Most longtime singles have had to endure intrusive but well-meaning inquiries into their marital status, not only from adorable kindergartners but also grandparents, parents and caring church folk. One Adventist single offers her candid opinion about being single in the church today, and what she learned from hosting her first singles event. She writes, “One cannot overstate the obvious crisis for single Adventist women over the age of 35. While men have options, women must make choices. If we wish to meet a man and marry, we find ourselves speed dating, chatting online to strangers and playing the Adventist version of “six degrees of separation.” Click here to read more in this month's issue and then visit our Facebook page to share your single stories!
Artículo especial de Visitor: Castidad en la ciudad

Dios creó a Adán y Eva y después los unió. ¡Aún todos los animales del arca de Noé tenían un compañero! Si hoy fuese así de sencillo encontrar una pareja. En el artículo especial de este mes, Michelle Chin, una soltera Adventista del Séptimo Día, habla de una fiesta para solteros con la esperanza de lograr alguna conexión romántica para sus amigos.

En el artículo, ella habla de algunos desafíos que enfrentan los solteros, especialmente las mujeres, ya que estas tienden a superar en número a los hombres de la iglesia. Ella escribe: "Nadie puede recalcar la crisis tan obvia que enfrentan las mujeres Adventistas mayores de treinta y cinco años de edad. Mientras que los hombres tienen opciones, las mujeres tienen que elegir. Si deseamos conocer a un hombre y casarnos, nos encontramos en citas aceleradas, chateando en línea con extraños, y jugando la versión Adventista de "seis grados de separación". Lea más en inglés en la página 11.

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April Visitor Asks What It's Like to be a Single Adult in the Church Today


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God created Adam and Eve and then put them together. Even all the animals in Noah’s ark had a mate! If only finding a spouse today could be so simple.
DO YOU HAVE A HUSBAND?"

a 5-year-old innocently asked me. “No,” I replied. “Why not?” she asked. After a short pause, she declared. “I have an idea! You could marry Uncle Andy!”

Most longtime singles have had to withstand intrusive but well-meaning inquiries into our marital status. The questions come not only from adorable kindergartners but also grandparents, parents and caring church folk. Singles can’t sit together without curious congregants questioning their dating status. Even singles who may not be interested in dating, but would like to meet other professional adults who share the same faith, are often challenged about their status.

For those who are interested in finding a spouse, a common refrain is, “Meeting ‘the one’ usually happens when you least expect it.” Well, my experience tells me that you just can’t expect it to happen in church, especially if you are a woman!

The Reality of Gender Ratios

According to one Baltimore single I spoke to, there is a 3:1 ratio of women to men at the Seventh-day Adventist church he attends. “Men have options,” he remarked. The North American Division Secretariat Office, with a poll conducted in 2009 by the Center for Creative Ministry, reported that males only make up about 44 percent of church membership in North America. A 20-year study by the Barna Group reports that other Protestant congregations also tend to be more filled with women than men.

For the 30- and 40-somethings who missed their cruise on the college “love boat,” there is the uncomfortable reality that the ratio of living men to women begins to decline by the time we reach the 35-39 age group. According to the U.S. Census, the ratio at birth is 105 males to 100 females; but due to higher male mortality, the overall ratio is 96.7 males to 100 females. The tipping point for the decline in the number of males occurs in that 35-39 age group. The 2010 census confirms there were nearly 100,000 more women than men at those ages. Between the ages of 40-59, there are a million more women than men!

One cannot overstate the obvious crisis for single Adventist women over the age of 35. While men have options, women must make choices. If we wish to meet a man and marry, we find ourselves speed dating, chatting online to strangers and playing the Adventist version of “six degrees of separation.” To cover our bases, we also ask our married friends and pastors for recommendations. Sometimes a referral bears fruit and a lucky couple strikes a match. Most of us can think of at least one couple that would not have met without the assistance of a friendly introduction. Yet, a more common response to the referral request is a frustrating variation of, “Um, let me think. Hm. No, I’m really hard pressed to think of anyone I would want to recommend to you.”

In his book Tipping Point, Malcolm Gladwell describes “connectors” as people who have “a truly extraordinary knack for making friends and acquaintances.” Every Adventist who wants to get married needs friends who are connectors. Recently a connector couple at Potomac Conference’s Capital Memorial church (CMC) in northwest Washington, D.C., decided to invite some of their single CMC friends for a Saturday night mingle in the Maryland suburbs with their single Adventist friends from other churches. The ratio of men to women was nearly equal, with enough interesting interactions to generate enthusiasm for another get-together, this time at my apartment in downtown D.C.

