

[Theme music: upbeat electronica plays in the background as Katie speaks before fading out.]

Katie Axelson: Welcome to Have Hope; Will Travel. When we travel, we get to know people who are different than we are: we hear different perspectives and better understand others' stories. We learn to stand with people instead of having opinions on issues. I'm your host, Katie Axelson. Did you know that the Have Hope; Will Travel team is growing! I can't do this by myself... in fact, I don't do this by myself! And we are looking for more people to join our volunteer team. If you want to help with transcripts, show notes, graphics, producing the show, or you see another way where your skill set may be a good fit for the show, send me an email to start a conversation - Katie@KatieAxelson.com. And be sure to hit subscribe because there are some great things coming. This week we're chatting with Mary B. Safrit. MaryB. fills the gap between what the church provides and what Christian singles need. She's the host of Unsuitable Podcast, the author of a series of survival guides, most recently entitled "We Don't Want The Bouquet: the single Christian's guide to surviving wedding season." Do we need that or do we need that? Oh, we need that! She lives in New York City and she coaches singles to make the most out of their lives right now. MaryB., welcome to the show!

MaryB.: Thanks so much for having me. I'm excited to be here!

Katie: Yeah, I'm excited to hear your story and hear your perspective and I mean, as a single myself, I of course know the church has some opportunities so - I'm excited to have a deeper conversation around these things.

MaryB.: So many opportunities. Nothing but opportunities. [MaryB. and Katie laugh.]

Katie: Yeah, yeah about that. [Katie laughs.] So what made you become passionate about singleness?

MaryB.: Umm, you know I kind of stumbled into it truthfully. I was at a transition point in my life, I had moved to New York City to pursue a career as a singer and that did not pan out. I got burnt out real quick, and you know, was going through a lot of transitions and was writing as a way to kind of process that. You know, had a bunch of stuff and was like, "Maybe I'll write a book!" And one of the little very messy, very chaotic essays I wrote was on singleness and really singleness and sex and really just my lack of - like, just my very awkward wanderings through the church as a single person, and as you know, like a virgin in New York City, and like someone who's not dating you know all of that kind of stuff. And I showed it to a friend and she was like, "I think this like is a book in and of itself." And I was like, "I'm not going to be that person who like just starts writing about singleness," because I like, myself have this perception of what that meant which was like, somebody complaining about not being married yet. And you know, like talking about how to date, how to get married and I was like, "That's not my vibe." But funnily enough, that was something that I felt like writing into that kind of void was something that I actually became really passionate about, and once I started doing some more research into you know, what was out there, and what kinds of - who was talking about it, and what they were saying. You know, I noticed there's a real need for you know, people who were going to approach singleness from a place of like a very human place, a very holistic place, and a place that kind of challenged a lot of the assumptions that a lot of us bring to the table when it comes to talking about singleness. Because I think that even now, a lot of people when I say that I talk about singleness and I write

for singles in the church, they assume I talk about dating. They assume that I talk about like, how to be content in three easy steps. [Katie laughs.] And you know, really what I like to do is kind of get under the surface and something that I've noticed is that like, there's one: not enough singles involved in the conversation.

Katie: Agreed! Married people talking about singleness is one of my pet peeves!

MaryB.: Married people love to talk about singleness, let me just tell you.

Katie: Oh yes, they do!

MaryB: And love to give you dating advice based on their experience of dating one person and getting married [Katie laughs.] when they were in college. So no. I mean that's really not much of an exaggeration.

Katie: No, it's not.

MaryB: But [MaryB. laughs.] you know, so one: the lack of singles in the conversation. And two: I don't know, I approached this - this genre as someone who really felt like we weren't necessarily asking the best questions. You know as a - like I think a question that I hear a lot is "Why are there so many singles?" or "Why are there so many single women with like, unanswered prayers for husbands?" or "Where are all the men? Where are all the single men?" My question is like, "Why do we approach relationships as if marriage is the solution to every relational problem and is supposed to fill every relational need?" What's going on on a cultural level that's kind of caused us to be so obsessed with marriage? To be so, so certain - to really have this foundational narrative that marriage is the ultimate goal for every Christian, "should be" the ultimate goal for every Christian. When you know, the actual reality, right, is - I mean you can fill in the blank any number of ways, but I think a lot of people would say that "It's to become more like Jesus, to make disciples, to love your neighbor," any number of things. But the lived reality and the way that a lot of churches operate really like, tries to funnel people into this one experience and if you aren't part of this one experience, it really doesn't know what to do with you. And so my question is like "What can we as singles do about that?" You know, how can we kind of challenge that - just not, you know, necessarily take it on ourselves to educate people, but just like our very presence in churches, and the questions that we're asking with our lives. Like how is that beneficial for the church? And how is that like, pointing the church more towards the person of Christ?

