetoric surrounding the apparent omni-malleable definition of "family," but I'm not presently concerned with defending fatherhood to our venerable Idiotocracy. I wish instead to issue this charge to single Christian men: **as you look for a future wife, don't write off the single moms in your church.**

Teenage "purity," "second virginity," and other gospel-perversions

The odd romanticization of *marriage* in Christian sub-culture has done a lot of damage. Marriage, young men are told at youth camp, is our reward for not having sex in high school. If you can keep yourself "pure" through your teen years, fellas, you are entitled to a beautiful young virgin, who will address all your sexually frustrated woes with endless sex all your days. Just *hang in there a bit longer*—until you get to a Cristian College! To a pimply 17-year-old young man with an imagination, this is compelling enough to "surrender your life to Jesus."

Even worse than the expectations branded on young men is the impression left on young men and women who have sinned sexually. The "stay pure till marriage" rhetoric offers this problematic axiom: purity = being a virgin; therefore, losing one's virginity = impurity. The masterminds of our youth camps often recognized this problem—that is, the problem that such a fragile definition of "purity" will leave young men and women who have had sex in despair—so they came up with one of the most bizarre solutions imaginable: "second virginity." Rather than changing the definition of "pure" to reflect biblical teachings of sin, atonement, and imputed righteousness, these geniuses changed the definition of "virgin" so they could hold on to their terrible axiom!

Brilliant! Except, it isn't, because as long as you define "purity" as "virginity," stretch marks and a baby will always brandish many young women as second-tier Christians who are at the very least *less pure*, no matter how many pamphlets you produce that smack of "second virginity."

Many of us who *were* the pimply 17-year-olds at youth camp have grown out of this kind of silliness in recent years. We can laugh about the absurd analogies we were saturated in and the antics that pervaded the whole movement—we all remember our unvarnished pennies, rubber bands, nails, buttons, *true love waits* rings, and of course, *the rose*, right? But the long-lasting effects of this nonsense is not funny. Even for those of us young men who have come to understand the staggering reality of the gospel, and what it means for "purity"—namely, that "not having sex" is a pitiful substitute for "purity" when we consider the *actual* purity of Jesus' imputed righteousness—we still find the expectations of our pimply-17-year-old-selves hard to shake. For all of our theological maturity, we still expect that marriage to a beautiful virgin is our entitled reward for not having sex in high school.

I am convinced that many Christian young man have not fully shaken off this terrible theology. We have come to understand, in principle, that "virginity" does not equate to "purity." And we have further come to understand, in principle, that "marriage" is not the culminating reward for our not having sex before marriage. But *functionally*, marriage is still idealized to be something vainer than what Scripture calls it.

In light of all this, here are three reasons I think Christian men should pursue Christian single moms for marriage.

Single Christian moms are as pure as the sinless Son of God, which is more than you deserve in a wife.

"He who finds a wife finds a good thing." (Proverbs 18:22) Period. A wife is a gift of God's grace, and grace is undeserved. If this is the case, then having the vain expectation of marrying a childless virgin is unwarranted. Note, I am not saying that young Christian men should *lower their standards* to include single moms, as if to say condescendingly "Hey, single moms are a gift of God's grace too." I'm not saying that the expectation of a childless virgin is *too high*, I'm saying it's just flat out *not biblical*. Being a consistent Christian means *actually* seeing Christian men and women *in Christ*, bearing all of the righteousness and purity and holiness that union with Christ implies.

Single Christian moms shouldn't be punished for rightly responding to their sin.

Many of the single moms in our churches became single moms by virtue of having sex out of wedlock. As a Christian, I make no bones about the fact that such an act was sinful. In fact, the Christian single mom *also* acknowledges that her act of sex outside of marriage was a sin. Yet a biblical understanding of *children* leads us to conclude that the baby produced by this sinful act is an unimaginably grand and beautiful gift! Even in the case of rape, a consistent Christian looks at the conception of a child as the brightly shining silver-lining, which runs straight down the middle of a tragic situation.

