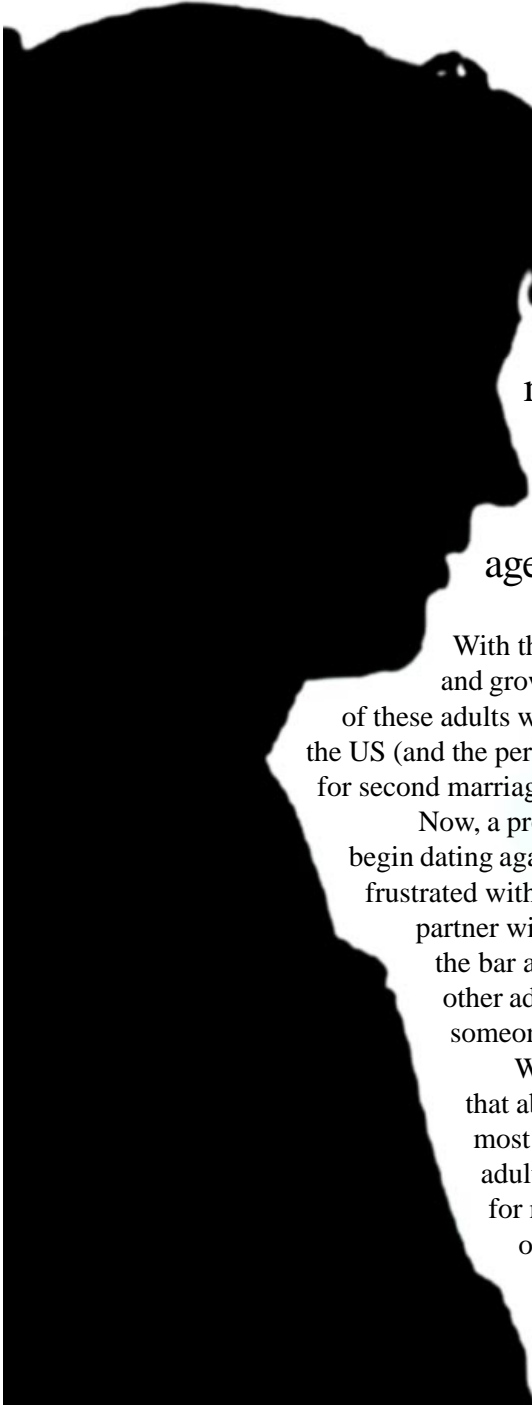


The ideal destination for Christian men and women to find friends, dates, and even soul mates

by Steve Hewitt



Last year I did some ministry work with a singles ministry at a local church after the church had decided to increase their ongoing singles ministry when survey information revealed that 35,000 single adults lived within five miles of the church. According to our last U.S. Census figures, 44% of all adult Americans are single. That means there are over 100 million single adults of all ages.

With the increased number of divorces in our society today, we are seeing a large and growing number of adults in middle age facing the situation of being single. Many of these adults want to find love again and remarry. While 50% of first time marriages fail in the US (and the percent of failed marriages is equal within the Christian community), the percent for second marriages to fail is 75%.

Now, a prolific number of books and helpful guides are available for those who wish to begin dating again in the hopes of remarriage. Still this leaves many middle aged single adults frustrated with the prospect of the process of meeting someone that they might be able to partner with, especially if they are seeking a Christian partner. The good news is that the bar and club scenes are not a solution. Even for those that try this method to meet other adult singles, only 2% of men say they have found a lasting relationship with someone they met at a bar or club.

Where are most singles finding each other? The Internet. Surveys are showing that about 40% of single adults use online dating services to meet other singles. Almost eight years ago, CCMag did a story on what was then a new option for single adults. At the time, meeting others on the Internet seemed scary and inappropriate for many. Yet, over time, our society has grown accustomed to meeting people online, and we know that relationships have developed and flourished as a result. Most online dating services like to brag about the numbers of couples that have married because of meeting online. And, while I can't find a good reference for statistical proof, many articles on the subject conclude that the success and failure rate of a marriage that started from an online con-

tact is about the same as marriages where couples met in other ways.

However, I believe that online dating can actually offer an advantage to a successful relationship IF both partners use the initial profile survey as a way to disclose their real beliefs, values and goals honestly. Along those lines, if a Christian uses a service that is designed and dedicated to helping others with similar beliefs, values and goals meet, they are ahead of the curve.

Relationships.com

Which brings us to the focus of this article, a place for Christian singles to connect called Relationships.com. Formerly known as ChristianMingle.com, Relationships.com utilizes many interactive features that allow Christian singles of all ages to meet and communicate. They offer email, chat rooms, message boards and instant messaging. In addition, however, they have some unique features that are reflective of their Christian atmosphere, such as 100 new inspiring eCards with spiritual messages that members can send each other. Moreover, they have a feature allowing searchable scriptures, which can help when discussions turn to the Bible.

At present, Relationships.com has approximately 275,000 members with the largest concentration between the ages of 30-39. Although many mass market Websites are heavily male dominated, Relationships.com attracts nearly a 50/50 male-to-female ratio. They believe this is because their members are interested in building serious, long-term relationships.

Since Relationships.com is a Christian online community, you can see the difference between this and other secular single sites right away. For example, members are encouraged to answer a variety of multiple choice questions and essay questions. In the essay portion, you are encouraged to answer, "What does being a Christian mean to you?" They also ask, "What is your favorite Bible passage, and why?"

