



EXCERPT



Single, Just Because A Pilgrimage into Holy Aloneness

October 18, 2022 | \$18, 208 pages, paperback | 978-1-5140-0478-4

Pilgrim and podcaster Bridget Gee shares her singular journey of vibrant life in the kingdom of God. Her travels have become a personal pilgrimage of walking with God and others, experiencing spiritual formation in the ups and downs of literal mountains and valleys. She explores her longings and hopes in vulnerable narratives, navigating issues of identity, community, mental health, dating, sexuality, and more.

Wholly Known, Seen, and Loved

This isn't the book you're expecting, I promise you that now. Rather than offer you a self-help guide or a comprehensive theology of singleness, I offer you my story.

I'm inviting you on a "pilgrimage into holy aloneness." In recent years, pilgrimage has become a wonderful tool of spiritual formation for me. It's helped me look at my life differently and practice a deeper and more profound faith in God. I'll be framing the way I talk about singleness using pilgrimage throughout this book. You may be more familiar with your own singleness than you are pilgrimage, and that's okay. I am too.

Let's start by getting on the same page about it. My working definition of pilgrimage is *a journey to a destination, usually in the footsteps of others, to return to a place you belong.*

With singleness, I don't believe the destination is marriage, contrary to everything we've been told in and outside of the church. I think the journey of singleness is deeper into God's presence, or what I like to call "holy aloneness." The place where you are wholly known, wholly seen, and wholly loved by your Creator. That's the place we all belong.

Pilgrimage happens in so many of our favorite movies and stories. *The Odyssey*, *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Wizard of Oz*, and all over the Bible, just to name a few.

Consider one of the most famous pilgrimages: Moses and the Israelites' escape from Egypt and forty years of wandering in the desert. Early on in their journey, Moses has a holy moment alone with God in the middle of the mountains.

"And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, 'The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.'" (Exodus 34:6 NIV)

This claim God makes about his character is repeated throughout the Bible—in the Psalms, Joel, and Jonah for example. For generations the Israelites remember who God showed himself to be on that original pilgrimage into the Promised Land. God proved his character over and over, in all the highs and lows with his people. He never changed.

In my own story, my own pilgrimage into holy aloneness, God has shown himself to be merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love for me too. At times he has had to invite me up onto a mountain alone to do it. The great thing about a pilgrimage into holy aloneness is that God doesn't make us go alone. He sends us with himself, his promise to walk with us, with the truth that he walked this life before us.

These truths might be the start and finish of where my story and your story overlap. God is the same and has the same promises and invitations into his presence for us both. After that, it's likely that our pilgrimages look wildly different. Nonetheless, we are pilgrims together. I want to make space for you, especially if your singleness has been different than mine.



Tara Burns, print and online publicity
800.843.4587 ext. 4059 or tburns@ivpress.com

Krista Clayton, author interviews
800.843.4587 ext. 4013 or kclayton@ivpress.com



ivpress.com/media



Single, Just Because A Pilgrimage into Holy Aloneness

October 18, 2022 | \$18, 208 pages, paperback | 978-1-5140-0478-4

Bridget Gee is the spiritual formation coordinator for InterVarsity's Study Abroad programs, where she directs European pilgrimages for students, staff, and partners to experience contemplative and historic followings of Jesus. She is the host of *Soladarity: The Singleness Podcast* and lives in Tucson, Arizona.

You should know some things about me before we begin.

My singleness happens to be in a very Western, evangelical, heteronormative context. I am an upper-middle class, White, thirty-something-year-old, cisgender, straight woman. I've never been married or engaged, and, for the cherry on top of my singleness sundae, I'm a virgin too. I like to joke that I'm a dime a dozen, in that there are plenty of women *just* like me. But it's true—they are funny, smart, educated, well-resourced, think similar things, live similar lives. I check all the boxes that my evangelical bubble wants me to, but I've grown weary of this bubble. I've needed to say yes to a pilgrimage beyond my context.

But I know there are so many of you out there, my fellow pilgrims, who have different stories and backgrounds. I want to honor that. Let the parts of my story that relate to you speak to your life and heart, and ditch the rest. It's okay. Our journeys are different. My life is not prescriptive.

If your singleness is much younger, praise God. If yours is singleness after loss, death, or divorce, you are welcome and loved here. If your singleness doesn't include virginity, know that it's not less valid. Perhaps your singleness is much older than mine. God bless you.

I hope that some of your singleness out there is male singleness and BIPOC singleness and all types of queer singleness. And I hope my story is a blessing to you too. I hope some parts resonate deeply.

—adapted from the Introduction, "An Invitation into Pilgrimage"



Tara Burns, print and online publicity
800.843.4587 ext. 4059 or tburns@ivpress.com

Krista Clayton, author interviews
800.843.4587 ext. 4013 or kclayton@ivpress.com