

Single Adult Ministries

Handbook for Leaders



CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE



one by one
TOGETHER
SINGLE ADULT MINISTRIES

Single Adult Ministries **Handbook** for **Leaders**

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www.nazarene.org/ssm/adult/singles



You probably chose to read this Single Adult Ministries Handbook since you are involved in some aspect of Single Adult Ministries (SAM). This will be a challenging and rewarding experience as well as an exhausting and time consuming ministry. However, the benefits will far outweigh the challenges. SAM plays a vital role in helping churches meet the needs and expectations of single adults as they live the Christian single adult lifestyle, including for some of them the adjustment to new roles following death or divorce. Single Adult Ministries is one of many entry points into local churches. Any handbook that attempts to cover the unique nature of churches soon realizes the impossibility of that task.

Therefore, we have attempted to provide general principles and concepts. The reader and ministry leaders must then tailor them to fit individual churches. Most ministries and programs need some adjustments as they are implemented from one church to another.

This Handbook contains a wealth of information. You are encouraged to skim through it before reading specific sections. You may want to prioritize your reading to avoid feeling inundated with information. If you are beginning Single Adult Ministries, remember you cannot start everything at once. Start with small and simple programs and ministries. This does not mean, however, they are insignificant. As your support and leadership base grows, expand as needs and interests dictate.

The Handbook was also designed to be user-friendly. Unless otherwise noted, all materials are reproducible for use in your ministry and leadership training.

Population statistics regarding single adults continue to change. Remember that the number of single adults is over forty percent of the adult population in many countries. One church growth researcher states that over fifty percent of the unchurched population are single adults. All churches need to be aware of the single adult population in their communities and develop strategies to welcome single adults.

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Chapter One

Local Ministries

Today, people question the need for Single Adult Ministries. Considered by some as a passing fad of the 1970s and 1980s, churches tend to overlook the single adult population. Admittedly, there will be a larger number of single adults in metropolitan areas; however, single adults will be found in all locations.

Single adults comprise over 40 percent of the adult population 18 years of age and older. They also account for over 50 percent of the unchurched population. This group includes those who are divorced, never-married, and widowed. There is a growing group of single parents where the parent has never married. An increasing number of children are being placed with their fathers as the primary caregiver. The church must recognize the ministry needed by these groups of people and accept the opportunities they offer.

Divorce is a reality that affects families within the church and community. Death comes each day—often without time to prepare. In these times of crises, the church must be ready to minister. We minister better with a plan prepared before these crises occur. Many people are willing to minister to those in need, but feel inadequate. The needs for compassion, support, love, and a listening ear are always there. We need to realize these needs continue weeks and months after the actual crisis. The need for ministry is often long-term.

Kay Collier-Slone in *Single in the Church*¹, states there is a great need for the church at large to recognize that:

- Singleness is not a victim state.
- Singleness is not necessarily a temporary state.
- Singleness is not a lesser state.
- Singleness is not a threatening state.
- Singleness is a growing state.
- Singleness is not going away.
- Single adults go wherever they find a religious body which recognizes their needs—even if they have to go outside their own denomination.

Remember that single adults account for over 50 percent of the unchurched population. With this statistic in mind, one of the responsibilities of Single Adult Ministries is to educate the church regarding the issues, concerns, and needs of single adults. For many church leaders, singleness is not part of their experiences. Therefore, we as Single Adult Ministries leaders must educate them. One means of accomplishing this goal is to encourage single adults to form personal friendships with senior pastors and church leaders. Growing friendships will result in understanding better each other's perspective.

Single Adult Ministries Philosophy

We believe that single adults are important in God's eyes and are vital in His kingdom. We believe that singleness is a viable lifestyle and that God provides grace for living life as a Christian single adult.

Single Adult Ministries Purpose

The purpose of Single Adult Ministries is to:

- Minister to the unique needs of single adults through specific ministries such as divorce recovery, grief recovery, and single-parent family ministries.
- Equip single adults with the skills for living productive lives.
- Assist single adults during times of crises.
- Encourage ministry to others through involvement in the local congregation, service projects to the community, and mission trips.
- Integrate single adults into the total church program by using their gifts, talents, and abilities.

Single Adult Ministries Mission

The mission of Single Adult Ministries is to encourage Christians, to prepare them to share the good news of the Gospel, and to introduce others to Jesus Christ.

Single Adult Ministries Core Values

1. Salvation: Developing and maintaining an ever-growing relationship with Jesus Christ
2. Ministry: Using spiritual gifts through ministry
3. Growth: Fostering a community that facilitates spiritual formation
4. Relationships: Developing relationships with members of the church congregation
5. Christian Living: Encouraging single adults as they live the Christian single adult lifestyle
6. Education: Educating the church community regarding the Christian single adult lifestyle

Single Adult Ministries Logo

One—a word that describes single adults. One person to make the decisions. One person to complete the household chores. One person to plan for the future. One is a whole number and it is more than half of two.

One by one single adults come to our churches and ministries seeking to find acceptance, to learn more about Jesus, the single adult Leader of Christianity, to recover from divorce or the death of a spouse, and to form a network of friends. One by one, but together, these individuals have many gifts, talents, and abilities waiting to be used by the church. Together, they realize that they share many life experiences and that there's comfort, encouragement, and hope.

Single adults also seek incorporation into the local community of believers. Yet specific ministries and addressing unique single adult issues require time designed for single adults. These gatherings



should not preclude single adults from experiencing worship, fellowship, learning, and encouragement from the entire congregation.

Single adults come individually. Together they help complete the Body of Christ in local congregations around the world.

Local Director of Single Adult Ministries Job Description

The responsibilities of the local Single Adult Ministries director are:

1. To identify the single adults of the local congregation. This includes single parents, divorced, widowed, and never-married individuals.
2. To educate the Sunday School and Discipleship Ministries International Board to the need and importance of Single Adult Ministries.
3. To serve on and be responsible to the Adult Ministries Council of the Sunday School and Discipleship Ministries International Board.
4. To report, present proposals, and request funding from the Adult Ministries Council.
5. To determine, by using surveys, conversations, and other forms of input, the needs of the single adults in the local church.
6. To plan programs to meet the spiritual and social needs of single adults.
7. To form committees and work with the single adults in designing and implementing various programs.
8. To provide opportunities for single adults to minister to the members of the local congregation through specialized ministries and involvement in the total church program.
9. To provide opportunities for the local congregation to minister to single adults by meeting specific needs such as grief and divorce recovery, single-parenting skills, providing role models for children of single-parent homes, and meeting specific needs.
10. To establish if possible a library of books, CD's, magazines, and other resources to provide insights and support for successful Christian single adult living.
11. To cooperate with and promote district and general single adult activities.
12. To introduce non-Christian single adults to Jesus Christ.

What Is Single Adult Ministries?

This question was asked of a group of Single Adult Ministries leaders and resulted in a lengthy discussion. The following conclusions were drawn.

First, the nature of Single Adult Ministries is multi-faceted. Second, the range of individuals under the umbrella of Single Adult Ministries includes all adults, creating many challenges. And third, single adults include those who are divorced, never-married, and widowed — adding another dimension to the ministry.

SAM is ministry to all individuals without a spouse. The operative word in Single Adult Ministries is *adult*. This includes any single adult with an interest in the programs and ministry of SAM. Some are as young as eighteen, while others over eighty attend SAM events. Age is not a defining factor in SAM; interests, needs, and concerns lead people to SAM.

Single Adult Ministries will include a variety of ministries and programs. These include Divorce Recovery, Grief Recovery, Single-parent Family Ministries, and Remarriage Preparations to name a

few. Stepfamilies are an emerging area of ministry as these families seek to form a healthy family unit that doesn't fit the traditional family models.

Insights into Single Adult Ministries

Single Adult Ministries leaders, magazine articles, and books contain much information on the way people within the church view single adults.²

1. Single adults are the church. The growth rate for the single adult population continues. Over 40 percent of the adult population are single adults. This includes individuals over 18 years of age that are divorced, never-married, or widowed. A church on the growing-edge includes single adults in its ministry. Single adults comprise over 50 percent of the unchurched population.
2. Single adults may threaten many people in the church. The divorced and widowed individuals often feel this most keenly. They find their friends and acquaintances don't know how to treat them when they no longer are part of a couple. Never-married individuals often feel they are not treated as peers.
3. Single Adult Ministries is bigger than a program for single adults. Single Adult Ministries is an outreach arm of the church. Divorce and grief recovery programs often bring community members to the church in times of crises. As needs are met, love and compassion expressed, and acceptance given, many join the mainstream of the congregation. Often this leads to a personal relationship with Jesus and involvement in other ministries and programs.
4. One umbrella program will not work for all Single Adult Ministries. Each congregation brings its unique group of single adults. The age range of Single Adult Ministries often determines the direction of the program. When implementing ideas from other Single Adult Ministries, be sure to adapt them to your congregation.
5. Single Adult Ministries is part of Adult Ministries, with adult as the operative word. In the past, some viewed single adults as oversized teenagers. This is based on memories or media images of singleness that many married people hold. Their recollections of singleness are based in pre-marriage years when they were young and perhaps immature.
6. Transition is a fact of life in Single Adult Ministries. This is partly because divorce and death create transitions and partly because businesses find that moving some single people is cheaper and often less disruptive than moving families. Some transitions come naturally to all adults—aging, job changes, empty nest syndrome, financial changes, etc.
7. Single Adult Ministries can be a renewing force within your congregation. Many people find single adults very open to learning about God. Perhaps it reflects their disappointments with other means of meeting needs. Some retreat and revival speakers find single adults very receptive to God's message and allowing Him to work in and through their lives. Single adults may lead the church in the next great revival.

Common Myths about Single Adults

Effective ministry starts with education rather than programming. It is often necessary to take an honest look at the stereotypes and misconceptions held by the congregation that may limit the effectiveness of ministry to single adults. Some myths still exist today—even with the growing acceptance of singleness.

Single adults have more money than couples. It is more accurate to say, “Single adults have more discretionary use of their money. That is, there is only one person making decisions regarding expenditures.” The flip side of that statement is that there is only one person to earn the income. Options to increase money are limited, typically involving cutbacks or getting a second (perhaps third) job. Some single adults, especially single parents and retired persons, live at or below the poverty level.

