

## Chapter One

# Local Director

Today, people question the need for Single Adult Ministries. Considered by some as a passing fad of the 1970s and 1980s, churches tend to overlook the single adult population. Admittedly, there will be a larger number of single adults in metropolitan areas; however, single adults will be found in all locations, particularly in North America.

Single adults comprise over 40 percent of the adult population 18 years of age and older. They also account for over 50 percent of the unchurched population. This group includes those who are divorced, never-married, and widowed. There is a growing group of single parents where the parent has never married. An increasing number of children are being placed with their fathers as the primary caregiver. The church must recognize the ministry needed by these groups of people and accept the opportunities they offer.

Divorce is a reality that affects families within the church and community. Death comes each day—often without time to prepare. In these times of crises, the church must be ready to minister. We minister better with a plan prepared before these crises occur. Many people are willing to minister to those in need, but feel inadequate. The needs for compassion, support, love, and a listening ear are always there. We need to realize these needs continue weeks and months after the actual crisis. The need for ministry is often long-term.

Kay Collier-Slone in *Single in the Church*, states there is a great need for the church at large to recognize that:

- Singleness is not a victim state.
- Singleness is not necessarily a temporary state.
- Singleness is not a lesser state.
- Singleness is not a threatening state.
- Singleness is a growing state.
- Singleness is not going away.
- Single adults go wherever they find a religious body which recognizes their needs—even if they have to go outside their own denomination.<sup>1</sup>

A quick look at the reference information and you recognize the above as a dated statement. Yet, its message continues to apply to single

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adults today. Remember that single adults account for over 50 percent of the unchurched population. With this statistic in mind, one of the responsibilities of Single Adult Ministries is to educate the church regarding the issues, concerns, and needs of single adults. For many church leaders, singleness is not part of their experiences. Therefore, we, as Single Adult Ministries leaders, must educate them. One means of accomplishing this goal is to encourage single adults to form personal friendships with senior pastors and church leaders. Growing friendships will result in understanding better each other's perspective.

### **Single Adult Ministries Philosophy**

We believe that single adults are important in God's eyes and are vital in His kingdom. We believe that singleness is a viable lifestyle and that God provides grace for living life as a Christian single adult.

### **Single Adult Ministries Purpose**

The purpose of Single Adult Ministries is to:

- Minister to the unique needs of single adults through specific ministries such as divorce recovery, grief recovery, and single-parent family ministries.
- Equip single adults with the skills for living productive lives.
- Assist single adults during times of crises.
- Encourage ministry to others through involvement in the local congregation, service projects to the community, and mission trips.
- Integrate single adults into the total church program by using their gifts, talents, and abilities.

### **Single Adult Ministries Mission**

The mission of Single Adult Ministries is to encourage Christians, to prepare them to share the good news of the Gospel, and to introduce others to Jesus Christ.

### **Single Adult Ministries Core Values**

1. Salvation: Developing and maintaining an ever-growing relationship with Jesus Christ
  2. Ministry: Using spiritual gifts through ministry
  3. Growth: Fostering a community that facilitates spiritual formation
  4. Relationships: Developing relationships with members of the church congregation
  5. Christian Living: Encouraging single adults as they live the Christian single adult lifestyle
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6. Education: Educating the church community regarding the Christian single adult lifestyle

## Single Adult Ministries Logo

One—a word that describes single adults. One person to make the decisions. One person to complete the household chores. One person to plan for the future. One is a whole number and it is more than half of two.

One by one single adults come to our churches and ministries seeking to find acceptance, to learn more about Jesus, the single adult Leader of Christianity, to recover from divorce or the death of a



spouse, and to form a network of friends. One by one, but together, these individuals have many gifts, talents, and abilities waiting to be used by the church. Together, they realize that they share many life experiences and that there's comfort, encouragement, and hope.

Single adults also seek incorporation into the local community of believers. Yet specific ministries and addressing unique single adult issues require time designed for single adults. These gatherings should not preclude single adults from experiencing worship, fellowship, learning, and encouragement from the entire congregation.

Single adults come individually. Together they help complete the Body of Christ in local congregations around the world.

