



## Starting From Scratch & Itching to Quit: The Basics of Starting a Single Adult Ministry

[www.KrisSwiatochoMinistries.org](http://www.KrisSwiatochoMinistries.org)

[www.TheSinglesNetwork.org](http://www.TheSinglesNetwork.org)

### **BASICS: STATS**

What do we know about singles in our country? About 54% of the population is single (this includes anyone 18 years or older, divorced or widowed, based on the 2010 census report.) This varies depending on what city and state you live in. Washington DC is closer to 65% whereas a small town might have 35%.

### **Factors that affect singles population:**

- Higher employment opportunities
- Educational opportunities
- Military base close by
- Retirement area
- Size of a town or city and location in the US
- The number of churches/ministry nearby

So, if most cities average at least 50% single adults, then the church should also be at 50%, right? Unfortunately, the majority of churches are around 30% (with most of this percentage in very young singles or much older). Unless they have a pastor who focuses on single adults, the percentage is even lower.

Today in the US there are less than 25 full-time singles pastors (all age/gender/denomination). There are many pastors who have multiple hats that may include singles without the title of singles pastor. Then there are education or small group pastors that offer a class or two for singles or a program such as Divorce Care or Grief Share. So, who is leading the majority of singles ministries today? Volunteer leaders make up 90% or more of all singles ministries. Some of these volunteers are under a pastor/church and some are outside the church. These leaders are invaluable to the ministry of singles adults.

### **So, what else do we know about singles in relation to the church today?**

- Single, never married is the largest group. They have the most flexible use of their time and money and are usually the least used and reached in the church.
- Single-parent families have the least flexible use of their time and money and usually have the most needs in the church. The majority of these ministries cater to single moms; leaving out any focus for single dads.
- Singles from 18-30 prefer to be called young adults. They say they aren't single; they just aren't married yet.
- Singles 30-45 is the missing age group in most churches. Today most churches offer ministry to young singles, 18-30. Then they might offer a singles Sunday school class or small group, however, the age group usually ends up for singles over the of 45. A median-aged single rarely wants to hang out with someone that could be their parent or their child.

**Q: So, if the number of singles in our country is so high, then why isn't the church doing more to reach them? Why aren't they hiring more singles pastors?**

**A: Singles ministry is difficult.**

Because singles come in such a wide age range with huge differences in life stages, needs, goals, etc., It's hard to simply come up with one plan that fits all.

***Proverbs 16:9 The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.***

**B. Singles' lives change too often:** Even if you start a ministry, singles lives change and as a result, the ministry will too.

- Some get married
- Some leave your ministry to serve in another area
- Some move/leave your church and you don't always know why
- Some come because they are wanting a mate but when there isn't anyone, they leave
- Some never grow up or mature

**C. Lack of leadership:** It's hard to find a pastor who has experience ministering to singles. Often they have been married their whole life and have a hard time relating to singles. Singles ministry takes time to develop. If a pastor isn't ready to put years into the work; the ministry has to be restarted over and over.

**D. Past experience:**

- Some churches have failed at singles ministry because they didn't have the right pastor or knowledge of how to lead it.
- Some churches' singles ministry, due to lack of leadership, became a meat market.
- Some churches have a lot of unhealthy singles, making it difficult to keep the balance healthy. Often the unhealthy ones keep the ministry from growing.
- Some churches can't find healthy, mature leaders or all their leaders got married so they have decided to close the ministry.
- Some churches feel singles shouldn't be separated for any reason which really means they don't understand what it is to be single nor their needs.

**So, does this mean singles ministry is doomed?** That is can't be done and done well? The population of single adults continues to go up while the ministry only led by churches is going down. So, the door is wide opened to develop a singles ministry that can be successful. It takes a calling by God, leadership, prayer, determination, and lots of people to help.

