

Resilient Cross-Cultural Living: Unique Perspectives from Single Missionaries

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Ephesians 4:16

He (Christ) makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is *healthy* and *growing* and *full of love*.”

Romans 12:4-5

Just as our bodies have any parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ's body.

We are many parts of one body, and *we all belong to each other.*

**Mobile Member
Care Team – West
and East Africa
teams together in
Ghana**



Together for the journey

The Survey – Resilience: Perspectives from Single and Married Missionaries

Focus: Resilience and Marital Status

Criteria for Respondents: Serving
in passport country not their own

Content of the Survey

Demographics

Rating Scale

Narrative Questions

Self-Care and Lifestyle Balance Inventory

Description of the Respondents

Total Respondents: 817

Ministry setting: Most working in urban areas of developing countries in a team or workgroup

Types of Ministry

Teaching

Support

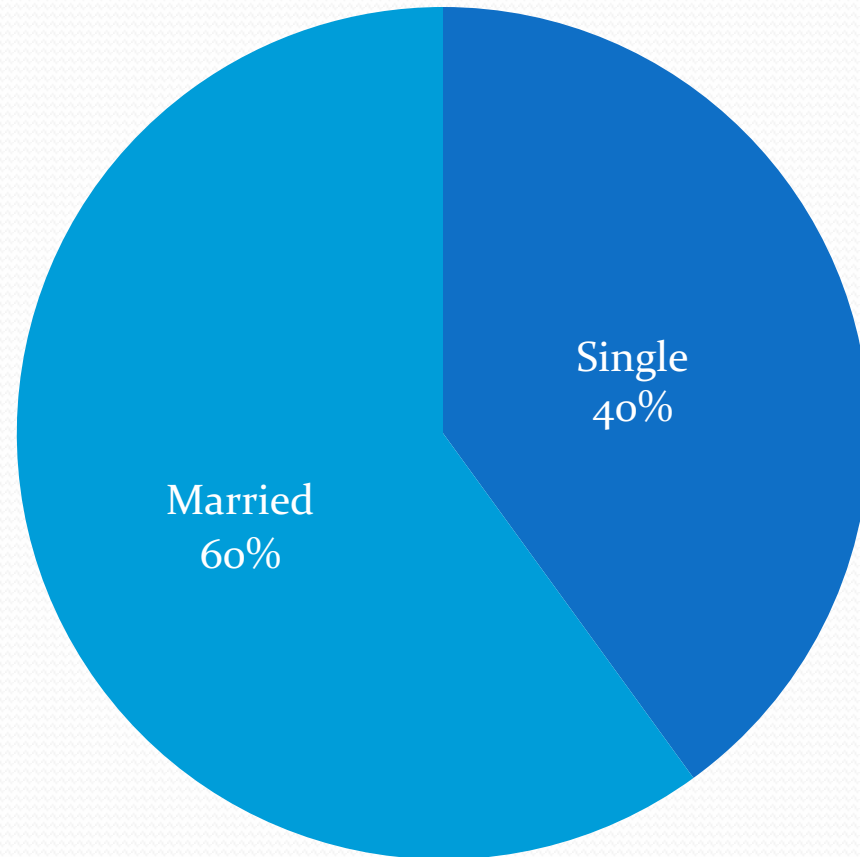
Discipleship

Administrative

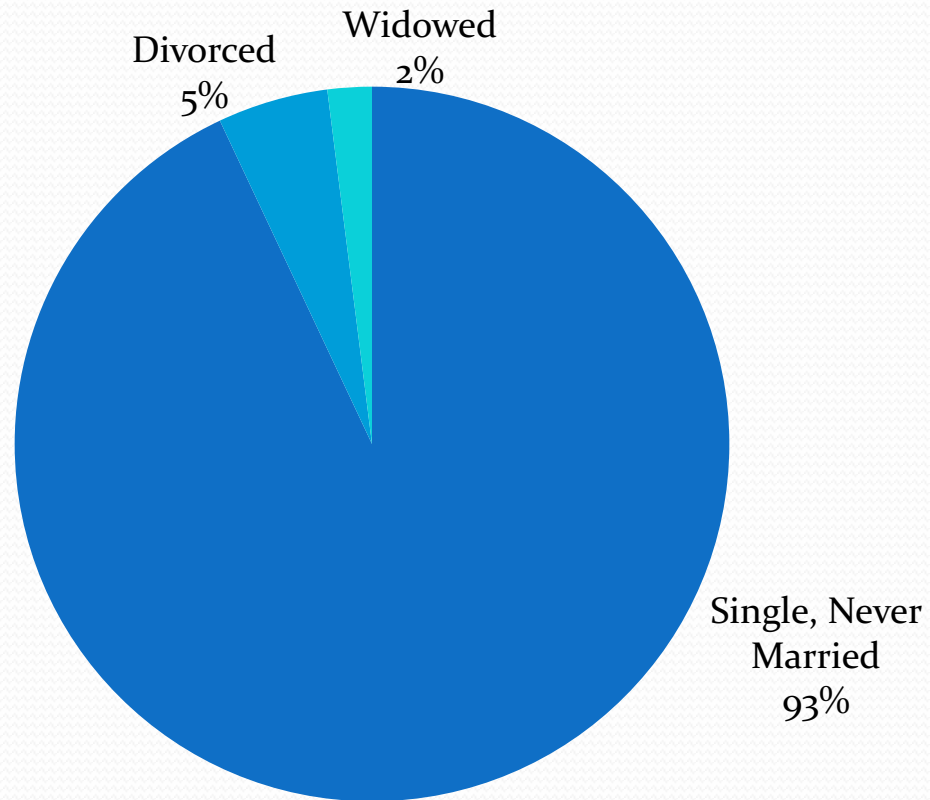
Member Care

Evangelism

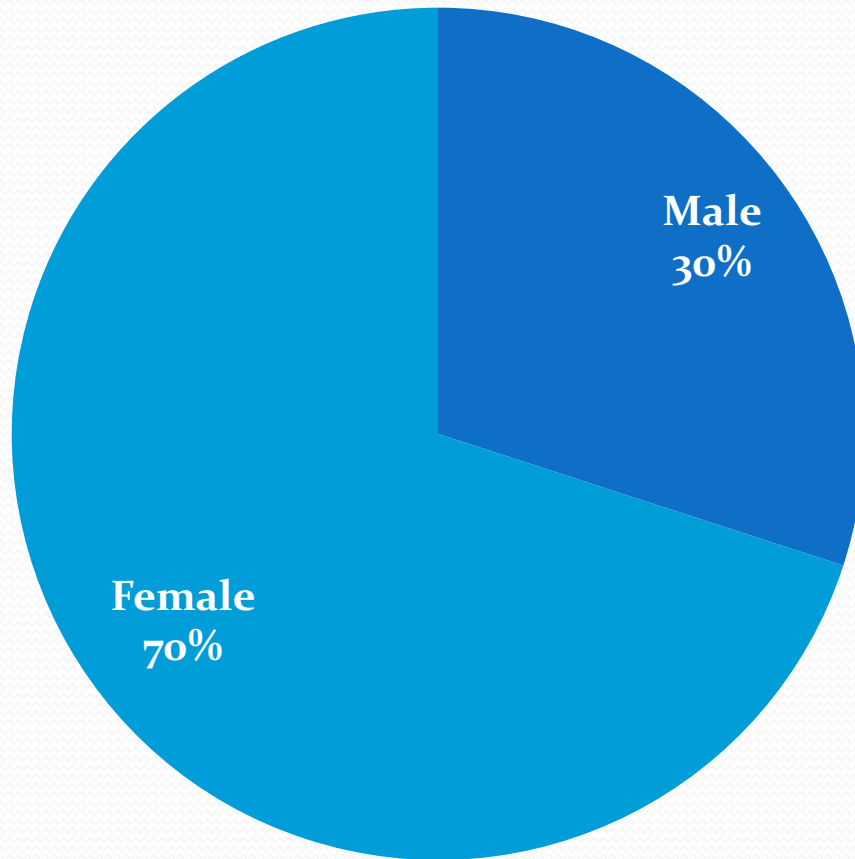
Marital Status



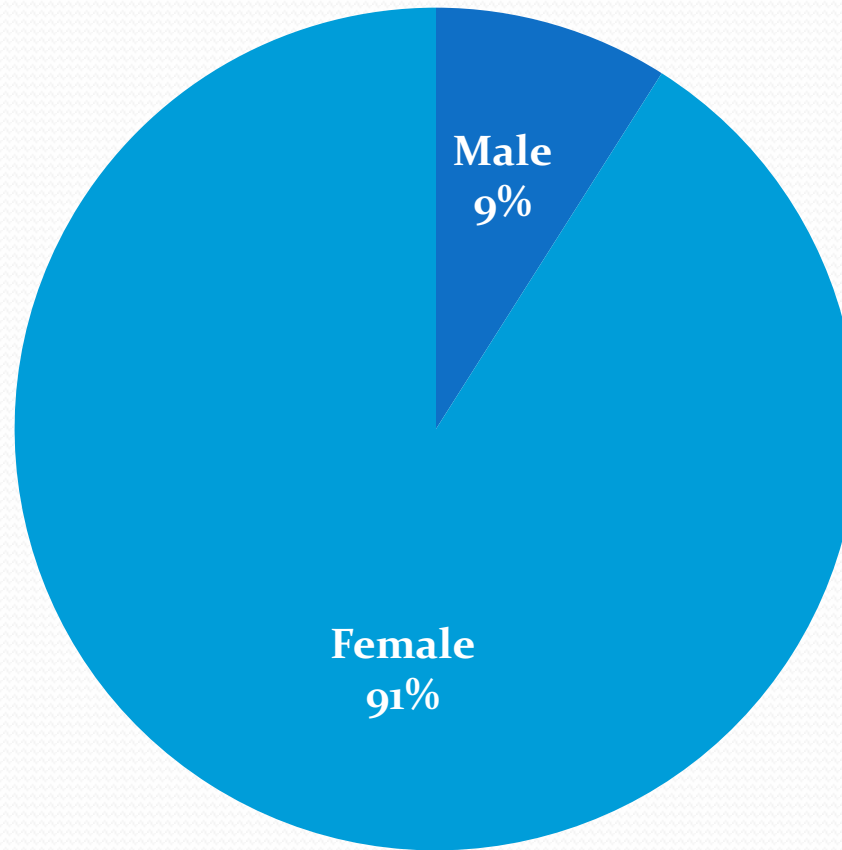
Single Types



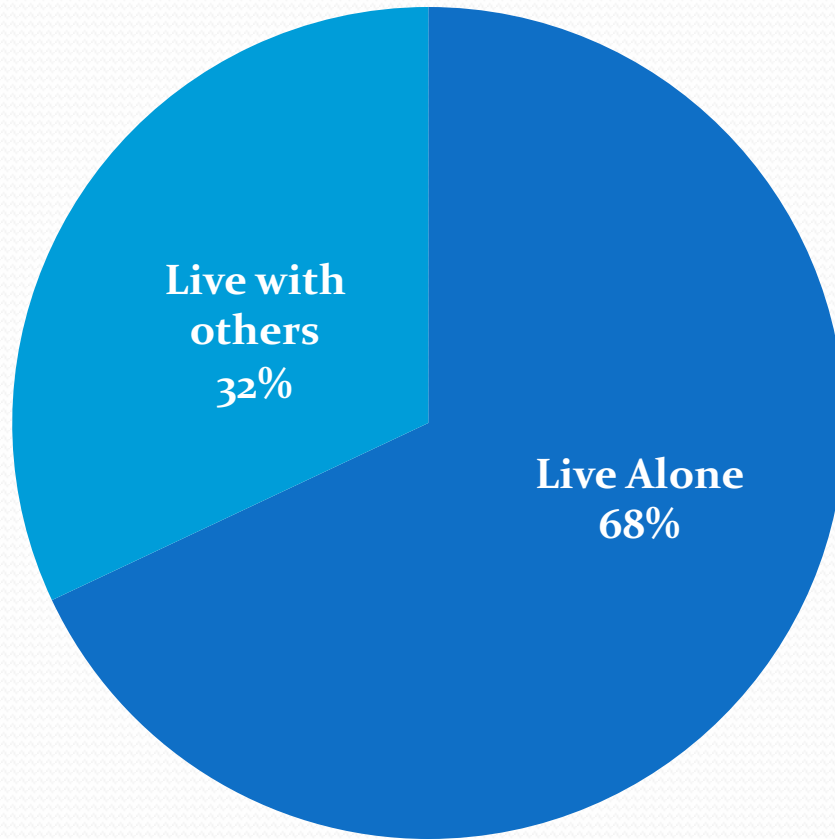
Gender of All Survey Respondents



Gender of Singles



Housing for Singles



Respondent Nationalities

Missionary represented

26

different passport countries

Passport Regions

North America – US/Canada

Europe – 9 countries

Africa- 6 countries

Oceania – 3 countries

Central/S. America – 3 countries

Asia – 3 countries

Countries of Service

Missionaries serving in
73
different countries of service

Countries of Service

Africa – 32

Asia – 21

Central/South America – 7

Oceania – 4

Europe – 9

The self-rating statements were:

1. I am content in being (married or single).
2. I have the emotional support of family.
3. I am part of a close, loving community.
4. My self-worth is directly impacted by my marital status.
5. I feel I am discriminated against because I am (married or single).
6. I have a close personal friend who speaks the truth in my life.
7. I am resilient

Personal Reflection

Respondents rated on each statement from 1 to 5 with 1 being Strongly Disagree and 5 being Strongly Agree.

Take a moment and think about how these self-statements might be different for marrieds and singles. You will find them on pg. 2 of your handout.

Put an S for Singles or an M for Marrieds next to the statement you think would be rated higher for that particular group.



Survey Results for Statement Ratings

SURVEY RESULTS: SELF-RATING STATEMENT #1

Higher for marrieds

I am content in being (single or married)