Single adults have more time than couples. All of us have 24 hours in the day. It is true that some single adults exercise control over how time is spent—particularly those without children or whose active parenting days are passed. Couples share household chores. Single adults complete the same chores without assistance.

There is something wrong or single adults would get married. Many Christian single adults are single by default. That is they have established and maintained dating standards that limit the dating pool. Limiting dating partners to Christians is one example. Other qualifiers only serve to narrow the field. Rather than questioning the sexual orientation or thinking something is wrong, these individuals need to be encouraged, applauded, and affirmed.

Single men are not capable of taking care of themselves. Perhaps in the past this was a realistic assessment. However, today’s men share household chores—regardless of their marital status. Some men grew up in homes where they learned at an early age to care for themselves by doing their laundry and preparing meals.

Single adults are sexually frustrated and more prone to engage in deviant sexual behavior. According to *Single Adult Passages*, single adults listed sexuality issues fifth as a problem area. Today’s society causes all individuals to face sexual temptations.

Marriage is God’s highest calling for all men and women. Actually, God’s highest calling is to live Spirit-filled lives. Our Christianity is based on the death and resurrection of a single adult, Jesus. Another single adult, Paul, wrote much of the New Testament. A quick historical review of many of the Church of the Nazarene colleges and universities include single adults who dedicated their lives to these institutions. Remove the single adults from responsibilities in local congregations and some would need assistance in many areas.

All single adults are lonely. Single adults do not have the corner on the loneliness market. It is an issue that everyone faces at various times. Some single adults have learned to turn their loneliness into aloneness and solitude with God. However, all people long for community and belonging. God created us as social beings.

Realities about Single Adult Ministries

There are some realities about Single Adult Ministries (SAM) that leaders must face. Understanding these unique aspects of the ministry help leaders avoid frustration.

1. *Some single adults are transient.* Freedom and mobility are often listed high as advantages of singleness. Some companies recognize the cost effectiveness of transferring a single person as opposed to a family. Other single adults maintain steady places of residence, employment, and church involvement. Some younger single adults move as a result of changes in roommates or economic status.
2. *There is no perfect SAM group.* It is impossible for one group to meet all the needs of single adults. Some groups find the niche to be recovery programs, for issues of death or divorce. Others develop ministries to single-parent families. Some attract college age and career age single adults. Find your niche and develop it. Does this mean single adults will leave your church to attend another one? No, if their spiritual needs are met within the congregation, many will stay. Some will attend larger groups for fellowships and other reasons. Yet, the local church provides them with a place to minister.
3. *Much of the work of SAM is a healing ministry.* Many single adults come to churches in times of crises, such as death or divorce. Other single adults need emotional and spiritual healing. These result from experiences as well as grieving the loss of hopes and dreams. Many need to see themselves as God does—forgiven and cleansed. SAM must help develop wholeness to provide new hopes and dreams.
4. *SAM is not a one-person job.* Single adults are not overgrown teens needing to have every minute planned and supervised. Single adults must feel ownership of the programs and ministries if they are to succeed. Many handle responsible jobs during the week and then struggle with the lack of responsibility for the ministry. As Christians, we are not called to be the “Lone Ranger.”
5. *SAM requires planning.* A strong program requires advance organization and planning. One single adult leader recommends a year’s worth of planning, promotion, and prayer before beginning a new ministry.
6. *Some use SAM as a safe place to play the dating game.* While this is not the objective of SAM, facing this reality helps when members marry. It may be necessary to confront some individuals regarding improper behavior since some attend various groups with dating as a primary goal.

Ministry to Single-parent Families

James 1:27 states, “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows [single-parent families] in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.”

Single parents, with children under the age of 18, number almost 20 million or 10 percent of all adults over 18 years of age. Mothers are the primary caregiver in over 16 million of these homes while fathers provide primary care in slightly more than 3 million.

One of the easiest means of ministry to single-parent families is to provide a group that meets on Sunday mornings. This eliminates the need for childcare since children are involved in other ministries of the church. Theresa McKenna, a leader in ministry to single-parent families, suggests that if the issue of childcare is not addressed, you may as well not discuss single-parent family ministries. McKenna offers the following suggestions for ministry to single-parent families:

- ✓ For single-parent families formed as a result of divorce, it is important to involve the children in an intentional healing experience. Frequently, the children feel responsible for the breakup of their parents' marriage and they need assistance in discovering it was not their fault.
- ✓ Connect single-parent families with two-parent families. This provides opportunity for children to see what a two-parent family looks like.
- ✓ Understand the increasing importance of Single-parent Family Ministries. Single parents head one-third of families, yet 95 percent of these families do not attend church.
- ✓ Realize it is an outreach ministry. A major responsibility will be increasing awareness of the needs of single-parent families and how to minister to them effectively.
- ✓ Remind single parents that God loves their families, too.
- ✓ Encourage them in their roles as single parents.

Additional suggestions include:

- ✓ Establishing an emergency fund to help with needs not met through other resources.
- ✓ Setting up scholarship funds to help single parents attend unaffordable church activities and training.
- ✓ Providing occasional time-out for single parents by planning an activity for the children.
- ✓ Identifying individuals within the local congregation to assist with basic maintenance and other household needs.
- ✓ Implementing a mentoring program to provide role models.

How to Begin Single Adult Ministries in Your Congregation

There are three stages of Single Adult Ministries. It is important to take time to complete each stage and work through all three. Just like a church plant, there is much work that is done behind the scenes for months, even as long as a year, before the first organized event occurs.

The first stage is *Informal*. In this stage, there is little organization, most probably none, with many gatherings seeming to just happen as single adults find themselves together. This stage may begin with one person or a small group attempting to identify and name single adults in the congregation and forming a network.

The second stage is *Occasional*. Some organization will develop as a calendar may be planned with regular events such as lunch together on specific Sundays of each month, attending church functions as a group, or gathering for Bible studies. During this stage, you will observe a leadership group forming and the development of core meetings.

The final stage is *Structured*. This includes establishing a council or committee to develop and implement an organized Single Adult Ministries. Included at the end of this chapter are worksheets to aid you. They include a tool to determine how ready your congregation is to begin Single Adult Ministries, a sheet for recording the results of brainstorming sessions, and a checklist for events.

The Director of Adult Ministries is to nominate the Director of Single Adult Ministries with the approval of the Pastor and the Sunday School Superintendent. The director will be elected by the Sunday School and Discipleship Ministries International Board and serve on the Adult Ministries Council.

In the *informal stage*, begin to identify the single adults in your church. Be sure the congregation understands that single adults include the divorced and widowed as well as never-married persons. Ask congregation members to provide names of single adults that do not attend church. Check the

class rolls of the children's department for single parents. These are two excellent sources of potential members.

As the ministry moves to the *occasional stage*, plan an organizational meeting. You will need to have done background work first. See "Does Our Church Need a Single Adult Ministries?" at the end of this chapter.

Survey the single adults to identify needs, interests, best times to meet, etc. Depending on the size of the church, you may wish to invite a select group to serve as a committee. Include persons to represent the divorced, never-married, widowed, and single parent. Whenever possible, select people that meet more than one requirement. Attempt to include individuals from varying age groups.

At the beginning of the *structured stage*, continue meeting with the committee established during the "occasional stage." See "Leadership Team Brainstorming Session" at the end of this chapter. Take a survey of the single adults in the congregation. Prior to the meeting, tally the results of the survey and have a copy for each person present. (See the section entitled "We Want to Know You Better" and "Interest Survey.") Appoint a secretary to record ideas. Make people feel comfortable in brainstorming; accept all ideas then choose the ones most adaptable to your needs. Select people to help start the ministry. You may be more successful if you ask for a specific amount of time, such as three months or six months. See the section entitled "Brainstorming Session Results."

Plan the first meeting (see "Entry Event Worksheet" and "Quality Program Checklist"). Make it appealing. You might show a film, have a speaker, a dinner, etc. Include a get acquainted activity and allow time for socializing. Enlist a welcoming committee that helps people feel comfortable. Watch for the person who tends to be a loner.

Within a few days of the initial meeting, meet with the committee or council to evaluate the program. Determine the things that worked well and what needs to be done to improve others. If a program does not work, use it as a learning experience and move on.

While it is necessary to meet to address the unique needs and concerns of single adults, they must also be involved in the total church program. Single adults must feel part of the total church congregation and family. Watch the church's programming, making sure that single adults are included in all aspects. You may need to talk with church leaders if single adults express concerns about some programs. Education is part of your role. Remember that education may include informing single adults regarding the purpose of some programs and ministries as well as educating church and ministry leaders about single adult concerns.

Occasionally, you may wish to include some married couples in your activities. This will help single adults to become acquainted with them as well as providing role models for the single-parent children.

Encourage single adults and couples to exchange baby-sitting. This would include those without children, single parents, and couples. The goal would be to provide baby-sitters with minimal expense to allow parents to participate in activities without the children.

A Single Adult Ministries Council

Depending on the size of the single adult group, you may want to establish a single adult council. Most Single Adult Ministries experts recommend that this group be selected with definite reasons for each person. If the meeting is open to anyone, be sure you personally invite those you want involved. See "Does Our Church Need a Single Adult Ministry?" and "Leadership Team Brainstorming Session."

Refer to “What to Say to a Potential Volunteer” for help as you talk with the people you want on the leadership team.

Specify the time involvement (two or three meetings of 90 minutes) and purpose (to dream and formulate the basis for your Single Adult Ministries.)

Purpose: To provide more single adult leadership, assistance in planning and administration, representation of various single adult groups, and ownership in the program.

Organization: Determine the most effective means of representation. Include the divorced, never-married, widowed, and single parent. Be sure all age groups are represented. Determine the method of election or selection and length of office (one year, two years, and number of consecutive terms).

The council shoulders the responsibility for the preparation, promotion, and administration of the programs. Members may chair various committees or be responsible for a committee’s work. Remember you are working with adults. The more ownership they feel for the ministry, the more effective it will be. Give the council the authority to make the dreams become reality. Single Adult Ministries is ministry **with** single adults—not **for** or **to** them.

