10-1-1975

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Counseling The Single Adult

ADDIE FURIMAN

Margaret Hoopes: I don't know of anyone that is better qualified to introduce Addie Jean Furiman than I am. I've known Addie Jean for about 14 years and we went through our masters program together and then a number of years later went through our doctorate program together. For those of you who know what the blood, sweat and tears of a masters and doctorate program means, then you know that we have some very strong ties, Addie is from Logan, Utah and did her undergraduate studies at Utah State. Her masters degree was at B.Y.U. and a degree in counseling psychology at the University of Minnesota.

That's her formal education. For those of you who know her, you realize, of course, that her informal education has contributed a great deal to her life and to other people also. She has a great curiosity about people, about how they interact, and has the ability to give a great deal. I think that I will now let her expose that to you.

Addie: Margaret is the only person that came to ask me to get information about what to do. She is the only person that asked me, "What don't you want me to tell them," instead of "What do you want me to tell them." I appreciate her sensitivity.

It is a pleasure to be here today, and particularly around the topic that we've been asked to present. It has been a very good method on my part, they asked me if I would conduct the panel, and then, just like everything else that happens that's good, someone unknown person arranged for the panel, and arranged to have them here. And I appreciate that kind of effort, and I hope that it is useful to the people that are here.

One of the reasons why I think it is an interesting topic is because most of us spend our lives either married or single and that for most of us in the room today, we will at one time be either married or a single parent. And so it does add some other common experience. Maybe it is one, because of the usefulness of the people on the panel today, that may help our own experience at some other time. I hope that would happen.

I just finished conducting, last year, two individual studies for the church, and one was on single parents. The other was on single females in the church. Today we were going to talk about, and still are for awhile, the issue or the topic that you have been given—and that is counseling the single adult in the church. Another interesting fact is that we had to solicit Jan Tyler ten minutes ago to represent the "never married". I think that gives you some idea of the difficulties in assembling a panel such as this, and why I think it is kind of interesting.

They tell me that they asked thirty people to participate on the panel, and of the thirty, they had seven, I believe, who were either never married, who refused to come or couldn't make it at the last moment. The three who are here, representing three of the thirty, are single parents. Because of this I appreciate their attendance, and I think that they can share some of their experiences that can also be useful to you in your own careers.

One of the difficulties of this age group of never married, widowed or divorced in the church, is that they probably represent the widest variation of interests of any other group in the church. They also represent the widest variation in age of any group in the church. You're talking about people from 18 to 100, from all walks of life, with different priesthood callings and different church callings. So in a sense, it is a different experience.

By way of how we are going to structure the next little while, I have a series of questions that I am going to raise, and then ask the panel to respond to them, both out of their own experience, and of the other people they know who are single parents, either divorced, widowed or never married. Then we will probably have a little time at the end for a few questions and answers from the audience, so that if you want to go into an area that for you would be useful, we will have some time for that, although I would guess it would be somewhat limited because of the number here.

Now to move right ahead, and not use any more of the time that we need, let me introduce the panel to you briefly, and then I am going to ask them to say a little bit to us about themselves in addition to what I introduce them as, in order that you might have a little better understanding of their background.

I have Larue Petty on my far right. Currently she is working as a secretary in a bank in Utah, and in the church she serves as a stake Young Special Interest Representative; so she is not only on the church council, but she also as a career, and in addition to that she raises four children.

Irv Lindsay, sitting next to Larue, is currently working at Utah Trade Technical College in Provo, and also works with academic standards at B.Y.U. He is the multi-regional president of Young Special Interest in that area. When he is not working he has time to raise two children on the side.

Ellen Bates is next. She is currently enrolled at B.Y.U. She is the mother of three children and a recent convert to the church of about one year. She teaches a Sunday School class of 15 and 17 year olds.
Jan Tyler, who has just been recruited and who has to leave in order to attend a class, is currently director of the Family Consultation Clinic at B.Y.U. I think that it is under the office of the Marriage and Family Department. I appreciate her coming at such a short notice.