MARRIEDS
Strongly Agree
4.79

SINGLES
AGREE
3.67



SURVEY RESULTS: SELF-RATING STATEMENT #2

Somewhat higher for marrieds

I have the emotional support of family

MARRIEDS

Agree

4.46

SINGLES

AGREE

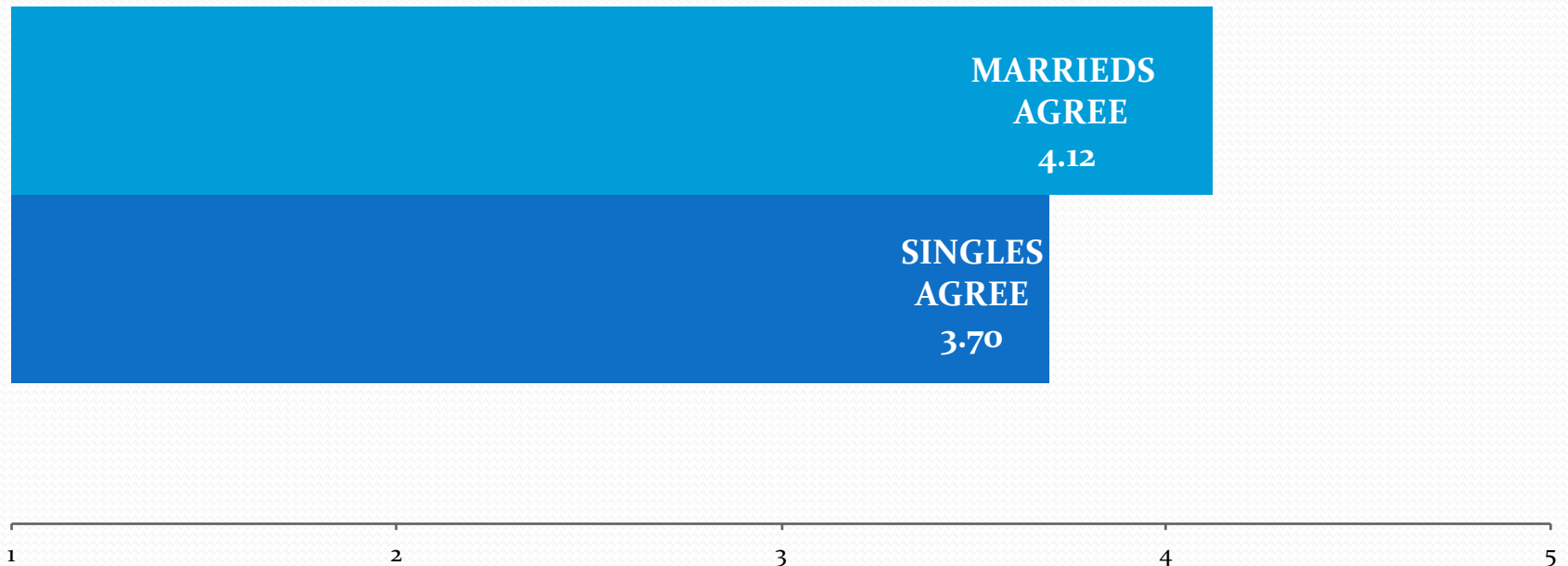
3.70



SURVEY RESULTS: SELF-RATING STATEMENT #3

Somewhat more likely for marrieds

I am part of a close, loving community



SURVEY RESULTS: SELF-RATING STATEMENT #4

Marrieds are more likely to feel this way

