

Book Review

The Significance of Singleness: A Theological Vision for the Future of the Church.

By Christina S. Hitchcock. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2018. Pp 176. Paper, \$21.99.

We are in need of a theology of singleness. There are countless books on Christian marriage but few on Christian singleness. The few books on Christian singleness tend to focus on how to prepare for marriage. Christina Hitchcock, professor of theology at the University of Sioux Falls, offers something that few others do. She shares candidly from personal experience, argues from Scripture, and draws from church history in order to form a theology of singleness that challenges popular thought and brings vision to the church.

Hitchcock posits that the American church has taken the secular idea that sex is a requirement for entry into adulthood and baptized it: there is an underlying idea in the church that a Christian is not fully grown up until he or she has married. Scripture does not support this idea. While many do marry in their 20s or 30s, it is not uncommon for others to experience disappointment or even a spiritual crisis when a suitable mate is not found within an expected time frame (7). Others may feel marginalized when they find themselves single again after the loss of a spouse.

Throughout the book, Hitchcock explains a theology of singleness. Singleness demonstrates the priority of the church and the need to trust in God rather than in family. Singleness emphasizes the future over the present: in the resurrection, there will be no marriage. “Marriage will become unnecessary and outmoded because all relationships will be fulfilled in and through Jesus” (33). The central part of the book outlines the lives of three singles that illustrate Hitchcock’s theology of singleness. In chapter 2, the life of Macrina illustrates the call to deep community. In chapter 3, Perpetua’s story illustrates the importance of prioritizing our identity as a Christian, even at the cost of death. Chapter 4 traces the life of Lottie Moon, a missionary who demonstrated that authority comes directly from Jesus and not from a spouse.

Evangelical Christians “are afraid of being single because of what it means theologically: that God might not give us everything we want when we want it” (93). Hitchcock addresses this fear and offers a fresh perspective of God’s purposes in singleness. As she writes, “singleness is either a present reality or a future possibility for everyone. It is a topic that impinges on all our lives and must be considered carefully” (xxvii). The book is written primarily for an American audience. Hitchcock’s book is personal, readable, and insightful. *The Significance of Singleness* will be appreciated by singles and marrieds, alike.

Jennifer Creamer