Katie: Yeah... who was also single, by the way!

MaryB.: [MaryB. Sings her next sentence.] Who was also single! [MaryB. goes back to speaking normally.] Yep. He sure was.

Katie: Yes.

MaryB.: So yeah, there's a lot of - the really interesting thing to me about all of this - there's a lot of really interesting things about it - but like, it really doesn't take a lot of examination for the logic and the narratives to start falling apart. And so it's super interesting to me that there is such a steadfast rooted narrative of like marriage idolatry, that perpetuates this marriage

idolatry, when really you don't have to ask that many questions for it to not track with any kind of biblical or theological like way of viewing the life of a Christian.

Katie: Right. Yeah, yeah. No that's so good and it's so real too. Let's talk a little bit about like, why do singles matter?

MaryB.: Oh my gosh.

Katie: Can't - can't we just like, marry us all off and then be done with the singles problem?

MaryB.: I mean... [Katie and MaryB. laugh.] Like, there's a lot of ways I could answer to that question. I mean there's a lot of logistical issues. But I do think that like - why do singles matter? Singles matter as they are where they are, because I think singles embody the gospel in a really unique and particular way. I think there's a lot about the single life that is really healthy for married people to learn from, and for the church to experience. I think that we image Christ and the life of Christ who was [MaryB. Sings] also single! [MaryB. Begins to talk normally again.] in a really particular way that is beneficial for the entire church. You know, I think a really good, robust theology of singleness ultimately creates a healthier environment for marriages as well. And I think that we, we know God and we know Christ better through a more diverse way of like, the more diverse kind of our picture is of how God is present and working in people's lives, you know the more robust our picture is of who God is, and God is present and working in all of it. All of our lives, in - in unique ways. I've learned a lot from my married friends and I would imagine my married friends have learned a lot from me as far as you know - I just think there's so much about being a human person operating in the world where we are these inherently social creatures who are really informed by the culture around us that when we don't kind of allow for differing or outside perspectives, we can really get caught in this bubble or echo chamber that like perpetuates, and really doesn't challenge - like, I don't know it doesn't challenge a lot of the assumptions. And there's nobody to ask the questions that single people are asking with their lives, of like - right? Like it's so easy for those narratives to fall apart and the reason that they're not falling apart, the reason they're so entrenched is because like, the people in leadership don't have those questions. Because they're married, you know? And so I think that like, when we think about the Church as you know, the body of Christ, when we think about the Church as like, the hands and feet of Jesus and you know, as this kind of incarnational experience of like you know, we have the Holy Spirit in us and just the different ways that manifests. I think that single people kind of present ourselves to church culture and say: Okay, the gospel. We believe in the gospel. The gospel is good news. But there's also this other narrative that you're saying is good news, but how is that good news for me? In the life that I am living right now, here in front of you, and it's a question that kind of demands to be answered. And I think it's an uncomfortable one and it's very challenging in a lot of ways and I think a lot of churches are not necessarily prepared to answer the question. But I think it's an important question. Because ultimately, you know if our foundation is this idea of a self-sufficient nuclear family unit, that's a pretty shoddy foundation. A "sandy foundation" if you will.

Katie: There you go!

MaryB.: To get biblical about it. [Katie laughs.]

Katie: Right. So how do we approach having conversations like that and challenging that status within our church or within our own communities?