I'd like to begin, then, with kind of a general question, and I will tell you what my purposes are with the questions I ask. I have told the people on the panel that today their purpose is to help you and me. One purpose is to try and increase our awareness of what it is like to be a single parent. The second is to try to help us as professionals to see what we can do to increase our skills and our attitudes, and maybe you will have to change them such that we can be more useful when we are counseling with single parents, particularly in the church. So to begin with I have asked them to be spontaneous as possible with the traveling microphone. I'd like it is like to be a single parent in the world today, and then we will just move from that point. I would like to include Jan Tyler until the time that she leaves, so we'll discuss what it is like to be a single adult in the world today. So, do you want to start from there? Who wants to start first? Do you want to?

Try Lindsay: You get to hear this story, Keep in mind this story is part true and part made up. You've got to know that from the beginning. I'd like to take you on a short, one-day journey through the life of a person, so if you will imagine with me, you just got off work at about 5:30 or 5:45. You should have been off at 5:00, but you were held up at work and traffic and such, so you didn't get to the babysitter's until close to six. So you are rushing madly to get to the babysitter's. You arrive, the babysitter is a little upset because you are late. She is trying to get dinner for her family, her husband is expected home at any time, and your being late has caused a problem.

The children feel it, so they are a little bit upset. You manage to get them out to the babysitter's on time. You get them to the babysitter's, you arrive, the babysitter is a little upset because you are late. She is trying to get dinner for her family, her husband is expected home at any time, and your being late has caused a problem.

You look at the house. You have forgotten about a car except how to put gas in and how to change a flat tire. It's difficult. Just imagine with me, you have a flat tire. It's difficult. Just imagine with me, you have a flat tire. You get the car started, you pull the kids out of the tub and dry them off, and rush them in to get their jammies, excuse me, pajamas on, that's home talk. Then you kneel down and have a real quick prayer. Well, the hour is late and you're in no emotional state nor spiritual state to have the kind of prayer and do the meditation necessary, so you have a quick prayer and you pray to the Lord silently, "Help tomorrow to be better so you can do a better job in raising the kids in terms of giving a prayer." You give them a good-night kiss and tuck them into bed and say, "Go to sleep," You're on the way out the door and you hear a little voice from underneath the covers say, "Daddy, can I have a drink of water?" So, you run and get a drink of water and then you spend five or ten additional minutes. You come back and it is five minutes to ten.

You tell them again to hurry quickly and get it done, so they can go to bed. "Come on now, hustle your hustle, get going." They hurry, and at a quarter after nine, you run in and pull them out of the tub. You, since then, cleared the dinner table and are trying to get dishes washed. You notice the time and it is getting late. So you pull the kids out of the tub and dry them off, and rush them in to get their jammies, excuse me, pajamas on, that's home talk. Then you kneel down and have a real quick prayer. Well, the hour is late and you're in no emotional state nor spiritual state to have the kind of prayer and do the meditation necessary, so you have a quick prayer and you pray to the Lord silently, "Help tomorrow to be better so you can do a better job in raising the kids in terms of giving a prayer." You give them a good-night kiss and tuck them into bed and say, "Go to sleep," You're on the way out the door and you hear a little voice from underneath the covers say, "Daddy, can I have a drink of water?" So, you run and get a drink of water and then you spend five or ten additional minutes. You come back and it is five minutes to ten.

The children feel it, so they are a little upset. They want to be with the children. You haven't had time to sit down and give them their baths and spend some quiet time with them.

Your first comment is, "Hurry and come sit at the dinner table. We've got to eat quickly and get it done." So they sit down and you eat very quickly. About eight thirty you are finished. You rush them into the bathtub and
My own son,--I look at him and he smiles, and I see dollar signs because he is going to need orthodontic work. This is a major decision because he is almost twelve years old now, and I know deep down inside, one of these days I'm going to have to get started on this. But it means an awful lot more money than I am prepared right at this point to put out, but I should do something. And who do I ask? He has a father, and I get support the way it's defined legally, in terms of dollars and cents, but it comes in a way that he can pull out his wallet. This is support--and I have bad feelings about it—or those bad feelings, is it bitterness? Is it resentment? What kind of feeling?

When I look at things like a baby who has been sick all night and I've been up all night and I have to go to school the next day, and even if I get to school I didn't study because last night I was taking care of a sick baby. What are the feelings I am feeling? I don't know. Is it bitterness? Is it resentment? Is it support?

