BOOK PROPOSAL

**Pieter Valk**

*God, what’s my gift?*

*Discerning Vocational Singleness and Christian Marriage*

**CONCEPT STATEMENT**

Christian marrieds raising kids are burdened by expectations to display the gospel with their marriage, raise their kids to embrace to gospel, fund the gospel through their job, and somehow find time and energy to address the brokenness in our world in a way that preaches the gospel. Single Christians experience similar expectations, but exchange marriage and children for a lack of support and second-class status in their churches. Unrealistic expectations lead to kingdom work multitasking, ineffectiveness, and shame. But what if God intended some of us to primarily focus on the kingdom work of raising children and others to use their availability from not raising children to do other kingdom work with undivided attention? What if God intended to save us from the anxiety of choosing our vocation, instead inviting us to ask Him whether He’s calling each of us to either vocational singleness or Christian marriage, trust that He knows what will be best for each of us individually, and embrace his calling?

I’m writing this book to urge every Christian young adult to discern whether God is calling them to vocational singleness or Christian marriage. The book explores why we should offer this question to God, what the options are, how to discern, and how pastors and parents can support discernment.

I hope this book contributes to a rebirth of teaching of, support for, and practice of vocational singleness in Protestant churches in ways that strengthen Christian marriages. I hope this raises up the next generation of Christians who will accept God's call to vocational for His sake, gather together in families, and use their availability to heal our cities in ways that would bring the gospel alive for those curious about Jesus and draw people to Him.

**TARGET AUDIENCE**

This book is for Christian college students serious about submitting every part of their life to Jesus, prodded by a sense that marriage is good but not guaranteed, and willing to be challenged by orthodox teaching about discernment in a fresh way. This book is for parents disillusioned by the sexual revolution and searching for a way to guide their children to think in truly Christian ways about their capacities for romance and sex. This book is for pastors who find the current answers to the Church’s broken sexuality inadequate and are open to an ancient and inconvenient explanation for our current state.

**LENGTH OF BOOK**

45,000 words

**TIMELINE**

Completion by Q4 2023

**COMPETITIVE TITLES**

*Breaking the Marriage Idol* by Kutter Callaway

Callaway’s book has a challenging assessment of American Christianity’s idolatry of romance, but he uses that to offer a common survey of sexual stewardship. This book, on the other hand, focuses on the need to discern and explores theology, practical application, and the impact on the Church at depth to offer something new.

*All That’s Good: Recovering the Lost Art of Discernment* by Hannah Anderson

Anderson’s book addresses the topic of discernment, but it provides a survey of discernment for any topic and fails to address the question of discerning vocational singleness and Christian marriage.

*Redeeming Singleness* by Barry Danylak

Danylak’s book explores theology of singleness in some similar ways to this book, but this book addresses the need to discern and how to discern in ways other books have not.

**BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION**

I am a speaker/author about discernment, vocational singleness, & LGBT+ topics according to a historic sexual ethic, published in *Christianity Today*, *Mere Orthodoxy*, *Christ and Pop Culture*, *Fathom Magazine*, *Ekstasis Magazine*, and more. I'm the Executive Director of Equip ([equipyourcommunity.org](http://equipyourcommunity.org/))—the premier consulting & training solution for churches aspiring to be places where gay people thrive according to a traditional sexual ethic. We've trained over 20,000 Christian leaders. I’m a licensed professional counselor specialized in serving gay Christians hoping to steward their sexualities according to a historic sexual ethic. I’m a teacher and aspiring deacon in the Anglican Church in North America about celibacy and sexuality. And I'm a founding brother of the Nashville Family of Brothers ([familyofbrothers.org](http://familyofbrothers.org)), an ecumenically Christian monastery building family for men called to vocational singleness. In fewer words, I help churches love gay people and celibate Christians find family. I have a moderate social media presence of ~16,500 followers across platforms. This includes 6800 followers on Instagram, 5000 followers on Facebook, 3700 followers on Twitter, and 1000 followers on Tiktok. Check out all of my published work and free video resources at [pieterLvalk.com](http://pieterLvalk.com) or connect with me on socials @pieterLvalk.

I studied at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminar toward a non-degree fellowship and got my Masters in Clinical Mental Health Counseling from Lipscomb University.

I have written for the following publications:

*Christianity Today* - [The Case for Vocational Singleness](https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2020/november-web-only/valk-case-for-vocational-singleness.html)

*Mere Orthodoxy* - [Vocational Singleness is a Gospel Cornerstone](https://mereorthodoxy.com/vocational-singleness-is-a-gospel-cornerstone/)

*Christ & Pop Culture* - [A Pandemic of Romantic Idolatry](https://christandpopculture.com/a-pandemic-of-romantic-idolatry/)

*Fathom Magazine* - [Is it really better to marry than burn with desire?](https://www.fathommag.com/stories/is-it-really-better-to-marry-than-burn-with-desire)

- [Happy (Spiritual) Fathers Day](https://www.fathommag.com/stories/happy-spiritual-fathers-day)

- [Welcome to my closet.](https://www.fathommag.com/stories/welcome-to-my-closet)

*Ekstasis Magazine* – [The Ascetic Fetish](https://www.ekstasismagazine.com/blog/2022/the-ascetic-fetish)

*Juicy Ecumenism* - [Why say gay? A response to “Yes to Gay Identity, No to Gay Sex?”](https://juicyecumenism.com/2021/04/20/gay-anglican-pieter-valk/)