Additionally, we would rightly identify the *abortion* of a baby conceived out of wedlock as sin, so the young woman who has sex outside the proper bounds of marriage, conceives a child, and chooses to carry that baby to full term, *in spite of all the pressure* from the culture in which she resides to kill the baby, acts *rightly*. She has done well to celebrate the life of her baby while her culture persistently calls her baby an "inconvenience" and a "burden." Yet the tragedy is that such women are likely to *hear* Christians lobby for the lives of their children, but when they actually come into the church, they find a vacuum of young men who are willing to put their money where their mouths are. Quite often, single moms have an easier time finding men who are willing to be with them *out in the world* than they do in the Church. Single Christian men, beware of the indictment Jesus offered to the Pharisees: "They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger." (Matthew 23:4)

Marrying single Christian moms demonstrates the gospel, which is what marriage is supposed to do.

We are not told in Ephesians 5:22-31 that marriage is intended to satisfy vain expectations, or that it's the entitled reward of a virgin for a virgin, we are told that marriage is a covenant, *intended to reflect the gospel of Jesus Christ*. That's its *essence*. It is true that ordinarily, children are supposed to be the product of *marriage*, and where childbearing occurs apart from marriage, sin has occurred in some way, shape, or form. *But*, marriage, *in its essence*, isn't *merely* defined as "the proper union for bearing and raising children." No, *in its essence*, marriage is supposed to be a display of the gospel! This means that a husband and wife who cannot have children are no less able to experience the *essence* of marriage than those who can, and a husband and wife who begin their marriage with children already in the picture are also no less able to experience the *essence* of marriage than those who begin childless.

But it gets even better. Not only is a marriage between a man and a single mom still able to reflect the gospel—and thereby meet the chief end of marriage—such a marriage also has the potential of reflecting the gospel to an *even greater degree*, since it reflects not only Christ's love for his Bride, but also the Father's love for his adopted children! Far from being a burden, marriage to a single mom is brimming with gospel-displaying potential.

Many single Christian men in our churches bemoan the fact that they desire to be married, but can't seem to find a wife. Perhaps the problem is that their "market" is too narrowly defined.

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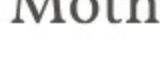
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Samuel G. Parkison (PhD, Midwestern Seminary) is Associate Professor of Theological Studies and Director of the Abu Dhabi Extension Site at Gulf Theological Seminary in the United Arab Emirates. Before coming to GTS, Samuel was assistant professor of Christian studies at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and pastor of teaching and liturgy at Emmaus Church in Kansas City. He is the author of *Revelation and Response: The Why and How of Leading Corporate Worship Through Song* (Rainer, 2019). Thinking Christianly: Bringing Sundry Thoughts Captive to Christ (H&E, 2022), and *Irresistible Beauty: Beholding Trine Glory in the Face of Jesus Christ* (Christian Focus, 2022).



September 8, 2016

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2 thoughts on "Single Men, Consider the Single Mothers In Your Church"

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OKRickety

March 13, 2019 at 6:35 pm

Samuel,

Did you marry a single Christian mother?

"My personal views, for example, are considered by most to be very strict, so the single moms I have in mind for this post are those who became single moms by virtue of unwedded pregnancies or the death of their husbands, and not by divorce."

I'd be interested in your explanation of this position. And expanding it to situations such as a woman who was an unwed mother, then married, and later divorced. Or the divorced woman who afterwards has a child without remarriage.

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sparkison3

March 13, 2019 at 8:02 pm

No, I didn't marry a single Christian mother.

I'd be happy to send you a position paper I wrote on divorce and remarriage that might clarify. What I believe about divorce and remarriage is not in principle effected by children, either before or after divorce. That's the point of my clarifying comment: it is to say, "What the Scripture teaches about divorce and remarriage applies across the board, whether there are children involved or not." You can email me at sam@emmausk.com if you'd like that paper.

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