Jan: I'm not a single parent but I am a single person and maybe it is because I was not raised in Utah. Some of the people had already talked about the culture shock of coming to Utah. I have found it easier to be a single person in the world than to be a single parent in the church. I am grateful to say that I do see that changing. I do see a few heads nodding and agreeing with me, but I guess this convention has been exciting to me because I find that there are some things worse than being a single person in the church—such as, being a fornicator or an adulterer or a homosexual. Seriously, I don't think it is quite that desperate.

Life for me I find is quite an adventure— and not that I don't want ever to be married or that I haven't always wanted to be married, because that is part of my orientation; I come from a large family and have parents who are not only happily married, but are beautiful individuals—but I think I don't feel a sense of desperation about it, partially because of some very comforting things and instructions that I am given in my Patriarchal Blessing, which indicates to me that each one of us has our own time schedules for certain events to take place in our lives and through the eternities. Also, being single has become an adventure because I have not had someone to rely on, and so I have had an opportunity, maybe earlier and for me longer, to draw upon the concepts of self-reliance that are beginning to be talked about by some of the General Authorities. It would have been easier for me to avoid those kinds of self-responsibilities if I had someone to rely upon.

Also I think by being a single person I have the opportunity to discover talents and resources within myself that I might have had to defer, because my energies are not being drawn towards making a household and directing my energies towards children, and so that is part of the adventure for me.

I have also learned that there are certain ways in society, not only in the society generally, but in the Mormon subculture, that really do not help women to be self-reliant. In fact, we encourage them not to be self-reliant or to learn how to do things such as change a tire, or change the oil, or to figure our income tax and things like that; and so this is part of my system of self-reliance that I have had to learn. Another part that has been hard for me has been living in Utah. I can't say it has changed that much, but it has been an adjustment. That is, while living in the world or in the mission field, I have found that relationships with men have been easier. Coming to Utah I find that a lot of times men will relate to me as a sister, or in the qualities that I have thought could be labeled as mothering. They relate to me in these kinds of ways. They relate to me as they relate to close members in their family, but have a hard time relating to me as an individual; and so that has been a hard thing for me to adjust to. I think in the process I have had the opportunity to educate a few men in very pleasant ways.

I also feel that human resources, the human resources of single people, are going untouched to a great extent within the church. I can remember one instance when I had been to a ward in Utah—my first Utah ward, not in the city of Provo—I was the only single person in the ward and they did not know what to do with me. The other night I had the opportunity to speak in a regional meeting and I said that one of the great needs I have is not to be treated as a paraplegic, and that is the kind of feeling I had in the new ward I had entered. Suddenly I was a cripple of some sort and I couldn't be dealt with; I couldn't be fitted in, and nobody knew what to do with me and the priesthood person came up to me and said, "We'd really like to place you somewhere. We wanted to put you with the widows but you wouldn't fit there, and we wanted to put you with some of the people living in your area, but they are married and there might be constraints on the part of some of the wives that you might be after their husbands." By the time the man got through, I was quite distressed and I thought, "What's the point of that type of arrangement, when a common bond should exist between us in terms of gospel concerns; and whether I'm married or single I
do still have some of those gospel concerns." So, it has been a tremendous learning process for me.

I think as I work with students—particularly young women who are in their late twenties, who have returned from missions and still aren't married, and who are feeling kind of desperate—it's been because of my experience that I've been able to be more helpful in helping them become more productive in their single years. Sometimes some people indicate to me that maybe I should be feeling guilty because I am having such a good time being single. I feel guilty about other things that I don't wish to confess to you here, but it is not because I am single. I would hope that as we get more sensitivity to the broad spectrum of human experience that we can learn to relate to each other whether we are married, single or divorced. Thank you.

Addie: Jan presents a good opportunity to slide the conversation from what it is like to be a single parent in the world to what it is like to be a single parent in the Church.

Maybe this can be useful to us because of our common bond as members of the Church and also as professional helpers, so if you could, at this point, say what it is like to be a single parent or a single person in the Church.

Larue Petty: May I also point this towards family, and may I relate on incident that I think may perhaps illustrate—and that is, that you are living your church standards and you are trying your very best, and you portray to your children that all of you are—and at the time of divorce my daughter cried, "God's a liar. God's a liar. Look at us for living our religion, for doing everything you're supposed to do. This church isn't true. There isn't a God." When she watches her grandfather dying and she knows that he is a very devoted righteous man, she wonders if God is just, why this.