## Local Director of Single Adult Ministries Job Description

The responsibilities of the local Single Adult Ministries director are:

1. To identify the single adults of the local congregation. This includes single parents, divorced, widowed, and never-married individuals.
2. To educate the Sunday School and Discipleship Ministries International Board to the need and importance of Single Adult Ministries.
3. To serve on and be responsible to the Adult Ministries Council of the Sunday School and Discipleship Ministries International Board.
4. To report, present proposals, and request funding from the Adult Ministries Council.
5. To determine, by using surveys, conversations, and other forms of input, the needs of the single adults in the local church.

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6. To plan programs to meet the spiritual and social needs of single adults.
7. To form committees and work with the single adults in designing and implementing various programs.
8. To provide opportunities for single adults to minister to the members of the local congregation through specialized ministries and involvement in the total church program.
9. To provide opportunities for the local congregation to minister to single adults by meeting specific needs such as grief and divorce recovery, single-parenting skills, providing role models for children of single-parent homes, and meeting specific needs.
10. To establish, if possible, a library of books, tapes, magazines, and other resources to provide insights and support for successful Christian single adult living.
11. To cooperate with and promote district and general single adult activities and SoloCon.
12. To introduce non-Christian single adults to Jesus Christ.

### What Is Single Adult Ministries?

This question was asked of a group of Single Adult Ministries leaders and resulted in a lengthy discussion. The following conclusions were drawn. First, the nature of Single Adult Ministries is multi-faceted. Second, the range of individuals under the umbrella of Single Adult Ministries includes all adults, creating many challenges. And third, single adults include those who are divorced, never-married, and widowed—adding another dimension to the ministry.

SAM is ministry to all individuals without a spouse. The operative word in Single Adult Ministries is *adult*. This includes any single adult with an interest in the programs and ministry of SAM. Some are as young as eighteen, while others over eighty attend SAM events. Age is not a defining factor in SAM; interests, needs, and concerns lead people to SAM.

Single Adult Ministries will include a variety of ministries and programs. These include Divorce Recovery, Grief Recovery, Single-parent Family Ministries, and Remarriage Preparations to name a few. Stepfamilies are an emerging area of ministry as these families seek to form a healthy family unit that doesn't fit the traditional family models.

### Insights into Single Adult Ministries

Single Adult Ministries leaders, magazine articles, and books contain much information on the way people within the church view single adults.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Single adults are the church. The growth rate for the single adult population continues. Over 40 percent of the adult population are single adults. This includes individuals over 18 years of age that are divorced, never-married, or widowed. A church on the growing-edge includes single adults in its ministry. Single adults comprise over 50 percent of the unchurched population.
  2. Single adults may threaten many people in the church. The divorced and widowed individuals often feel this most keenly. They find their friends and acquaintances don't know how to treat them when they no longer are part of a couple. Never-married individuals often feel they are not treated as peers.
  3. Single Adult Ministries is bigger than a program for single adults. Single Adult Ministries is an outreach arm of the church. Divorce and grief recovery programs often bring community members to the church in times of crises. As needs are met, love and compassion expressed, and acceptance given, many join the mainstream of the congregation. Often this leads to a personal relationship with Jesus and involvement in other ministries and programs.
  4. One umbrella program will not work for all Single Adult Ministries. Each congregation brings its unique group of single adults. The age range of Single Adult Ministries often determines the direction of the program. When implementing ideas from other Single Adult Ministries, be sure to adapt them to your congregation.
  5. Single Adult Ministries is part of Adult Ministries, with adult as the operative word. In the past, some viewed single adults as oversized teenagers. This is based on memories or media images of singleness that many married people hold. Their recollections of singleness are based in pre-marriage years when they were young and perhaps immature.
  6. Transition is a fact of life in Single Adult Ministries. This is partly because divorce and death create transitions and partly because businesses find that moving some single people is cheaper and often less disruptive than moving families. Some transitions come naturally to all adults—aging, job changes, empty nest syndrome, financial changes, etc.
  7. Single Adult Ministries can be a renewing force within your congregation. Many people find single adults very open to learning about God. Perhaps it reflects their disappointments with other means of meeting needs. Some retreat and revival speakers find single adults very receptive to God's message and allowing Him
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to work in and through their lives. Single adults may lead the church in the next great revival.

### How to Begin Single Adult Ministries in Your Congregation

There are three stages of Single Adult Ministries. It is important to take time to complete each stage and work through all three. Just like a church plant, there is much work that is done behind the scenes for months, even as long as a year, before the first organized event occurs.