**So, to make sure we are on the same plate, let's first define the purpose of singles ministry:**

- To reach a group of people that might not come into the church another way. It is simply a gate.
- A place to build friendships, get healthier, and grow.
- It's a place that provides mutual support of a particular life-stage whether it's being a single parent, divorced, widowed, or never-married.
- A place to meet their future spouse.
- A place to learn how to be a volunteer, serve, and/or become a leader.
- Singles ministry is not a club. It is not a group of people that is separate from the church. It's a group that helps grow the church. By focusing the singles ministry on spiritual growth, the whole church benefits.

**Note:** Every church is called to reach singles but not every church is called to start a singles ministry.

## **So, where do you start?**

### **1. Continue to pray personally, affirming this is God's direction for you.**

Ask yourself why do you want to start a singles ministry? What goals or mission do you have? What do you hope to accomplish? Are you just wanting friends to go to dinner with? Is it to find a mate? Is it to grow the church? The kingdom? Are you willing to wait and gather the right co-leaders first? Have you found out how many singles actually live in your area and their demographic? What does your pastor think? Friends?

#### **Singles ministry isn't:**

- To give singles a social club. If I have seen and heard this once, I have seen and heard it 100 times. If you build your ministry only for the purpose of fun things to do on the weekends, then you are building it on a weak foundation that eventually will die. These types of ministries are usually led by 2 women with a few helpers. Over time, the women get burned out and don't want to host any more events. Once this happens, the ministry goes away.

IF, IF, IF you build the right foundation of the word of God first, if you start with a Bible study, book group, prayer group, divorce recovery, Sunday school class, etc., then you have the right foundation. From that group, I promise you that people will ask each other what they are doing for the weekend. I promise you; the social side will come as a result of the right foundation. Then, when you do have a social, it becomes a "strategic fellowship".

- To only get singles married, although heaven forbid, singles meet someone in church! We do want singles to find the one in church, but we first want them to know Christ. We want them as healthy as possible. If getting them married is our only goal, you are in trouble. But the other side, if we don't acknowledge that 99% of all singles do want to get married, then we are not planning for the type of ministry to help educate and nurture them in that direction.

- A competition or a comparison to other singles ministries. Do not allow your past (or others past) to dictate your direction or focus. Numbers and activity should never replace personal growth and leadership development.

#### **Singles Ministry is a way to:**

- Develop an effective outreach to the growing number of single adults in your church and community.
- Enhance church growth.
- Help fulfill the Great Commission
- Help renew the vision and purpose of your congregation
- To meet the needs of single adults who want spiritual growth, healing opportunities, and social fellowship.

Note: Single adult ministries have to continually be poured into as they change. Discipleship is critical. It's better to pour yourself into a few people who will duplicate themselves rather than trying to do it yourself. So, what if all the ideas and plans you have created don't get done? Whose ministry is this anyway? Don't allow the enemy to push you too fast. Take the time to develop others.

### **2. Continue to do research.** Talk to other singles ministry leaders near and far for advice. Go to [www.TheSinglesNetwork.org](http://www.TheSinglesNetwork.org) , watch videos, download resources, purchase *The FAQ's of Singles*

*Ministry book, Leaders that Last 6 Week Leadership Training, etc. Spend as much time as you can learning what to expect so you can develop your plan.*

***Hebrews 13:7 Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.***

- 3. Talk to your pastor (those over you) about your calling and have a plan to give them.** You will need the support of your church for greater success.

Note: Great resources at [www.TheSinglesNetwork.org](http://www.TheSinglesNetwork.org) on how to set up a plan to talk to your pastor.

- 4. Involve others including male/female leaders who have the same calling.** If you are on staff, you can be male or female, but your leadership team needs to have a demographic equal to who you feel led to reach. If you are a volunteer, your need to be sure you co-lead with the opposite sex. Note: The initial team of leaders may or may not actually be the team that leads the ministry. They simply may help you at the start for direction.

