



Jesus, Single Like Me: Strategic Fellowships, Not Socials  
by Kris Swiatocho

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*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.*

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 There I am again, sitting in the church parking lot, all alone. It's Saturday morning, a time I am usually still in my bed, under the covers with my squishy soft pillows getting a few more winks. A day I know I should be cleaning something. A day to catch up on laundry, buy groceries and call my mom. But no, I am at the church waiting on the drove of singles to join me to go hiking. It's now 9:15 a.m. and no one has showed up. Hmm, where could they be? OK, I will wait a bit longer, I mean, maybe they got stuck in the two others cars on the highway this morning. 9:30, 9:45, 10:00 a.m. and still no one. OK, I guess no one is coming. What is wrong Lord? I plan these great events and either only a few show up or none. What am I doing wrong?

It was 1995, and I had started attending a new church in Raleigh, NC. Besides singing in the choir and greeting, I had been given the role as the singles leader. What in the world was my church thinking? Sure, I had a ton of experience serving on a team at other churches. But to run one all alone? I mean, were they sure? Could I do this? Well, not really. I still needed a lot of training, encouragement and help. But where was I to get the help and what would I need to do in the meantime?

Well, this particular morning was one of many times where I would plan an event and no one would show up. I mean, I was fun, outgoing and energetic. I would create the cutest flyers and post them everywhere. I would even get the opportunity to get up in front of church to let folks know what we were doing. But still despite all this, folks wouldn't always show up. So I started to pray and God revealed something huge to me:

Never plan anything I wouldn't want to do alone, because sometimes I would be alone. Every event or social I plan should be a strategic fellowship which would eliminate #1 if done right.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved (Acts 2:42-47).

Jesus, single like me, gives us the example of how all things need to be strategic. Our goal with all things needs to be focused on reaching people for Christ, growing the saved and equipping the leaders. So how was I not doing this?

1. I thought all singles' ministries needed to have tons of socials.



I mean, that is what we are there for right? To meet others, connect, make friends and possibly find a mate. What better place to do this than a social! Well, to be honest, a singles ministry never has to plan a social for singles to connect. It's amazing how when you plan a Bible study, a missions event, Sunday school, etc., singles find each other and go do things. The church's role is not to plan our social calendar. When you plan so many socials (without anything being strategic about it), you can quickly not only wear yourself out but also your leadership team.

2. I didn't collectively pray.

I had broken one of the golden rules of life: collective leadership prayer. Sure, I was praying, even crying out to God, but I do not remember meeting with my leadership team to pray about what we were doing much less having them lead the various events. Praying together on a regular basis not only brings your team together but it also puts you on the same page. You will know what to do and not do. So when folks say, "Why are we doing this or that?" you can simply say the truth. God is not leading us there.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer (Acts 2:42).

3. I planned events that I wanted to do and not do.

I simply hate putt-putting and hiking but love going to the movies and fishing. OK, well, most singles love to go putt-putting and hiking (well the healthy ones anyway) as well as the movies, but fishing? I can tell you as of today there isn't much I have not done with singles. Bottom line, singles want an environment to talk, to connect and be encouraged. Some are there to meet a possible mate (which to me is a good thing considering they are at a church event), some are there to make friends and some need support and prayer. I have found that younger singles love doing missions projects that lead to eating at Taco Bell (99¢ menu), while older singles just want to eat out. As I have gotten to know my singles, who they are and what they want, I have been able to be more strategic in planning events that not only did the obvious (make friends, etc.) but reach people for Christ. Events that also help grow my leadership team while training others. So sometimes this means doing fewer socials (strategic fellowships) with the focus being more on Bible studies and missions projects. Remember, people are not drawn to the church because of your socials, great preaching any/or music, but what the power of the Holy Spirit is doing through your people/ministry.

Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles (Acts 2:43).

4. My socials were socials, not strategic fellowships.

Every event you do has to be strategic. Now the world may think you are having a cookout, movie night, concert, etc. but you know and your team that it's a strategic fellowship. By being strategic, you have a) prayed; b) planned with enough time to promote; c) allowed enough time to make changes; d) trained leaders and team members to lead the event; e) developed goals; f) followed-up to see if you met the goals. Your leaders will be placed at your events to help make connections, recruit singles to be on the team, minister to people, offer prayer, etc. Again, the world thinks you are eating hamburgers at Bob's. But when this cookout is over, you can sit back and say, "Wow, we met John, Judy, Tyrone and Kim. I think Kim would make a great single mom's leader. I was also able to pray with John. Did you see how Judy and Tyrone helped with the clean-up. Let's talk to them about serving on the team for the next event." Do you see the difference?



All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need (Acts 2:44-45).

5. I never delegated.

I would get mad when folks didn't show up (and they knew it). I would plan all these events (that I thought they wanted) and when they didn't show, I would make sure they knew I was angry. I never thought about asking what the singles wanted nor did I involve more of the team to help. I would just do most of it myself and then get angry when I was left alone in the parking lot. Strategic ministry involves others leading. It's important to delegate.

Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts (Acts 2:46).

6. I never evaluated or measured what I was planning.

If you don't stop to see what you are doing and if it's working, you will keep doing the same thing over and over but expecting a different result. Isn't that the definition of insanity? Sometimes a movie night works, and sometimes it doesn't. A few years ago I was working at a church and had planned a monthly event (that my leaders were leading). After four months (we had each Sunday school class host a month) and despite a really good turn-out, the leaders decided they didn't want to do them anymore. Now, I could have said, "No, we are going to do them because we had a ton of folks come" (if that is the only measurement), but I didn't. Numbers are only one way to measure the success of an event. Your leadership team's desire to lead, to see folks coming to know the Lord, to see people growing in the Lord, to see lives changing, etc. are other ways. Without evaluating (with your team), you have no real idea if what you are doing is what God wants you to do.

Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test? And I trust that you will discover that we have not failed the test (2 Cor. 13:5-6).

Final Thoughts:

Build your socials based on people's interest and the leaders to lead them.

Well, I drove home again all alone. I was so bummed and I felt like a failure. I just knew everyone wanted to go hiking. It's one of those "cool" and "popular" things to do in 1995. But after I got home I realized that I hated to hike. I was doing it for them without thinking if it was what I wanted to do. I am not saying that we don't need to do things for others, even making personal sacrifices. What I am saying is as a leader, I need to be passionate about what God is calling me to do, including the socials I plan. And if, God calls me (or the team) to plan something that is not my area such as hiking, then find a team member who does enjoy hiking and let them lead. What is even better is to do what I called "Urban Ministry." Instead of planning a bunch of things to do, plan things based on the interest of your team, teaching the team members how to reach out to others in their neighborhood, family and work. For example, if someone likes to scrapbook, then plan a scrapbook day. If someone likes to go running, start a running group. All of these activities would of course be strategic with the goal of reaching the lost, building the saved and equipping the leaders.

. . . praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved (Acts 2:47).



But please remember this important guideline.

As you teach and lead by example, just like Jesus, you have to train your leaders to build their own teams. As you pour into a few, they will pour into a few and so on.

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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!