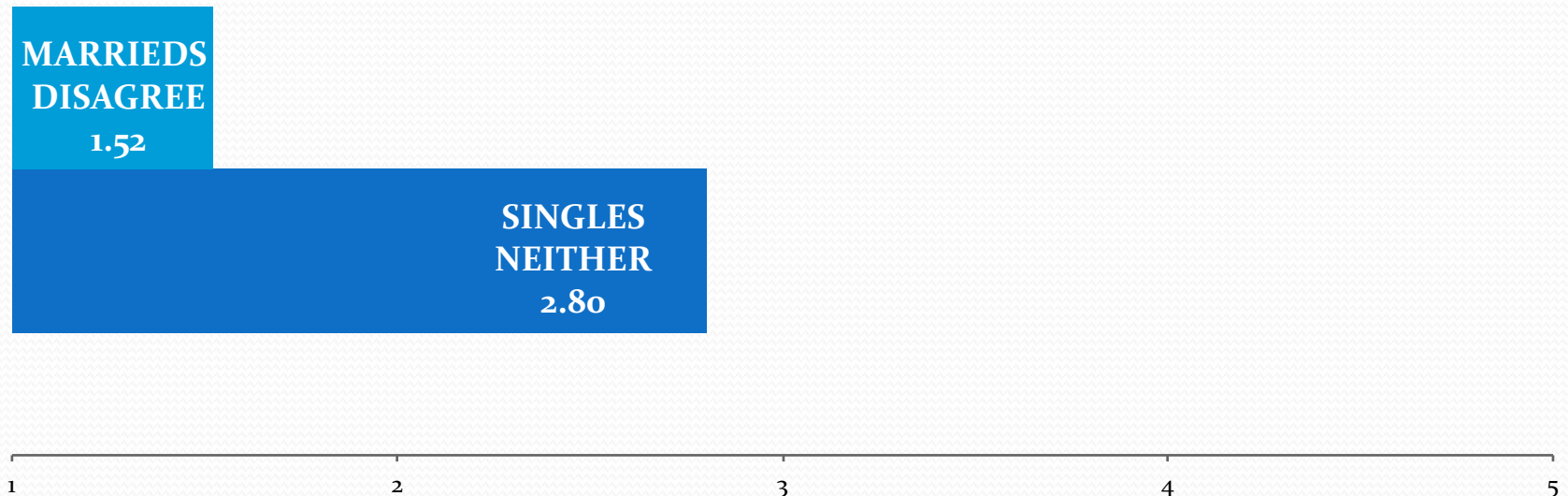
**My self-worth is directly impacted by
my marital status**



SURVEY RESULTS: SELF-RATING STATEMENT #5

Singles are more likely to feel this way

I feel I am discriminated against
because I am (married or single)



I feel I am discriminated against

43 % of single missionaries disagreed

BUT

90% of married missionaries disagreed

Theology of Singleness

Old Covenant

vs.

