



One by One: Welcoming the Singles in Your Church

Gina Dalfonzo

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There are now more single adults than married adults in the United States, yet the evangelical church continues to focus primarily on serving couples and families with ministries geared toward their particular needs. This can lead, however unintentionally, to the marginalization of adults who are single by choice, divorce, or death, or who are simply not yet married. Families are a good thing, but so are all of God's people, and singles long to be lovingly integrated into the Body of Christ.

In *One by One*, Gina Dalfonzo explores common misconceptions and stereotypes about singles, including the idea that they must be single because something is wrong with them, and the subtle (and not-so-subtle) ways they are devalued, like when sermons focus overmuch on navigating marital relationships or raising children. She shows how the church of Paul, who commended those who remained single, became the church where singles are too often treated like second class Christians. Then she explores what the church is doing right, what unique services singles can offer the church, and, most importantly, what the church can do to love and support the singles in their midst.

One by One: Welcoming the Singles in Your Church Details

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From Reader Review One by One: Welcoming the Singles in Your Church for online ebook

Ethan Smith says

Very helpful perspective for church ministers and other leaders, as well as any other married folks in the pews. It probably could have been 30-40 pages shorter, but overall an easy and thoughtful read.

Rachael Mathis says

A refreshingly honest look at what it's like to be single in the evangelical church. I couldn't stop saying Amen over and over. It's a shame that very few married people will probably ever read this book because it is completely full of truths and ideas that I so wish would be put into practice. I can't say I related to every single thing. Section 2 lost me a little (although the parts on I Kissed Dating Goodbye and the Christy Miller series were certainly thought-provoking). But for anyone who wants to understand a part of the Body of Christ that is largely overlooked within the church, this book is an excellent resource.

Carolina Hinojosa-Cisneros says

Singleness, in church, is a wide open opportunity for the church to mend a great divide between those who feel included and those who show up to church for Advent, and don't feel a part of the family.

“What happens when the church – consciously or unconsciously- elevates married people over single people” (Dalfonzo, 37)?

One by One shines a light from the other side, where Gina points out the language our church leaders use without taking into account how it hurts the singles in our church. I was a single in church, at one point, however I was a single mom. That is far different than a single who would love to have a family and does not.

“...imagine that one reason you don't have what you want is that you've carefully followed the teaching of the people who are now blaming you” (Dalfonzo, 50).

One by One offers constructive criticism to the church on how we approach singleness. It lends a hand to those of us who are not single and leads us to a place of camaraderie and unity. Dalfonzo explains, “Christian community, as found in a healthy church, encourages not only the growth of Christian character within each of us but also the growth of Christian love between us” (Dalfonzo, 193-194).

Our lives are best lived out when we serve one another. I'm always looking for new ways to serve. This book is a great place to start. I didn't realize how quiet some singles are about their situations. Gina's book is an open call. There are plenty of singles among us; my sister is one. I wonder how much of this book she can relate to. I wonder how many times she's felt out of place. One by One teaches me to be more conscious of my actions and my welcome.

I've already bullet pointed one place where I lack welcoming singles – dinner. My husband and I

unconsciously only invite families to our home for dinner. We're rarely around singles if they are not family. I appreciate this book. Among the sea of voices feeling hindered in our church, the single voice is not one that comes to the forefront of my mind or heart. That changes immediately. Many thanks to Gina and her book for providing the landing ground for me with One by One.

I highly recommend this book no matter where you find yourself navigating church. There is much to learn from everyone that makes up the complete body of Christ. After you read it, pass it to a friend. They will thank you for it.

Olivia Ard says

I married young at 22, and my church attendance and involvement was touch and go for most of my college years, so I didn't truly experience adult singleness within the context of the church. Because of that, I was eager to read Ms. Dalfonzo's take on the issue. I hoped it would open my eyes and help me tune in to those with perspectives and experiences different from my own. It did not disappoint. With a blend of traditional research and personal experiences, Dalfonzo presents the problem (social stigmas/stereotypes associated with singleness within the church), the causes, and the potential solutions with page-turning finesse.

Reading this book was a convicting experience. I cringed as I read words I myself have said to my single friends with good intentions, seeing how hurtful they were within the other person's context. I found myself identifying with singles as I noticed similarities between the stigmas and stereotypes they face in the church and those experienced by childless/infertile couples. I feel like this book helped me cultivate a new layer of empathy for my brothers and sisters in Christ.

If you, like me, married young and missed out on the experience of being single after college and beyond, please read this book. It is so important to understand this perspective.

Cassie says

Excellent book for any married or single Christians involved in the church. Insightful and honest without being conceited or whiny.

Marcie says

Overall, the author has some good insights and makes good points, but I was hoping to come away with a better vision of practical steps that the church can take to better welcome and incorporate singles. I didn't feel like that was presented in the book. While the anecdotes were fine, I would have also enjoyed more statistical research and was hoping for a better historical context that went back farther than the 1990s about how we got to where we are today. I didn't feel like I read anything particularly profound, though some of the points she made in the last couple of chapters were helpful. I think this is a good book to help get the conversation started and to help people start thinking about this issue.