MaryB.: Yeah I mean it's easy for me, because of what I do. And so all people have to do is say, "What do you do?" And I'm like, "I do this!" And then it very naturally evolves but I think like, you know, asking asking questions I think is a really - like getting really curious and inquisitive in your relationships, and kind of starting to you know, just through the pot a little bit. I don't think there's anything wrong with stirring the pot. Like if you, like let's say you're in church on a Sunday and the pastor gives a sermon and the main illustration is about how like, I don't know, is about marriage right? Where like, "Oh we're talking about God's love and the example that I'm going to use is from my marriage or from being a parent," and you know, just a really simple thing to do could be like, "Hey you know," and this is something that I cover by the way in my Single Christian's Church Survival Guide is kind of how to walk people through different options how to have these conversations. But the just like, go up to the pastor and say "Hey I really enjoyed the sermon. You know, it was a little challenging for me to kind of wrap my head around like what you were saying because I don't have that experience of marriage or parenthood, but you know, I have experienced that same kind of thing in friendship," and you know maybe tell a story about a friendship. And say, "How would you feel about using more examples that are a little more universally relatable," or just - you know. Like it can be as simple as that. It doesn't need to be like, antagonistic or anything like that. And it doesn't mean like, they're going to listen to you or they're going to do anything about it, but I think that you know, when we don't speak up and we keep that kind of stuff inside it can breed a lot of resentment that is not healthy for us or for our communities. And I think like, it really benefits the community to cultivate relationships where those kinds of conversations happen within the Body and especially with you know, people who are in leadership. Which is its own tricky thing for single women to kind of try to navigate. But that's its own hill of beans, as it were.

Katie: Yeah, yeah. That's another nice little mess that we've got.

MaryB.: [MaryB. speaks sarcastically.] Thanks purity culture.

Katie: [Katei speaks the next sentence sarcastically.] Yeah, appreciate you so much. [Katie and MaryB. laugh.] Yeah. How can we as single, as marrieds, as churches, support the singles in our lives?

MaryB.: You know I - my advice that I usually give people who ask this question is really just to ask. [Katie and MaryB. laugh.] How can - ask the actual single people in your life, and if you don't have single people in your life, then start building relationships with single people. We are in all sorts of places, you'll find us anywhere you look! We make up a lot of the population at this point!

Katie: We do.

MaryB.: But yeah I mean the biggest thing is just have that open-ended conversation and genuinely ask. You know, for some people like, maybe it would be helpful to like invite them into your life in a really authentic and genuine way. Invite them over for family dinner or like to come over and do laundry or whatever. I live in New York and so I am forever taking people up on that

offer. If they have, if they happen to have a washer and dryer in their apartment which is very rare.

Katie: Right.

MaryB.: You know, so just any little thing like that I think. But it really is going to depend on the single people in your life and you know, just to like open the door and to keep opening the door. Because I think some single people might not know what to do with that, or have a hard time trusting that. And so another piece of advice that I like to give is for, for people to focus more on like really small sustainable things versus big grand things that are going to require a lot of planning.

Katie: Yeah.

MaryB.: So think about think about, think about what you're already doing and where your lives maybe intersect with single people. You know, who are the people that are already there? How can you maybe just make a small adjustment that's going to incorporate single people into your life in a little bit of a different way or a more intentional way. Because I think that it can be a little bit intimidating because you know everyone's busy it can be a little bit intimidating to think about adding on a whole other thing, or like trying to find childcare so you can go out and get drinks with someone or go get a cup of coffee with someone. You know, so really think about these small, sustainable, regular things. And honestly in my experience, those are the kinds of things that foster like real deep relationship, is in those like, allowing for the consistency because consistency is a really big thing for single people that we don't necessarily get a lot. So if you can be that sort of committed, consistent presence then that's going to be a really huge thing I would say generally, across the board.

Katie: Yeah. And I like your point too, that a lot if it can be what you're already naturally doing. Like think about where you are, where you're encountering people, but then think about what your family does. And I think of like, families who've invited me to go see movies with them. They're already going to the movie, they just bought one more ticket for me or I bought my own ticket! Like that's fine too. I'm just going with them. Or like, they always have Sunday dinner and so what's more seat at the table on Sunday dinner, or holidays! You know, I don't live near my family. I'm not going to go home every Thanksgiving, every Easter, whatever. Having a place to spend 4th of July makes a difference, otherwise I'm just sitting at my house going, "Hmm, I wonder if I can see the fireworks from here."