New Covenant

New Covenant Blessing

In the new covenant, one is fully blessed in union with Christ independent of marriage, family, or possessions (land). Barry Danylak

Matthew 19:10-12

Jesus' disciples then said to him, "if this is the case, it is better not to marry!"

Not everyone can accept this statement," Jesus said. "Only those whom God helps.

Some are born as eunuchs, some have been made eunuchs by others, and some choose not to marry for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Let anyone accept this who can.

I Corinthians 7: 7, 35b

But I wish everyone were single just as I am. Yet each person has a special gift from God, of one kind or another...

I want you to do whatever will help you serve the Lord best, with as few distractions as possible.



New Covenant and Status

*In the family of God, one's status
is not improved through
marriage.* Barry Danylak



It is good...

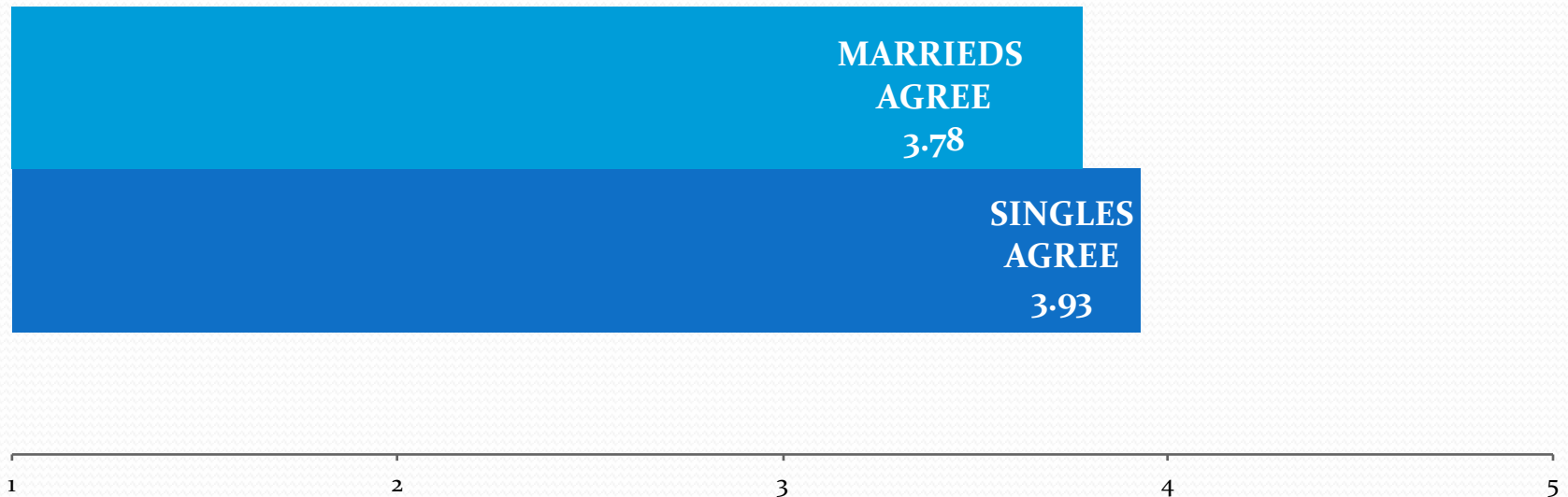
...both the married and the single states are “good”; neither is in itself better or worse than the other.

So whether we are single or married, we need to receive our situation from God as his own special grace-gift to us. John Stott

SURVEY RESULTS: SELF-RATING STATEMENT #6

Singles are slightly more likely to feel this way

**I have a close personal friend who
speaks the truth in my life**



SURVEY RESULTS: SELF-RATING STATEMENT #7

Marrieds rate themselves slightly higher

I am resilient

MARRIEDS
AGREE
4.11

SINGLES
AGREE
4.0



The Majority of Single Missionaries:

...are content in being single (67%)

...have the emotional support of family (67%)

...are part of a loving community (67%)

...have a close friend who speaks the truth (76%)

...feel they are resilient (84%)

What Contributes Most to Resilience?