*The Living Church* – [How a Deconstructed Evangelical Found Reconstruction as an Anglican](https://covenant.livingchurch.org/2022/01/19/how-a-deconstructed-evangelical-found-reconstruction-as-an-anglican/)

*Anglican Compass* - [COVID–19 Targets Single Christians](https://anglicancompass.com/covid-19-targets-single-christians/)

- [How to Provide the Sacrament of Family to Single People](https://anglicancompass.com/how-to-provide-the-sacrament-of-family-to-single-people/)

- [Can Anglicans in North America Offer Something Better Than Gay Marriage?](https://anglicancompass.com/can-anglicans-offer-something-better-than-gay-marriage/)

- [3 Ways to Make Singleness a Win for the Gospel](https://anglicancompass.com/3-ways-to-make-singleness-a-win-for-the-gospel/)

*Nashotah House Theological Seminary* - [God sets the lonely in families](https://www.pieterlvalk.com/blog/god-sets-the-lonely-in-families)

*Outreach Magazine* - [Reframing Our Sermons on Sexuality](https://outreachmagazine.com/features/discipleship/70995-reframing-our-sermons-on-sexuality.html)

- [Do Christians Have ‘Respect for Marriage’?](https://outreachmagazine.com/features/73199-do-christians-have-respect-for-marriage.html)

*RENEW.org* - [Singleness in the Bible: A Q&A with Pieter Valk Exploring the Gift of Singleness](https://renew.org/singleness-in-the-bible/)

*Awaken Catholic* - [Distance Makes the Heart Grow Fonder](https://www.pieterlvalk.com/blog/distance-makes-the-heart-grow-fonder)

*The Equip Blog* – 50 articles at <https://equipyourcommunity.org/author/pieter/>

I have trained more than 21,000 Christian leaders at 85+ churches, Christian universities, and campus ministries including...

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I have developed a long-term partnership with the Coalition for Campus Outreach as their primary trainer and content provider around sexual stewardship, spear-headed a Council for Christian Colleges and University partnership program that pairs CCCU institutions with sexual stewardship content experts and a ready-to-implement toolbox of solutions designed for CCCU institutions, and I am in the early stages of long-term partnerships with multiple dioceses in the Anglican Church in North American.

Samples of public speaking:

* <https://www.pieterlvalk.com/blog/leveraging-christian-singleness>
* <https://www.pieterlvalk.com/blog/building-committed-christian-community>
* <https://www.pieterlvalk.com/blog/naming-and-caring-for-gay-male-body-shame>
* <https://www.pieterlvalk.com/blog/gods-good-for-gay-people>
* <https://www.pieterlvalk.com/blog/gay-people-the-holy-spirit-and-the-church>
* <https://www.pieterlvalk.com/blog/lgbt-people-amp-gods-answer-to-loneliness>

The following people would likely endorse the book and/or give me access to their networks to promote the book:

* Dorena Williamson
* Justin Giboney
* Kutter Callaway
* Scot McKnight
* Bridget Gee
* Jason Cusick
* Laurie Krieg
* Alastair Sterne
* Jason Gaboury
* Todd D. Hunter
* Debra Hirsch
* Greg Jao
* Caleb Kaltenbach
* Phylicia Masonheimer
* Sam Allberry
* Wesley Hill
* David Bennet
* Rev. Malcom Foley
* Katie Crobsy
* Greg Johnson
* Greg Coles
* Igor Sabino
* Holly Stallcup
* Preston Sprinkle
* Yucan Chiu
* Leonard Allen
* Janet Blevins Dean
* Shirley Hoogstra
* Julia Sadusky
* Mark Yarhouse
* Barry Danylak
* Esau McCaulley
* Tish Harrison-Warren
* Wendy Alsup
* Jake Meador
* Jen Pollock Michel
* Russell Moore
* K. B. Hoyle
* Mary DeMuth

**BOOK SUMMARY**

Introduction

Chapter 1 – An Accidental Discerner

Chapter 2 – A Different Kind of Singleness

Chapter 3 – Why Seek God’s Preference?

Chapter 4 – Reasonable Objections & Cautionary Tales

Chapter 5 – Bulking Spiritual Muscles for Discernment

Chapter 6 – 5 Ingredients for Discerning Marriage & Singleness

Chapter 7 – Supporting Discernment: For Parents & Pastors

Chapter 8 – Why you should still discern

Appendix – An Open Letter to Romance Idolatry

There are six pieces:

1. In the Introduction and first chapter, we’ll examine the unrealistic expectations for kingdom work, ineffective multitasking, and shame that Christians of all kind experience, with an invitation to discern between vocational singleness and Christian marriage to right-size expectations and effectively heal the brokenness in the world. Plus, I’ll share about my personal journey of accidentally discerning between vocational singleness and Christian marriage.
2. Before discerning, we have to figure out what our options are, so in chapter two we’ll explore what the Bible has to say about the relational options available to us: vocational singleness and Christian marriage
3. Next, in chapters 3 and 4, we’ll consider why God prefers us to offer this question of Christian marriage or vocational singleness to Him and address common objections.
4. In chapters 5 and 6, we will investigate how to generally practice Christian discernment and how to specifically apply that to the question of Christian marriage or vocational singleness.
5. In chapter 7, we’ll review how parents and pastors can support the discernment of teens and young adults in their churches and families.
6. In chapter 8, I’ll address my sexual orientation and why my personal story and the theological urgings in the book are still relevant to straight Christians.

**SAMPLE CHAPTERS**

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