Being a single person in the L.D.S. Church means going to church and watching the children learning lessons of devotion in families. Hearing promises that if you live worthy and if you do this and you do that, you will be blessed and your family will be united in all these things. It's having your children come and say, "Mama, please don't get married. I don't want my name to be different from yours." It's watching a son go through his priesthood years without a father for a companion or a guideline. It's watching him, because of his teachings in the church, continually trying to build a relationship with his father, and his father not responding—just slightly—enough to torment but not enough to fill his needs. It's having your daughters very loving and very close and very devoted with you, until they reach the age of 15 or 16 and suddenly turning on you because you can't show them how to build a relationship with men. How can they trust you when you couldn't even keep their father. It's knowing that there is a God, that there is eternal life and eternal marriage and you don't have it. It's watching your children who desperately need a father and wondering if it is your fault that you don't get one for them, but not having the courage to do anything about it. I would agree with Jan that it would be easier outside of the church than in. But you love the Lord and you know that the gospel is true and you just can't deny that. From there where do you go?

Irv: I'd like to make a comment about that. When my wife died I walked into a Sunday School meeting, and I have been in the Bishopric (not with this individual), but we had gone to stake Bishopric Meetings together and had spent many hours listening to Stake Presidents and associating together on many stake activities. I knew the wife of this man very well, as well as the husband, of course—I have to make everything clear, see how defensive I have become. As I entered this Sunday School meeting I was about as close as the gentlemen on the front row here. I started to reach out and shake their hands, and the two other women standing with her were prominent leaders in the ward. All three of them looked directly in my eyes and turned their backs on me. I thought at that point, "Gee, What have I got?" I had even taken a shower that morning, changed my brand of soap, too! This is not an uncommon story, and this is the reason I'm relating it to you. It happens quite often. If you'd allow me enough time, I could sit down and come up with sixty or seventy names for similar incidents that have happened, both here and in California.

There are a lot of things that happen in the Church, not by design but by accident, but they hurt nonetheless. They effect your spiritual growth. They impede your emotional stability, and they certainly question your physical ability. So, this is one of the problems that I think we have to deal with as counselors, particularly church counselors.

Ellen: My older son is going to be twelve years old in January and he is looking forward to receiving the Aaronic Priesthood. We've only been members of the church a year last month. This is all new to the boy, to us—the church and the teachings of the church. We were already separated from their father before I joined the Church. They (the children) have an entirely different outlook. Their outlook is—it is going to be a different story. I hope that it will be. The children push. They are looking. Every man that comes around they say, "Is he going to be our daddy now? But it is difficult to be a single parent in the Church because everything is geared to the family. It's very conspicuous like on Christmas Day, because all the programs, all the songs, and when it comes to the part where it talks about in the song "I Am A Child Of God", "Parents kind and dear", she knows her mommmy kind and dear. All she knows about her daddy however, is that he holds her in his lap sometimes, but not at other times. That's really sad, and it is hard for her to relate to the concept of family life as the church presents it from what she knows.
I think that there is some discrepancy somewhere, where children know that they are different; that they need to have some help in an environment geared to the perfect family and family life; how it should be. And if they are in a single-parent home, whether it is just a single father or mother, it can't be the way that the songs sing, the songs that they sing in Sunday School. It just can't be that way for them.

Addie: In addition to some of the comments by the panel, you might be interested in some of the data obtained in the survey that was conducted on single parents in the church. Most of the things they have found have been mentioned by numerous men and women, and they talked about what it is like to sit in Sunday School on the first Sunday of the month, and the children ask why they aren't asked to participate as a family, and it is because they don't have a father and or a mother. Another discussion was what it is like to be a single parent and to have 3 or 4 children, and yourself being about thirty, and you have two home teachers, one that is about twelve and the other about twenty, and they have no apparent needs or desires to respond to the youngsters in any way. Or what it is like to have little girls grow up without a mother to have some sort of identity. Or what it is like to have a boy who never had the protection of a father or a man around the house.

At church they talked about what it is like to have a lot of attention of different ward members, i.e. what they can do for you, or maybe a home teacher that comes twice or three times every year -- not the regular kind of follow through -- he takes your boy to priesthood outings if there is not a father in the home.