**Caution: If you are a women-only lead.**

The majority of all singles ministries are started by women. The only problem is over time, women statistically only draw other women unless you have a male co-leader. If a man walks into a class/small group or gathering and sees only women running the ministry, they will not come back. You might want to get a married couple to help lead, preferably one that was single for a long time or has been divorced and remarried. This can help at the start until you can grow more men.

Note: For ideas on how to recruit men into your ministry, go to [www.TheSinglesNetwork.org](http://www.TheSinglesNetwork.org)

- 5. Once you find others, start meeting weekly to:**

- Pray about the ministry including direction, how to grow the ministry, leadership training, logistics, target audience, budget, marketing, how you want to start whether it's a Bible study, service project, or Sunday lunch, etc.
- Develop your mission statement/goals/name (this will change as your ministry grows.)
- Develop job descriptions of your existing and future team.
- Share any resources you have found.
- Discuss any issues or problems that need to be resolved.
- Involve the prayer ministry of your church for additional prayer.
- Allow the Lord to change direction if need be.

Note: While you can pray for your individual needs, this meeting is not designed for that. It's designed to pray for specific things related to the ministry.

***Psalm 37: 5 Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and he will act.***

- 6. Develop and expand the team:**

Leadership development is crucial to the success of your ministry. A lot of ministries are relationally structured. Meaning, they all just show up and help each other. While this is nice and everyone is helpful, it doesn't promote growth. Your ministry needs structure in such a way you build a team that also builds a team. Everyone has a job and knows what is expected. They also are prepared to train the next person to take their place.

You need to develop leaders based on the needs of the ministry. For example, if you are starting a Bible study at the church you will need teachers, greeters, hospitality, prayer, marketing, and, follow-up and facilities leaders. If you are Bible study is just starting out, you might combine some of the jobs until more people join.

Note: Be careful of who you put on your team as a leader. It may be better to have them serve first and then, as time goes on and you train them, they can become a leader.

***Isaiah 41:10 Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.***

## **7. Develop public relations**

Getting your pastor, staff, married adults, and even singles to support the vision God has given you is important. They need to see and experience the value, the asset your ministry is for the church and community. If it's a value, they will not only keep it but help promote it and support it.

### **Ideas towards this goal:**

- Attend leader's meetings and share the vision and any success stories.
- Ask the church for a list of singles; work with church secretary to qualify them
- Speak at married Sunday school/small group classes and have them share at your class.
- Serve on leadership teams where you get to share about the singles.
- Have you singles serve on mission teams, help with service projects.
- Develop marketing materials to help promote your ministry such as website/web page, logo, brochure, name tags, Facebook page, Meetup.com, Instagram, etc.
- Attend any local associational meetings to share about the ministry
- Work with local counselors, Divorce Care leaders, Griefshare and Celebrate Recovery ministries so you can partner.

## **8. Housekeeping:**

- Continue to evaluate the ministry and adjust as needed.
- People will come and go despite how amazing you or the ministry has become.
- Develop a plan for conflict and how to handle unhealthy singles.
- Meet with your pastor regularly to share the good things that are happening (keep bad to a minimal)
- Accept help; learn to delegate
- Take care of yourself; grow in your own relationship with the Lord. If you aren't healthy, then you can't lead anyone else to be.

Patience! Remember that God is in control. We must -- in our enthusiasm -- be sensitive to His timing and His will. Stay open to God's continuing leadership. Your ministry should change as the needs and methods dictate. Enjoy and remember some days will be tough but overall it can be the most rewarding ministry there is. Note: Suggest reading the Book of Nehemiah and follow his model of waiting on God.

***Philippians 4:6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.***

For more information on how to start a singles ministry, grow and develop, go to [www.TheSinglesNetwork.org](http://www.TheSinglesNetwork.org). To bring Kris to your church/city in person or by zoom, call 919.434.3611 or [Kris@TheSinglesNetwork.org](mailto:Kris@TheSinglesNetwork.org)