The first stage is *Informal*. In this stage, there is little organization, most probably none, with many gatherings seeming to just happen as single adults find themselves together. This stage may begin with one person or a small group attempting to identify and name single adults in the congregation and forming a network.

The second stage is *Occasional*. Some organization will develop as a calendar may be planned with regular events such as lunch together on specific Sundays of each month, attending church functions as a group, or gathering for Bible studies. During this stage, you will observe a leadership group forming and the development of core meetings.

The final stage is *Structured*. This includes establishing a council or committee to develop and implement an organized Single Adult Ministries. Included at the end of this chapter are worksheets to aid you. They include a tool to determine how ready your congregation is to begin Single Adult Ministries, a sheet for recording the results of brainstorming sessions, and a checklist for events.

The Director of Adult Ministries is to nominate the Director of Single Adult Ministries with the approval of the Pastor and the Sunday School Superintendent. The director will be elected by the Sunday School and Discipleship Ministries International Board and serve on the Adult Ministries Council.

In the *informal stage*, begin to identify the single adults in your church. Be sure the congregation understands that single adults include the divorced and widowed as well as never-married persons. Ask congregation members to provide names of single adults that do not attend church. Check the class rolls of the children's department for single parents. These are two excellent sources of potential members.

As the ministry moves to the *occasional stage*, plan an organizational meeting. You will need to have done background work first. See "Does Our Church Need a Single Adult Ministries?" at the end of this chapter.

Survey the single adults to identify needs, interests, best times to

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meet, etc. Depending on the size of the church, you may wish to invite a select group to serve as a committee. Include persons to represent the divorced, never-married, widowed, and single parent. Whenever possible, select people that meet more than one requirement. Attempt to include individuals from varying age groups.

At the beginning of the *structured stage*, continue meeting with the committee established during the “occasional stage.” See “Leadership Team Brainstorming Session” at the end of this chapter. Take a survey of the single adults in the congregation. Prior to the meeting, tally the results of the survey and have a copy for each person present. (See the section entitled “We Want to Know You Better” and “Interest Survey.”) Appoint a secretary to record ideas. Make people feel comfortable in brainstorming; accept all ideas then choose the ones most adaptable to your needs. Select people to help start the ministry. You may be more successful if you ask for a specific amount of time, such as three months or six months. See the section entitled “Brainstorming Session Results.”

Plan the first meeting (see “Entry Event Worksheet” and “Quality Program Checklist”). Make it appealing. You might show a film, have a speaker, a dinner, etc. Include a get acquainted activity and allow time for socializing. Enlist a welcoming committee that helps people feel comfortable. Watch for the person who tends to be a loner.

Within a few days of the initial meeting, meet with the committee or council to evaluate the program. Determine the things that worked well and what needs to be done to improve others. If a program does not work, use it as a learning experience and move on.

While it is necessary to meet to address the unique needs and concerns of single adults, they must also be involved in the total church program. Single adults must feel part of the total church congregation and family. Watch the church’s programming, making sure that single adults are included in all aspects. You may need to talk with church leaders if single adults express concerns about some programs. Education is part of your role. Remember that education may include informing single adults regarding the purpose of some programs and ministries as well as educating church and ministry leaders about single adult concerns.

Occasionally, you may wish to include some married couples in your activities. This will help single adults to become acquainted with them as well as providing role models for the single-parent children.

Encourage single adults and couples to exchange baby-sitting. This would include those without children, single parents, and couples. The goal would be to provide baby-sitters with minimal expense to allow parents to participate in activities without the children.

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### A Single Adult Ministries Council

Depending on the size of the single adult group, you may want to establish a single adult council. Most Single Adult Ministries experts recommend that this group be selected with definite reasons for each person. If the meeting is open to anyone, be sure you personally invite those you want involved. See “Does Our Church Need a Single Adult Ministry?” and “Leadership Team Brainstorming Session.” Refer to “What to Say to a Potential Volunteer” for help as you talk with the people you want on the leadership team.

Specify the time involvement (two or three meetings of 90 minutes) and purpose (to dream and formulate the basis for your Single Adult Ministries.)

