



Jesus, Single Like Me: Leadership by Legacy
by Kris Swiatocho

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EDITOR'S NOTE: The following article is part of the Jesus . . . Single Like Me series.

Jesus lived his life as a single adult till his death. Because he lived his life as a single adult, he understands every aspect of what you and I are experiencing today. This series examines the "singleness" of Christ in relation to our singleness with the hope you will be encouraged to walk this journey you have been given. A journey that not only leads to the cross for our salvation but to his resurrection for our future.

I've had it. I am going to quit. I am so sick of these singles. They don't commit to anything. They don't show up. They are only focused on getting married. Besides all of this, my pastor doesn't care. My church thinks singles have leprosy, and heaven forbid they ever become one. Jesus, I am so alone in leading these singles. I am so alone in ministering to them. Help! Help!

Does this sound familiar? Do you ever just want to quit leading singles? I have been leading, teaching or ministering to singles my entire adult life. And because I am single, I can be the first to admit we can be a big pain in the behind, but so can married people. So many people think that singles are the ones who don't commit or follow through or that we have relationship issues (of course that is why we are not married). But what I have learned over the years of being in ministry is there is only one thing different between marrieds and singles: marrieds tend to deal with most of their relational issues before coming to church.

I know because as the leader of first-impression ministry at my church I see couples arguing in their cars. Pointing fingers, yelling, and even crying, etc. But as soon as they open the car doors, the smiles get turned on and the skipping across the parking lot starts, as if nothing was wrong. Their marriage, their kids, and their jobs are all perfect. Now singles, due to not having this blissful marriage, tend to bring ALL their problems to church. Because church is where their family is (or should be). So the appearance is that singles have a ton of issues. That we are unhealthy, don't commit, and we are too focused on marriage (heaven forbid we want to meet a Christian mate and they are a member of our church). So as a result of this, as a singles leader, the task of ministering to them can be overwhelming. So how in the world did Jesus deal with all those disciples and their issues? How about the crowds who followed?†

Well, Jesus by example taught his disciples, and those that followed such as Paul, many things including to stay focused on the prize of bringing people to Christ. What I love about Paul is that he once persecuted Christians only to get saved and spend the rest of his life doing the opposite. Paul took his existing experience as a leader, combined with his new walk with Christ, to reach and build the church. But like most of us as leaders, Paul also ran into aggravationóChristians who were not unified, leaders who wanted to quit and ministries that were falling apart. Paul, a man who modeled his life after Christ, learned how to continue the fight. Paul, single like Jesus, learned the frustrations of dealing with people (single and married), trying to keep them encouraged, and trying to keep them unified. And you know what? It worked sometimes.

We start with Paul writing from Macedonia with the goal of encouraging the Corinthian churches, sharing what the churches there are doing . . .

And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the



privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will. So we urged Titus, since he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see that you also excel in this grace of giving. I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich. And here is my advice about what is best for you in this matter: Last year you were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so. Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means. For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have. Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality, as it is written: "He who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little did not have too little"† (2 Cor. 8:1-15).

Paul has given us a glimpse of not only how we can be encouraged in doing God's work, but also how to encourage others.

1. Keep doing the work of the Lord.

"Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity" (2 Cor. 8:1-2).

Like the Macedonians, we are in a world, a country, and maybe a ministry that is not doing so well (well, in our perception). Despite what we see that isn't working, we need to focus on what is working. God is still in control. Remember the old song, "Count Your Blessings Name Them One By One." Perhaps it is time to sit down and write out the many things your ministry is doing well. List the singles whose lives have changed. One thing I do is keep track of the e-mails and personal notes from singles who thank me for helping them. Then ever so often I go back and reflect, allowing the Lord to remind me of what I am doing right.

Also, please know that even when times seem tough and our ministries aren't growing the way we think they should be, this could be a time of testing by God as well as God wanting to make some changes. Pray and ask the Lord for direction, be ready to do what he asks (even if it means letting go or starting over).

2. Give, not knowing where it goes.

"For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints (2 Cor. 8:3-4).

As a leader you have got to have the mindset of "giving the ministry away." You cannot teach, guide, or lead singles and not expect them to leave you at some point in time. I know, I know as soon as you get your team built, some of them get married on you or just quit. Yes, it is very frustrating. However, this is what ministry is all about. I have had to learn to just pour out not worrying or knowing where it all goes. Please know the process of building leaders is a daily duty. Healthy singles will get married, healthy singles will move into other roles at the church and healthy singles will just move. You are left with those who are healthy, who choose to stay in singles ministry, while all the other singles never seem to get healthy. So if you are not continuously growing new leaders, the unhealthy singles will dominate. This type of single will drain you, break you and cause you to want to quit. One note of hope though: as you build and equip leaders for whatever area of ministry God is calling them, God is doing the same somewhere else and those singles will show up at your church. You just have to pray and have faith that God will bring them.

3. Seek God's direction first and then others.

"And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will (2 Cor. 8:5).



I can't tell you how many ministries I get hired to speak and conduct training for that have left consistent prayer out of their ministries. Sure, they pray in Sunday school or small groups for individuals, but they never seem to be collectively praying for the leaders and direction of the ministry. Paul shares here how important it is that we give ourselves to the Lord first by in own walks and then in our ministries. To be asking for God's guidance of how to lead our ministries, to do his will. Then to include others because of God's will. Including others means to train, grow, share, spend time, etc., for the purpose of reaching people for Christ. How can we possibly know what God want us to do in our ministry if we aren't praying?

