"We wish you a Merry Christmas..we wish you a Merry Christmas. ..." The radio was cranked loud as I listened to Christmas music on my way home for Thanksgiving. Thanksgiving would be different this year. I drove up the driveway and quickly got out of my car, almost racing to get in the door. My younger brother was there with his three kids. One after another came up to me and gave me a big hug, and then I gave them a smooch. "Yuck," said my nephew. He's four and believes that kisses are gross. His entire focus is Woody and Buzz from Toy Story. "To infinity and beyond," he yelled racing past me.

I hugged my mom as she started to explain what food was ready to eat. I dropped off my suitcase in the spare room and threw my coat on the bed. I then walked into the living room expecting to see my dad in his recliner. He loves his recliner. Snacks on one side, Diet Coke on the other and his cane within reach. He's not there. Hmmm, maybe he's in the bed. The last couple of years his health has gotten so bad that he has been forced to stay in bed. I couldn't wait for his hugs and kisses. I can still smell his English Leather cologne mixed with baby powder (he believed in staying dry).

I peeped into his room, but he was not there. Maybe he was in the restroom. Then it hit me. It's all so surreal. He's not there, Kris. He's never going to be there again. All I could do was hang my head and start to cry. Although it had been a year since my dad's death, for some weird reason I still expected him to be there. I just couldn't believe he was gone. The pain is worse today than the actual day he died. I miss him so much.

My dad was an amazing man—not just because I say so, but because he was. You see, my dad (Henry) was not my biological father. He was my step-dad. My biological father was not the best person in the world. Between his abuse and adultery, my mom endured many years of pain—as I did and my younger brothers. My mom finally got the courage to leave my father. It was a tough time in our lives trying to understand what was happening and trying to make ends meet. While working at the local hospital in medical records, my mom met Henry. Henry was also in the middle of a divorce. These two very lonely and lost souls were destined to meet. After a period of friendship, they started to date and quickly knew that the other was the "one." Both fearful of making some of the same mistakes from their first marriages, they both made a commitment that God would be the leader in this marriage.

Henry married my mom and proceeded to raise four, sad, hurting, and angry children—children who felt abandoned by their biological father, children who felt confused, children who were overly dependent on their mother. Henry, somehow raised us with love, compassion and acceptance. He never abandoned us. He never abused us. He loved us as his own with a love that could have only come from the Lord.

Henry, reminded me of another man who loved beyond his ability. His name was Joseph—Jesus' step-dad. I don't think that anyone really acknowledges the role that Joseph had in Jesus' life. God chose Joseph to be Jesus' earthly father—a father who would have to raise Him just like his other kids, a father who would love Him as he loved his other kids, a father that the world only knew as his biological father until Jesus' ministry became public.

So another Thanksgiving came and went. As we sat around the table one more time, marveling at my mom's cooking and how we ate too much, we shared what we missed most about our dad: a man who loved life, a man who loved Christ, a man who brought Christ into our home, a man who raised four little kids who were broken and, one by one, with the Lord's help started the healing process. Thank you, Lord, for step-parents who sometimes turn out to be the best parents. Thank you, Lord, that through understanding loss you created a bridge to reach us so that one day we will spend eternity with you in heaven where there is no loss.

**About Kris Swiatocho**

Kris Swiatocho is the President and Director of [TheSinglesNetwork.org Ministries](http://www.thesinglesnetwork.org/) and [FromHisHands.com Ministries](http://www.fromhishands.com/). Kris has served in ministry in various capacities for the last 25 years. An accomplished trainer and author, 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*](http://www.thesinglesnetwork.org/), co-authored with **Dick Purnell** of [Single Life Resources](http://www.slr.org/); [*From the Manger to the Cross: The Women in Jesus' Life*](http://www.thesinglesnetwork.org/bookspdfs.html); and the most recent, [*Jesus, Single Like Me with Study Questions*](http://www.thesinglesnetwork.org/bookspdfs.html). Kris is currently working on her fourth book: *FAQ's of Singles Ministry*.