

### **Being A Single Mormon on O'ahu Today**

The process of dating and eventually finding a partner to marry is common practice in society today. It is considered to be a normal part of life and something that most feel happens naturally and should never be rushed into. This rite of passage is a little different for followers of the Church of Latter Day Saints, also known as Mormons. The common belief of those of the Mormon faith is to practice abstinence until after marriage. Only then is it considered proper, sacred, and beautiful. A very big contrast from what most people practice in our culture. Sexual activity before marriage, is considered sinful and not the path to righteousness. Behaviors like making out or any heavy petting are also deemed inappropriate. Although physical attraction and desire is a human trait, young Mormons must rely on the strength of their beliefs and convictions to make difficult decisions.

The methods that were used to obtain information for this research were participant observation, formal interviews and informal interviews. There were a total of 8 informants that were focused on, 4 were male and 4 were female. All informants were single, active Mormons, of different ethnicities, living on Oahu between the ages of 18-28 years old. The participant observation involved attending a couple of Singles Mormon church services and observing the social interaction of opposite sexes.

Single Mormons tend to look for similarities between themselves and their potential mate, believing that the more things that they have in common, the more successful their relationship will be. If their possible mate does not have the same core values and beliefs, it's believed that there will be more conflict between the couple. Thus, looking for a mate within the church is a lot more appealing and highly encouraged. Not only is being a member of the church of high importance, but also whether or not that other person is an active member in the church. An active member is someone who actually attends church regularly and follows its teachings. All of the informants stated that this was a very important quality for their significant other to have. This is because family is very important to the church and being able to go to church as a family meant a lot to each informant. One informant explained, "How would it look if I went to church and took my children but their

father did not go to church with us? This would not be teaching the importance of going to church to my children if their own father does not go.”

The status of a return Missionary is also of great significance. These are members sent on their mission for two years all over the world. Men go on their mission when they turn 19 years old. Women can also go on their mission at the age of 21. It is much more common for the men to go on their missions than the women because it is expected more of the men. Although dating before going on their mission is allowed by the church, it is not be taken seriously because Missionaries are not allowed to date while they are on their mission (Lindsay). Many of the single female members are especially looking for return Missionaries, because they don't have to worry about their boyfriends leaving them for two years and because they often return looking for a serious relationship leading to marriage. Being a return missionary is another important quality that the majority of the females look for in their mate.

Single Mormons also appreciate many of the typical characteristics that non-members value. Qualities such as being intelligent, good-looking, and fun are also highly appealing. Even so, the number one quality to have is being an active member of the Mormon Church. For women, the second most important quality is being a return missionary.

Sixteen years of age is considered acceptable for dating. It is encouraged by the church to date within the church (Goddard). The church also offers many opportunities, such as dances, hikes, and picnics at the beach to allow the single members to meet. Singles have a *ward*, or church time, of their own. Married members and families also have their own wards. This way, they are allowed to meet other single members while attending church. All the singles congregate into the main church area for the first part of church then split off into two separate classes. One class is the introductory or basic class for those members who are just learning about the religion. The other class is the advanced class in which they discuss in depth the teachings and scriptures from the Book of Mormon. After this class, the singles then separate into a male only class and a female only class, in order to discuss and learn more about their religion and how it pertains to them.

Going on a date to the movies is not something that single Mormons tend to do often, because many of the movies that are out today are seen as unclean. This especially refers to the movies that are rated R. Movies that are R rated are believed to be unwholesome, teach degrading, offensive and immoral concepts (Lindsay). Some members feel that this will not help to be morally pure and have clean wholesome thoughts that will strengthen their

closeness to God. Seeing those types of images may corrupt and tempt those pure of heart. It also prevents them from really getting to know their date through conversation.

