



Every church, regardless of its size, is called to minister to single adults. To have an effective singles ministry, you need six things: (1) A program designed specifically for single adults that provides them a time when they can build relationships with each other. (2) Since everything rises and falls on leadership, good leadership is important. (3) A teacher who can lead single adults into the truths of God's Word and help them apply them to their lives. (4) Activities that give single adults a chance to interact with each other. (5) Bonding experiences, through small groups or retreats. (6) A positive identity for singles in the church. From Rich Hurst, Mclean Bible Church, Mclean, VA

The first organized singles ministry:

But as the believers rapidly multiplied, there were rumblings of discontent. Those who spoke Greek complained against those who spoke Hebrew, saying that their widows were being discriminated against in the daily distribution of food. So the Twelve called a meeting of all the believers. "We apostles should spend our time preaching and teaching the word of God, not administering a food program," they said. "Now look around among yourselves, brothers, and select seven men who are well respected and are full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. We will put them in charge of this business. Then we can spend our time in prayer and preaching and teaching the word." This idea pleased the whole group, and they chose the following: Stephen (a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit), Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas of Antioch (a Gentile convert to the Jewish faith, who had now become a Christian). These seven were presented to the apostles, who prayed for them as they laid their hands on them. God's message was preached in ever-widening circles. The number of believers greatly increased in Jerusalem, and many of the Jewish priests were converted, too. Acts: 6:1-7

The churches responsibility:

- Get to know the single adults in your church by name; know their children's names; learn about their lives.
- Use single adults in every part of the church. Although I do believe that having special programs for single adults is good so that their needs can be met, I also believe blending single adults into every aspect of the church is good, too. How better can a single adult who wishes to be married or a broken single parent see a successful marriage/family?
- Understand the various needs of single adults; not every single adult needs to be separated out or focused on. Some singles need to stay in blended classes and small groups so as they invite marrieds to church they can come to class together. Every community is different and needs to be evaluated on its own merit rather than simply adopting an approach that works for another church.
- Pray for our single adults.
- Understand the demographics of the single adults in the church as well as your city/community.
- Develop a desire to meet the needs of single adults through staff, training, programs, small groups, etc.

Rick Cole, pastor of Capitol Christian Center, Sacramento, Calif., saw two specific reasons to minister to singles. "First, many are hurting from the pain of divorce and need the love and care the church can provide. The church should be the place to turn to for healing and restoration. Second, many singles are poised to serve in various ministries of the church. They are gifted and hungry to make their lives count. We can release them into ministry to fulfill the call of God."

Who are the single adults in your church?

The following list represents single adults who may be in your community or congregation. Can you think of others? How might your congregation minister to some of these groups of individuals?

- Always been single
- Undergraduate or graduate students
- Community college students
- Young professionals
- Single parents with children under 18
- Single parents with children over 18
- Separated* singles
- Recently divorced
- Recently widowed
- Widowed, but do not consider themselves single
- Singles who choose to be single
- Singles with physical disabilities
- Singles caring for parents/relatives
- Single adults who are homosexual
- Single adults who have always been single but have adopted children
- Singles in military service
- Engaged persons
- Married* persons who live as singles (spouses of prisoners, spouses of partners who are ill and living elsewhere, spouses of those who travel extensively, etc.)

Main categories of single adults:

- Never married
 - Formerly married (divorced)
 - Widowed
 - Single parent
 - Separated* (the separated person is legally married but living a single lifestyle)
- *Separated legally or by choice is in no way legally single. The Singles Network Ministries does not endorse the inclusion of married adults into a single adult ministry. However, there needs to be a place for them as they may reconcile, need healing and/or restoration and support.

Become aware of special needs:

- Most single adults over 30 live alone and may not be able to meet financial obligations, home repair, health issues, babysitting needs, etc.
- If a single adult misses church one Sunday, will someone call and check on them?
- Be aware of churches that have single ministries you can work with (network).
- Some single adults have special needs mentally, physically, emotionally. They may not be ready to be in a single ministry.

Reaching single adults through marketing:

- Bulletin/website/brochures
- Inserts in the bulletin for special events
- Ads in various local papers or on the radio
- Direct mail or listings of anything anywhere to promote singles events
- Having single adults as greeters to look for other single adults or families
- Bring in a single adult speaker or a speaker who is single and successful
- Single Sunday every six to twelve months with after-church lunch open to all singles with a special speaker
- Have sermons that include single adults and various aspects of their lives.

Note: See the additional free resources at www.TheSinglesNetwork.org on how to market your ministry.

Become sensitive to your language:

- Single adults are not comfortable when the word "family" is used a lot. For example, call Family Night Supper, Church Fellowship Supper.
- Single parent "families" (they haven't stopped being a family just because one spouse is gone)
- Single "adult" versus just the word single
- Singles that are 18 to 28ish prefer "young adult." They say they aren't single, they just aren't married yet.
- Not every single adult wishes to be reminded of their singleness

Become sensitive to types of events and programs that exclude single adults:

- What is the overall attitudes of the church in relation to single adults?
- Do you have a lot of family- or spouse-focused events?
- Do you host Valentine's Day events that encourage a partner of some kind?
- Do you charge less for married couples for events than single adults?
- Do you assume that single adults need married folks to teach them or vice versa (should be who God has led into that position)?

So, how can you start ministering to single adults?

The Future

As you become aware of your single adults and start encouraging and educating your staff, you will continue to draw more single adults. They will grow and learn and contribute to the overall growth of this church. Eventually you can have a healthy, active and growing program.

- Start Sunday school/small group classes that meet various needs.
- Mentoring ministry
- Book, walking, sports clubs
- Leadership training for single adult leaders
- Single parent family ministry
- Divorce care/separation/kidscare ministry
- College/career ministry
- Outreach and inreach activities
- Conferences and retreats
- Program for interns from the local college to lead college/young adults
- Senior single ministry/grief share
- Service/mission projects

Note: Once you start to establish a ministry, it is critical that you have a pastor or single adult director you can devote full-time to single adults. Part-time interns from seminary are fine for help with specific areas under the single adult pastor/director but are not equipped to be leading the entire ministry. Singles will respond as you lead. If you give them someone who doesn't have time for them, doesn't understand them, and doesn't relate to them, then the commitment you receive from your singles will be unimpressive. Bottom line, we reap what we sow.

For more information on developing your single adult ministry as well as articles, websites and books of interest, go to www.TheSinglesNetwork.org Ministries.

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