MaryB.: Yeah, yeah for sure. I would say especially in areas of the country/world that are so like, insular and family-centric. The nice thing about being in New York is that it is a lot more - like singleness is just so much more generalized speaking, which has been a huge, huge gift for me in ways that I didn't even realize. Like there's just so much that I was internalizing living in the Southeastern U.S., that I did not realize until I was in a fundamentally different environment. And you know, the church - churches still have their things, but I would say within church environments there - it is like, at least somewhat more normalized to be single later in life. There's still the same issues but you at least encounter more single people. So yeah I would say depending on where you are in the country or in the world even, that you know, like single people are going to be more and more isolated I would say, like the more kind of suburban your

environment is, the more kind of rural your environment is. That you know, just for married people to be like extra conscious of that as well. Like it's really really easy to kind of be super insular in our perceptions and in how we're thinking about our communities and who we interact with. But yeah so that's just something to be aware of.

Katie: That's so good. And your environment does make such a huge difference! What advice do you have for those of us who don't necessarily feel like we fit where we are, be it because we're single or be it because we feel like an outsider in some other way?

MaryB.: You know, I think that feeling like you don't fit or belong - I guess it would depend on the context, I would assume for single people it's a - we experience it on a cultural level, a communal level, and then like, a one-to-one relation level, and even within ourselves. There's this specific kind of loneliness that we can feel and experience from that feeling of "unsuitable" if you will. [Katie and MaryB. laugh.] Just to name-drop there.

Katie: There you go!

MaryB.: Hashtag #Branding! [MaryB. and Katie laugh.] But no, I think that, you know for me a lot of it started with surrounding myself and really being conscious of who I was letting into my life. And who was getting into my life, and really finding a group and a support system that was really for me, and that I was really for. That was part of it. I mean therapy was a huge part of it, and recognizing and starting to be a little more mindful of it of and reframing like, where those narratives live inside of me and what kinds of decisions they cause me to make. So like, when I'm making decisions out of shame and fear versus out of freedom and love and generosity and all that jazz. You know, I think like, there's only so much that we can control and I think I've been really privileged to be part of - I mean, God's been super faithful in the kinds of people that He's brought into my life and the people He's surrounded me with. But also like, I think that we have a great deal of agency when it comes to who we spend our time with. And if you're part a community that, you know, it's a struggle to feel like you fit - there's... I would say it's worth, at the very least, finding people who you can talk to about it. And being honest about it because at least for me, a lot of the time you know I would be met with grace and compassion. I would also be met with, "Me too! I feel that way too!" And I think there's a great deal of connection that we can build if we kind of have the courage to go first sometimes, and be the one to own it and say, "Hey I feel kind of lonely in this community sometimes." Or I think that if the people in our lives are quality people, then they will come to support us and want us to feel loved and included. And I think that we get to reciprocate that as well and invite people to be honest with us in a way that ultimately connects us and bonds us.

Katie: Yeah that's good and it's important. I mean, no one wants to be the first person to be vulnerable but a lot of times it takes the first person and then the second person and then by the third person, it's a whole lot easier.

MaryB.: Yeah.

Katie: So tell us a little bit about the wedding guide. Why is it even necessary? [Katie and MaryB. laugh.]

MaryB.: The wedding guide - you know this is one of those like, "I'll go first," moments. You know, I as a single person, I have all sorts of feelings about going to a wedding. A lot of them are positive, very fun, I love a wedding. I love dancing like an idiot on the dance floor. I am not good but I am very enthusiastic and very committed. [Katie laughs.] There's so much to love about it, but also for single people it brings up a lot of complicated feelings and when everyone around you is ostensibly having a great time and partying and blah blah blah, you can feel kind of like a wet blanket or like, "Am I - like, why? Is it - I'm not supposed to feel weird about this!" Like, "I feel like I'm not supposed to have these feelings!" So I had one of those moments at a friend's wedding and you know just fears about like, "How is this going to change the relationship?" And you know you even like narratives that I would notice in myself that would pop up that would be triggered at weddings of like, "I am alone and I will always be alone," And it gets very dark and depressing and you know I like - it was late at night, I was having horrible acid reflux - which did not help anything - I couldn't sleep, I was emotional, I was having such bad anxiety. And so I just like texted a couple of single friends and I was like, "Hey this is what I'm feeling. Have you ever felt this way at a wedding?" And they were like, "Yeah pretty much every time." Both of them were like immediately like, "Yes!"