Plan the terms of office to allow the turnover to be no more than half. This provides experienced leadership while others are learning.

Single Adult Ministries Treasurer

Working with the local director of Single Adult Ministries, the treasurer should prepare an annual budget. The budget should project the income and expenditures for the fiscal year. The fiscal year for Single Adult Ministries should be the same as that of the local church. The budget should also include funds provided through the local church’s operating budget.

Since Single Adult Ministries is an entity of the local congregation, Single Adult Ministries should follow procedures established for other entities of the church such as Nazarene Youth International, Nazarene Missions International, and others that maintain financial records. The responsibility of the Single Adult Ministries treasurer is to maintain careful accounting of all money received and disbursed.

Monies received through Single Adult Ministries should be funneled through the church treasurer. The responsibility of the treasurer of Single Adult Ministries is to maintain careful accounting of all monies received and disbursed. Should the records of the Single Adult Ministries and church treasurer be in disagreement, these individuals shall work together to identify and correct discrepancies. In instances where Single Adult Ministries has a separate checking account, the treasurer shall prepare a monthly accounting of monies received and disbursed. A copy shall be submitted to the church treasurer, Adult Ministries director, Sunday School superintendent, and pastor.

Single Adult Ministries should have reasonable reserve funds for unexpected expenditures. The amount of this reserve fund will vary with each local church.

We Want to Know You Better⁴

The following will help us to know your interests. This will not obligate you in any way.

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____ City _____

State _____ Zip _____ Email: _____

Age: ☐ under 24 ☐ 25-35 ☐ 36-45 ☐ 46-55 ☐ 56-65 ☐ 66 or older

Check all that apply:

☐ never-married ☐ single parent ☐ divorced ☐ widowed

Time: (Check the day and time that would allow you to attend most meetings)

☐ Monday ☐ Tuesday ☐ Wednesday ☐ Thursday ☐ Friday ☐ Saturday

☐ Morning ☐ Afternoon ☐ Evening

How could Single Adult Ministries best meet your needs? Please rank the following items according to need with 1 being top priority.

☐ Fellowship

☐ Bible Study and prayer

☐ Self-improvement

☐ Service opportunities

☐ I would prefer to meet at someone's home (☐ I would be willing to open my home for meetings.)

OR . . .

☐ I would prefer to meet either at church or a meeting room of a restaurant.

I would like to participate in:

☐ book reviews ☐ Bible studies ☐ sports ☐ fellowship (how often?) _____

☐ support groups ☐ service projects ☐ other activities—please specify _____

Does Our Church Need a Single Adult Ministry?⁵

1. What is the reason for starting Single Adult Ministries in our church? _____

Who is asking for the ministry?

2. How many single adults already attend our church? _____

- live in the church's neighborhood? _____ - in the community? _____

3. How many single adults are members of our church? _____

What are their approximate age groups? _____

4. What is the attitude of the senior pastor toward Single Adult Ministries? _____

What is the attitude of the congregation toward single adults? _____

5. Is there financial support in the church budget for Single Adult Ministries? _____

6. What resources are available in our church and community to help our Single Adult Ministry?

7. Who will be part of the leadership team to brainstorm and create Single Adult Ministries?

8. What is our definition of Single Adult Ministries? _____

Leadership Team Brainstorming Session⁶

1. Who will you invite to serve on the leadership team for Single Adult Ministries? Do these people represent a broad cross section of the single adults in the congregation and community? Do you have a reason for inviting each one? _____

2. Who will facilitate the leadership team's brainstorming sessions? _____

What is the proposed agenda (purpose) of the leadership team? _____

3. When and where will the sessions take place? _____

Brainstorming Session Results⁷

1. What purpose statement did the leadership team develop for Single Adult Ministries? _____

2. What two to four areas of Single Adult Ministries did the leadership team target? In what order were they prioritized? _____

3. Have you updated the senior pastor about the leadership team sessions results? What feedback did you receive? _____

THE NEXT STEP:

4. Who will be part of the leadership core for the first event of your Single Adult Ministries? _____

Quality Program Checklist⁸

Meeting Room or Location

- ☐ Clean and well-lit?
- ☐ Adequate number of chairs and tables?
- ☐ Easy to find?
- ☐ Adequate instructions in publicity for finding the location?
- ☐ Enough parking?
- ☐ Location clearly marked with signs?

Greeters

- ☐ Adequate number?
- ☐ Arrive early?
- ☐ Sufficient instructions or training on how to be a greeter?
- ☐ Registration table present?
- ☐ Name tags and pens available?
- ☐ Literature about Single Adult Ministries and the church in general available?
- ☐ Newcomers not embarrassed by too much attention?

Actual Event

- ☐ Provided what was promised in the publicity?
- ☐ Began on time?
- ☐ Ended on time?
- ☐ All program's needs (flip charts and markers, overhead projector, handouts, etc.) set-up prior to the meeting?
- ☐ Program details fulfilled?
- ☐ Child care (if needed) offered safely and sufficiently?
- ☐ Refreshments plentiful and appropriate?

Other special needs or circumstances? _____

Your overall rating of this event: _____

What could be done to improve this event in the future? _____

Entry Event Worksheet⁹

Who is our target group? _____

What are their needs, issues, or interests? _____

Who is on the leadership team for this event? _____

What are the essentials in setting up this event? _____

How is this event connected to the total life of the church? _____

How will we evaluate and strategize following the event? _____

Special Notes:

All About Single Adult Ministries¹⁰

Single Adult Ministries is a very rewarding part of our church. As we plan, organize, and develop programs, we need your ideas and concerns.

What do you see as the predominant need of single adults? _____

How can the church best meet these needs? _____

What kind of ministry programs would benefit you most? _____

In what areas of Single Adult Ministries would you like to be more involved? _____

What is a new area of ministry you would like to see Single Adult Ministries implement? _____

Would you be interested in serving on the Single Adult Ministries council? _____

Additional Comments: _____

1 Kay Collier-Slone, *Single in the Church*, New York: The Alban Institute, 1992), p. 88-89.

2 See “Common Myths about Single Adults” and “Realities about Single Adults” in Chapter Two.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

Chapter Two

District Ministries

District Single Adult Ministries Director Job Description

The responsibilities of the district Single Adult Ministries director are:

1. To become acquainted with the resources available through the Regional and Global Single Adult Ministries office.
2. To serve as a resource person to the local Single Adult Ministries director.
3. To share information received from the Regional and General Coordinator of Single Adult Ministries with the local directors.
4. To inform the Adult Ministries Council of the Sunday School and Discipleship Ministries International Board about the opportunities and responsibilities of ministry to single adults.
5. To provide single adults on the district opportunities for ministry, such as involvement in children's camp, Work and Witness for new churches, etc.
6. To identify a single adult in each local church to assist in publicizing and following up district, regional, and general Single Adult Ministries activities.
7. To form, if possible, a council to assist in planning and implementing various programs.
8. To encourage and assist the implementation of Single Adult Ministries in each local church.
9. To serve on and be responsible to the Adult Council of the Sunday School and Discipleship Ministries International Board.
10. To report at each meeting of the Adult Council planned activities and summaries of previous activities.
11. To promote and publicize district, regional, and general activities through district newsletters.
12. To develop, if possible, a single adult newsletter to promote better communication on the district.
13. To share ideas and concerns with the regional and general coordinators of Single Adult Ministries.
14. To enlist the help and support of local single adult leaders.

Making Single Adult Ministries Work on your District

Refer to the philosophy, purpose, mission, and core values for Single Adult Ministries in chapter one. Use these statements as a basis for developing similar statements for your district. You are free to modify them to reflect the uniqueness of the district. Developing these statements provides a standard when planning events and activities for the district. They offer guidelines to keep the ministry focused. Periodically review and modify the statements as goals are achieved and new needs identified.

SAM addresses many needs. Some will be social, others focus on spiritual growth and development, and others respond to emotional needs. All of these are legitimate and require attention.

Single adults gravitate toward churches that minister to their spiritual needs and offer ministry opportunities. These same individuals often will travel to socialize with other single adults and to form a network of friends that understand and share common challenges and experiences. Dr. Jerry Porter,

General Superintendent, reminds us that something “electrifying happens when single adults gather to worship their Leader—who was also a single adult.” The sense of community reminds Christian single adults they are not alone—either as single adults or as Christians.

District gatherings may be more vital to persons from the smaller churches and those who live in communities with fewer single adults than large urban areas. For these individuals, the opportunity to mingle with other single adults breaks the sense of isolation and leads to encouraging networks and friendships—many that last for years.

As the result of district events and friendships, some pastors and church leaders may experience concerns about single adults leaving smaller churches to attend larger churches that offer more single adult activities and ministries. Based on experience and conversations with individuals reflective of this scenario, they continue to attend the church that provides spiritual nourishment and ministry involvement.

Identify churches that have some level of Single Adult Ministry and the leaders. Attempt to identify a single adult contact person in each congregation. These individuals will assist in promoting events and distributing information to the single adults in local churches. When possible, develop a newsletter. Include in the district newsletter information from *Single Purpose*, the Single Adult Ministries’ web-based newsletter at AMC, Adult Ministries Connection, and information gathered from resources available through the Single Adult Ministries office and your own sources.

Capitalize on district events to promote Single Adult Ministries. Create a display that makes resources available, announces upcoming events, and uses various forms of technology to display pictures from past activities. Present workshops at Sunday School Conventions. Plan one-day seminars that educate pastors regarding Single Adult Ministries. Encourage pastors’ attendance by offering CEU (Continuing Education Units).

Attend and report to the District Adult Ministries Council. Become an active member and encourage single adults to attend all district events. Present the district’s philosophy, purpose, and mission statements.

Work to develop a district resource library, drawing from the Single Adult Ministries Annotated Bibliography for suggestions.

Single Adult Ministries District Council

The purpose of a District Single Adult Ministries Council is to involve more people in the planning process, to give representation from various sized churches and locations, and to provide ownership of district programs. The job of a district director is too large for one person to handle effectively.

Determine the most effective means of representation. This may be by zones or a selection from small, medium, and large churches as well as urban, suburban, and rural areas. Include the divorced, never-married, widowed, and single parent. Submit the names to the District Adult Ministries Director for approval. The district Adult Ministries Director is an ex-officio member of the council.