When out on a date, some members try to avoid situations that may lead to sexual temptation. They may go out on double dates or in groups and participate in activities like bowling or surfing. They try to avoid being alone with that other person of interest by not staying out too late, or by not staying in a car alone too long when being dropped off after the date. The main purpose of the date is to go out and have fun and get to know that other person (Lindsay).

Many of the informants stated that it is very hard to avoid sexual temptation especially when a couple has been together for a long time. Some informants also felt that this is a reason why so many Mormons marry at a young age. The couple does not want to commit the sin of sex before marriage so they get married so that if they have sex, it is no longer considered a sin.

Physical affection that can lead to impure and passionate actions is considered very inappropriate and should be avoided. Acts of affection such as hugs and kisses are believed to be alright if it does not lead to impure thoughts or sexual urges. French kissing is not considered an act of affection that is acceptable, because it is believed to be more of a lustful action. Any kind of petting is not allowed either. Petting is inappropriate touching of the other person's private parts that do lead to sexual temptation (Goddard). Mormons have a high priority on chastity, because sex outside of marriage is considered a very big sin. This places a great strain on the social and moral decisions that young adult Mormons face regularly. In our present society, where a man's promiscuity is often celebrated and encouraged, a young male Mormon may face ridicule and have to rely on his personal faith and beliefs for comfort. Although, chastity and virtue is acceptable in young females of most faiths, it may sometimes be misinterpreted as conceit or some form of vanity. This is also cause for social discomfort.

If a member were to have sex before marriage, to repent for this sin is a very long process. One informant said that it took at least a year for this sin to be forgiven and for the member to be eligible again to marry in the temple. The bishop of the church would give the member specific guidelines that would need to be followed in order to be forgiven. One example of a guideline is not committing the same sin again until marriage.

Mormons believe that you have to be married before you die because marriage is ordained of God and is necessary in reaching the highest heavenly state after death. The idea

that marriage in the temple will eternally seal both parties (have eternal marital ties to each other), places a higher significance on courtship and is taken very seriously. Though the church does not prohibit marriage to someone of a different faith, it is highly discouraged and frowned upon by other followers. It is believed that those of different faiths will only challenge a Mormon's belief and serve as a deterrent to real glory and happiness.

Mormons also believe that divorce is a very last resort. The church will help to counsel the couple to try and work it out. One informant said that although couples who are married in the temple get sealed to each other, they can also be unsealed. This does not happen very often and is also a long process. To be unsealed, the member must ask the permission of one of the prophets and have a very good reason as to why they should be unsealed. The informant said that adultery is not a good enough reason in the eyes of the church to be unsealed, although it is a sin, it is still something that the church believes a couple can work through.

Whether or not they felt that their beliefs were being challenged in today's society 2 male and 3 female informants felt that it was not very hard for them to maintain their morals and beliefs. These informants would just avoid the situations all together that could lead them down the wrong path so that the temptation to do something against their beliefs was not an option even though most of today's societies views on chastity was not highly valued as it had been in the past. They felt that people in today's society are more aware that people have differences in many ways like not belonging to the same religion and having different values for example. One informant said that he and his close friends all belonged to different religions and that no one in his close group of guy friends would ever push him to do anything that he did not want to do. His close friends just accepted the fact that he was Mormon and that there were certain things that he believed in and they were just fine with it.

The other 1 female and 2 male informants felt torn about the subject of whether or not it was hard for them to maintain their morals and beliefs. They felt that although people in today's society were more accepting of differences in others choice of religion and values that their beliefs would still be ridiculed and joked about from time to time.

Single modern day Mormons on the island of Oahu possess a level of discipline and commitment to their beliefs and is nothing short of remarkable. In this day and age, where perversions and vice often seem the norm, it is refreshing to see that there are still those that value purity and clean living. To be able to withstand ridicule, temptations from peer pressure and simply overcome basic human impulses is truly an admirable trait. We must then pose

the question, “what makes them so different from their non-Mormon peers and how can we incorporate some of their positive qualities into our own lives?”

### **Works Cited**

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