



Jesus ... Single Like Me: He Modeled Leadership
by Kris Swiatocho

Originally published by Crosswalk.com

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following article is part of the Jesus . . . Single Like Me series.

Jesus lived his life as a single adult till his death. Because he lived his life as a single adult, he understands every aspect of what you and I are experiencing today. This series examines the "singleness" of Christ in relation to our singleness with the hope you will be encouraged to walk this journey you have been given. A journey that not only leads to the cross for our salvation but to his resurrection for our future.

"Hey Kris, we would like to have you lead this year's singles retreat. We will give you some general guidance but would like to see what you come up with on your own and with your team. Let us know what you need from us," said the singles director of my singles group.

It was 1992 and I was serving on the leadership council of a large singles metro group in Raleigh, NC. We had about 400 singles actively coming each week. Every year they would host a singles retreat in a city near the coast or the mountains. I had attended these retreats and even served, but I had never led one on my own. This would be a huge undertaking. Was I ready? Was I prepared? Where did I start? Who did I need to call? Where would I begin? I didn't know it then, but this one event in my life would be so pivotal in my walk as a Christian and my development as a leader. With this one event I would learn: 1) what true leadership was about; 2) how to build and maintain a team; 3) how to enjoy the journey; 4) and how to listen to God for his guidance in every part.

So the task was at hand. So where would I start? Should I find a place, a date, cost, design a logo, a theme? Ugh. There was so much to do, and I was clueless on the best place to start. So I decided the first thing to do was to pray. Pray for God to guide me in his direction versus my own. Pray for God to bring me a team to help lead this event. I opened my Bible to John 6: 1-14.

Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias), and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the signs he had performed by healing the sick. Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples. The Jewish Passover Festival was near. When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do. Philip answered him, "It would take more than half a year's wages to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!" Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?" Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place, and they sat down (about five thousand men were there). Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish. When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted." So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten. After the people saw the sign Jesus performed, they began to say, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world." Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.

Jesus, single like me, in this one passage showed me how to be a true leader. As a single I can be a leader of whatever God wants me to lead. It comes down to my obedience, my willingness and his guidance. So many times in churches I believe married people think singles are not grown up enough to lead. We are not mature enough to be on finance committees or serve in leadership. Very rarely do you hear about a single pastor leading a church. But wasn't Jesus single? If Jesus were alive today in human form, would he have been able to get a job pastoring? Jesus teaches in this passage



the importance of following God over man. Man will always limit you due to his own insecurities. God will limit you only in his preparation of your future.

What Jesus Teaches About Leadership:

1. To heal the body whereby heals the soul: So here is the situation. Jesus has just finished healing a bunch of folks. Through this physical healing, he is also healing emotionally and spiritually. Jesus teaches us that we must first reach people through felt needs such as hunger, physical and emotional pain, finances, etc. When we meet these physical needs, people are more open to receiving other needs such as salvation. They are more willing to trust and listen to you. They are more willing to build a relationship.

Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias), and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the signs he had performed by healing the sick (John 6:1-2).

2. To build a team that is F.A.T.: Jesus, when building his team (his disciples), prayerfully considered each person he asked to follow him. He spent time with them, talking to them while allowing them time to also pray about it. When we are asked by God to be leaders, we need to build a team that will be faithful, available and teachable (F.A.T.). Even if each part isn't matured in each person, you see the potential. The disciples weren't all there yet, but Jesus led them (over the three years) and got them there. Leadership is not a one event occurrence but a journey between you, them and the Lord. Remember, you are not just building a team for this event or that study or that conference but for life. What you teach them today will affect all their other relationships for the rest of their lives.

Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples. The Jewish Passover Festival was near (John 6:3-4).

3. To not forget the bread: As a leader/follower, we must never forget the ultimate purpose in reaching people for Christ: for those who are lost, to lead them toward salvation and for those who are saved, to help them grow in their walks with the Lord. We can easily as leaders forget this purpose and get caught up in designing logos, naming our ministries, coming up with fun things to do, etc. Jesus gives us the example of remembering to not forget the bread, the meat per se. Don't allow what you don't have to distract you from what you do have. Remember, God is the ultimate resource for all things. It's not a resource issue but a distribution issue.

When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" (John 6:5).

4. To allow failure: If there is one thing that makes a good leader it is failure. But the key is to learn something through the failure. I love it when Philip is questioning Jesus on how they were going to buy enough food to feed this huge crowd. Philip has just seen Jesus do these incredible miracles and then in the same time period asked such a dumb question. Jesus is again showing us how it's okay to fail. It's okay to not do it right the first time. We learn from our mistakes. So this time you prayed after you found the venue for your event. Or this time your leadership team was made up of friends versus who God has to bring together. Or this time you had a disagreement and didn't resolve it. Again, all of these things can lead to the growth of you and your team. Jesus allows our failures to see what we are going to do with them. A teachable spirit makes a great leader.

He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do (John 6:6).

