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**I Just Simply Loved Singles

An interview with the former single minister Barbara Christa,** North Richland Hills Baptist Church, North Richland Hills, TX

**A little background:**
While working as a school teacher, her life was changed by God a few months after she graduated from college. She reached a point where she knew there had to be more in her life as a Christian than she had experienced. In her brokenness, mainly due to a failed romantic relationship, she cried out to the Lord for help. At that point, she realized that He could make the decisions for her life far better than she could, and she immediately turned over that responsibility to Him. What joy filled her life then, and it has never left.

A few weeks later, she discovered a ministry for Single Adults, the first in Southern Baptist history, located at South Main Baptist in Houston, Texas. The class and the teacher Harold Tate would help her grow in her faith, teaching her how to understand God’s word. She began to realize just how vital the singles class was to her growth. This was when she knew she had a passion for other singles to have the same life –empowered by a living, loving Savior.

Three years later, at the age of 25, Barbara got married to David. For some, marriage would be a door out of singles ministry, but this only increased their passion for Barbara and David. Next, God would lead them to minister at another church, Richey Street Baptist in Pasadena, Texas. They were excited about the move and what God would do for singles adults. However, they found out this church wasn’t as supportive at their last. While she and David waited for God to open that door, God would use Barbara to teach children’s Bible classes, something that would help her down the road qualify her to be on the church staff.

Finally, after six years, God opened a door to start a singles ministry, mainly to those 18-30. They quickly had 35 regular attendees on Sundays and 45 in their home Bible study on Thursdays. It was an exciting time and a fulfilling experience. Before long, they even found themselves counseling singles as well on everything from relationships to work to finance.

\*While they were open to anyone coming of any age, at that time, the church didn’t have many singles over the age of 30; there were few to none that were divorced or single parenting.

**HOW DID IT GROW?**

At first, they simply contacted existing singles in their church, letting them know about the new Sunday school class and home Bible study. Next, she and David went from door to door in nearby apartments and houses, inviting single adults to come.

**MAKING THE NEXT STEP**

The Lord would move Barbara and her husband again. This time to Fort Worth, TX. They joined North Richland Hills Baptist and once again ran into roadblocks to start a singles ministry. However, God has His ways! In 1975 Barbara was hired as Minister of Childhood Education and served in that capacity for eight years. During that time, she also taught Ladies Bible Studies. Still, after all these years of being married, of serving in children and women’s ministry, her heart longed to work with Singles. So, she resigned after eight years, and two days later, she started a singles Sunday school class as a volunteer with the approval and support of the church.

**THE MINISTRY KEPT GROWING**

On the first Sunday, ten people showed up. By the end of 2 years, they were averaging over a hundred each Sunday. During the four years of teaching, 56 people were saved, 70 got married, single parents’ ministry would develop, and many would lead within the ministry and other parts of the church. By now, as they had aged up, their ministry was reaching singles from the 18-mid-fifties.

The structure of the Sunday school class also grew. They had home Bible studies, prayer groups, service projects, ministry specific to singles to help with moving, home repair, home visits, plus social events.

**TO THE NATION**
After four years, God told Barbara to resign from North Richland Hills and start speaking throughout the nation. She taught every weekend in churches and at state conferences on a variety of topics. She led retreats and trained leadership, etc. Although it was exciting, she couldn’t help but feel she was called to work with the local church. So, she ended up back at North Richland Hills as the Minister of Childhood Education but would only accept the position if she would be allowed to teach a Singles Sunday School class for singles. She and David would eventually transition to full-time single ministers at the church.

**TIME FOR SOME CHANGES**

While she had been away traveling, the church staff had divided the Singles into separate classes, and the total number in weekly attendance had dropped to about 60. She inherited leaders who could teach God’s work well but who did little or no ministry to their class members during the week. The spark that had been in the old class was gone. She had to slowly replace those teachers who were not “called” to Singles Ministry. She enlisted people not to just “teach” but to “pastor,” God gave her a great time of dedicated men and women who poured their lives into Singles.

**CULTURE CHANGE**

Single Adults as a whole had changed. Most of the singles coming were now 35 and older, single parenting, and divorced. She and David had also aged up and knew they were drawing an older demographic. Once again, it was necessary to change the structure to meet the “new” needs. She formed classes that included Divorce Care, Single Parents, and five Bible classes. Later she added a rotating Boundaries Class. These are classes that continue to this day.

She also noticed a change in what singles were interested in personally. Overall, they seemed to be more focused on pleasure than growing their relationship with God. She witnessed the results of this seeing firsthand. Singles were coming with:

 a. Failed multiple marriages

 b. Parenting without ever being married.

 c. A greater instability financially. Many were ill-equipped to make a living and did not depend on the Lord to be the Lord of their lives, even those professing Christ.

 d. A lack of understanding of how to build healthy relationships or marriages.

 e. Mental and emotional health issues.

 g. A sense of entitlement and “poor is me, you owe me” attitude

 h. Extensive immorality and “looking for love in all the wrong places.”

**WHAT ELSE CHANGED?**
Lack of leadership that was trained or healthy. Leaders need to be mentored to genuinely love, guide, and “pastor” Singles. They need to work successfully with hurting people and understand how to set wise, compassionate boundaries.

Sunday school and small group teachers and other leaders needed to be knowledgeable as to how to teach and inspire. They needed to become aware of how/when/where to refer their class members for help, such as Divorce Care, Celebrate Recovery, and Griefshare type ministries.

Teachers need to know the basics: how to prepare their hearts to minister to others; how to prepare a lesson using the resources that can help them; how to share the Gospel and they should be doing this; how to pray with power and the importance of doing it daily; and how to work as a team for the building up of the Gospel within Singles Ministry and within one’s church.

One big struggle among leaders has been in the area of taking care of themselves. Ministry, because it’s made up of people, is hard. People pull you from every direction. Often leaders don’t take enough breaks, call on others to help, delegate, and/or get the training needed.

You cannot serve others as God wants when you run on “empty” spiritually, physically, or emotionally. Leaders needed to learn to pace themselves and have “a time out” when needed, focusing on “being” who God wants before you set out to “serve.”

**WHERE IS BARBARA TODAY?**

Both Barbara and her husband, David, are still teaching Sunday school and people of all backgrounds. They also work with the Good News Club for children. In addition, they are providing pre-marital counseling for couples because ministering to singles is simply something they can’t stop doing.

In total, Barbara ministered at NRHBC for 31 years.

Thank you, Barbara and David, as young singles and a married couple for loving singles, fighting for us in the church, and the legacy you have left behind.

www.LaborDaySingles.org

www.TheSinglesNetwork.org Ministries

www.KrisSwiatochoMinistries.org

[www.IntentionalRelationshipSolutions.org](http://www.intentionalrelationshipsolutions.org/)

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