

Singleness

by Peter Kirk, February 2004

Sometimes, and especially in a pleasant place like Great Baddow, it seems as if the whole world revolves around the average nuclear family, Mum, Dad and 2.4 children. These are the images we see in the press, on TV, in adverts, even in church. This is what is presented as normal, as how people should want to live, and it suggests that any other lifestyle is strange and deviant.

Indeed, marriage and family life are good, but they are not the only good way to live. Many people today do not live in average nuclear families, or even as couples. According to national statistics, one person households now make up 29 per cent of all households in the UK. Some of these people choose to live alone, either for life or for a time. But many more would love to live as part of a family, but are forced to live alone. This may be because they have never found the right partner. Or maybe they were once in a long-term relationship, but this has come to a painful end in separation or death.

Some people are truly fulfilled in singleness. Some people function well as singles even if they do not intend to remain single for life. But many single people find life on their own a real struggle. While they may put on a show that everything is OK, they are hurting inside. Often they feel inadequate because they have failed in past relationships, and their feelings make it hard for them to build new ones. They can tend to avoid other people and immerse themselves in work or in solitary hobbies. Some are prone to depression, to alcoholism and other addictions, and to anti-social behaviour. It is easy to feel that things would be fine if only they had a partner. Good models for a contented single life are hard to find, but Jesus Christ can be one.

Single people, even those who want to remain single, do not usually want to live in isolation. They have valuable contributions to make to the community. But too often they are left out of social events because they don't come with a partner, and they are passed over for responsibilities because they don't fit the mould. Many really value such simple things as being asked out to a meal with a family, to play with the children – and to help with practical matters like babysitting. And they value chances to make friends, and not only ones which seem like dating set-ups.

So please, you families, don't treat us singles as oddities. Make friends with us!

(Published in Baddow Life, Issue 3, Spring 2004)