Close relationship to God

Strong, loving relationships

Sense of God's Call – Singles

Other Themes Related to Resilience

Personality and character traits

Personal disciplines

Enjoyment of ministry

Specialized supports (e.g., counseling)

What is the Best Part of Being Single?

FREEDOM

Other Best Parts of Being Single

Time to myself, for myself

Independence

Flexibility

Knowing this is God's best plan for me

Intimacy with Christ

Ability to serve God w/o distraction

Opportunities to bond with culture

Opportunities to rely on God

But some said...

I can't see a best...

I don't want to be single.

What is the most difficult about being married?

Less freedom

Less independence

Less flexibility

**What is the most difficult
about being single?**

LONELINESS

Themes Related to Loneliness

Being alone

Not belonging

Lack of companionship

Lack of sexual intimacy

Not having children

Challenges to self-image

Negative assumptions

But some singles said...

being single is not difficult...
I enjoy it.

What is the best part about
being married?

Companionship

The antidote to loneliness

God created us as social beings. Love is the greatest thing in the world. For God is love, and when he made us in his own image, he gave us the capacity to love and be loved. So, we need each other. Yet marriage and family are not the only antidotes to loneliness. John Stott

How would you go about
building intimacy in your
setting?

This is not referring to sexual
intimacy, but rather close,
deep personal friends.

Intimacy with God

*I have given them the glory you gave me,
so they may be one as we are one. I
am in them and you are in me.*

*May they experience such perfect unity
that the world will know that you sent
me and that you love them as much
as you love me. John 17:22-23*

Intimacy with Others

We loved you so much that we shared with you not only God's Good News but our own lives too. (I Thess 2:8)

God knows how much I love you and long for you with the tender compassion of Christ Jesus. (Phil 1:8)

Intimacy with Others

Though Paul did not have his own wife and family, he experienced profound familial intimacy within the spiritual family of God in which he had utterly invested himself. Barry Danylak

How are Singles Building Intimacy with Others?

Sharing deeply with others
Time together – shared experiences
Praying together
Intentionality, effort
It is a gift from God

My favorite “building intimacy” response...

I listen more than I speak.

I laugh more than I cry.

*I remain authentic and honest
before God and others.*



Lack of Intimacy

But, some don't feel they
have intimacy....for a
variety of reasons...



Best and Hardest Parts of Being Single

Freedom/Independence

AND

Loneliness

What Kind of Freedom?

For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters. But don't use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your freedom to serve one another in love. For the whole law can be summed up in this one command, Love your neighbor as yourself. Galatians 5:13

**West and East
Africa teams**



Building Community



Building Meaningful Community

Some ideas from the Mobile Member Care Team:

Attitudes

Practices

Written Helps



Attitude of Grace

I used to know all about speaking truth. Now that I am living in this community, I am learning about speaking the truth with grace.



Some community building
practices...