Laura (Book Scrounger) says

As the tagline for this book says, there are now more single adults than married adults in the United States. But you might not think that from looking at typical evangelical churches, because many still seem to cater primarily to couples and families. I can attest to this, as a member of the "Focus on the Family" generation, and having spent several years in the church as a single adult.

The first section of this book shares a lot of stories from singles in the church, and corrects some unfortunate stereotypes that many singles have encountered (some of which are perpetuated by the church), such as the idea that single people have something terribly wrong with them, that they're not "real adults" yet, or that they're "projects" for others to "fix."

The second section tries to take a look at "how we got here," while the third focuses more on what the church does right, as well as practical ideas for welcoming the singles in our midst.

Dalfonzo does a fair amount of critiquing in this book, and it may give off a negative vibe because of that, though I think she works to counter that in places. She emphasizes that her criticisms only exist because she loves the church, and believes it should be a place where everyone's voice should be heard equally. She isn't afraid to call out (rightfully, I think) certain celebrity pastors who have made disparaging comments about singles, or have elevated marriage to a place that casts singles, by contrast, as "broken" or troublemakers.

I thought this book was valuable for giving the perspective of a female Christian who has been single all her life, but desired marriage and family. One section I appreciated was in section 2 where she attempts to answer the question of "how we got here," by sharing some critiques of the "courtship culture" (and popular books it produced) that exploded into evangelical churches in the late 90s. She argues that this left many people even more obsessed with marriage, while also even more confused about how to get there. I mostly concur with her evaluations, and I think probably a whole book could have been written about just that subject. In section 2 she also covers "gender wars," which was interesting, but probably the chapter I understood the least.

I think the strongest section for me was in section 3 where Dalfonzo talks about loneliness -- and illuminates just how much of a driving force our fear of loneliness can be. As a single Christian who believes that celibacy outside of marriage is what she is called to, this would make her feel very isolated without the church there as a family to love her.

This is a good wake-up call to the church to make sure the singles in their midst have a voice, and aren't getting pushed away by a "family-centric" approach.

Disclosure: I received this book free from Baker Books through the Baker Books Bloggers www.bakerbooks.com/bakerbooksbloggers program. The opinions I have expressed are my own, and I was not required to write a positive review. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255 <http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/wa...>

Amanda McClendon says

Full disclosure: Gina Dalfonzo is someone with whom I am internet-friendly.

That being said, oh my goodness, this book is such a gift to the church. More than anything, it made me feel *seen*, and gives loving critique to a church that I love, and that I know Gina loves. Married people should

read this just as much as single people should, and we should all think through how to love each other in all seasons of life.

Thanks, Gina.

Michelle Kidwell says

One by One

Welcoming the Singles in Your Church

by Gina Dalfonzo

Baker Books

Christian

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I am reviewing a copy of One by One through Baker Books and Netgalley:

Being Single is now more common than being married in the United States. There are now more single adults than married adults in the United States. There is often a stigma and judgement that comes with being a Single Adult, a Stereotype. This book reminds us that being Single does not mean we have sinned.

As Christians Men and Women are often told they are not living up to God's Will if they don't Marry or have a family. And we are often taught to believe that being Single is a negative condition.

Some treat singles as if they are Pariah's. The author warns us about how false teachings can poison our faith.

I give One by One five out of five stars.

Happy Reading!

Carter Hemphill says

It's refreshing to read a book which highlights the plight of singles in being a vital part of a church body. The author describes primarily the challenges for single women and the stigmas they face in the church today. One of the important takeaways was the challenges that women have with internet dating and the challenge to stay chaste. The book could have been trimmed down to make a more compelling argument, but the main points are sound.

Rachel B says

Because the subtitle of this book is *Welcoming the Singles In Your Church*, I assumed this book was going to be full of practical ways that church leaders and members, particularly the married ones, could begin to include single individuals in the "regular" life of the church, and explain why those things would be helpful. (For instance, having intergenerational and multi-stage small groups, so we can all learn from each other's different experiences and be challenged rather than reinforce the ideas/opinions we already hold.) There is some of that here, particularly in the last couple of chapters, but much of the book seemed to be a defense for why single Christians don't date more... not what I expected.

Dalfonzo uses primarily anecdotal "evidence" to make her points. She states that in order to present a perspective that's broader than just her own, she "sent out a number of questionnaires to friends and acquaintances," yet the included comments seem to be from just a handful of people. While I love anecdotes and think they can be extremely helpful, I think they're stronger when used in conjunction with more statistics and Scripture.

Instead of sharing the complaints of singles and then telling the Church that they need to be included, it would have been helpful had Dalfonzo explained *why* singles need to be included in certain ways and pointed readers to Christ, reminding us how He expects His people to love. Again, this happens some of the time, but not always.

