



I Married My Mother
by Kris Swiatocho

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Mom, Mom, can you talk a little softer? Mom, Mom . . . I am trying to watch my TV show. Mom, Mom, are all your friends hard of hearing? Can't you talk more softly? Mom, MOM, MOM, I am trying to watch my TV SHOW. CAN YOU GO SOMEWHERE ELSE TO TALK ON YOUR PHONE? Umm, please? I love you!

To say the least, she didn't move but just seemed to get louder. I was like:

Why does she seem to always get on the phone when I am watching TV? Also, why does she seem to need to yell when she talks? And while we are on this same thought, why does she start watching TV when I am on the phone? Why does she start cooking and banging pots when I am on the phone or watching TV? Why does she not consider how noisy she is and that I am not used to this noise? Why does she not consider what I have given up for her to live with me? Why? Why? OK, just breathe Kris and God will get you through it . . . again.

So Lord, is this what it is going to be like forever? Will my relationship with my mom be a constant battle of who can be noisier? Who is right and who is wrong? Of who ate the last ice cream sandwich and forgot to buy more? Who is cooking and didn't call home to say they would be late? Who likes the thermostat at 69 and who likes it at 73? What is this, Lord? It's like I am married to my mother. Ugh.

Well, if you are reading this article I am sure you can probably relate to some degree. Two years ago my dad passed away from Alzheimer's and cancer. Not only did my mom spend the last 10 years taking care of him, but she had also helped to take care of her own mom who lived with us when I was young (until she passed). So between two marriages, her own mother's illness, kids and grandkids, my mom is used to taking care of people. She is used to noise and activity, chaos and craziness. Since my dad's death, my mom has struggled not feeling needed, not to mention the extreme loneliness widowhood brings. Sure, she has her church and some friends but it wasn't the same.

So after a year had passed, she decided to sell her home and move two hours west to live with me in my teeny, tiny, itsy, bitsy home. Did I say my home was small? She moved in knowing that we would have to come up with Option B. My house was simply too small to accommodate both of us and an office/ministry. We started to pray and ask God for our next step. Should we build on, and if so, how big? Should she buy her own home close by? Should we buy something together? Would we be able to survive living together? I mean, I was so used to being alone and she was so used to having people around her. I was so used to privacy and well, she didn't care if someone walked in on her. I was used to eating quick sandwiches while working on the computer. She preferred sit down dinners at the table, complete with a napkin and salad fork.

As the weeks rolled on, we would start to discover just how many differences there were between us. There would also be many, many days of tension. We were both having to give up things. We were both having to compromise. Could we learn to be happily married or be on our way toward a divorce? (LOL.) Is there something more to this new situation than what appears on the surface? I mean, yes, my mom doesn't want to live alone and well, I am single so it seems to be a perfect match. But what if God has something else in store? What if my new living situation is to help me grow individually and toward Christ?

Aw, come on Lord, seriously? Can't this just be me helping my mom not be lonely? Am I really supposed to be learning something from this? Lord, I don't want to learn anymore. I just want my mom to cook and clean and be my mom but at the same time give me my space and privacy. That sounds fair to me. Right, God?



But just like being married, it isn't a one-way relationship. I am finding out that this new living arrangement is so much more than having a roommate. God is calling me to the next step.

The Next Step

So my mom and I decided to buy a new home together. A new start, a new beginning for us both. We moved about 20 miles from where I had been living. We moved closer to my mom's sister and the town we all grew up in. We found a beautiful home in a quaint neighborhood. It's more house than I thought I would ever get to live in. As each day passes, we have had to learn so much about each other and how to "get along." So what is God showing me, what is he teaching me?

1. I am the most selfish person on the planet and well, I kind of liked it.

This is bad, really bad. In the past I have had many, many roommates. I learned a long time ago that I struggled with selfishness when it came to my home and my belongings. Praise the Lord for he had taught me that if you own something that you are worried about getting broken by a roommate or guest, then sell it or surrender it and whatever may happen to it to God. The other person is way more important than the object. OK, so I thought I had a handle on this selfishness until my mother and I became roommates. I found myself falling into this little girl mode of "my time" and "my room" and "my stuff" and I did this or that. Gosh, who is this person? I thought to myself. Was I still really this selfish about my things? Did I really think it was more important to have what I wanted in the house? I was finding this selfishness was leading to quarreling. And the quarreling leading to hurt feelings. I am thankful to see how much more I needed to grow in this area. How much the things I am so selfish about are really not that important. Not more important than my mom. Not more important than the Lord.

An unfriendly person pursues selfish ends and against all sound judgment starts quarrels (Prov. 18:1).

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves (Phil. 2:3).

2. I have not honored my mother, and I should have.

Well, my mom can sometimes just aggravate the stew out of me. From silly things she says to asking me the same question again to using the wrong remote control causing the TV to get messed up, I found myself yelling at her all the time. Or worse, talking back. Talking back has been a problem I have had since I was a child. However, since I've grown up and haven't lived with her, the occasional lost temper or talking back has been sandwiched in between days and weeks of conversation where I was a wonderful and respectful child. Now that we are living together, I find the least little thing she says or does sets me off. I seemed to stay angry all the time. Angry? At what? I asked myself. Was God allowing this tension to show me something about myself? Perhaps I had not dealt with some anger issues from the past, the present. Did I need to come to my heavenly Father and be healed? Well, in the meantime of my new counseling session with Jesus, my mom made it very clear that she was my mother and deserves respect. And this respect will give me a longer life. But you know, everyone deserves respect. Thank you, Lord, for reminding me that even though we now live together, and there had to be compromise and give and take on both our ends, she is still my mother and I need to honor her.

"Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you (Ex. 20:12).

My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires (James 1:19).

