



Jesus, Single Like Me: Friendships That Don't Lead to Marriage
by Kris Swiatocho

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.

All my adult life I have heard that you can not be friends with the opposite sex. From Billy Crystal's comments made in When Harry Met Sally to personal friends with bad experiences, the image of opposite-sex friendship has been skewed as something negative.

They say that in all opposite-sex friendships, one person is madly in love with the other while the other is not. The one in love will sit, waiting and hoping for them to realize they are the "one." That if given enough time of their "friendship," one day it will work out and they will both be in love at the same time, getting married, have a million babies and live happily ever after.

Hmmm, well, yes, it could happen. Why? Because I know of folks who were friends for a long time and eventually did get married and are living happily ever after—minus the million kids, maybe just one or two. But my beef today is more along the lines of can you have friends of the opposite sex and it not turn into love. And not turn into something you regret. Is it possible? Would you want it to be possible? Do you care?

I recently invited one of my female friends (we'll call her Jane) to hang with me and some male friends. One of the guys (Bob) told me later that he was interested in getting to know Jane. I told Jane that Bob was interested in getting to know her better with no strings attached. Perhaps they could have some coffee. He felt that they had a lot in common. Both had lost their spouses two years prior. I thought this would be good, as it would get her out of the house. I thought meeting some new male friends would encourage her. Well, she basically told me in a nutshell that she was not interested in finding a mate right now.

Finding a mate??? I was just wanting her to make a new friend. She said, "Kris, you can't be friends with the opposite sex". I was like, says who? I asked her to explain. She said that in the past, while her husband was in the hospital, they both had become friends with another cancer patient who shared her husband's room. When her husband ending up passing, this man continued to seek a friendship with her. As time went on, what she thought was just friendship was being interpreted as something romantic from his end. Things got so messed up that she broke off the friendship and pretty much swore off ever being friends with men again.

Wow, I felt so bad for her as I think she was missing out on some great new friendships. But here is the key that Jane missed; all friendships (even those with the same sex) need communication and boundaries. Even if one person is attracted to the other and it's not shared, you still need to make sure where both parties are. This way there are no surprises. This is what I believe Jesus had to do to.

Jesus, while on this earth, lived as a single adult. I believe he experienced all the same things we experience as singles. One area in particular was his friendships with women. In today's media, people simply cannot believe you can be friends with the opposite sex without it leading to sex. Why? Because they don't know how to or want to. We are such a self-focused society. But if we look at Jesus' friendships and we practice what he did, we not only can have these friendships but we can use them to advance the kingdom—not to mention grow us.



Here Are Some of the Women Jesus Was Friends With:

Mary Magdalene

We all know the controversy around her. The media has made her out to be Jesus' wife. The world just can't believe that Jesus could be so close to this woman and not fall in love with her. Speaking from a woman's point of view, I believe Mary Magdalene might have been drawn to Jesus, even romantically at the start. This man had saved her life. He healed her from seven demons. Wouldn't you want to follow someone who did that for you? I think she was thankful and curious of who this man was. We would know from Scripture that she ended up being a part of the group that followed him. She learned about him. She learned so much that her admiration went from my teacher, my friend to my Savior, to my Lord. She was the first person to see Christ raised from the dead. The first to tell the Good News! This was a huge responsibility to put on anyone and God chose a single woman, his friend. Mary Magdalene spent time with Jesus in order to know the next step in her life—a step that led her to the cross, to his grave site to his resurrection and eventually his ministry. Jesus was friends with Mary Magdalene that would lead to blessings on both sides.

Then the disciples went back to their homes, but Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?" "They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. "Woman," he said, "why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him." Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her (John 20:10-18).

Mary and Martha

Mary, Martha and their brother Lazarus were all friends of Jesus. Jesus would visit them from time to time as most friends would. Upon one visit, we remember the story of when Martha got mad because her sister wouldn't help her get the meal ready. She asked Jesus for to tell her sister to help her. Mary was doing what God wanted her to do; she made the right choice to be at Jesus feet. Jesus taught Martha a lesson in priorities. What we learn from this friendship is that Jesus ate with these women, spent time with them, taught them, laughed, and eventually cried (upon hearing that Lazarus was dead). Jesus was their master, their king but he was also their friend. I can just see him now stopping by to share something about God, eating some lasagna, playing a game of Uno. Jesus taught us that being around the opposite sex is good as it teaches us about the opposite sex. What better way to prepare us for marriage? What better way to prepare to reach the lost? What better way to learn about each other?

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:38-42).

All of these women plus many more were valuable to God. Did some follow Jesus because they thought he might be a possible husband, maybe? But they learned of his destiny, his purpose and realized that their friendship could only just be friends. I believe that Jesus, who was fully man and fully God, desired to be married just like most singles. He desired



a home, children, to live out his life like his brothers and sisters, and his earthly father before him. But his path did not lead him down that road. For some of us God is saying the same thing. Either he is saying not now or not ever.

So does this mean we can't be friends with the opposite sex because we are not going to get married? No, this means we have to have boundaries and communication. I believe Jesus had to be very clear with everyone in his life. Not only did he have to communicate his future but also his present. I believe that with Mary Magdalene and the other women who followed him, he had to be careful to not be alone, to protect his ministry and theirs. I believed he had to be careful of physical touch, hugs, kisses, etc. When he went to Mary and Martha's home, he didn't go alone but knew they were both home—again, for protection. Just like today, we have to protect our friendships. We have to guard our hearts. We have to pray about them.

Remember, when we are open to God and his direction, we are open to the relationships he brings before us. All relationships first start with God and are for God.

You must worship no other gods, but only the LORD, for he is a God who is passionate about his relationship with you (Exodus 34:14).

When we meet someone new, we need to first pray about that friendship. What is the purpose of this friendship? Is it to just be friends, allowing the blessings to come naturally or does God want us to be an example? Does he want you to help them by connecting them with others? To church or Bible study? When we refuse to be friends with the opposite sex we are missing out on so many blessings from God. Opposite-sex friends teach us about each other, about how to communicate better and how to care. When you are friends with the opposite sex, you learn to love from the inside out versus the outside in. And yes, sometimes it can lead to romance—but even if it doesn't, you have this amazing friend.

I love meeting new men in my life. I like to go ahead and assume they aren't the "one" so that I can enjoy the friendship. If it leads in that direction, great. But if not, I have just made another brother in Christ with whom I get to spend eternity.

Questions for Discussion or Personal Exploration:

1. Who are some of your opposite sex friends? How is your relationship with them?
2. What are the benefits of an opposite-sex friendship?
3. How can an opposite-sex friendship be a negative?
4. Do you think it's harder to be friends with the opposite sex after a divorce or death of a spouse? Why?
5. What are ways you can protect your friendships with the opposite sex?
6. Why is it hard to be friends once you have been romantic with someone?
7. Read John 15:9-17. What does Jesus think of friendship? What does this mean to you?

Application:

Start today to pray and ask to reveal his truth to you. What is God telling you about yourself in regards to opposite-sex friends? Is there someone in your life that you need to be honest with? Is there someone you want to be friends with only but are afraid they like you romantically? Are there some opposite-sex friends that drive you nuts and you need to learn to love them in Christ?

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.

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