Elect a treasurer from the council to handle all finances. SAM is not a money-making organization, yet it should be self-supporting.

Can Every Church on My District Have Single Adult Ministries?

What an excellent question! While every church on your district may not have an organized Single Adult Ministries program, each church must minister to single adults. Because of size, location, and population, SAM will vary from church to church.

Consider that almost one-half of the adult population, defined as those over 18, is single. Single adults comprise over 50 percent of the unchurched population. Can any church that wishes to grow neglect this segment? Single Adult Ministries includes divorced and widowed persons along with those who have never-married. Sometimes it is necessary to remind people that the divorced and widowed are single. It soon becomes obvious that the needs and interests cover a wide variety of topics.

Sometimes, the divorced and widowed face grief issues. Single parents struggle with a new lifestyle and often a reduced income. Never-married persons wonder what their role in the church is as the “traditional family” is elevated to a high position.

Young single adults, 24-35, often don’t view themselves as single adults. They just aren’t married yet. Somewhere in the mid-thirties, they begin to consider that singleness may be a longer-term lifestyle than originally thought. The number of women choosing to adopt or to use medical technology to have a child is growing. It is not our responsibility to judge the validity of their choices; it is our responsibility to show Jesus’ love to them and their children.

Single-parent families offer the church opportunities to invest in the lives of children as role models. All children, whether from a single-parent home or not, need the attention, support, and prayers of many adults. Today’s society exposes children to issues most of us faced when our coping skills were more developed.

It is true that every church on your district may not have an organized SAM program. It is most important that each church minister to single adults. This may include referring them to programs in other churches. Many single adults choose to attend a smaller church where they minister in various responsibilities. They also are actively involved in Single Adult Ministries in another church. Remember single adults attend church where their needs are met.

Analysis of Your District

1. How many churches on the district have Single Adult Ministries? _____

2. What size churches make up your district? How many churches have attendance of
____ under 49 ____ 50-99 ____ 100-199 ____ 200-299 ____ 300-499 ____ 500-699 ____ 700-999
____ 1000-2500 ____ 2500+

3. What does your district do now to minister to single adults? _____

4. Have you discussed the need for Single Adult Ministries with the district Adult Ministries and
Sunday School Ministries directors? _____

5. What are the needs of the single adults on your district? _____

6. How can District Single Adult Ministries help meet the needs? _____

7. What do you think the single adults on your district want? _____

8. What can you discover from the daily newspaper and other magazines about the needs of single
adults? _____

Leadership Team Brainstorming Session ³

1. Who will you invite to serve on the leadership team for Single Adult Ministries? Do these people represent a broad cross section of the single adults on the district? Do you have a reason for inviting each one? _____

2. Who will facilitate the leadership team's brainstorming sessions? _____

3. What is the proposed agenda (purpose) of the leadership team? _____

4. When and where will the sessions take place? _____

Brainstorming Sessions Results⁴

1. What purpose statement did the leadership team develop for Single Adult Ministries? _____

2. What two to four areas of Single Adult Ministries did the leadership team target? In what order were they prioritized? _____

3. Have you updated the Adult Ministries Council about the leadership team session results? What feedback did you receive? _____

4. The Next Step: Who will be part of the leadership core for the first event of your Single Adult Ministries? _____

Quality Program Checklist⁵

Meeting Room or Location

- ☐ Clean and well-lit
- ☐ Adequate number of chairs and tables
- ☐ Easy to find
- ☐ Adequate instructions in publicity for finding the location
- ☐ Enough parking
- ☐ Location clearly marked with signs

Greeters

- ☐ Adequate number
- ☐ Arrive early
- ☐ Sufficient instructions or training on how to be a greeter
- ☐ Registration table
- ☐ Name tags and pens available
- ☐ Literature about Single Adult Ministries and the church in general available
- ☐ Newcomers not embarrassed by too much attention Actual Event
- ☐ Provided what was promised in the publicity
- ☐ Began on time
- ☐ Ended on time
- ☐ All program's needs (flip charts and markers, overhead projector, handouts, etc.) set up prior to the meeting
- ☐ Program details fulfilled
- ☐ Child care (if needed) offered safely and sufficiently
- ☐ Refreshments plentiful and appropriate

Other special needs or circumstances _____

Your overall rating of this event _____

Chapter Three

ABC's of Single Adult Ministry

A—

Acceptance—Single adults, like everyone else, need to know they are accepted and valued by the church community. They also need for others to accept singleness as a viable life style.

Accountability—As a single adult, it is easy for me to think the world revolves around me. After all, I'm the only adult making most decisions that affect my life. It is important to have someone who questions how I invest my time, money, and energy. Single adults with children may have some accountability. Yet the need remains for an adult who keeps me focused.

Affirmation—The Christian community appears to hold marriage as the preferred status. This may create challenges for single adults as they seek affirmation for their singleness. Many single adults are single by default; that is, they didn't decide to remain single for an extended season. They established dating standards and determined living the Christian lifestyle as a high priority.

Adult—The operative word in Single Adult Ministries is adult. Descriptors such as over-sized teenagers, irresponsible, fickle, and so on are no more applicable to single adults than to married adults. Often single adults hold positions of responsibility in the workplace, but find themselves in lesser roles in the church world.

B—

Bible Study — One of the major purposes of SAM is to bring people into a relationship with Jesus and to encourage spiritual growth and development. This happens best through Bible studies. Book studies addressing single adult issues and applications are a good option, too.

Boundaries—Some people have difficulty establishing and maintaining good boundaries. Some need to know that it is okay to decline opportunities presented by people within the church.

Budgeting—Many need assistance in planning and adhering to a budget. Budgeting is something we hear much about, but often lack the skills to implement. Additionally, living on one income presents challenges since there are fewer discretionary dollars.

Burn-out—Some tend to see single adults as having more time than other adults. Unfortunately, the reality is that everyone has a 24-hour day. Single adults need to know it is all right to say no in order to avoid burnout. For other single adults, burn-out may be related to their roles as parents. Therefore, an effective SAM needs to minister to single parents by providing some respite.

C—

Community— There is a sense of community that develops among single adults that is not replicated in other ministries. Perhaps it reflects the willingness to depend on others during difficult times. Many single adults see the community formed by SAM as important as family relationships.

Compassion—Single adults need to receive compassion during challenging times. As they receive compassion, they are able to give it to others in need. This means offering a listening ear, giving encouragement and support, meeting specific needs, and a multitude of possibilities.

Counseling—There will be people involved in SAM that need to use the services of professional counselors. However, many single adults benefit from having the attention of a willing listener. There are some issues that may be easily resolved by putting the situation into words.

Contentment—Paul expressed it well when he wrote, “for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances” (Phil. 4:11b). Contentment is a decision that is made sometimes day-by-day and moment-by-moment. Like people everywhere, some single adults are more content than others. They need to hear that contentment is a decision.

Celebrate—Single adults need people to celebrate their successes. A new job, a new car, moving into a new apartment, and many other occasions need to be celebrated. In a family structure, these happen more naturally as family members share excitement and joy. Single adults depend on friends to help celebrate. Find reasons to celebrate.

D—

Divorce recovery—Many identify divorce recovery as a life-saver while navigating the troubled waters of divorce. Also remember that children are affected by their parents’ divorce. They can benefit from a program that helps them to understand what is happening, to realize they were not responsible, and to know that others have survived.

Dating discussions—Entering the dating arena as an adult following divorce or death is scary. There are general concepts regarding dating as teens and young adults, but fewer guidelines for adult dating. General discussions are helpful as people understand their fears and concerns are shared by others.

Diversity—No other ministry in the church involves such a wide age range. Considering the unique needs of the divorced, never-married, and widowed is staggering. Yet everyone is united by singleness. Use the diversity to share commonalities, to gain new insights, and to learn how to apply concepts to different circumstances.

E—

Evangelism—One of the core values of SAM is to bring people into a relationship with Jesus and to encourage spiritual growth and development.

Encouragement—Everyone benefits from encouragement and it is an important element of every ministry. This is especially true of SAM as people adjust to a new lifestyle and learn to live life as single adults.

Education—Informing the congregation is a key element in SAM. Just when I think people understand who single adults are, I hear about a group that only identifies single adults as those who have never married. Educate the congregation to understand that all persons without a spouse are single adults, regardless if they are divorced, never-married, or widowed. Education also needs to include the unique challenges of the single adult lifestyle, especially as Christians. Help church leaders to understand terms and other aspects of church life that tend to be exclusive of single adults. For

example, banquets where the cost of an individual ticket is more than half the cost of tickets for couples.

Empathy—Even though people haven't experienced a particular situation, they are capable of understanding based on similar circumstances. For example, I haven't experienced the death of a spouse; I have experienced loss and the death of relatives and friends. I can empathize with those grieving the death of a spouse, without having walked that particular path.

F—

Friendships—Single adults value their friendships. Many single adults depend as much on friends as they do family members. Some depend on friends more than family. SAM is also a good place for developing cross-gender friendships, without romantic overtones.

Forgiveness—Many single adults need to know and understand that God's love didn't stop when they experienced death, divorce, or whatever sin they deem as unforgivable. They long to experience God's love and forgiveness.

Freedom—After receiving forgiveness, some need to discover the freedom that comes with knowing Jesus. Freedom from past sins, freedom to begin a new chapter in life as a Christian single adult, freedom to discover who they are in Christ, and freedom to use their gifts, talents, and abilities in the church are some examples.

Faith-building—Stories of how God has worked in the lives of single adults serves to encourage our faith. Telling stories of God's love, grace, and mercy at work strengthens others' faith.

G—

Growth—Single adults need to use their gifts, talents, and abilities to further God's kingdom. Growth as individuals work through the grief of their crushed hopes and broken dreams. Growth as single adults find ministry opportunities within SAM and the congregation.

Grief recovery—Ministry to the grieving individuals is a relatively new aspect of SAM. Too often, we understand grief as something experienced later in life. However, many people have experiences that cause them to grieve; some related to death and others the result of downsizing, moving, loss of friendships, and many other experiences. People need to learn to grieve the small losses in life to prepare them for grieving the significant losses.