There is also another concern -- how do you feel about a relationship with the opposite sex in the church when you are a single parent and, thus, be under suspect even to have a conversation with another adult. Although the children are adolescent, with an adolescent vocabulary, this affects their having a relationship with people the same age, or even the opposite sex.

Another concern with single parents is the kind of help they get as a single parent in the Church. I don't want us to have a cloud hanging over us, so we are going to move to some kind of help -- situations that we all operate in our own individual styles, and we reason them in our own ways in which to help. But, some of the suggestions that were given by single parents, one of the concerns, was how they are counselled both in the church, and in the ecclesiastical council, and professional council -- those employed by the church, and those who are not in the church. One of the common concerns was that there seemed to be a real need for people to talk to them what to do. Somehow, single parents were more in the need of advice than anyone else. I'd like to shift the conversation a little bit, because I have heard from a number of people that say they have been burned by a counselor. Now, I've used that phrase a couple of times, and it never made contact. Now, I'd like to ask the question from the parents point of view. What do people mean, the single parent, when they say that they have been burned? Could you help me on that because I don't know? Could you respond to that?

Ellen: I am assuming that this is not an L.D.S. counselor, so I can't say that it is an L.D.S. -- in fact, I was talking to a counselor who was a Baptist minister. His solution was that he was going to show me how much he loved and cared for me, and he wanted me and my family to join him and his family in a relationship.

Irv: I think I can be quick. I don't know about a counselor crusade, but I think I can report on some stories I have heard about bishops, and please, before I get accused of heresy, I'm not knocking bishops, but there are some problems that bishops have in counseling with single people. The first thing, the most common thing from people I've heard that are single parents, is that they go into the bishop to seek help and the bishop preached to them for 45 minutes, and they walk out of the office saying, "Bishop, you didn't help me out with my problem." I don't know if this happens. I have not heard the comment about counselors, but I have heard the comment several times that we are not getting the counseling in the church.

Question: What do you mean by preaching?

Preaching about how to make your life better. You have to pray. You have to fast. You have to get on your knees and pray. These people have been doing this. Their problem is that they are not getting the kind of help that they are getting the prayer, and they are getting the fasting going, but they are not getting the male direction to help them to come to some kind of decision. I don't know if that communicates the feeling that I got from these people, and what they communicated to me.

Ellen: I think that the way I would relate to this kind of question is that perhaps, there has been too much time and energy and thought dwelling on what happens and trying to analyze and comprehend and understand it, and at the time that seems very important, but through the years I have found that it doesn't help. I think that the counseling should be more supportive, and should be instrumental in getting you started again, or how to get going again; how to cross this bridge, and how to react in a particular situation. I had the experience of being held back in counseling. They spend too much time on the situation, and trying to understand it and to analyze it, and this just got me deeper into despair.

Question: From what I've seen, single parents get married again within a year. Do you have any information on why they get married. Do
they just say, "Well, I want to get married again," and then they just do, or what?

Answer: One of the things that you've got to consider, I think, is that the majority of people that remarry have children that are already grown. I think it would be difficult to go out and find a woman to fill the shoes of that wife. If you have young children, it isn't easy to go out and search around.

Broderick: One of the things that I've thought of that I don't know if anyone else has thought of is a little preparatory work. One of my good friends about my age with a lot of children died and left his children fatherless. It really brought my own mortality to me very vividly. We had a family home evening around the subject of what would happen in our family if our daddy died. Two very good things happened on that evening--that if I ever died I would be glad of having done one thing, my oldest son, who was very concerned over that matter, said do we have life insurance, social security, lease on the house, and one thing and another; and he said, "You know, if it happened we could do it." I thought, "You, know, that really is something." He knows that it is not impossible, that if something happened he could do it. That shows really a lot of strength of character.

Another thing I said was, "Well, our mother has a lot on the ball. I would hope that if something happened she would not stay unmarried." It seemed to me that with her talent it would be a waste for her to live alone. She got a little bit upset, but I said that if something came up there would be someone else in the world. She could find a relationship with someone else in the world. I would even give my children permission to accept a stepfather if that event should occur. I think that was one of the best things I ever did was to tell them to accept my wife's remarriage without spoiling their relationship.