The parts/chapters needed to be better defined and focused. Many times she would start to say something, but then add "I'll talk more about that in a later chapter – right now I want to talk about xyz." There were also several instances when a chapter abruptly ended before she had (seemingly) finished her thought.

I will say, I really appreciated her humor! There is a part of the book where she points out problematic themes in the *Christy Miller* series, and it was hilarious. (I immediately shared it with my sister, as we both read the books growing up – she liked them, I didn't.)

Overall, I agree with much of what was said here, but the delivery just wasn't the best I've read. My favorite book on this subject is *Singled Out* (it touches on many of the same topics, but it's better organized/fleshed out). I would recommend *One by One* to anyone who is intimidated by *Singled Out* (since it's slightly more academic, and not humorous).

I received this book through Goodreads First Reads.

Ruth says

This is a clear, engaging, and enjoyable read. Although I would have read it anyway (given my life experience and interests), since I have my own book on singleness and the church releasing soon(ish), I was especially interested to see 1) whether Dalfonzo and I cover similar ground, and 2) if we handled the issues in the same way. I'm pleased to note that while we do start with similar premises, our paths widely diverge in development. I respect how open and honest Dalfonzo has been, and how much of her own feelings and experiences she's shared. That takes a special kind of courage, and I respect that. If there's a critique, however, it's in the wording of the subtitle, which led me to expect a bit more practical application and a bit

less theory. That's a minor quibble, however. This book is a solid addition to any pastoral/ministerial library.

Purple says

I devoured this book in one sitting. I actually intend to do a second, slower reading in order to spend more time thinking about and studying some of her points & ideas in greater depth.

While others may find the "anecdotal" evidence to be insufficient, for me, it was entirely relatable - so many of them were similar or reflective of my own experience.

I found the section of the explosion of the courtship culture etc in the 90s and the damage it has done to the church very intriguing - I hope she or someone else actually writes another book just on that. I was a little past the stage of the Christy Miller books when they were popular, but having younger siblings read one out of curiosity and couldn't stand it. I vividly remember when "the man in the hat" as Dalfonzo puts it, exploded in popularity.

I think the epilogue a valuable section of the book, and I think Dalfonzo did us all a disservice by tacking this section on as just a short epilogue. I would have liked to have seen this as a much more fleshed out section, giving more practical advice to the church as a whole on how to make a change.

I wish we could give half stars, because I really feel it is a 4.5 star book.

Elizabeth says

Hmm, it's hard to know how to sum this up. As a single person close to 30, I resonated with many of the feelings expressed by the single interviewees in this book. On the other hand, I have had relatively few negative encounters in either of my churches (current and growing up) related to being single. I have often felt very supported as an individual, and I'm so thankful for that. For me, a lot of the difficulty in being single comes from comparing myself to my peers. I appreciate how Dalfonzo expresses some of the difficulties of being single, like how little control we really have. What if we've hardly had the opportunity to date and not due to any fault of our own? I agree with Dalfonzo when she debunks the myth that single people are less mature than married people. Ooh, that myth bothers me so much!!

The greatest strength of this book is Dalfonzo's emphasis on the body of Christ listening to, learning from, and loving people who are different. I really hope married Christians read this book to understand what single Christians are often up against, especially in a church culture that values marriage and family so highly.

This may have been outside of the scope of the author's interest, but I would love to see a Catholic perspective where single women have a place as nuns. It seems to me that Catholicism holds the single-married question in tension much better than Protestantism, and I'd like to investigate that more.

I know I have more thoughts about this book, but this is what's on my mind after just finishing it.

Joan says

Today's evangelical churches are overwhelmingly family oriented. Where does that leave singles?

Dalfonzo has written a book to help churches understand singles and create a welcoming climate for them.

She reveals what the church looks and feels like to singles, sharing her own thoughts and her interviews with others. I was appalled at some of her quotes from books and preachers. No wonder singles feel awkward in a church culture that thinks singleness is a negative condition and that not being married precludes one from spiritual maturity. She also writes about the impact of the non-dating movement, the unchristian teaching about leaving a legacy, and more.

She also looks at what singles must endure in this sex saturated society. I was again appalled to learn that eighty percent of single evangelical Christians say they have had sex. I wonder if that is a result of lack and attention and support from the church.

This book is not a theological nor biblical exploration of singleness. While Dalfonzo does quote the passage around I Corinthians 7:8, she does not make a big deal about Paul later saying that singles can much better be concerned about the Lord's affairs. When was the last time you heard a sermon encouraging people to remain single so they could have undivided devotion to the Lord? (See I Cor. 7: 32-35) When was the last time singles were sought out in your church because of their unique gifts and abilities? Does your church look at singles as problems or opportunities?

Dalfonzo has some good ideas for church leaders and how they can incorporate and support singles in their congregations. This would be a good book for church leaders and board members to read. It would also be good for those sitting in the pew as Dalfonzo has many ways church members can incorporate singles into their lives and support them.

I received a complimentary copy of this book from the publisher. My comments are an independent and honest review.