Goal-setting—Learning to set new goals is an important part of the grieving process. Life is forever changed by death and the loss of hopes and dreams. New goals must be set; some will need encouragement and assistance as they set realistic goals.

Gateway—SAM often serves as a gateway into the Body of Christ. This may result as people accept Jesus as Savior, as they transition into other ministries, and as they discover life after traumatic experiences.

H—

Healthy people—One of the myths regarding single adults relates to their emotional health. Admittedly, individuals come to SAM in times of crisis following death, divorce, single-parent family issues, and

a variety of other events. Along with these individuals are single adults who have experience recovery from similar events as well as emotionally healthy people. Our responsibility is to treat the unhealthy and encourage the healthy.

Helping others—Ministering to others is a vital part of most recovery processes. Many people involved in helping others experience personal benefits as they reach beyond personal needs to assist others.

Healing—Many adults have experiences that require some type of healing. As people experience healing, they are able to minister to those facing similar circumstances.

Hope—Some single adults have experienced events that have left them devoid of hope. For some, the loss of hope reflects broken dreams while others find the true Source of hope in Jesus.

Holiday awareness—Many cultures emphasize holidays as family time. For those without family, estranged from them, or separated geographically, the holidays present challenges. These challenges involve all adults, regardless of their marital status. However, those who are experiencing the holidays for the first time as single-again may find themselves wondering how to cope.

I—

Instruction—There are skills needed to live as successful, healthy single adults. SAM is the best place to learn them. There are myths regarding singleness that need to be removed and replaced with truths about life as a single adult. Others need instruction on how to live as Christians. Still others need help with practical day-to-day living skills such as budgeting, financial planning, parenting as a single adult, and other issues.

Identity—Since much of the Christian world assumes that adults find identity in roles as husbands/fathers and wives/mothers, it may be difficult for single adults to determine who they are in the Christian community. Every adult needs to understand that true identity comes through a relationship with Jesus.

Intimacy—Intimacy is often used synonymously for sexual intercourse. However, there are intimate relationships that aren't sexual. True intimacy is found as people share their stories, hopes, and dreams with others who value the shared information.

Internet—Stories abound of people, regardless of marital status, whose lives have been destroyed or radically changed through internet usage. An additional area of concern is online match-maker services and chat rooms. While there are many positive benefits of the internet, individuals need to be aware of the dangers of it, too.

Intergenerational—SAM by definition includes a wide age range as well as diversity in socio-economic, educational, and work areas. Yet, it is one of the few, if not only, place that people from such diverse background come together and form community. The younger people need to hear the stories of those who are farther along in life's journey. The older individuals enjoy the life and energy of those younger than they. Capitalize on the opportunity to bring the generations together to learn and share.

J—

Jesus—SAM is built on a spiritual foundation. The uniqueness of SAM is spiritual growth and development in our relationships with Jesus. Without Jesus as part of our ministry, we are no different than secular groups.

Joy—As Christians, we know our source of joy is our relationship with Jesus. Use all the events of SAM to bring people face-to-face with Jesus.

K—

Kindness—Some will come to SAM events needing to receive some kindness. Events in their life, personal and professional, may create the need for some kind words.

Kids—The children of single parents are often overlooked; or we assume their needs are being addressed through Children's Ministries. However, they may not receive help in dealing with the death of a parent or their parent's divorce. Recovery ministries that also address the needs of the children will benefit the family. Additionally, some SAM events should be designed to include children. Also, consider child-care when planning events. Perhaps SAM and NYI can work together to provide child-care.

L—

Laughter—Following many SAM events, I hear attendees comment about how they enjoyed and needed the times of laughter. While the need for a merry heart is good, life often puts people in situations that provide little opportunity for laughing. Additionally, a laugh is much better when shared.

Love—People need to know they are loved by others and God. SAM is one avenue for showing love and introducing people to the loving God.

Listening ear—According to Harold Ivan Smith, people need someone who will listen to the end of the sentence. Often no advice is needed; just someone to give undivided attention.

Leadership development—SAM is a place where people discover and develop leadership abilities. As people accept responsibility for different aspects of SAM, they can learn and develop new skills.

Learning—Whether it is about life as a single adult or spiritual growth and development, learning is a key component of SAM.

M—

Marriage preparation—Dennis Franck states that rather than seeing singleness as a problem to be solved through marriage, we should raise the bar for people getting married. Alan Corry, another SAM colleague, says that people who have been part of SAM should be better marriage candidates. That is, through the events and teaching of SAM, people have a sense of wholeness and skills that will enable them to better face the challenges of marriage.

N—

Never-married adults—A largely overlooked group in SAM, never married adults seek affirmation, support, encouragement, and role models. Among baby-boomers, there is a large number of never-married adults that are blazing trails for others. These individuals have learned much about life that can be shared with others. SAM leaders must recognize the loss of hopes and dreams, help individuals through the grieving process, and encourage formation of new hopes and dreams. Never-married adults comprise the largest segment of the single adult population, and we cannot discount or overlook their needs, issues, and concerns.

New Life—Introducing people to Jesus is the foundational principle of ministry. This happens in a variety of ways as the Church ministers to people. This is particularly true of SAM as single-again individuals discover a new lifestyle. For others, new life is a renewed interest in spiritual growth and development.

O—

Opportunities for service—The nature of SAM provides countless opportunities for service as we assist people in times of crisis and transition. Additionally, single adults who are distanced from family depend on friends for assistance during routine challenges such as car repairs and transportation after medical procedures.

Openness—Several speakers state they enjoy their times with single adults most. Further questioning centered on the willingness of single adults to hear and respond to God's call. This often reflects the dependence single adults have on God. Since there is no other adult to listen, single adults tend to become more dependent on God. Many single adults, after recovering from a crisis, are often willing to help others by sharing their experiences. These individuals willingly companion others through difficult times and then share good ones.

P—

Purity—A quick review of how single adults are portrayed in the media reveals little that reflects the Christian single adult lifestyle. Small groups designed to discuss these pressures and share coping skills provide encouragement and support. New Christian single adults may be learning to recapture their purity as they view life from a different perspective.

Parenting issues—Parenting is a responsibility designed for two people. Single parents, therefore, face unique challenges, such as total responsibility for day-to-day discipline, one person to transport children to diverse activities, and juggling the demands of home and school. While single parents benefit from parenting conferences and workshops, those designed for two parent families must include time for single parents to discuss how the principles apply to them.

Pain—Everyone faces pain. It's part of life. However, single adults often face life's pains without immediate support. This is an opportunity for service as others listen, share, and support during these times.

Passion—As people benefit from the ministries offered by SAM, some will become passionate about continuing the ministries. Part of the passion of SAM is to educate the congregation and community

regarding the single adult lifestyle and to assist others in respecting it. Lori Smith in *The Single Truth* writes that “marriage isn’t better than the single life—it’s just different.”

Q—

Quiet—One of the greatest challenges of many single adults is becoming comfortable with silence. Teachings within SAM should encourage single adults to change their times of loneliness into aloneness and aloneness into solitude.

R—

Recovery—Throughout this list, recovery is a recurring theme. People experiencing death and divorce need assistance as they work and grow through the events. Transcending all groups is the loss of hopes and dreams that must be identified, named, acknowledged, and grieved. This, too, is a recovery process.

Rebirth of hopes and dreams—As a result of life’s losses, new hopes and dreams must be formulated. There is little information that validates the loss of hopes and dreams and encourages new ones. Consider making this issue a discussion topic.

Respect—Conversations with single adults reveal a feeling that the single adult lifestyle is not respected. There is the sense that others continue to wait for single adults to grow up, settle down, and get married. This won’t happen for every single adult; therefore, respect for their lifestyle must be encouraged.

Role models—Even as adults, we look to others as an example.

Relationships—Everyone needs someone who is supportive of them. We also need friends of both genders. SAM is often the place where individuals find both.

S—

Social events—Everyone needs time designed for fun and laughter. Social events provide both while presenting opportunities to form new friendships.

Step-family preparation—One of the greatest challenges facing today’s world are step-families. Preparing for life in a step-family presents unique challenges as groups of people with unshared past experiences come together. For other step-families, it is a first marriage for one spouse, thereby creating another set of circumstances.

Small groups—Many churches found great success in developing small group ministries. These groups offer a small, more connected group in which to learn and grow. While it is important for single adults to be part of mixed groups, there are single adult issues that are best addressed by small groups comprised of single adults.

T—

Truth—Single adults need to hear the truth about life as Christians. They need to know about the challenges, similarity between their lives and married persons, and the truth about a relationship with Jesus.

Tips for life—Learning from others happens as people share their stories. Encouragement, support, and helpful hints make life easier to manage.

Time management—One myth regarding single adults is that we have more time than married persons. While some single adults, those without children, may have more discretionary control of their time, everyone has a 24-hour day. Everyone needs to hear that it is OK to say no.

Touch and trust—SAM should be a safe place to learn to trust and to experience good touch. Everyone needs human touch and for some single adults, this may rarely happen.

Transitions—Some single adults may feel as if their lives are constantly in transition. Others will experience major transitions. Be aware that all transitions have the potential for being stressful.

U—

Unity—Whether people are divorced, never-married, or widowed, single adults are united by the commonality of singleness. Capitalize on this sense of unity while recognizing the diversity of the ministry.

Unchurched people—Some researchers say that over 50 percent of the unchurched population are single adults. No church or ministry should ignore such a large portion of the population. Remember that some of the unchurched single adults may identify themselves as Christians.

Understanding—Single adults are looking for a place where they are valued, respected, and understood. Any church or ministry that provides these will find single adults wanting to join them.

V—

Victory—Whether it's used in a spiritual sense as victory through Jesus or in a more secular sense as overcoming a problem, victory is part of life. Everyone has issues that create struggles and eventual victory. Celebrate each victory and encourage those in battle.

Visitation issues—Children in single-parent homes may face challenges as a result of divorce or a parent's death. Leaders of Children's Ministries and Youth Ministries must be aware that for children of single-parent families regular attendance may be on a regular-irregular basis. For example, court ordered visitations may mean that some children will be absent every other week or once monthly.

Another aspect of SAM and recovery programs will be to encourage single parents to stay involved with their children when their contact is limited. Another issue deals with the challenges of differing lifestyles of the parents. Be prepared to listen and support single parents as they face and cope with these challenges.

