

Book Reviews



Treweek, D. (2023) *The Meaning of Singleness: Retrieving an Eschatological Vision for the Contemporary Church*.

Dover Grove IL: IVP Academic. 279 pages, \$46.99, ISBN: 9781514004852

Singleness and marriage have been presented in many ways in the past. In recent history the idea of singleness has been seen as a negative and as a season of waiting until something better comes—marriage. There have been many books written on relationships but few dig deep into the theology of singleness and even fewer are written by a single Christian. Treweek looks at many aspects of singleness and seeks to, as the subtitle suggests, retrieve a vision of singleness to the church of today. She emphasizes that her book does not look at all the nuances of singleness but primarily “Western, Reformed, and traditionally evangelical in both content and context” (p.4). There are many aspects of singleness that can be addressed so it is critical to narrow in on an aspect of singleness to dig deep.

Treweek gives a theological and historical overview of singleness in the church. Part one looks at the context of singleness: how singleness has been viewed by the church and society as a whole. There is a clear pattern of singleness being the ideal and even the holier option within Church history, then marriage becoming the more favoured lifestyle in more recent history. Part two looks deeper to diagnose singleness. Singleness has been viewed in recent history as an unfulfilled life in many ways. When the church elevated marriage to the preferred and better life choice it diminished singleness and therefore diminished single people by extension. Treweek states that “today’s church increasingly regards marriage as not merely a core component of the happy life but necessary for anthropological and even spiritual fulfillment” (p. 54). This sentiment can lead to the feeling of being devalued if you are a single person.

After diagnosing singleness Treweek spends time retrieving a healthy vision of singleness in part three. She looks at church history, how the Bible views singleness, and finally Christian theology. It is important to look at where we have been before we can look at where we are going. Finally, in part four she ties everything together by defining the meaning of singleness in the church community and mission. Very little of contemporary theology on singleness has been written by single Christians (p. 217) which has led to the devaluing of singleness and has been a disservice to married Christians as well. The final chapter discusses ways that the readers and other researchers can continue the conversation. As stated in the beginning, this is limited to a specific aspect of singleness and does not look at all nuances of singleness.

Treweek gives an extensive look into the history. It is interesting to see how history has, in many senses, favoured the idea of being single, noting a large reason for marriage being placed on a pedestal in more modern days is a desire to reclaim marriage ideal that was not previously there. She is fair to all perspectives she addresses even when she disagrees with them. Overall, it is a very encouraging read for single people and can help people of all relationship statuses to see singleness in a positive way. It is also a great read for married pastors who are searching for some background in singleness. The reader needs to develop application for themselves as it is not clearly laid out for them.



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Treweek puts it well when she says in her preface “the time has come... for the contemporary evangelical church to retrieve a biblical faithful and pastorally nourishing theology of singleness” for everyone. This book is a great start in the continued conversation on singleness in the church. Singleness is not meant as a time of waiting or hoping for something better but an opportunity. The church needs to support single people in their congregations as much as they support and encourage marriages. This book shows why studying singleness is just as valuable as studying marriage.

Reviewed By:

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