



Who Is a Single Adult
by Kris Swiatocho

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I have been single my entire adult life. Because I am single, I have had a front row experience of how churches are reaching and growing singles adults. As a result, I have found that most churches simply did not know much about us nor how to reach us. After several years of serving on various single's ministry leadership teams as well as starting my own, God called me to help others do the same. Specifically to help reach the church, the pastors and staff; to educate and provide resources so that ALL churches would know how to reach singles.

Understand, unless you die when your spouse dies, every married person will experience being a single adult. Are you prepared for what life will bring? What about those in your life that are already single? Your child, your widowed parent or in-law, your divorced sibling or friend, or your neighbor who is parenting their children alone?

Single adults come in a variety of ages and life-stages. They are 19 still living at home with their parents, 29 with 3 kids that have different fathers, 35 and widowed, 52 and never married, and 68 and divorced after 40 years of marriage. Today we are seeing epic proportions the number of women and men having kids outside of marriage with little to no shame. While the number of divorces seems to be going down (which is great), the number of people living together continues to go up. Churches actually have to ask people if they are living together as a part of their membership application. And of course, we also have to mention the homosexual explosion. It's not that the percentages of homosexuals have gone up much in the last decade. It just seems that way due to the high visibility in television, movies and the news. We have a generation of adults who have accepted this lifestyle as normal, giving them power.

The Basics Stats of Single Adults in the US, 18 and up

43.6% or 99.6 million of the country is single but this is not reflective in the church today. In larger cities, the singles population is over 52% while in more rural areas it's around 33%.

There are more singles in your church than you realize. Most churches consider college-aged adults to not be single because so many are still living at home. I have heard them referred to as extended youth.

Single adults in their 20's and early 30's are commonly referred to as young adults. They aren't single but instead just not married yet.

Older singles are sometimes referred to as single again or widowed or in some cases divorced.

With these various titles, some churches simply are not sure who a single adult is. But by definition, anyone not legally married is a single adult (or an adult who is single). This does not include separated people because they are not legally divorced.

61% of the 99.6 million are single adults who have never married, from 18 to the grave.

A large percentage of this number makes up the 30-45 age group which happens to be largest missing demographic in the church.

While they have the most flexible use of their time and money, for some reason, the church fails to try and reach them. They can stay later, serve longer, take mission trips at the last minute, tithe without having to talk to a spouse, etc. The church is missing such a huge resource.



23.8% of the 99.6 million are divorced

You are probably surprised at this low number considering all the talk you hear about half of all marriages end in divorce. While I am very thankful for divorce recovery programs, as they have help people reunite with their spouses as well as some have a successful second marriage, I think the church needs to put more emphasis on preventative maintenance before singles get married to begin with.

If the second most need in life outside of salvation is marriage*, then why isn't the church doing what it can to help the single adult get married the right way? Why aren't they teaching more about a focus on your relationship with Christ first? Why aren't they teaching on dating, friendship, and relational issues such as trust, accountability, finances and such? Why aren't they bringing in speakers, providing bible studies, offering counseling and conferences, etc. to help in this area? Why aren't they communicating to their church how much they love single adults and how they want to help them be whole in Christ. Why aren't they helping singles find a mate the right way?

*99.99 % of all singles adults want to be married based on my own research for the last 25 years. However, not all will be married. Not all are ready to be married and not all are healthy enough to be married. Because of this, we have to have a balanced ministry to singles adults in that we offer courses and counseling for those seeking marriage but at the same time, be aware of those who are not wanting to get married or are still healing from a past relationship (dating, marriage or death). Please note, just like there are some very unhealthy singles in your church, there are many unhealthy married couples. The difference is that most married people leave their issues at home (or in the car on Sunday mornings), while most singles bring their issues to church because that is their family. So bottom line, we all have junk to deal with. I just want to know is the church willing to reach all for Christ or only who they seem most liked.

14.4% of the 99.6 million are widowed.

What is interesting about this statistic is the number of young widows and widowers we are seeing in our country due the wars. However, despite this growing number, I have only seen a church here or there with a ministry specific to them. Instead, they find themselves clumped in with older folks or divorced.

Most churches have senior ministries that include widows and widowers even though I have been told there still seems to be an emphasis on the marriage, which has a tendency to isolate someone without a spouse.

If you live near a military base, you are also seeing a number of adults who go for months without their spouses at home. Even though technically they are not single, they are alone, tending most likely to small children. While I am not advocating including them in your ministry, I am saying you need to be aware of this people group.

59.1 million of the population maintains a household by a single adult, 45% of all households nationwide.

Single parent-families have the most inflexible use of their time and money but the most needs. One in two children will live in a single parent family at some point in their childhood. One in three children are born to unmarried parents. Can you believe this statistic? The family is falling apart at a crazy rate. We simply can't continue to try and only reach the traditional family when the numbers of blended families, broken families, nontraditional, stepparent, separated, single families exist.

We have a generation of kids being born that are not only raised without a dad or father figure but have no idea who their dad is. How will a boy know what it is to be a man, a father, a husband, and a man of God when there is not one to teach him. This is where the church can have the greatest impact. If the church is made up of mostly traditional fathers (and men who can act as fathers, uncles, big brothers, grandfathers, etc), then why can't they see the need to reach out to these families and be that missing dad. Our mission as a church is not only to reach lost people in a foreign country it's also to reach those on Sunday morning in your church, in the pew next to you. It's in your own extended family*, your neighborhood, your towns and cities.

I love to talk to singles that want so desperately to be married, to have their own kids. I tell them this world is full of



children without the parents. Start there and allow the Lord to fill your heart. Be a Spiritual parent.

One thing that is very positive I have been seeing over the years in single parent ministry is the increase to keep it going even when a church has dissolved it's single adult ministry. I am seeing more and more of a trend to put it under the women's and men's ministries and/or family pastors. Also, there are more books, Bible studies and teachers in this area than ever before. Please go to my website at www.TheSinglesNetwork.org to see a complete list of resources.

*I recently did some church growth work in Washington State. I met with three families who each had taken in children of a family member. What a wonderful way to minister to those who have no fathers, no mothers, and no home.

31.4 million of the population live alone, 27% of all households

If you were to go through your church directory, would you find 27% of your membership living alone? More than likely, no. Why, because we are not reaching them. Please know, as I have said in my last article, I do not believe all churches are called to have a singles ministry but instead all churches are called to minister to singles (of every demographic). Some churches do their style of worship will reach one age group more than another and that is OK. The point is not that we have to be every kind of church to meet every kind of person. It simply means that you are missing a huge population of people that need the Lord too.

Start today and really pray about what your church can do to reach the other half of the population. Maybe you already have a Sunday school class or small group. Maybe you offer a divorce or grief recovery ministry. Maybe the Lord wants you to take it to the next level to insure the life of the future church. Start today to invest in the single of tomorrow whether it's your own grown children who are single, your extended family, your neighbors or even yourself. Help prevent the broken, hurting and parentless generation of tomorrow by investing in a single today.

Source: America's Families and Living Arrangements: 2010 U.S. Demographics (Tables A1 and A2)
<http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/hh-fam/cps2010.html>

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 three 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 the most recent, *Jesus, Single Like Me with Study Questions* (includes a leader's guide and conference/retreat of the same name). Kris is currently working on her fourth 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' 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!

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