W—

Wholeness—The greatest lesson any SAM can teach is that wholeness comes from a relationship with Jesus rather than another human being. Additionally, single adults need to be reminded that whole people are best suited for marriage.

Worship—Most SAM events should include times of worship. Remember the greatest offering of SAM is that individuals may know and have a relationship with Jesus.

Wide age range—SAM includes people from early 20s and upward. This diversity of ages can present challenges, yet it is one of the strongest elements as people share and learn together and from each other.

X—

Expectation—Expectations are a two-way street: expectation from single adults that SAM will address their issues, needs, and concerns and expectations from SAM that single adults will become involved in some of the opportunities it provides. The list of expectations is virtually endless, however, identifying some of them is important for an effective ministry.

Experience—People can learn from the experiences of others. Sometimes this is avoiding certain dangers and at other times, it is drawing encouragement and support.

Y—

Yearning to know God—Throughout this list, a repeated theme is relationship with Jesus and single adults seeking to know and follow God. Always remember that it is this emphasis on knowing God that separates SAM from other gatherings of single adults.

Z—

Zealous—Some single adults become zealous in the desire to share what they have learned and experienced with others. This is one way of knowing that SAM has achieved its purpose.

Chapter Four

Leadership Skills

Leadership is a topic that piques our interest, especially as we attempt to translate principles from the business world to ministry settings. One of the challenges we encounter is modifying business world leadership concepts into ministry settings based on the servant leadership model. We learn about servant leadership as we watch Jesus wash the disciples' feet. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12 about our various gifts and how they form the Body of Christ.

Leadership is more about who we are rather than what we do. Rereading Bible stories of great leaders reminds us that their success was not based on having the right information as much as being in a place where they heard God speak and willing obedience. Nehemiah, for example, gives some leadership principles:

1. Leaders demonstrate genuine compassion and love for the people they lead—a desire to see them experience God's very best. This is what brought Nehemiah into leadership. He saw the deep need of his people and was moved by love to do something about it (Neh. 1:1-4). Leaders don't act before they have spent time alone with God in prayer. Nehemiah's first response was a time of mourning, fasting, and prayer before God (1:4).
2. Leaders are willing and able to overcome fear and take risks for the sake of the vision. Nehemiah was afraid to speak to the king on behalf of his people, but he did it (2:2-3).
3. Leaders know and accept the fact that when they attempt anything significant, there will be opposition and negative people to contend with. Nehemiah no sooner finished his presentation to the king than two of the king's officials became critical of it (2:10).
4. Leaders do their homework, study the situation, evaluate possible solutions, and are careful and timely about communication. Nehemiah scoped out the project before he started talking publicly about it. He timed his communication carefully (2:11-18).¹

While many other leadership principles can be learned from Nehemiah, remember that at no point did Nehemiah become self-conscious about his leadership. It seems he wasn't so much trying to be a leader as he was simply trying to be faithful to a passionate vision that God gave him to be an agent of restoration among his people.²

Leadership Is a Process

Leadership is a process rather than a position. Consider this acrostic developed by Kerrie Palmer.

L— Leaders are led by God and lead His people. It is awesome to realize God entrusts the privilege of leading His people to us. When leadership is viewed as a God-given privilege, apprehension is lessened, knowing God is holding our hands.

E— Leaders are enabled and energized by God. Jesus promised power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and enables you to be His witnesses (Acts 1:8). Your leadership in Single Adult

Ministries is part of your world. The main purpose of Single Adult Ministries is to proclaim the Gospel message to single adults. Although ministries and methods may vary, the message is the same. All ministries are intended to draw people to Christ, for He commissioned you to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing and teaching them (Matt. 28: 19-20).

- A—** Leaders aspire to accomplish the will of God. Romans 12 is a leadership textbook explaining how to lead in the will of God. First, leaders offer themselves to God as a *living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, which is really a spiritual act of worship*. This is a conscious decision that does not automatically happen. Once you have committed all of you to God, your next step is a continual transformation by the renewing of your mind. Through this act and process, you will be able to discern what God's will is for you and your ministry, *His good and pleasing and perfect will* (Rom. 12:1-2).

The renewing of your mind occurs as you communicate with God in prayer and through His Word. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, cast a vision and establish a purpose and a mission for the ministry to which God has called you. Effective leaders have a vision; vision energizes every effort and provides the force that pushes through obstacles. With vision, leaders have a mission and a contagious spirit as the team comes alongside them to fulfill God's purpose and mission for ministry.

- D—** Leaders develop leaders. Leadership is a spiritual gift that Paul says is exercised with diligence (Rom. 12:8). Eugene Peterson in *The Message* explains leaders lead without manipulation, which is without maneuvering or using people for their purposes. John Maxwell links his definition of leadership (influence) with the responsibility of leadership (people development). He asks, "How do we who influence others truly motivate and develop them? People tend to become what the most important people in their lives think they will become." Leaders are developed as we affirm and encourage each member of the leadership team. As your team players observe your diligent leadership, you are developing good leaders.

- E—** Leaders enlist and equip a team. Each member is part of the Body of Christ. *Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully* (Rom. 12:4-8). Each gift should be represented in your ministry team. Leaders may have several of these gifts, but God does not expect you to do it alone.

The analogy of the body is a beautiful picture of God's design for ministry. If single adults are given the opportunity to use their gifts, the Body will be complete. Leaders prayerfully consider their council and, with the proper approval, enlist people for the team.

- R—** Leaders reproduce themselves releasing the ministry. . . . *That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his*

feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way (Eph. 1:18-23).

The analogy of the body to the Body of Christ appropriately describes the Single Adult Ministries Council. Christ is the Head; and we are a part of the Body, important in fulfilling what it was created to do. Max DePree in *Leadership Is an Art* writes, “The art of leadership is liberating people to do what is required of them in the most humane way possible. Thus, the leader is the servant of his followers in that he removes the obstacles that prevent them from doing their jobs. In short, the true leader enables followers to realize their full potential.”³

Characteristics of a Leader

Drawing from the book, *Managing People Is like Herding Cats* by Warren Bennis, the following traits were among those identified as common to all effective leaders.

- *Self-knowledge.* Knowing who you are and recognizing and using talents is a basic ingredient for good leadership. This allows leaders to surround themselves with individuals possessing other strengths to form a strong leadership team.
- *Open to feedback.* Although at times feedback may be difficult to hear and accept, identifying honest and caring people to provide feedback gives leaders opportunity for continued growth.
- *Eager to learn and improve.* Asking questions and listening to answers are key characteristics of good leaders. Many leaders are open to change and eager to learn new methods and strategies.
- *Curious risk takers.* While it almost sounds like an oxymoron, taking curious risk reflects the adventurous nature of leaders. Good leaders look for ways to challenge the routine and then develop plans before taking risks.
- *Focus on tasks.* Persistence is a quality possessed by leaders. They have the ability to concentrate on the tasks at hand.
- *Learn from adversity.* Great leaders frequently endure setbacks. They have used the setbacks as opportunities to learn about themselves, other people, the organization, and relationships.
- *Balance tradition and change.* Good leaders recognize the value of tradition while recognizing the need for change. They have developed skills that allow for the integration of tradition while making change. Work within the system. Good leaders soon realize it is impossible to accomplish the task alone. They work with the system to cope with problems and challenges and rely on others to assist in achieving goals. Serve as models and mentors. Good leaders understand the necessity of having “leaders-in-training.” They feel a sense of accomplishment as they watch new people move into leadership roles.⁴

Leadership will also include challenges, situations that test our abilities, and opportunities to work with different personality types. It may be necessary to return to this list as a reminder of the traits that are characteristic of strong leaders. At other times, this list may serve as a reminder of traits we need to continue to develop and strengthen.

Ideas regarding leadership have changed dramatically in recent years. Rather than the leader being the driving force for a ministry, current leadership models moved from a team concept to a more fluid style. No longer is the leader “in charge” giving direction, dreaming the dreams, and formulating the vision alone. Leaders communicate the purpose and mission of the ministry to others, including those involved in the ministry and church leaders. They also implement methods to accomplish

the purpose and mission, develop the leadership potential in others, and facilitate changes and transition.

Building relationships is a vital aspect of leadership. People want to know that they are “real” people—that they have faced and survived challenges and failures. Authenticity is a key characteristic of today’s leaders.

Great leaders understand that being authentic in relationships is a priority. They develop self-understanding, interpersonal skills, intuition, and communication skills. They develop others through team building, mentoring, coaching, and networking.

Today’s effective leaders know the importance of being life-long learners. They capitalize on learning opportunities within networks. They adapt skills and insights from other organizations to the ministry settings. Effective leaders know the importance of listening. They work to develop the skill of active listening in conversation. They listen to identify gifts, talents, and passions and then assist individuals as they develop and use them to build God’s Kingdom.

Foundations of Leadership

Leadership takes time to develop and involves time for others to recognize leadership skills. According to John Maxwell in *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*, there are seven key areas found in leaders.

1. *Character*. Leadership begins by developing your inner self, enabling others to see your character. Character is necessary for trust and trust makes leadership possible.
2. *Relationships*. Leaders have followers. Relationships make it easier for people to follow. The deeper the relationships with followers and those involved in the ministry, the easier it is for them to follow.
3. *Knowledge*. Leaders must have a grasp of the ministry potential, the ministry needs, and a vision for the future.
4. *Intuition*. As important as knowledge is, leadership requires more than raw data. Leaders are able to communicate passion for the present and vision for new ministry strategies.
5. *Experience*. Leaders need experience to demonstrate abilities. It is possible for the experience to be in a related, but transferable, field. Experience is not a guarantee, but it encourages people to give you opportunities to show your abilities.
6. *Past success*. Proven experiences show what you’ve accomplished. Additionally, each success is another example of leadership ability.
7. *Ability*. People will follow as long as you demonstrate the ability to lead. When people no longer believe in your abilities, they will stop following you.⁵

Leaders view life experiences from a leadership perspective. Some are born with this ability while others develop it. This may be described as the ability to grasp intangible factors, understand the factors, and work with them to accomplish ministry goals. This involves the ability to read the situation by capturing the details others miss. Understanding the context of the bigger picture and observing trends are other elements of this ability. Good leaders develop the ability to read themselves as well as others. Reading themselves include knowing their strengths, skills, and weaknesses. This enables them to develop a leadership team that complements them.