3. I didn't listen well enough.



What, Mom? What did you say? Uh-huh? Uh-huh? I am listening. I am LISTENING. I AM LISTENING. What did you say again? (LOL.) My mom likes to talk. And if you know me you are laughing right now because you know I love to talk, too. So where did you think it came from? Anyway, my mom talks all the time to me and to others. I think the phone is attached to her brain. I look forward to the day they have phones in your head so she can save the time of dialing. Oh, did I mention she still can't figure out how to check her voice mail on her cell phone? But that's another story. Well, because she is always talking I sometimes don't listen because I have heard the same stories over and over. But what I am learning is that listening to my mom is not only a sign of respect, but it shows I care. I care about her and her needs. Listening to anyone is a sign of showing how much you care. Jesus loves us and cares for us, but do we do the same for him to show how we feel? Are we concerned about our present and our future? Are we concerned about who he is and what he did on the cross for us?

Stop listening to instruction, my son, and you will stray from the words of knowledge (Prov. 19:27).

Listen to your father, who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old (Prov. 23:22).

4. I lacked wisdom in what I said and when I said it.

You know, I have been a Christian a long time and have read Proverbs and the book of James many times. So much scripture about wisdom, about our mouths and how they can hurt or heal. One of my favorite sayings is: "Think about what you are going to say. Will it build a bridge or take one down?" Recently my mom reminded me that I had been blowing up the bridge between us. That I was not thinking about what I was saying and as a result, my thoughts, my feelings and my requests were not getting the responses I wanted. But instead they were causing more problems. She reminded me that each time we say things that hurt another person, it becomes a brick that after time, becomes a wall. A wall that cannot be taken down. As a result, I have been thinking more before I speak and in some cases, not speaking at all. I have seen a huge change in my mother's behavior toward me. Some battles are simply not meant to be won. Thank you, Lord, for showing me and teaching me about wisdom. I don't have to have the last words. Sometimes it's best to be right and not let anyone know.

To answer before listening— that is folly and shame (Prov. 18:13).

I instruct you in the way of wisdom and lead you along straight paths (Prov. 4:11).

With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water (James 3:9-12).

5. I felt taken advantage of, when I really just wanted my own way. I wanted to be in control.

I wish I had a dime for every time I wanted to control my circumstances. I think that with being single for so long that there are things I simply do not like about it. So if I can control things around me, I can control the pain, the joy, the fear, and so on. My control issues have been with me for years. They are better than they used to be but still haunt me. It's a daily struggle of surrendering to Christ. Even in the midst of this new life of living with my mom, there are going to be challenges. All the more reason for allowing the Lord to be in control. Thank you, Lord, that you are in control. Thank you for helping me understand that with change, things can get crazy and seem out of control. But on your Word I can stand in you and in your Truth that you have it all under control.

All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. Only let us live up to what we have already attained. Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do. For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is



destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body (Phil. 3:15-21).

6. New accountability.

Living with my mom has really brought high accountability of what I do with my time, how I spend my money and how I eat. When you live alone (even though God sees all), you simply feel you can do what you want, when you want and how you want. Living with my mom has taken me to a new level of responsibility. We are both wanting to put our funds into our home. So at Christmas we didn't buy each other anything. Also, we split food costs as well as food preparation. What a joy it's been to have someone to cook for and with. Also, my time has been especially watched. There is still so much to do in regards to our new home (not to mention my old one that I still have to put on the market to sell.). Making sure my time is a balance of work, play, rest, ministry, etc. is more important than ever. I am learning a high level of structure in my life. Thank you, Lord, for allowing me to see accountability as something you created to help me be more like you.

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds (Heb. 10:24).

"He also said to His disciples: "There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and an accusation was brought to him that this man was wasting his goods. So he called him and said to him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your stewardship..." (Luke 16:1-2).

Well, so far I think mom and I might make it. Each day that passes I am trying harder and harder to learn to simply love her the way Christ loves me. To listen more and care. To offer more help and understanding. One day I will be older and I just pray I have someone who will want to help take care of me. As the saying goes, "What comes around, goes around." Well, from the Word we know that what a man sows, he reaps. I pray, Lord, that this new life will draw me not only closer to you but bear fruit to help many more come to know you. Thank you, Jesus, for the ways you bring new eyes and new situations to bring more life to your Word and your direction. Amen.

A wicked person earns deceptive wages, but the one who sows righteousness reaps a sure reward (Prov. 11:18). Kris Swiatocho is the President and Director of TheSinglesNetwork.org Ministries and FromHisHands.com Ministries. Kris has served in ministry in various capacities for the last 25 years. An accomplished trainer and mentor, Kris has a heart to reach and grow leaders so they will in turn reach and grow others. She is the author of 3 books: *Singles and Relationships: A 31-Day Experiment*, co-authored with Dick Purnell of Single Life Resources; *From the Manger to the Cross: The Women in Jesus Life* and most recent, *Jesus, Single Like Me with Study Questions* (includes a leaders guide and conference/retreat of the same name). Kris is currently working on your 4th book: *FAQ's of Singles Ministry* coming this fall, 2012.

TheSinglesNetwork.org Ministries helps churches, pastors and single adult leaders evaluate, develop and support their single adult ministries through high-energy speaking engagements, results-oriented consulting and training and leadership development conferences and seminars. Click here to request a FREE "How to Start a Single Adult Ministry" guide.

FromHisHands.com Ministries is Kris's speaking ministry. If you've ever heard her speak, you know that Kris is the kind of speaker who keeps the crowd captivated, shares great information and motivates people to make a difference in the lives of those around them! She speaks to all church audiences on everything from "first impression" ministry to women's topics to singles and young adults. She can speak on a Sunday morning, at a woman's retreat or for a single adults conference. Bring Kris to your church today!