Katie: Yes.

MaryB.: And I was like, "What do you do?" And they didn't necessarily have - I think one of them was like, "I usually get drunk and lock myself in the bathroom and cry."

Katie: Options.

MaryB.: And I was like, "Okay that's a choice." You know, and the other one was like, "Do you want to talk?" Blah blah blah. And I was like "No, I think I'm just going to take a shower and do some like, some meditation or whatever." I made it through the night, it was fine. But it was one of those little moments where I was like, "Oh why am I so like - why do I just assume that I'm the only person who feels this? Or experiences this?" When like - I think that's just so, it's so isolating! And like, often times it's so not true. So I, you know, created this guide out of a - like anything I create, it's out of what I have found to be helpful for myself in areas where I have seen a need. And so like this was a thing that I was like, "If this is such a normal experience why are people not talking about this? Why are we not owning it?" You know, there are like random blogs here and there that are like "Five tips for surviving a wedding when you're single" and they all had a lot of similar advice. And I, as an aggressively Type A Person wanted something a little more methodical, and so I created it and just thought about like, "Hey, what are things that I have done before a wedding that have really helped set me up well? What are ways that I have owned my feelings? What are like logistical things that I need to think about? Like, where do I need to get myself permission to say no?"

Katie: Yeah.

MaryB.: So there's all sorts of different - it walks through like, a few different things that you'll probably encounter before, during, and after. And I try to make it super practical and super fun and you know, because I think resources for singles sometimes can get a little mopey. So I always try to make everything that I create for singles fun, while also being full of depth and meaning and all of that jazz. But yeah!

Katie: That's what I wrote down in my own note, I was like "It was honest and practical without being bitter."

MaryB.: Yay! That's good, that's what we aspire to.

Katie: Yeah, yeah. Sorry I cut you off.

MaryB.: Oh no, totally fine. I was rambling so that's good that you cut me off. [MaryB. and Katie laugh.] It's like [MaryB. Starts singing.] "How do I land the plane?" [Katie and MaryB. laugh.]

Katie: Where can we get the wedding guide?

MaryB.: Sorry it's eight o'clock so my brain is like, "You should not be talking still."

Katie: That's okay, we're here for it.

MaryB.: What did you just ask me? Where people can get it?

Katie: Where can we get the wedding guide?

MaryB.: It's exclusively available in my shop on my website MaryBSafrit.com and then you click on shop or just go to MaryBSafrit.com/shop and *We Don't Want the Bouquet* is a digital download. You can get it right there for \$6.99. And it'll go right to your inbox, and you can start reading it right then.

Katie: Love it.

MaryB.: It's about fifty pages, there's some reflection questions at the end of each chapter, but it should be a pretty quick read as well.

Katie: I love the title by the way, because I am conveniently always in the bathroom during the bouquet toss. [MaryB. laughs.] What a coincidence!

MaryB.: We love that boundary! We love it. That is actually one of the things that I suggest in the book is like, maybe you decide that that is whatever traditional thing that you hate is a great time for you to use the restroom.

Katie: Uhhuh. Every time, every time. One time I almost panicked because the reception only had one entrance and I happened to be on the opposite side of the dance floor from the entrance and I thought, "Oh no, it's about to be Bouquet Toss time, I am stuck on the wrong side, I cannot get to the exit. Like what am I going to do? Well thankfully there was A) a photo booth right there and I thought "I'm just going to dive into the photo booth and photo bomb whoever's in there," and then B) it was like an old barn and there was an area where you could go upstairs and I thought, "Oh I'm going to disappear upstairs."

MaryB.: Into the hayloft, yeah.

Katie: Into the hayloft! That's going to be my only option, that's where I was going. And thankfully I was with some people who knew that was the game plan, so they were helping me scope out exits too.

MaryB.: Oh I love that. Yes, get some conspirators on your side!

Katie: Right! So if we're not single, is it worth still exploring the wedding guide or is it exclusively for singles?

