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## God... Then Friends... Then Romance!

By Kris Swiatocho,  
 The Singles Network Ministries

**Was the last person you dated someone that pushed you towards the Lord or took you away?**

## THE PAST

We are so influenced by our environment and the way we are raised. I believe the responsibility to raise youth correctly falls not only on the family (extended as well as immediate) but also the church. Today's society sends too many wrong messages.

As single adults and leaders, what role do we have in helping know the right way? How are we a part of the truth? As a single adult leader I am constantly asked for the "right advice" to give single adults on dating or having a relationship. I have to be honest and tell you that when I was young I dated a lot. Wasn't that what you were supposed to do? I mean, isn't everyone encouraged to have a boyfriend at age 6? And a first kiss by 13? In high school, wasn't the big question always, "Who are you going to the prom with?" Worse yet, in college, didn't people look down upon virgins, wondering what was wrong with them? (I may not have given the best advice back then...)

Where was God during all of this? What does God have to say about having a boyfriend or girlfriend? The church today and the Christian home do seem to be teaching young adults to stay pure—but are we teaching them to *develop friendships*? Are we teaching them to seek Christ first? Are we teaching them about having a deep relationship with Christ before having a deep relationship with another person?

## THE PRESENT

The challenge today is knowing how to help single adults develop God-centered relationships first. We know that we are dealing with a lot of obstacles: our childhood, our past relationships, our relationship with God. It's not going to be easy, but one by one we can make a difference.

**Every relationship (romantic or platonic) must first start with a relationship with God. Exodus 34:14 says, "You must worship no other gods, but only the LORD, for he is a God who is passionate about his relationship with you."**

- Do your single adults have a clear understanding of who they are in Christ?
- Do they know of their purpose?
- Do they understand that God has them where they are right now for a reason?
- Do they understand the value of the singleness?

## Seek friendship with others

The bible speaks on friendship, but not on "dating" as we know it today. *"And Jonathan made David reaffirm his vow of friendship again, for Jonathan loved David as much as he loved himself" 1 Samuel 20:17*

- Do your single adults seek friendships that are healthy?
- Do they seek friends that encourage them, hold them accountable, and push them towards Christ?

## Romantic Relationships

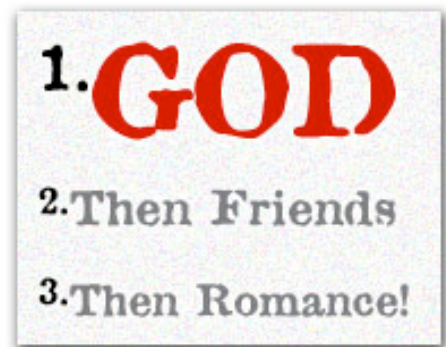
Allow friendship to turn to romantic friendships only in God's own timing. *is better to be patient than powerful; it is better to have self-control than to conquer a city" Proverbs 16:32*

## How can we start the process?

What can we do to teach about having a relationship with God first, then each other?

1. Pastor:

- Speak on singleness, purity, dating, blended families, single parents
- Visit singles groups/classes
- Offer premarital and pre-engagement classes at church
- Be available for counseling



## 2. Church:

- Sunday school teachings on relationships/dating
- Bible studies on relationships/dating
- Library/resources/magazines
- Retreats/Conferences
- Training available for leaders
- Brochure on the single adult ministry with text related to this topic

## 3. Home:

- Parents can discourage dating for pure pleasure but instead used as a process for courtship for marriage
- Family can support celibacy and friendship
- Friends can support celibacy; accountability

## 4. Leaders:

- Mentoring available
- Accountability partners
- One-on-one
- Counseling
- Teaching what God says

## The next step in helping your single adults:

- Have them ask God to make them right person before they meet the right person.
- Encourage personal quiet time, bible study, self-discipline accountability
- Encourage singles to ask God to reveal anything in them that hinders progress

## How to encourage those in a Friendship-Relationship:

*Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily hinders our progress. And let us run with endurance the race that God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, on whom our faith depends from start to finish. Hebrews 12: 1-2*

- Encourage very direct communication with each other. Spend time together to get to know each other better—rather than 'dating'.
- Encourage safe environments to further develop their friendships
- Encourage single adults to want to be equally yoked spiritually
- Encourage lots of prayer.

## THINGS TO REMEMBER:

- Pastors/leaders needs to be aware that not all couples marry. There needs to be something in place to handle sin, rejection, disappointment and breakups.
- Not all singles should date—nor marry. There should be enough accountability and trust among each other to help people avoid mistakes.
- Pastors should be willing to not marry couples where individuals aren't right for each other.
- It is important to teach a relationship study series on a regular basis, or have it available on tape. Just like Divorce Care there should be 'Dating Care' or something similar offered.
- Make training available to others.



**About the author:** Kris Swiatocho is the President and Director of [TheSinglesNetwork.org](http://TheSinglesNetwork.org) Ministries (TSN) in Raleigh, NC. TSN is a ministry for single adults, their leaders, and their pastors. TSN helps churches evaluate, develop, and support their single adult ministries through consulting, speaking, conferences, seminars, and leadership development activities.

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