

The Wedding Ring Doesn't Cure Alone

Why half the people saying "I do" are still single, and how one phone call after 25 years proved it

The power of prayer and dedication will lead a soul that is searching for true love to find one. It is not the hypocrisy of someone who has not been faithful but wants a faithful man or woman. Marriage is sweet when two genuine friends meet and fall for each other. That is the design. That is the ease God intended when He said it is not good for man to be alone.

But unfortunately most people fall in love because of beauty, a career, education, talent, fame, or money. We audit resumes, not souls. We marry potential, property, immigration papers, and prestige, then wonder why the house feels empty at night. That is why you'll hear people on buses and in social places regretting their relationship and confessing that if given a chance they would choose otherwise. We confuse a good partnership with a good covenant. A business merger with a marriage. The result is what we see everywhere: two successful people in one house, paying bills together, raising brilliant children together, and dying slowly from a thirst no salary can quench.

That is the lie this article confronts. Because there is a kind of loneliness that doesn't care about your marriage certificate. It shows up at the dinner table with two children laughing over video calls from Australia. It rides in the passenger seat on the way home from church. It lies down between you and the person you vowed to love until death. Brother Felix knows that loneliness. He has lived with it for twenty-five years.

We have the wrong definition of "single." The government counts you as single if you don't have a spouse. The church often counts you as single if you don't have a ring. But the soul keeps a different census. The soul asks one question: Am I known? Am I home? If the answer is no, then you are single, and it doesn't matter how many anniversaries you've celebrated.

Felix is a man most would envy. He has been married to his lovely wife for over two decades. They are blessed with a son and a daughter, both excelling in good public universities in Australia. He is a faithful man, a provider, a father whose prayers got his children across oceans. By every outward measure, he has succeeded. Family, faith, fruit.

Yet when he sat with me, he said it plainly: "Brother, I have always carried an emptiness in my heart." Not bitterness. Not anger. Just a quiet, persistent hollow that weddings, births, and graduations never filled. It is the kind of emptiness that doesn't show up in wedding photos. You can smile for the camera while your soul sits in exile.

To his surprise, that emptiness was named out loud by someone from his past. He got a phone call recently from his ex-girlfriend. She too has been married for twenty-five years. She runs a lucrative business, holds a good job, and has accomplished much in education and prosperity. She has everything our culture says should make a woman complete.

For one hour they talked, not as former lovers chasing what was lost, but as two tired travelers comparing notes from the same road. He told me, "I could hear it in her voice, the same thing I carry. A tired heart from long searching." And she confessed it without shame or pretense: she is very empty inside, though married, and of course "happily married" by every social standard.

That was fascinating. 25 years of marriage. Two children in universities abroad. Businesses built. Degrees earned. Prayers answered. And still the same diagnosis: a heart without life in it. The world calls that “a midlife crisis.” The Bible calls it what it is: a desert. Psalm 63:1 says, “My soul thirsts for You in a dry and weary land where there is no water.” David wrote that hiding in the wilderness of Judah, but he could have been sitting in Felix’s living room.

What broke Felix wasn’t the phone call. It was what the phone call proved. If another person could fix this, one of them would have been fixed by now. He had twenty-five years of marriage. She had twenty-five years of success. They met in that conversation and found the same emptiness looking back at them. Solomon had a thousand women and wrote “all is vanity.” Augustine had status, a lover, a son, and wrote “our heart is restless until it rests in You.” Felix and his ex are not the first to discover that people make terrible gods.

So here is the new definition I’m offering in this article, and I offer it with trembling:

A single person is anyone whose deepest aloneness has not been met, whether by God, by purpose, or by covenant love. The wedding ring is irrelevant if the soul is still in exile.

And a non-single person is anyone who can say, “I am known and I am home,” whether that home has one person in it or two.

By that measure, Jesus was not single. Paul was not single. The celibate nun who laughs with her sisters and sleeps in peace is not single. But half the people walking down the aisle are. Half the people at funerals aren’t.

I know the pushback. The law needs boxes. Immigration needs “M” or “S.” Hospitals need a next-of-kin. I’m not tearing up the census forms. I’m saying they don’t get the last word on your life. The last word belongs to Psalm 107:9, “For He satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul He fills with good things.” Notice the qualification. He satisfies the longing soul. Not the married soul. Not the successful soul. The longing one. The one brave enough to admit the ring didn’t work.

This article will offend two groups. It will offend married people who have built their identity on “at least I’m not alone,” because it asks them to check if they actually are. And it will offend single people who have built their identity on “I’m waiting for someone to complete me,” because it tells them they may already be complete, and the wait is not the problem.

But it will set one group free: the honest ones. The ones who, like Felix on that phone call, are tired of pretending. You don’t have to lie anymore. You can be married and still single. You can be single and already loved. The cure was never a person. The cure is a Presence.

If you recognize your voice in these pages, the tired voice, the thirsty voice, don’t run from it. Don’t marry it off and don’t drown it in busyness. Bring it to the One who told the woman at the well, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give will never thirst.”

That phone call after twenty-five years wasn't a temptation for Felix. It was a confession. Two single souls telling the truth in the dark. And truth, even when it hurts, is the beginning of Hephzibah, "My delight is in her."

You are not alone because you lack a partner. You are alone because you lack the only One who said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." And until that aloneness is met, you are single. But the moment it is met, you are loved.

About the Author

Matoke Geoffrey is a theologian and author whose ministry focuses on marriage, singleness, and spiritual formation. He asks the church to redefine "singleness" by the soul's census, not the government's.

Phone: 0710296864

Email: geoffreyomurwa@gmail.com