MaryB.: You know, I will never say no to anybody's seven dollars. [MaryB. And Katie laugh.] I did create it specifically for singles, but I think it's - I'm always a big fan of anything that's going to build people's mindfulness of what the single experience is like. And you know, if you're getting married or if you are married and a person who attends weddings, it might make you, help you be a little more mindful of what your single friends might be going through. You know, you can always gift it to a friend, you can always send the link to your single friends and say,

“Hey I heard this really cool gal on a podcast, you should buy this book.” You know, those are all options as well.

Katie: They're definitely options. And I love the brides and the grooms too - we won't exclude the grooms – who are aware of their single friends and kind of, not that they “plan their wedding around us” that sounds arrogant and ridiculous. But they're conscious of us in planning their wedding. Like I think of one woman that, she realized like, “Katie you're not going to know anybody at this wedding and no offense, it's unlikely you're going to be bringing a plus one. So why don't you think of some mutual friends that we have and I will add them to the invitation list so you have somebody to talk to.”

MaryB.: I love that

Katie: Right?! In addition to me bringing whatever friend I wanted as a plus one.

MaryB.: Oh my gosh.

Katie: I was like, “Oh my gosh, you are just blessing me so hard.”

MaryB.: I love it.

Katie: What have I not asked you that you want to chat about?

MaryB.: That's a good question. No, I will say that I also have - I love, I love making resources for single people and I do have a free resource as well that if you - it's called My Friend's Wedding, and that is specific to the experience of you know, processing feelings that come up when you're about to go to a close friend's wedding, or a friend's wedding. And that's more like, it's a little less practical it's just journal prompts you know that kind of walk you through some feelings. So that is a free resource that is available on my website, it's on the homepage if you scroll down or it's also available at MaryBSafrit.com/links. I just want to make sure singles are super equipped, super you know like, I just I'm such a fan of singles and I just feel like there's like not always a ton of moments where we feel like people are thinking about us and considering us specifically in a really intentional, holistic, dignified way. And so I really am super passionate about creating stuff that gives - that isn't just stuff that's practical and fun yes, but also stuff that helps single people feel that, have that felt-experience of feeling specifically cared for. So yeah that's what I'll say.

Katie: That's awesome. I haven't checked that one out, so I'll have to check that out after we're done.

MaryB.: Yeah.

Katie: Where can we find you online?

MaryB.: I am on Tiktok and Instagram. Primarily on Instagram but I am also on Tiktok at [@MaryB.Safrit](https://www.tiktok.com/@MaryB.Safrit). The dot is important! Yeah that's where - I technically have a Twitter, that's [@MaryBSafrit](https://twitter.com/MaryBSafrit) but I do not tweet because I find Twitter to be terrifying.

Katie: Yeah about that. Twitter.

MaryB.: I actively avoid it. [MaryB. laughs.]

Katie: Same. I don't even have the app on my phone anymore at this point.

MaryB.: I do mostly hang out, I do make fun of videos and stuff on Tiktok and Instagram. Oh you can also follow my podcast.

Katie: Yeah!

MaryB.: On Instagram at @UnsuitablePodcast and you can listen to my podcast wherever you get podcasts. This - we are finishing up, we have a few more episodes I guess in this season. Season Nine we're talking about purity culture, sexuality, and singleness and it has been just so freaking dynamite. As I'm recording this, we just released an episode with Sam Allberry about reimagining intimacy. We've heard from all sorts of people from all sorts of experiences and perspectives, all single people, and it's just been a really dynamite season.

Katie: That's awesome. That's very cool. Would you be willing to pray for us?

MaryB.: Sure! Yeah, let's do it!

Katie: Cool.

MaryB.: Hey Jesus. Thank You so much for this conversation, thank You for - thank You for being single. Thank you for like, walking around on this Earth incarnating as a single dude in a time when that would have probably been real weird. Just God - Jesus you're such a good companion for us in that way, in so many ways, but for single people especially God, Jesus that's just just so freaking cool. And I'm such a fan of that. Jesus I just want to pray for anyone who's listening to this who feels unsuitable, who feels out of place, who feels like they're not seen in their church. God would You just, yeah, would You just be with them? Would You show them the places in their lives where there are people who care about them? Would You just inspire people to send them an unprompted text, but also God, would You just give them the courage to ask and to reach out and to speak up, God, because they are so valuable and so worthy and so wonderful. God, and You have created them specifically and intentionally, and you've placed them where they are specifically and intentionally. God and You are so good and You are so faithful. God and I just pray that You would, that yeah - You would activate your Spirit inside of them and just give them a vision for, for who You've created them to be and Your deep, deep, deep love for them as they are, where they are. And I pray that You would surround them with people who affirm that and see them as You see them. God we are so grateful for the weird and messy Body that You have given us to be a part of. God, we pray that - we know that You love the church even more than we do, and that You are doing Your thing and we are so grateful that we get to be a part of it God, and we are so grateful that it's not up to us to make -