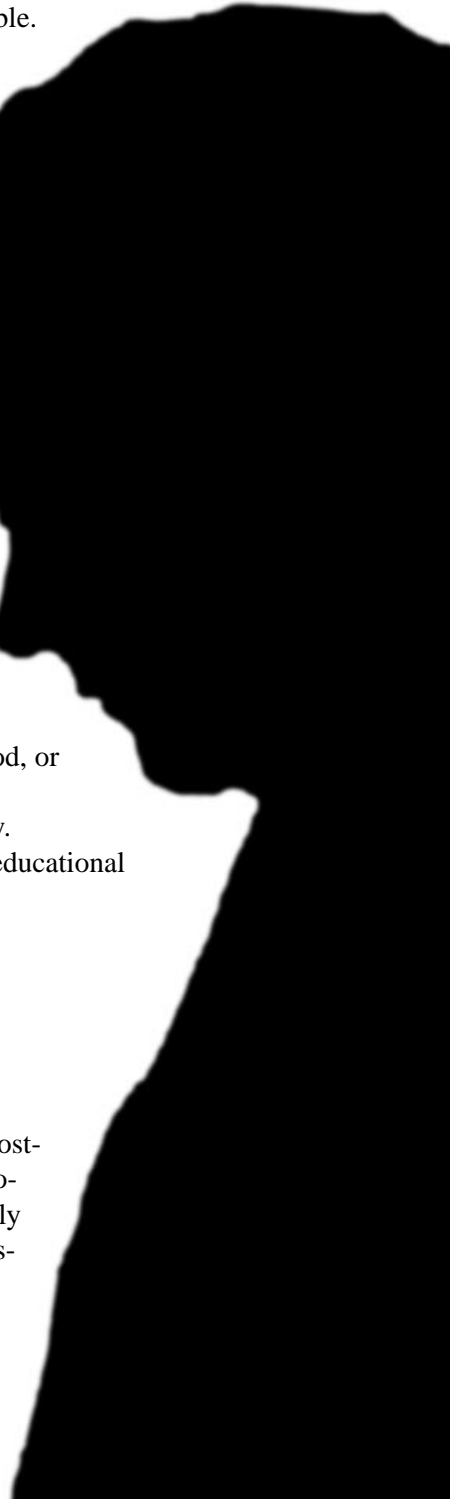
If you are a Christian single, Relationships.com can be a great place for you to establish some new friends. The site is certainly a great place to communicate with other Christian singles. Many Christian singles do not attend a church with a singles ministry and miss the opportunity to communicate with other Christians from a single perspective. The message boards on Relationships.com were not centered on getting a date or mate, but rather discussions by Christian singles who want to communicate with brothers and sisters that are also single. Some of the discussion topics on the message boards include,

- **Bible Study & Theology** Have questions about your studies of the Bible, God, or Christianity? Talk them over here.
- **Daily Devotionals** Messages and thoughts to carry with you through the day.
- **Education & Resources** Find answers to your questions or give advice on educational matters.
- **Entertainment** Books, TV, movies and music.
- **Food** Share your favorite recipes, nutrition information and more.
- **He Said / She Said** Guys - have a question just for the ladies? Ladies - need to hear the man's side? Ask your question here.
- **Life** Humor, inspirational stories and poetry.
- **Relationships & Dating** Discussions on relationships and dating habits.

Now it is obvious from the numbers on the message board that most of those posting messages do so in the Relationships & Dating area. Yet, when I went into the forum to check it out, the discussions were still centered on subjects that were uniquely Christian, such as setting up a Christian singles Sunday school class. Another discussion area centered on being celibate and the harassment some single Christians get from others because of their commitment.

While Relationships.com is certainly a place where Christian singles can go in the hopes of meeting someone to date and potentially develop a future relationship, it is also a great place for Christian singles to gather for fellowship and support.

It is easy to set up an account, and the good news is you can set one up and



try Relationships.com free. They gave me an account to use to test the system, and I was impressed with the quick search features and ease of use. But more importantly, I spent some time looking at profiles of both men and women in my area, and was impressed that most made it clear right at the start that their relationship with Christ is most important, and that they were looking for friends or others that understand their love for Christ and their desire to live for Him. It was very refreshing.

Here are some testimonies from users that have found and established a relationship using Relationships.com. Notice that these are very timely, having been posted just weeks from the time I am writing this article. User Original Earl and Lynnea1 write, "I have never felt so strongly about my decision to pursue a relationship. I am sure that God brought us together, and this site is a tool put to use by Him. This site represents what a "Christian" dating site should be." This was posted on May 1, 2006. Jenn8503 posted this comment on May 30, 2006, "God brought us to one another and here we are planning on getting married in October of 2008!! Without relationships.com I probably never would've met Nathan and been as happy as I am now!"

So how can you start and then develop a relationship online? User Bunt posted this comment on May 26, 2006, "We live in different states, but still close enough. He in NY, and me in NJ. We exchanged a couple of emails, then talked on the phone few times, and then arranged to meet. It was meant to be. We were looking for the same things, like friendship, something lasting, sincerity, honesty, a place where we each could finally relax. No game playing. We are planning to marry next year. We've truly been blessed."

Starting an online relationship can be just as successful or can be just as big a failure as any other relationships people might start. It is important to be honest with yourself and in your profile and early communications with others.

If you are a single Christian and want to make some new relationships with others, I encourage you to try Relationships.com. Simply visit www.Relationships.com for more information about setting up your free membership and profile!



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