Purpose:	To provide more single adult leadership, assistance in planning and administration, representation of various single adult groups, and ownership in the program.
Organization:	Determine the most effective means of representation. Include the divorced, never-married, widowed, and single parent. Be sure all age groups are represented. Determine the method of election or selection and length of office (one year, two years, and number of consecutive terms).

The council shoulders the responsibility for the preparation, promotion, and administration of the programs. Members may chair various committees or be responsible for a committee’s work. Remember you are working with adults. The more ownership they feel for the ministry, the more effective it will be. Give the council the authority to make the dreams become reality. Single Adult Ministries is ministry **with** single adults—not **for** or **to** them.

Plan the terms of office to allow the turnover to be no more than half. This provides experienced leadership while others are learning.

### Single Adult Ministries Treasurer

Working with the local director of Single Adult Ministries, the treasurer should prepare an annual budget. The budget should project the income and expenditures for the fiscal year. The fiscal year for Single Adult Ministries should be the same as that of the local church. The budget should also include funds provided through the local church’s operating budget.

Since Single Adult Ministries is an entity of the local congregation,

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Single Adult Ministries should follow procedures established for other entities of the church such as Nazarene Youth International, Nazarene Missions International, and others that maintain financial records. The responsibility of the Single Adult Ministries treasurer is to maintain careful accounting of all money received and disbursed.

Monies received through Single Adult Ministries should be funneled through the church treasurer. The responsibility of the treasurer of Single Adult Ministries is to maintain careful accounting of all monies received and disbursed. Should the records of the Single Adult Ministries and church treasurer be in disagreement, these individuals shall work together to identify and correct discrepancies. In instances where Single Adult Ministries has a separate checking account, the treasurer shall prepare a monthly accounting of monies received and disbursed. A copy shall be submitted to the church treasurer, Adult Ministries director, Sunday School superintendent, and pastor.

Single Adult Ministries should have reasonable reserve funds for unexpected expenditures. The amount of this reserve fund will vary with each local church. A minimum of \$100.00 is recommended. Funds in excess of this amount should be re-invested into the ministries of the local church.

### **How to Approach a Potential Volunteer<sup>3</sup>**

Many leaders shy away from inviting people to volunteer, because they are never quite sure how to make the request in the most favorable way. It's not difficult—but it does require forethought and a belief that what you're asking the volunteer to do is a worthwhile task.

*Here are some phrases that don't belong in an invitation to a potential volunteer:*

- “I know you're busy, but...”
- “Would you mind doing a little thing for our program?”
- “We're desperate for new people to help us. We really need you to say yes.”
- “Could you at all possibly do this?”
- “We can't find anybody else to do it...”

*Here are some simple, clear phrases that do belong in an invitation to a potential volunteer:*

- “We are looking for someone with real gifts in this area for this responsibility.”
  - “Do you have interests in this area?”
  - “How can we help you contribute your many talents to Single Adult
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Ministries?”

“By observing you, it seems to me you are gifted in this area...”

When issuing an invitation, never apologize. Bad example: “I can guess that you are too busy to help us, but I’d like to ask anyway...” By apologizing, you communicate that the potential volunteers have something else more important in which to invest their time, or that what you’re asking them to do is not worthwhile. Make your invitation to the volunteer positive, simple, and straightforward.

Here are three things volunteers want to know:

1. Is it meaningful? Does it fulfill God’s plan? Will I have a sense of significance?
2. Will I have authority and structure? What is the chain of command? Will I have the freedom to get things done?
3. What about training? Will someone help me learn to do what I’ve been asked to do?

Remember to care for the individuals you ask to volunteer, whether they say “yes” or “no” to your request. God’s love can reach through your willingness to listen, support, and understand those with whom you minister. Your willingness to form a relationship with the volunteers and to appreciate their work may strengthen and empower them for future service in transforming ways.

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*Single Adult Ministries Handbook for Leaders***We Want to Know You Better<sup>4</sup>****Notes**

The following will help us to know your interests. This will not obligate you in any way.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Age:             under 24             25-35             36-45  
                    46-55             56-65             66 or older

Check all that apply:

never-married    single parent       divorced  
 widowed

Time: (Check the day and time that would allow you to attend most meetings)

Monday             Tuesday             Wednesday  
 Thursday           Friday               Saturday  
 Morning             Afternoon           Evening

How could Single Adult Ministries best meet your needs? Please rank the following items according to need with 1 being top priority.

