



From Edward Hopper, *Hotel Room*

I'm Single and It's Saturday Night

Singles wake up alone, go to church alone, listen to “how to be a good parent/spouse” sermons, and wonder what they are going to do that night.

by Kathleen Taylor

“D O UNTO OTHERS . . .” THE PHRASE KEPT running through my mind as I sat on the edge of my bed. Boyfriend Number 4 of my rather uneventful life had just handed me the famous death sentence: “You know, you’re a wonderful girl and you’re going to make someone a wonderful wife, but we’d be better off as friends.” I was thinking about what the next step ought to be. “Move away, or at least broaden your circle of friends,” was my father’s sage advice. Terrific. How was I supposed to broaden my circle of friends?

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a family-oriented church. I was not aware of this when I was younger, but as I graduated from a public university and entered my professional life, I realized that if I wanted to marry an Adventist, I might have blown my only chance. I was supposed to meet a nice young man in an Adventist college and marry him. Since my major wasn’t offered by Adventist colleges, I’d

unknowingly made a huge, life-altering choice. I hadn’t met anyone during my first year at an Adventist college, and I couldn’t afford to return. Now that I was a graduate occupied with my profession, how was I to go about meeting the Adventist men who hadn’t married their college sweethearts?

First, I went to local Adventist churches. There were half a dozen in the area with congregations in excess of 350 members. In the church in which I had been raised, I was one of only three single people under 30 years of age; unfortunately, all three were female. At the large churches there were, not surprisingly, very few members my age. The youth Sabbath school classes were comprised of “early college,” or “Hey, I’m 45 but feel 25.” There was nothing wrong with these classes and I made friends with both groups: in fact, some of my best friends fit in the “45 but feel 25” category. The smaller churches had few young adults and 80 percent of them were married.

After a couple of years, I came to the conclusion that males my age didn’t exist in the

Kathleen Taylor is the pseudonym of an Adventist who is active in her local church.

Adventist Church. I began to realize a hidden “price” of public education, and decided that compromise might be the next best solution. I resolved to meet “Christian” men. It wouldn’t matter if they weren’t Adventist, so long as they believed in God. I reasoned that, as long as they respected my religion, it would be OK to go out with them. Getting into a more serious relationship wouldn’t be so bad. To protect myself from getting too involved, I got a part-time job at a local Adventist hospital and started working on weekends. That was a way to get through the weekend and feel as though I was doing some good, without being too lonely.

The people in the church I visited were usually kind and said “Hello.” To be part of a church family you have to be involved, so I got involved. I did the lesson study for primary and later for kindergarten. I became a deaconess, sang in the church choir, and involved myself in Pathfinders. All the older parishioners loved me and assured me that I’d “find the right young man.” As I matured, I accepted the fact that there were advantages to being single. I was happy. I did have a lot more time and less responsibility than my peers with families, but I also made myself busy to keep from being lonely.

I, along with other single girlfriends, perused the writings of Paul and worked on developing my character. We worked through childhood traumas that we would probably have forgotten about, we bonded with one another, and we feverishly tried to believe that we would be able to accomplish more in the world as singles, and that we weren’t “bad” people because of it.

Then the relatives woke up and realized how old I was. “You need to get out more.”

“You’re too picky.” “You’d better find someone because you don’t want to be alone when you’re older.” These quotes became very familiar. And oh, how wonderful to have the writings of Paul at hand to volley back during stressful inquisitions.

Of course, there were a few single men out there whom I wasn’t related to, or that my best friend hadn’t already dated, but they were *very* few. As their relationships evolved and they became available, we would go out. Unfortunately, the special something needed for a life

partner wasn’t there. I made some close friends whom I wouldn’t give up for anything. The single guys tell me how hard it is to find single women that they would want to date, but they agree that it isn’t nearly as hard for them. So we all tend to group to-

gether a lot. That has been healthy for some, but for others it has only dramatized the acute loneliness that they feel.

Many single young Adventists have good health, lots of energy, few responsibilities, money, success, and time to enjoy it. But on Friday night and Sabbath, *families* do things together. Church social events center around family. Activities center around family and children. Families are friendly, but they are also busy. Flashing a smile and chatting at a potluck is about all the time for singles that they have. Singles wake up alone, go to church alone, listen to “how to be a good parent/spouse” sermons alone (wondering what they are going to do that afternoon), and realize that they don’t fit in. The unsolicited “kind” remarks of a church member—“I’m sure you’ll meet someone soon”; or “How come a pretty girl like you is here alone?” or “I don’t understand these young men”—are just further reminders

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that you're different. Everyone seems to assume that you're looking for someone and that you can't possibly be content alone. They make you feel out of place and act surprised when you don't leap at the opportunity to meet their nephews. We're not different; we're unmarried.

No one wants to be different. Is it any wonder that more and more singles just drift off somewhere where they aren't constantly reminded of how different they are? Can you remember the last time you had to ask a man to sit with you in church because people might think you prefer an "alternative lifestyle" since you always sit with your girlfriends? How much more your reputation means when you're single. You have to make sure that appearances are balanced. You don't want to be seen as fickle or too friendly by sitting with too many different guys, but you can't always be seen with the same girls either. It gets to be complicated.

Many singles feel that our church doesn't focus as much on the essential message of Christ's soon return, but rather on family issues. We get excited when God's Word and gospel are preached in a manner that focuses on the individual. Those of us that have remained in the church are proud to be Chris-

tians and are eager to share God's message. Some of us want to do nothing else; some of us want companions. We're not different, however, just "family units of one" with many of the same cares and concerns as other Christians.

Many women who don't marry after high school or college continue their education. Rumor has it that you might meet someone in school, so you keep going. Soon you have a Ph.D., but you're still alone. Now many of the people you meet are intimidated, or if you're a professional and work in a large firm, your language and communication skills are different.

Often the educational backgrounds of two people create barriers that are almost impossible to break down. I know; I've tried. Using large words or catch phrases frustrates those not used to them. And don't ever use them when having an intense discussion or else you'll get a response like this: "I didn't go to college; I don't know what those big words mean. Can't you speak like the rest of us?" Mentioning that a certain response had been "negated" didn't seem like using too big of a word to me . . .

What can we all do about this? Well, next Sabbath I'm having some "family units of two" over for lunch, and I'll ask how their week went. Don't think I'll ask about their love life, though . . . They'll probably ask about mine!