**Leadership by Legacy by Kris Swiatocho**

“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 I have learned over the years of being in ministry that 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 I see couples arguing in their cars as the leader of first-impression ministry at my church. Pointing fingers, yelling, 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. Due to not having this blissful marriage, singles tend to bring ALL their problems to church. Because the 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 are too focused on marriage (heaven forbid we want to meet our spouse at 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 staying focused on the prize of bringing people to Christ. I love that Paul 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 aggravation—Christians 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 Corinthians 8:1-15](http://www.biblestudytools.com/search/?t=niv&q=2co+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 Corinthians 8:1-2](http://www.biblestudytools.com/search/?t=niv&q=2co+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’s 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, texts, and personal notes from singles who thank me for helping them. Then ever so often, I 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, and God wants to make some changes. Pray and ask the Lord for direction, and 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 Corinthians 8:3-4](http://www.biblestudytools.com/search/?t=niv&q=2co+8:3-4)*).*  
  
As a leader, you have 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 to you or just quit. Yes, it’s very frustrating. However, this is what ministry is all about. I have had to learn just to 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 healthy people 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 take over. This type of single will drain you, break you and cause you to want to quit. One note of hope: 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 Corinthians 8:5](http://www.biblestudytools.com/search/?t=niv&q=2co+8:5)*).*  
  
I can't tell you how many ministries I get hired to speak and conduct training for have left consistent prayer out of their ministries. Sure, they pray in Sunday school or in small groups for individuals, but they never seem to be collectively praying for the leaders and direction of the ministry. Paul shares how important it is to give ourselves to the Lord first in their walks and then in our ministries. To ask God's guidance on 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., to reach people for Christ. How can we know what God wants 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 Corinthians 8:6-8](http://www.biblestudytools.com/search/?t=niv&q=2co+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 their importance. 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 essential that we are careful in how we share what is going on with our ministries with our pastors/staff over us. Always share what God is doing, leaving complaints for last (and only when 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 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.**  
*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 your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion, according to your means (*[2 Corinthians 8:9-11](http://www.biblestudytools.com/search/?t=niv&q=2co+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 what you have, not what you don’t have.**  
*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 Corinthians 8:12-13](http://www.biblestudytools.com/search/?t=niv&q=2co+8:12-13)*).*  
  
As leaders, 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 with 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 understand 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 than trying to have this colossal 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, 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 events, 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.**  
*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 Corinthians 8:14-15](http://www.biblestudytools.com/search/?t=niv&q=2co+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 ([TheSinglesNetwork.org](http://www.thesinglesnetwork.org/)) 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 vital that we lead the next generation, teaching everything we know as well as sharing. We must share our knowledge, church space, and 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 where 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 train the next group of folks who are going to be leading our singles. Over half of our country is single, yet the church does not reflect 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 positioned to make a difference in people’s lives.
* You can encourage, inspire and affirm the direction 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
  + 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 fantastic 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 (*[Philippians 3:12-13](http://www.biblestudytools.com/search/?t=niv&q=php+3:12-13)*).*