Fellowship  
 Bible Study and prayer  
 Self-improvement  
 Service opportunities

I would be willing to open my home for meetings

OR . . .

I would prefer to meet either at church or a meeting room of a restaurant.

I would like to participate in:

book reviews             Bible studies             sports  
 fellowship (how often?) \_\_\_\_\_  
 support groups             service projects

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other activities—please specify

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**Does Our Church Need a Single Adult Ministry?<sup>5</sup>****Notes**

1. What is the reason for starting Single Adult Ministries in our church?

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Who is asking for the ministry?

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2. How many single adults already attend our church? \_\_\_\_\_  
 - live in the church's neighborhood? \_\_\_\_\_  
 - in the community? \_\_\_\_\_

3. How many single adults are members of our church? \_\_\_\_\_  
 What are their approximate age groups? \_\_\_\_\_

4. What is the attitude of the senior pastor toward Single Adult Ministries?

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What is the attitude of the congregation toward single adults?

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5. Is there financial support in the church budget for Single Adult Ministries? \_\_\_\_\_

6. What resources are available in our church and community to help our Single Adult Ministry?

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### **Notes**

7. Who will be part of the leadership team to brainstorm and create Single Adult Ministries?

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8. What is our definition of Single Adult Ministries?

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**Leadership Team Brainstorming Session<sup>6</sup>****Notes**

1. Who will you invite to serve on the leadership team for Single Adult Ministries? Do these people represent a broad cross section of the single adults in the congregation and community? Do you have a reason for inviting each one?

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2. Who will facilitate the leadership team's brainstorming sessions?

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What is the proposed agenda (purpose) of the leadership team?

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3. When and where will the sessions take place?

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## **Notes**

### **Brainstorming Session Results<sup>7</sup>**

What purpose statement did the leadership team develop for Single Adult Ministries?

What two to four areas of Single Adult Ministries did the leadership team target? In what order were they prioritized?

Have you updated the senior pastor about the leadership team sessions results? What feedback did you receive?

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THE NEXT STEP:

Who will be part of the leadership core for the first event of your Single Adult Ministries?

**Notes**

**Notes****Quality Program Checklist<sup>8</sup>**

## Meeting Room or Location

- Clean and well-lit?
- Adequate number of chairs and tables?
- Easy to find?
- Adequate instructions in publicity for finding the location?
- Enough parking?
- Location clearly marked with signs?

## Greeters

- Adequate number?
- Arrive early?
- Sufficient instructions or training on how to be a greeter?
- Registration table present?
- Name tags and pens available?
- Literature about Single Adult Ministries and the church in general available?
- Newcomers not embarrassed by too much attention?

## Actual Event

- Provided what was promised in the publicity?
- Began on time?
- Ended on time?
- All program's needs (flip charts and markers, overhead projector, handouts, etc.) set-up prior to the meeting?
- Program details fulfilled?
- Child care offered safely and sufficiently?
- Refreshments plentiful and appropriate?

Other special needs or circumstances?

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Your overall rating of this event:

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What could be done to improve this event in the future?

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### Entry Event Worksheet<sup>9</sup>

Who is our target group?

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What are their needs, issues, or interests?

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Who is on the leadership team for this event?

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What are the essentials in setting up this event?

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How is this event connected to the total life of the church?

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How will we evaluate and strategize following the event?

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Special Notes:

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## All About Single Adult Ministries<sup>10</sup>

## Notes

Single Adult Ministries is a very rewarding part of our church. As we plan, organize, and develop programs, we need your ideas and concerns.

What do you see as the predominant need of single adults?

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How can the church best meet these needs?

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What kind of ministry programs would benefit you most?

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In what areas of Single Adult Ministries would you like to be more involved?

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What is a new area of ministry you would like to see Single Adult Ministries implement?

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Would you be interested in serving on the Single Adult Ministries council?

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Additional Comments:

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- 1 Kay Collier-Slone, *Single in the Church*, New York: The Alban Institute, 1992), p. 88-89.
  - 2 See “Common Myths about Single Adults” and “Realities about Single Adults” in Chapter Two.
  - 3 Adapted with permission from Sue Nilson.
  - 4 Ibid.
  - 5 Ibid.
  - 6 Ibid.
  - 7 Ibid.
  - 8 Ibid.
  - 9 Ibid.
  - 10 Ibid.
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