**Gathering
around each
other during a
recent Member
Care Providers
Retreat and
Consultation**



Praying together

**West and East
Africa teams
attempting to do
a Maasai jump!**



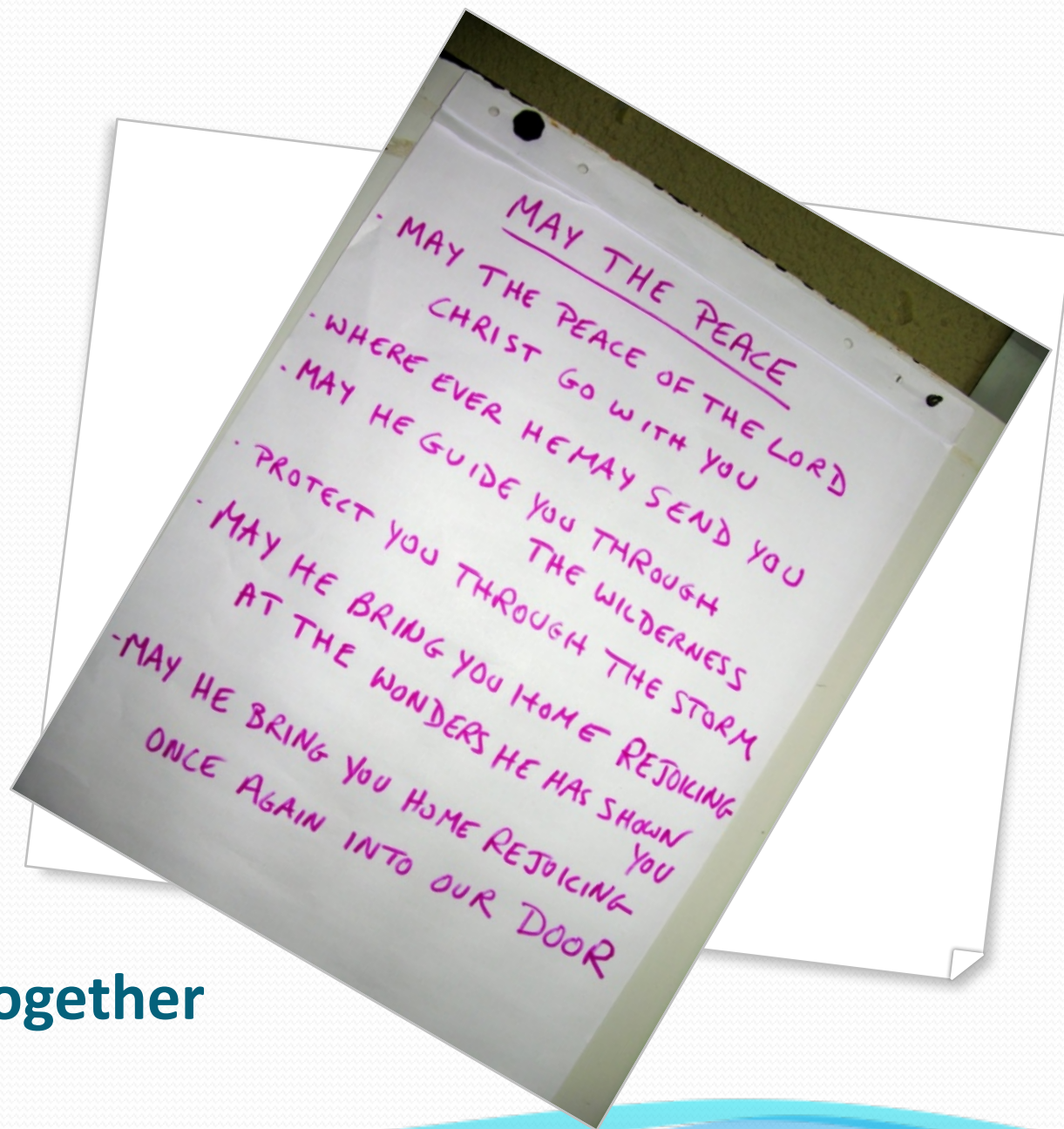
Having Fun

**Group hug for
the West Africa
team**

Touch



May the Peace of
the Lord song



Singing together

**Taking walks –
on the coast of
Ghana**



Exercise together



Let's pray

Turn to the person next to you and pray for a single missionary you know or for single missionaries in general.

Response at the Organizational Level

What policies or practice hinder or facilitate the work of single missionaries?

Is there a bias?

Response at the Individual Level

Give single missionaries the opportunity to talk about:

- Sense of call
- Relationship with the Lord
- Identity in Christ
- Friendships/Community of believers
- Emotional support of family
- Perceptions of discrimination or negative judgment
- Need for any practical helps
- Vacation plans
- Level of contentment

Ephesians 3:19

May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of the life and power that comes from God.



For a written version of this
presentation...

Go to the MMCT website at
www.mmct.org

In the Resources Section



The End...