Statement: I was also raised in a single parent home from my teenage years, since my mother died when I was twelve. And a couple of particular things that happened in our family as a result of my mother's death was this. I knew that my mother had already told my dad that if anything should ever happen to her she wanted him to find someone that had been married in the temple, who had her own children; and the two of them marry and raise their children together, and be each other's helpmate. Another thing, just a few months before my mother died, I think she knew she was going to die, she had a talk with me about what would you do if you didn't have a mother, and how would you feel. Also, when my mother died, one of the very first thoughts that came to me was something that she had told me when I was about eight years old when my great-grandmother had died, and she said, "If I ever died I would want you to grow up and be happy and make the best of life--to remember me with love and to do the things that your Father in Heaven has told you to do." That was the first thought that came to me after her death. I tried to do that. She told me, and she talked to me quite a bit, and she said, "love your dad, and accept the kind of religion that he does and be as good as you possibly can." I'll tell you how far I carried this. A customer of my father's came in and said that something must be wrong with me because my mother just died, and I still was so happy. But there wasn't anything wrong. It was the chance my mother had given me for reconstruction.

Addie: We do need to move along, and I'd like to do that knowing that we will have a little time in just a few minutes, if I could. I'm going to jump over the other 86 questions that we have, that are just around how we as professionals can increase our awareness, and move into some of their ideas of how we can be more facilitating. Let me just read through two or three of the questions that I was going to ask, and maybe you could think about them, and give your own conscience a chance to build in your own home.

Another thing that I was going to ask was, what are the attitudes in the Church towards single parents that compound counseling? What makes it difficult for the single adult to be in the main-stream of the church? Where are the areas--physical, mental, spiritual, emotional and intellectual--of a single parent that are most often ignored? For example, I participated a little bit ago in a critique of a premarital seminar that they held in my stake for a couple that was going to be married the next night. They spent a few hours with the couple, and they dealt with four topics: communications, financial planning, sex, and spirituality in marriage.

So, you just focus only on the physical, which we aren't focusing on today, and you talk about the statistics that he reported, that it wasn't uncommon for a husband and wife to participate in sex two of four times a week. I went home and thought about that in relationship with this topic today and thought of what that must mean to someone who is used to knowing that at least someone was sharing the same bed, that you could at least reach out and touch them as you wanted to. To not have that anymore, where does a 35 year old male go when he wants to be held and know that someone, somewhere thinks he is all right, that he is number one. Or where does a 30 year old mother with four children go when she wants to be held and told that it doesn't matter what she did that day, she is number one still to him. Maybe you might look at these areas, intellectual, emotional, spiritual and physical, and understand what it is like to be a single parent as opposed to yourself. It might be somewhat different.

Another one that I find is, what do you think is their contribution as a single parent both in the Church and outside. You might want to look at those questions; and maybe if you wanted an experience that was as rich as mine, you may want to interview about 15 or 20 single
parents and let them know your reasons for wanting to know is because you don’t understand. I didn’t understand and I fall in the category of a single adult in the Church and I was amazed. I was amazed that with my broad education and high intellect and all those different qualities, how much I had assumed about single parents--like they had never been married. And there are a lot of things that are different. It was a very useful experience for me. I’d like to turn the last couple of minutes and have the panel respond to what they think counselors do not understand about single parents, that if they understood it might help them to be better counselors, and maybe some do’s and don’ts that they might have in their minds about what they would do if they were counselors’ trainers and what they would do about how they would work with single parents. So, if we can respond to that for about two or three minutes and then we will open it up for questions.

Panelist: Before I decided to come out to B.Y.U. to go to school, which was fourteen years between my high school years and the time I started college, I was in a special class—I got accepted into college in the summertime without one of those tests, what are they called—college entrance exams. The university took a chance on me. One of the bits of advice that I had gotten before I came here which I can’t imagine anyone giving to anybody, but it came from a professional counselor, was why don’t I investigate the possibility of becoming a housekeeper in the home of an L.D.S. man who has lost his wife. His children would greatly respect a woman to come in to help, and I could probably end up getting married to that person. I was offended, greatly offended, because even though I didn’t have any formal education I felt, “If that is what I have to resort to, I might as well go with my hands tied into the mountains and put out a sign somewhere and say someone come and take care of me.”