5. To allow others to have viewpoints, ideas: It's important as a leader to allow others to share what God is telling them. You never know the ideas that might come out of folks. Remember it's not your vision, but God's vision. Embrace the ideas, direction, and resources given by God to others. The more you allow others to share, the more you empower others



to be used by God. The more you affirm their gifting. Plus, it's a lot more fun to have everyone's input and ideas working together.

Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?" (John 6:8-9).

6. To develop a leadership structure: Jesus gives us such a great example of how to minister to folks. You can't sit on the edge of the crowd and just yell at them. True ministry requires that you build a structure, getting organized so that no one falls through the cracks. Building structure also allows you to measure success, failure, etc. In another account, it says that Jesus had them sit in groups of 50 (Luke 9:14). Groups of 50 are much more manageable than one big group of 5,000 men, plus women and children. But here is the really cool thing about this picture of leadership. Even with the small groups, it still required the leaders—the disciples—to go in deep to feed the people. And upon going in deep, they could really see the needs that the people had. They could hear the concerns, the fears and even what folks thought about Jesus. They could even begin to see some new leaders being developed. You can't minister from the sidelines. A true leader gets his hands dirty by working alongside. How can you ever think of ministering if you don't experience what the people are feeling? Jesus, single like me, goes deep into our lives physically and spiritually, giving us a wonderful example to follow.

Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place, and they sat down (about five thousand men were there) (John 6:10).

7. To pray: Oh, how as leaders we forget the critical aspect of prayer. Not just before a meal but in all ways and at all times. As a singles ministry consultant, I often conduct leadership training at churches. The one big area most ministries lack in is consistent prayer. Are you praying as a leader? Is your team praying weekly? Are you praying for the direction of your ministry? For communication/relationship with your church? For doors to open? To reach the lost world? Are you thanking God for the things that ARE working in your ministry? Are you sharing this good news with your pastor and church leaders? Are you leading by example? If not, then how will you ever know the direction God wants to take you? How can you evaluate your ministry? How can you even know if God wants you to have a ministry?

Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish (John 6:11).

8. To use the resources God gives you: I prayed about this verse and what it meant. Why would Jesus have the disciples gather up the rest of the bread and fish? Why wouldn't he just let the crowds keep it for later? 1) The disciples had to go back into the crowd where they got to see, hear and minister to the crowd again. Jesus sent them back to enforce what true ministry is (fluid); 2) Going back into the crowd also allowed them to see if in fact everyone got enough, if their needs were met. etc. It allowed them to evaluate the ministry; 3) Gathering the leftovers allowed to the disciples to glean. Gleaning is as old as the Bible. There is so much waste in the world today. Even in our ministries—from leftover food at events to singles who do nothing for the Lord to improper use of our time and resources. Gleaning also allowed the disciples and the crowd to see just how powerful God is. It's not a matter of what God provides, it's a matter of how we use what he provides. Gleaning also showed us the importance Jesus emphasizes not to waste.

When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted" (John 6:12).

9. To love others first as he has loved us: Here Jesus gives us the perfect example of making sure the crowd was taken care of before his team/disciples. Now don't misunderstand. As leaders we do need to make sure we are healthy in all ways in order to minister to others. Jesus is simply giving us a model of what we need to do when we are out leading our ministries. For example, do you come in early and stay late to help? Do you get your plate of food later so that each of your guests is fed first? Do you take the worst parking spot to allow others to have the best? Do you take care of the needs



of others before yourself? As a leader do others see a model of humility and submission to God? Do others see your willingness to come alongside them in their lives? Do others know you would do whatever you can to help them? What I also love about this verse is there were 12 baskets left over ... one for each of the disciples. But notice, too, that Jesus had none based on this scripture—a prophetic window into his ultimate sacrifice on the cross.

So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten (John 6:13).

So, I answered the call to lead this huge singles retreat. I decided I needed a lot of prayer. As I read the scripture in John 6, I realized I needed a huge team to help with the task. I started to pray and asked God to bring together a team of folks with some of my gifts and some with other gifts. One particular person was a man named Steve, who I felt truly walked with God. I would learn early on that successful singles ministry works best when led by a woman and a man (married or friends). Steve's personality was the total opposite of mine. He was a caregiver, and I was an administrator. Together, with God's leading, we built an awesome team that would not only put on a wonderful retreat that even after 20 years people are still talking about, but built relationships as well. We learned that our retreat was not about the retreat but about all the things that happened prior—the prayer and planning meetings, lunches and dinners, going to the store, dealing with vendors, etc. I faced obstacles of people and room issues, equipment not working, misunderstandings, etc., and even the enemy did his part. But ultimately God got the glory. The retreat was called "Unity." And it did just that, brought us together in him to be used by him for his purpose.

I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me (John 17:23).

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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's 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!

Singles and Relationships by Kris Swiatocho and Dick Purnell

Many singles are Christians who wonder if God will ever bring a mate their way or if they should just stop focusing on a future with a marriage partner and live the single life to the fullest. Kris Swiatocho and Dick Purnell offer solid biblical answers for singles in this newest title in Dick's popular 31-Day Experiment Bible study. Kris Swiatocho, Director, The Singles Network Ministries