Key Functions of a Leader

Leaders are busy people; and the position is rarely under your control. You may face conflict between council members, stress as all the ministries vie for available meeting space, financial problems as an event goes over budget, and the list is endless. Hans Finzel in *Empowered Leaders* identifies some key functions of a leader to keep you focused on your responsibilities.⁶

- *Cultivate the vision.* Leaders cultivate the vision that others within Single Adult Ministries hold. It is important to remember that single adults involved in determining the vision more willingly work to achieve it. Leaders assist in articulating the vision.
- *Create a clear organization.* The structure of Single Adult Ministries may remain essentially untouched through leadership transitions; however, a new director may add or shift ministry emphases. A key element of any organization is putting the correct person with the right task.
- *Choose the right team.* Single adults on the council play an important role in determining your level of success. Each person has unique gifts, talents, and abilities. Ensure that your council mirrors the single adults in the congregation.
- *Change the culture.* Culture is defined as the shared values and behaviors that knit a community together. Understand the unwritten values and norms of your community and congregation.
- *Coach the team.* Since leaders are only as good as their teams, it is imperative that you guide and empower them. Each member brings specific strengths and weaknesses that complement the ministry and create a synergy for effective leadership.
- *Care for the team.* Caring for the members of the council and leadership team involves providing resources and opportunities for growth and development. Time and money invested in these single adults will yield returns.
- *Curing the Problems.* Part of the director's responsibility is to solve problems and resolve challenges. Part of this process is to teach and empower council members to address the situation on their own. Risky? Perhaps, but remember you have to clearly state the amount of freedom council members have to make decisions.
- *Check on progress.* As human beings there is a tendency to do what is inspected more than what is expected. Develop a system to help in tracking and checking on the progress of ministries, programs, events, and other delegated responsibilities.

Leaders' jobs often seem endless. Responsibility starts and stops with the leader. Leadership is a complex set of gifts, skills, experience, respect, emotional strength, discipline, vision, and developing a leadership team.

Leadership Gifts

Do not assume that only single adults with the spiritual gift of administration are spiritually equipped for leadership. Leaders often lead through other areas of giftedness. A single adult with a gift of teaching may lead a Bible study. A single adult with a gift of mercy may lead a support group by creating a safe atmosphere. A mercy-gifted person may also organize food and clothing drives for the needy or set up a soup kitchen. An individual with a gift of exhortation may motivate others through the ability to challenge and encourage them to love and do good works. An evangelist may lead single adults to be more committed to and trained in witnessing to the unchurched.

Discovering and Developing Gifts

A baby may be born with good intelligence but show a significant lag in mental development due to living in an environment where learning is not stimulated. So, a Christian may have an aptitude for ministry (a spiritual gift) that is not encouraged to grow. Spiritual gifts need to be discovered and developed. A number of tools are available to help Christians discover their spiritual gifts. Many books on spiritual gifts are available for study. Ask your pastor for recommendations.

Do not overlook secular sources for learning how to express spiritual gifts with greater effectiveness. Teachers can learn to teach better by taking classes in teaching methods. Speakers can learn to speak more effectively by taking courses in communication. Leaders can become more effective by attending seminars on management, administration, and leadership skills. Also, consider both Christian and secular books as resources for growth. Finding a mentor with the same gifts is another wonderful learning opportunity.

Knowing people's gifts and plugging them into a ministry where they can express them builds their sense of significance, competency, and contribution to the church. Encouraging people to serve as they are gifted lessens burn out. It is easy to become weary in well-doing when working outside an area of expertise and effectiveness.

Taking people's gifts into consideration can save leaders the headache of placing square pegs in round holes and the need to dislodge them. This may lead to a difficult situation when someone is incompetent in a desired position because it is perceived as prestigious. Ultimately, the greatest advantage of taking spiritual gifts seriously is to use these gifts as God intended—for His glory and the Church's good.

Working with Volunteers⁷

Almost all ministries of the church require lay or volunteer participation. Motivating, recruiting, and retaining volunteers requires thoughtful preparation, and continued effort. According to Les Parrott,

"The first step in motivating potential volunteers is to understand and appreciate their personal values and priorities."⁸ Before deciding to volunteer, church members must first become aware of the need and determine the importance of the need. Then they must decide whether or not to volunteer to serve.

The decision to volunteer is made easier when the church atmosphere is positive and the congregation is happy. Positive church experiences create an environment that fosters volunteerism. On the other hand, many people do not volunteer because they are afraid. "And fear in the mind of a potential volunteer turns to apathy."⁹

Make sure you carefully explain the task you are asking a volunteer to do. A clear challenge produces more volunteers than one that is ambiguous. Choose jobs to fit volunteers, carefully give instructions, establish specific deadlines, and insist on quality work. For volunteers to keep serving, they should see their work as significant and providing opportunities for personal growth. "Repetitive work without significance fosters a high dropout rate among volunteers."¹⁰

Natural Abilities, Talents, and Spiritual Gifts

“Real ministry takes place when perceived needs are strategically matched by the person who has the gift to meet that need. The matching of needs to the gifts of people is essential for meaningful ministry to take place.”¹¹ The question arises as to how to match jobs to volunteers and volunteers to ministries. One method is to search for natural helpers. While we are all involved in giving and receiving help from time to time, there are some people for whom helping is a more central activity than for others. These people are sometimes called natural helpers. They willingly make themselves available to those in need in their families, neighborhoods, workplaces, or the organizations to which they belong. They have the type of personal skills, similar to those of helping professionals, which make them particularly effective problem solvers. Some natural helpers hold positions of leadership, but many prefer to work behind the scenes.¹²

John Ed Mathison suggests that an attitude of ownership is extremely important in motivating volunteers. When lay persons prayerfully consider their own gifts, and then match them to a particular ministry, they have ownership of the decision. When volunteers have ownership of a commitment, they are more likely to follow through on it. A short questionnaire requesting specifics about willingness, the ability to serve, and the type of service can be used to match jobs and volunteers. Knowing if there are certain situations in which the volunteers feel uncomfortable or others for which they believe they are especially well equipped helps in matching volunteers and ministry opportunities.¹³

Effective caring people will reflect a spiritual aliveness in the way they meet life, and how they respond to, empathize with, and relate to others. Empathy, familiarity, ownership, and personal preferences all help determine volunteers’ involvement in the ministries of the church. Yet volunteers should be asked to serve based on their God-given spiritual gifts. Spiritual gifts are given for building up the church (I Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4). People’s gifts should match the committee or function where the gifts are most likely to be used.

“Church leadership is mostly a matter of letting spiritual gifts do their ministry.”¹⁴ Unfortunately, many people do not know what their gifts are or how to discover them. Many believers have never been told about God’s gifts for the benefit of the church nor assisted in recognizing or identifying spiritual gifts in themselves or in others. When lay people are “talked into” a ministry, they often leave it. The same positions must be recruited over and over again. When God calls people into ministry, they often find new meaning and purpose in their lives; and they enjoy a God-given ministry.

When looking for a church, most people seem to want an atmosphere they describe as friendly, spiritual, and accepting. Garth Icenogle writes, “we are hungry to be with others. Our spirits cry out to be known by another, to be loved by another, to be affirmed by another.”¹⁵ According to Diana Garland, people are not able to form meaningful social networks in large-scale, fast-paced, impersonal settings.

God has called us to be in Christian community. Community is a gift of God; and by God’s power and grace, it is a human responsibility. The universal community of faith takes form in local congregations, called to share life together in ways bearing witness to God’s love and mercy. Studies show that when people join a church, if they are not involved in a group or function of ministry within six months, 50 percent of them will become inactive. The best way to avoid inactives is to involve every member in meaningful ministry.

Although most lay volunteers have strong biblical, theological, and spiritual reasons for volunteering, they are still human beings who will eventually stop to examine the returns on their voluntary efforts. This is a human reaction. Volunteers expect material benefits, social approval, honor, or a sense of well-being from doing a good job. Negatively they often express freedom from guilt.

Training Volunteers

All volunteers should be trained before actually being placed in some function of ministry. Proper training leads to confidence in their ability to perform the ministry effectively. After lay people are recruited, someone must train them and help them learn to support, encourage, and grow from one another. Training workshops, seminars, retreats, lectures, and discussion groups all can nurture and enable lay leaders.

Training alone is not adequate. In all too many programs, persons are trained well, but then left on their own to sustain their ministry. Without some form of continuing support, natural helpers can lose their effectiveness.

Single Adult Ministries, along with the other ministries and programs, must use volunteers to reach their goals. These volunteers must feel ownership of the areas of involvement. Without this feeling of ownership, they tend to lose interest, burn-out, become discouraged, and quit. To avoid losing volunteers and lay leaders, publicly and privately acknowledge their roles in the effectiveness of the ministry or program. Single Adult Ministries, regardless of church size, requires many individuals to reach its potential.

How to Approach a Potential Volunteer

Many leaders shy away from inviting people to volunteer, because they are never quite sure how to make the request in the most favorable way. It is not difficult—but it does require forethought and a belief that what you are asking the volunteer to do is a worthwhile task.

Here are some phrases that do not belong in an invitation to a potential volunteer:

“I know you’re busy, but. . .”

“Would you mind doing a little thing for our program?”

“We’re desperate for new people to help us. We really need you to say yes.”

“Could you at all possibly do this?”

“We can’t find anybody else to do it. . .”

Here are some simple, clear phrases that do belong in an invitation to a potential volunteer:

“We are looking for someone with real gifts in this area for this responsibility.”

“Do you have interests in this area?”

“How can we help you contribute your many talents to Single Adult Ministries?”

“By observing you, it seems to me you are gifted in this area.”

When issuing an invitation, never apologize. For example: “I can guess that you are too busy to help us, but I’d like to ask anyway. . .” By apologizing, you communicate that the potential volunteers have something more important in which to invest their time, or that what you are asking them to do is not worthwhile. Make your invitation to the volunteers positive, simple, and straightforward.

