

Single & Surviving

Written By Danielle Caspar

In the midst of an area commonly known for its family appeal and family focus, there is a strong single community in Western Wake.

“Over 50 percent of our country is single (18 to the grave). In the Triangle, this number is like 52 percent, whereas in smaller cities, like Cary or Garner, it’s around 40 percent,” said Kris Swiatocho, president and director of TheSinglesNetwork.org Ministries. “This includes college students, to never-married, to single-again, to single-parent family to widowed.”

Oftentimes, this strong demographic is overlooked, and that hits home especially hard during Valentine’s Day – the day many celebrate with their significant other.

About 19 years ago, Kris got involved in ministry to reach single adults because she felt they were a large segment being disregarded.

“Most churches are made up of traditional families that include a husband, wife and kids. This is also what the church focuses on and markets to,” she said. “Because I am so invested in single adults (I am one too, never married), I see where the church has forgotten them. Not out of choice so much but out of ignorance.”

Typically, pastors are usually married with kids, and as a result, they are drawn to others who are married with kids, Kris said.

“Churches spend a lot of time teaching folks how to keep their marriages strong but spend no time in preparing single adults to be married or to even have a basic friendship with someone,” she added.

Kris believes that not every relationship should be built on getting married.

“We should relax and enjoy being friends – we find out so much about a person during this time. Things such as how they pay their bills, respect, how they treat their families, how they treat their friends, keeping their jobs and their attitudes before we get romantically involved,” she said.

“I know many want to find that special person, but they must first become the right person before they meet the right person,” she



said. "Everything starts with God and being God-centered. They spend so much time focusing on Mr. or Ms. Perfect and forget to focus on the ultimate perfect person – Jesus.

"I really want single adults (and teens) to work on their relationship with Christ first."

Kris encourages dating, but doesn't support online dating. Group dating to a movie and then a coffee shop is a safe way to meet people, Kris suggested. Coffeehouses like Vineyard, in Raleigh, where they play live Christian music on Saturdays, Borders and Caribou are all great places to hang out, Kris said.

Getting involved in a church or a single adult ministry with other single adults are great, too. For a list of local and state resources, visit Kris' Web site at www.thesinglesnetwork.org.

Perhaps the biggest mistake singles make when looking for love is getting too close too soon.

"We all desire love and intimacy – it's how God made us. However, we look for it in others to the point we don't care about anything else. We want a person to complete us instead of the only thing that can – God," she said. "Being a complete, whole person in Christ should be your goal ... the rest is just gravy."

For those who are single due to divorce, death of a spouse, etc., Kris recommends plenty of time for healing. Programs like Divorce Care, Divorce Recovery and Grief Share focus on restoration and accepting responsibility.

"I think having a group of friends for support who know exactly what you are going through is critical. These friends can pray for you, support you and hold you accountable," Kris said. "I would say a lot of people end up marrying again out of these groups because the folks that are there truly understand what they are going through."

For any single adult, the most important thing to remember is to get out there and live life, Kris said.

"Experience new things, new people from all backgrounds and walks of life, learn about new cultures, travel, eat new things," she said. "This is where the people are, the friendships and the relationships."



Kris received graduate training at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, been an affiliate staff member with Campus Crusade for Christ, taken leadership development courses (such as Dale Carnegie and Toastmasters), held single adult ministry conferences, workshops and seminars. Kris is also an accomplished trainer/mentor and is currently working on her second book called "Jesus ... Single Like Me." For more information, call (919) 779-3686, or email Kris@thesinglesnetwork.org.

Advice for Making the Most of Valentine's Day:

1. Be around friends. Get dressed up, buy yourself some flowers and go out to a nice place with your friends.

2. Find out what's going on in the Triangle. For example, White Memorial Presbyterian Church is doing a Hoedown on Feb. 11, and the Raleigh Baptist Association Singles Council is doing a dinner on Feb. 12.

3. Avoid finding any date to just have one. This leads nowhere, said Kris. If staying around is depressing, plan a fun trip to the beach or spend a day in the spa, but ask a friend to come with you.

4. Help out in your community. Valentine's Day isn't just about romantic relationships, its about all relationships. Visit nursing homes, homeless shelters or spend the day with a relative loving them. Hand out blankets to homeless people with heart shaped cookies attached, host a dinner in your home and ask folks to bring a person with them or get together with friends to make packages for those in the war.



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