I want to be counseled as an intelligent individual who has capabilities. I ran a business. I was an operator of a business before I joined the Church. Now, I think I have something to contribute to our society. I don’t know exactly what, but I think I have something. I want to be counseled as an adult, not as a potential wife to someone else. That may be a possibility, but I have heard so many times that it would be the prime thing in my life. If that is the prime thing in my life, what happens to my children and my studies? When you counsel a woman who has children, this is something to consider. I don’t know what she particularly wants to hear all the time, but I don’t think she always wants to hear she should be looking for a husband. I don’t!

Irv: Today, one of the things that is important to keep in mind when you’re counseling a single adult is to have no assumptions when you listen to them. So often there are several assumptions made. You’ve heard some of the assumptions already. I think the most important thing is not to have assumptions but to listen to their story and help them set goals, and to help them understand what their place is in life. Help them to understand where they fit into the society that they exist in, the environment they find themselves in, and also how they fit in with their family, their children; and help them identify themselves as a human being. My experience, and it’s not uncommon again, was that about a year after my wife died, I had a hard time identifying who and what I was. I’ve been very active in the church ever since I’ve joined. I’ve had several church responsibilities, but all those things meant nothing at that point. New identity had to be assumed, and it was at that time that I finally got out of the rut. Let me add, also, there was no mourning or wearing of dark clothes and ashes, because we expected it. It happened just as we were told it would happen, so there was no deep mourning and sadness for eight months and no sad tears. But there came a time when that had to be faced as to who I was, and what I was, and why.

That is probably the most difficult time that I went through; and if the counselor had been there to offer to listen to my story and to offer to give me some objective directions and some objective advice rather than subjective advice, I think that it would have made the situation much easier for me.

Panelist: I have tuned into everything that has been said, and I had no idea that anyone had lost their mate through death and had to know up to the last minute that they were loved. Because after going through the feelings of worthlessness when the divorce is going through, I know that these feelings are very strong, too.

I think that the best thing for the counselor to do is to accept the human being as an important person, an intelligent, worthwhile human being—one who has the strength in their dignity and their ability and at that point in one’s life, when going through a divorce, you wonder if you really have any dignity or ability. I was thinking about the divorce on the way over and I think that everyone who goes through a divorce must fact it alone. They must realize that they have worth. I had some good friends while I went through this situation, and although they tried to help me, they didn’t quite know what to do. So, I think that everyone has to go through it alone and not put themselves down.

One thing that really helped me get through the divorce is in going to church and knowing that Our Heavenly Father really loved me. Anyone who is going through a divorce, or has lost a mate and is in doubt about what they want to do, if they have this assurance that they are truly loved and that they are important people, it really helps them. I wish that when I was going through the divorce that someone could have helped me and told me that I was really important. I am so glad that I had the Gospel to turn to.

Question: I just want to comment on the subject of people thinking that they were burned by their counselor. Well, I am a counselor and I feel that sometimes I have been burned while
trying to help. I know that there has and still is some type of church program under the title "Special Interest Group". This often has a negative connotation to it. For people who are divorced, widowed, or unmarried—whether they want to get married, whether they are lonely, are seeking someone, whether it is suggested by me or by someone who is their friend, it sometimes gets negative reactions. And when that happens, how can we solve that problem when these people react negatively at the mention of Special Interest Groups.

Answer: Well, this type of thing comes up often. I think one of the problems here is that the people feel left out when they are put in a "special interest" group. They feel they are being excluded. They feel that by being put into these groups they are quite different. And I think that one of the reasons they don't want to include themselves in this type of group is because you are not responding to their individual needs and maybe it should be more for everybody.

Question: I've noticed that where the Church and the programs are allowed to grow by themselves without much interference, we have a lot of involvement, whereas when the bishop or the stake president run the program there is a lot of complaining and a lot of dissatisfaction.

Answer: There are a lot of factors that we will have to go into after we close the meeting because of the lack of time we have right now. So, if you would like to stay about fifteen minutes afterwards we will go into that. I certainly appreciate the attendance we have had today. I appreciate the openness and the willingness each of the panel members has displayed today and I hope as professionals we can look at our own individual needs and help others with theirs. Thank you very much.

D & C 25:12 — For my soul delighteth in the song of the heart; yea, the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me, and it shall be answered with a blessing upon their heads.