Katie: Yeah.

MaryB.: -to do the big things in the church, but we are so grateful that You've created humans in a way that we get to be part of it and we have so much agency in what a culture is like. And so God I just pray for renewal and redemption God, and I pray for a church that is more equitable, more loving, more compassionate, more gracious, and more kind to everyone. God we love You so much, and ask all of this in Jesus' name amen.

Katie: Amen. Thank you.

MaryB.: Thank you.

Katie: I love getting to hear people pray because I love like - first of all, how their personality comes out but also how their relationship with God comes out. You get to see a different part of their heart when they're talking to Him versus talking to me.

MaryB.: I love that.

Katie: So thank you for sharing that with us

MaryB.: Of course.

Katie: One of the things that we always like to ask here on the show, because we are always learning something: what is something you have learned recently?

MaryB.: Oh my goodness, what am I not learning? There's so much! There's literally so much. Like today I was reading a fantastic book called The Meaning of Singleness called Dani Treweek. I don't know if I'm saying her name right. It's - I think. it's coming out in May, I don't know how I got the copy of it when I did. Or maybe it's already out. Anyways I don't know. I have been reading that, it is just like - it's the book on singleness that we have needed for a very long time. It's academic so it's a little bit - the language is academic but like man, so freaking goods. She pinpoints so many of these narratives in such a like, has really done her homework. There's historical perspectives, there's social perspectives, so I've been learning a lot and through that. But on a more personal level, I've been learning to love myself. And just really been stepping into that recently and like not being ashamed of myself. I've been like feeling more confident, learning to like - I don't know. Like yeah, learning to love myself and realizing like "Hey God did a good job when He made me. And I'm kind of all that and a bag of chips!" [Katie laughs.] So that's pretty great. It's been a really liberating thing to step into that and it's been really fun to walk around in the world with that energy in my friendships, in my professional life, and my dating life, in all of the things. I have to give credit to Jesus of course, but also to my amazing therapist who has been instrumental in all of that. So.

Katie: That's awesome and that's super important. I think it's easy to get hard on ourselves because we're with ourselves all day long and sometimes I just want to break for myself. But to realize like "No, the Lord did a good job when He created me. I am His masterpiece too."

MaryB.: Yeah.

Katie: That's awesome.

MaryB.: Thanks.

Katie: MaryB., thanks so much for your time today, for sharing your perspective, for educating us a little bit, for writing a wedding guide! I have needed one, it's great. I look forward to like, going through the actual worksheet of it next time I get a wedding invitation, which could be any day since it's wedding season.

MaryB.: It's imminent, it's imminent

Katie: It's coming, I'm sure it's in the mail right now. It's probably in the mailbox waiting for me.
[MaryB. and Katie laugh.] So thank you so much!

MaryB.: Oh my gosh, thanks for having me this is a blast.

[Theme music: upbeat electronica plays in the background as Katie speaks.]

Katie: As always, a big thanks for listening. Be sure to check out MaryB.'s new resource We Don't Want the Bouquet. You can connect with her on Instagram at @MaryB.Safrit and you can connect with her through the Unsuitable Podcast. I'd love to connect with you on Instagram as well, I'm at @KatieAxelson. If you enjoyed the show, be sure to leave a review. That's how others know that you enjoyed the show and how guests know that their stories are safe here. If you're looking for more maybe check out Episode {72} with Laura Quam where she talks about becoming a foster mother as a single woman. Until next time my friend, know that you are valuable, know that you are seen, know that you are heard, and know that your story matters. And we'll see you again in two weeks. Bye.

[Katie stops speaking and the theme music: upbeat electronica ends.]