Making Introductions

About two weeks before my party, it became clear that without more bachelors, the single-mingle would likely become a girls’ night out. So, I decided.
to ask a few married friends for recommendations. One person responded with names. It also occurred to me to call my former roommate, a connector who is responsible for at least two of my blind dates. She also gave me some names and suggested I write an article about the event. I agreed and told her I already had a title in mind.

I had intentionally downplayed the single-mingle aspect of this party, mostly because I wanted the guests to be able to connect with others without specific pressure to find a romantic attachment. So, I was stunned when I read my friend’s email to her acquaintances inviting them to a singles party “that we’re calling ‘Chaste in the City.’” It seemed to me to be 50 shades of awkward. One married, male friend explained that seeing the word “chaste” conjures up an image of a woman who probably isn’t much fun. “I’m not sure I’ll be able to make this one,” a bachelor wrote. “I’m sorry but I’m not going to be able to make it,” wrote another. I couldn’t help wondering if they were spooked by the title.

In contrast, the women who had been invited responded with a higher level of enthusiasm. “Thanks for the invitation. It sounds like fun. I will be there,” wrote one woman.

Leave it to another married, male friend to observe that overt matchmaking exposes vulnerabilities for both genders. The probability of rejection is higher. Married people have already overcome their own fears of rejection and cannot understand why single people are so sensitive about this.

Group events, where singles are scouting, can also be frustrating as one quickly realizes there are no prospects. One woman arrived late to the party. After scanning the crowd and failing to find any obvious options, she turned to another guest and said brightly, “I see that I’m going to be making a lot of friends tonight.”

Beating the Odds
It was a diverse and eclectic group of people who attended my party. There were 10 men and 18 women; but two of the men are engaged, and one of the women is married, which left only eight eligible bachelors. Of the bachelorettes, three are not looking for romance. Consequently, there were really only 14 women available for dating. The male-female ratio ended up at 1:1.75, which still beats the odds at church!

A couple of the women discussed how to expand the list of eligible bachelors to invite to the next
single-mingle. One of them asked a male guest to share the names of his single friends. “Why would I do that?” he joked. “I want a 5:1 ratio [of women to men]!”

One of my friends and another party attendee confirmed his sentiment, “The men don’t have to do much to attract women, because the ratio is in their favor.” She added, “Being single in D.C. is great until you go home and see your parents or grandparents, and the reality hits that you may never have someone to sit beside you and hold your hand.” As an optimistic woman, she says this is a rare emotional response. In fact, she believes, “Being single, just as being an independent individual in a relationship, is living life trying to be content with the blessings in my life.”

One of my former schoolmates, an attorney in Texas, recently told me, “As a man, you have a responsibility to the children you haven’t had to find a spouse who will be a good mom and someone who will work together to build a family unit.” A lifelong Adventist, he says it is challenging to find a woman who is grounded in the faith. “There’s a difference between a real Adventist, who understands the biblical basis of our beliefs, and a cultural Adventist,” he said. “I think some Adventists marry [each other] because it’s easier to be with someone who already knows what a haystack is.”

In the end, Chaste in the City lived up to its name. At the close of a fun, booze-free evening, no one exchanged phone numbers, and there were no obvious new love connections. Yet, despite the apparent lack of interest in pair bonding, several shared an interest in organizing subsequent group events. One man extended an invitation to join his church group for Saturday night bowling the following week. Another man said he wants to organize a campfire gathering, but needs to find a location. Yet another suggested a regular Friday night gathering in D.C. One woman wants to organize a speed-dating event at her church.

**A Blessed Hope**

Single people live on hope. Most of us did not set out to be single adults. “It is just that you wake up one day and realize that the time frame you had for yourself has passed,” remarked one party attendee, a fit, attractive and vibrant woman. “I still feel like a hopeful single,” she smiled. Persistence is important. The Texas attorney quipped, “If you lose your car keys, you don’t go out and buy a new car or give up; you keep looking.”

For me, hope is sustained by faith that if we seek first the kingdom of God, all these things will be added to us (see Matt. 6:33). It is nurtured by friendships with fellow believers who encourage me to “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, and give thanks in all circumstances” (1 Thess. 5:16-18).

“I think part of the Adventist teaching is that there is more to life than just focusing on being single,” observed a health professional in her 30s who is in a serious relationship. “There’s the idea that you build treasure in heaven. This is not my home. We’re looking for something better,” she continued. “So whatever you are going through now, this is not the end.”

1 See “20 Years of Surveys Show Key Differences in the Faith of America’s Men and Women,” The Barna Group (barna.org)

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**Your Turn**

What has been your experience as a single adult in the Adventist church? Share your thoughts with us at facebook.com/columbiaunionvisitor or tweet us @VisitorNews using #columbiaunion.