4. Encourage each other.

So we urged Titus, since he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see that you also excel in this grace of giving. I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others (2 Cor. 8:6-8).

Wow, how important it is to encourage our brothers and sisters in Christ. You know how it feels to be discouraged, to want to give up and to want to quit. But how a simple thank you, we appreciate you, you helped me, etc. can change everything. Don't forget to let your leaders and team know how important they are. As you live the example, they will learn how to do it for others (and maybe toward you).

Also, as a leader myself, it is also very important that we are careful in how we share what is going on with our ministries to our pastors/staff over us. Always share what God is doing, leaving complaints for last (and only when absolutely needed). Remember Christ said the poor will always be with us. That is poor in money, health, emotion, etc. So focus on what is working, what is positive.

Lastly, hold your leaders (and fellow believers) accountable. God has called you to be a leader, so lead and be ready to correct (in love). Our team will not know what to change or improve upon without accountability.

5. Jesus is our example for everything.

i For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich. And here is my advice about what is best for you in this matter: Last year you were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so. Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means (2 Cor. 8:9-11).

Jesus, single like me (and Paul), is our example for ALL things. He shows us how to lead, love, care and empower others. If we don't constantly follow him, show others how to follow him and then live in the direction he leads us, this life means nothing (nor our ministry). So be encouraged to know Jesus has all the answers for whatever you are struggling with. Whether you need to cry out, an idea or affirmation, turn to Christ.

6. Give out of what you have, not what you don't have.

i For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have. Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality (2 Cor. 8:12-13).

As a leader, we know the 80/20 rule: 20 percent of the people do 80 percent of the work. Well, I love to make this percentage incorrect. I do this by spending time with my leaders and team, teaching, growing and living the example. I don't wait for folks to come to me, I go to them. I love to network people, putting them to work to serve the Kingdom as soon as possible. I love to help folks see what Christ sees. But in doing all this remember, you can NOT GIVE out of what you do not have or possess. As a leader you have to know what your gifts are. You also have to know what you are



realistically able to do. Your ministry will only grow as large as your leadership team can lead. It's better to do smaller or less ministry well versus trying to have this huge ministry, killing yourself and your team in the process. Don't compare your ministry to anyone else. Just do what God has called you to do.

Also, remember you need time for yourself, to rest, refocus and renew. Set boundaries for yourself and allow your leaders to see those boundaries as an example for them. Set aside time to get away (alone, with your family as applicable and with your team). Note: Not every church is called to have a singles ministry, but all churches are called to minister to singles. Very few churches can have a divorce recovery, single parent, 20-somethings, 60-somethings, missions, monthly event, grief ministry, etc. Pray and ask God what he is leading you, your church and your ministry to do and then do it well.

7. Share everything.

i At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality, as it is written: "He who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little did not have too little" (2 Cor. 8:14-15).

I love to share what I have learned about singles ministry (and ministry as a whole). Just look at my Web site () to see what I mean. I know how hard it is to lead singles. How hard it is to find resources and training. This is why it's important that we lead the next generation, teaching everything we know as well as sharing. We need to share our knowledge, our church space, and our events. If we are paying to bring in a speaker or for training, invite other churches as a way to sow into them. Not every church will be able to afford a singles ministry to be able to bring someone in. Also, you can share the expense of events, traveling to a retreat or conference, books and Bible studies (DVDs), etc. There will come a time when you have much to offer and share and just the opposite. Please know we are at a critical time in our country in which singles pastors are being let go faster than they are being replaced. So the need to teach, educate, encourage, and disciple is at an all-time high. We have to take the lead and teach the next group of folks who are going to be leading our singles. Over half of our country is single yet the church is not reflective of this. The need to minister, to reach singles, is increasing each day. Start today by sharing all that God has given you (as well as receiving what God wants to give you).

As a single adult leader or pastor . . .

- You have been put in the position to make a difference in people's lives
- You have the ability to encourage, inspire and affirm the direction that God has given them.

As a single adult ministry . . .

- You will go through seasons that allow:
 - Change (keeps ministry fresh; it's a good thing)
 - New growth in people, ideas and direction
 - Pruning (gets rid of things that aren't working from people to ideas)
 - Evaluation of where you are, where you are going and how to get there



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 - Evaluation of where you are, where you are going and how to get there
 - Rest and renewal†

As an individual . . .

- Don't miss the journey
- What are you teaching me God?
- Am I faithful, teachable and available?

I love leading singles. They are my heart, my breath and my life. Why? Because Jesus was single like me. Jesus loves singles and is working out his plan in our lives. We are important and matter to this world. So be encouraged, leaders. Be encouraged that you are doing an amazing work for the Lord. Don't give up until the Lord tells you. Never give up. Never!

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead (Phil. 3:12-13).



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 20 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 currently working on her third Bible study, From the Manger to the Cross: The Men in Jesus' Life. Her second Bible study, From the Manger to the Cross: The Women in Jesus' Life, was published last fall and is available on her websites. Her first book, Singles and Relationships: A 31-Day Experiment, was co-authored with Dick Purnell of Single Life Resources.

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!

Singles and Relationships by Kris Swiatocho and Dick Purnell

Many singles are Christians who wonder if God will ever bring a mate their way or if they should just stop focusing on a future with a marriage partner and live the single life to the fullest. Kris Swiatocho and Dick Purnell offer solid biblical answers for singles in this newest title in Dick's popular 31-Day Experiment Bible study.