Here are three things volunteers want to know:

1. Is it meaningful? Does it fulfill God’s plan? Will I have a sense of significance?
2. Will I have authority and structure? What is the chain of command? Will I have the freedom to get things done?
3. What about training? Will someone help me learn to do what I’ve been asked to do?

Remember to care for the individuals you ask to volunteer, whether they say “yes” or “no” to your request. God’s love can reach through your willingness to listen, support, and understand those with whom you minister. Your willingness to form a relationship with the volunteers and to appreciate their work and family situations may strengthen and empower them for future service in transforming ways.¹⁶

Delegating Responsibilities

Effective leaders enfranchise the team members so they can effectively complete their responsibilities and recognize that people want to accomplish their goals in a manner that reflects their personalities and styles. However, as leaders, there are some responsibilities reserved for the Single Adult Ministries director.

- *Be responsible for communications with the church leadership.* As the leader of Single Adult Ministries, you need to meet with the leadership to ensure a clearer understanding of the goals of Single Adult Ministries and how they fit into the picture for the entire church. Keep the leadership informed. I’m convinced that you cannot give too much information.
- *Be responsible for communications with the Single Adult Ministries Council.* Volunteer leaders need to know they are valued and keeping them informed is vital. Remember all communications involve giving and receiving information. If the leader is deemed to be a communications-giver without listening to others, there is a strong probability that communications with the leadership team will cease.
- *Be involved with the promotional process.* It isn’t necessary for the director to be responsible for developing the promotional materials. However, it is important to be involved in the process to ensure the quality of materials.
- *Be involved in the selection process for new team members.* Take time to get to know those interested in joining the team. Without limiting involvement, it is important to maintain a congenial team.
- *Be sure to follow up*—whether it’s details for events or garnering information for new attendees. It is possible to ensure that follow-up occurs without making those responsible feel as if they are being monitored.
- *Express appreciation to your leadership team.* With volunteers, they need to hear words of appreciation and praise in public meetings along with personal notes and calls.

- *Keep informed of the finances.* Leaders are responsible for maintaining the budget and making adjustments as necessary.
- *Address problems quickly.* Remember the final responsibility is the Single Adult Ministries leader's. Resolve issues quickly and with love.¹⁷

Resolving Conflicts

Conflicts occur as individuals work together to create a ministry or to achieve a common goal. Based on *The Peacemaker* by Ken Sande, here are five ways to resolve conflicts.¹⁸

1. The first way is to *overlook the offence*. Some disputes are too insignificant and, therefore, are resolved by quietly and deliberately overlooking an offence and forgiving the person who wronged us. An example is flippant remarks that offend you.
2. *Discussion* uses confession or loving confrontation to resolve the conflict. Individuals talk about the circumstances that led to the conflict, the role each played, and what can be done to resolve the issue. Discussion involves naming the problem, identifying your role in the conflict, using "I" statements, and accepting the role each party played.
3. Some *negotiation* is necessary. Typically, these issues involve money, property, or other rights. In negotiations, the parties seek to reach a settlement that satisfies the legitimate needs of all involved. Negotiations attempt to make the conflict a win/win situation—that is, both of you get something while you compromise on some things.
4. If negotiation doesn't result in solution, the next step is *mediation*. One or two people are asked to meet with the individuals to help them communicate more effectively and to explore possible solutions. The role of the mediator is to ask questions and to give advice, rather than forcing a particular solution.
5. The final step is *arbitration*. This involves the appointment of one or more persons to listen to the arguments and render a binding decision to settle the matter. Typically, this is done in business and legal circumstances.

Perhaps you've not considered using negotiations, mediation, or arbitration to resolve conflicts. More than likely, you've used some form of negotiations without recognizing the process. Mediation may have occurred as you discussed problems with mutual friends. Their insights may have caused you to resolve the conflict without recognizing the process.

Conflict may develop among members of the leadership team and you may be asked to serve as a referee. Finzel suggested a step before you accept the role of referee—ask those involved to talk about the problem with resolution as the goal. Finzel recommends the following guidelines.

- Mediate rather than judge. Encourage those involved in the conflict to solve the problem and allow them to determine how it will be accomplished.
- Give it time. Give all sides adequate time to express their position and understand the positions rather than hurrying to end the conflict.
- Don't accuse or lay blame. Keep people focused on the goal—finding a resolution. Emphasize *what* is right rather than *who* is right.

- Gain admissions—and forgiveness—of mistakes. Let people gracefully admit to shortcomings. Remember some of the hardest, but most powerful, words are, “I was wrong.”
- Find grounds for cooperation. Create ways for those involved in the conflict to work together for a common goal.¹⁹

When involved in a conflict, one of the first questions you must answer is, “What results do I want?” Honestly answering this question plays a key role in the approach you take. Remember that anger and differences of opinions are part of daily life. It’s how you cope with and react to them that make the difference. Anger is an emotion, a feeling, and there is nothing good or bad about it. Therefore, as Christians, we will become angry and experience conflict. However, our Christian experience should enable us to cope with and react differently.

- 1 Jeren Rowell, “Careful, Your Leadership Is Showing,” *The Communicator*, Nazarene Publishing House: Kansas City, July 2001.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Max DePree, *Leadership Is an Art*, (New York: Dell Publishing, 1989), p. xx.
- 4 Warren Bennis, *Managing People Is like Herding Cats*, (Provo: Executive Excellence Publishing, 1997).
- 5 John Maxwell, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers), 1998.
- 6 Hans Finzel, *Empowered Leaders*, (Nashville: Word Publishing), 1998.
- 7 This section on volunteers is adapted from materials written by Anita Greening in completion of the requirements for a degree in Management and Human Relations from MidAmerica Nazarene University.
- 8 Leslie Parrot, *Motivating Volunteers in the Local Church*, (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1991), p. 27.
- 9 Ibid., p. 45.
- 10 Ibid., p. 137.
- 11 John Ed Mathison, *Every Member in Ministry*, (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1988), p. 21.
- 12 Diana S. Garland and Diane L. Pancoast, *The Church’s Ministry with Families*, (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1990), p. 67.
- 13 Howard W. Stone, *The Caring Church: A Guide for Lay Pastoral Care*, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983), p. 99.
- 14 Brian Kelley Bauknight, *Body Building: Creating a Ministry Team Through Spiritual Gifts*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996). P. 17.
- 15 Gareth Weldon Icenogle, *Biblical Foundations for Small Group Ministry*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994), p. 27.
- 16 Adapted with permission from Sue Nilson.
- 17 Adapted from Women’s Ministries, Issue # 131, Thursday, August 15, 2002
<http://www.womensministry.net>
- 18 Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker*, (Grand Rapids: Baker), 1997.
- 19 Finzel, p. 81.

Chapter Five

Mentoring

Back in the days when sons worked with their fathers to provide life's necessities, role modeling was a natural part of life. In earlier days, apprenticeships were also a form of a mentoring relationship. Young people had the opportunity to learn a trade or craft by observing and developing skills under a master craftsman's direction. Meanwhile, daughters learned the skills necessary for family care while they worked with their mothers to prepare food and perform other household duties. Extended family members also insured that many other skills were passed to the next generation.

Mentoring experienced a surge of interest during the 1990s. Perhaps this was a result of people realizing they were separated from their biological families. Grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins were not available to fill the roles of mentor, teacher, encourager, discipler, and coach.

Today a variety of words describe relationships that resemble role models and mentoring. These include mentor, teacher, encourager, discipler, and coach. While nuances may distinguish the relationships, the ultimate goal is consistent: one person helping another grow.

Single Adult Ministries is an excellent a place for role modeling and mentor relationships to develop. Role modeling often happens naturally as single adults watch other single adults and incorporate the positive traits they see into their own lives.

What is Role Modeling?

Role models are often people whose behaviors and skills are observed from a distance or learned about through reading. Those people may or may not be aware that they are serving as a role model. Role models may or may not have a personal relationship with the individuals who see them as examples. Role models provide examples for individuals to follow during times of specific need, in a profession, or through new experiences.

As mentioned before, role modeling can occur without a personal relationship. Many people find wisdom and value by reading books or articles about people who are role models in society or in the Christian world. Some people tell how reading books by the saints of yesteryear have motivated them to develop their Christian faith. Knowing that others all through time have struggled with integrating Christianity into all aspects of life has encouraged them. For example, *In His Steps* and *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life* are just two of many books written years ago that continue to influence Christians today.

What is Mentoring?

Mentoring was a basic element of life before the 1900s. It occurred naturally as boys and girls learned farming, gardening, and life survival skills while working with their parents. Mentoring was the chief learning method as artisans invested time and taught skills to apprentices. At one time, the

university system revolved around a student learning in the scholars' homes. Mentoring occurred in royal courts as knights taught warriors' skills to the novices. In the eighteenth century, people like Jonathan and Sarah Edwards frequently had one or more "disciples" living in their homes to observe marriage and personal spiritual dynamics.

When we research mentoring, we see that definition of mentoring varies with each author. However, some commonalities tie the definitions together. In *Connecting*, Paul D. Stanley and J. Robert Clinton define mentoring as "a relational experience in which one person empowers another by sharing God-given resources." In *Mentoring*, Bobb Biehl adds time references to his definition: "Mentoring is a lifelong relationship, in which a mentor helps a protégé reach her or his God-given potential."

Mentors share lessons they have learned, extend helping hands, and become safety lines of love and affirmation to those following them. The *Word in Life Study Bible* stresses the giving aspect of mentoring by describing it as a "voluntary investment in others for their growth, development, and success." This definition is expanded to include faith in the value of the mentee and the benefits for this individual. Because of this value of the learner, mentoring may require loving sacrifice from the mentor. Howard Hendricks from Dallas Theological Seminary describes mentors as individuals involved in a process. Mentors are committed to help people grow, to keep them growing, and to assist them as they realize their life goals.

A look at the lives of biblical personalities and Christian leaders, we find references to, and experiences of, mentoring relationships. Moses prepared Joshua for the transition of leadership as the Israelites entered Canaan. Eli helped Samuel develop into a man who listened to God's voice and spoke to the nation. Priscilla and Aquilla discipled Apollos, taught him essentials for the faith, and sponsored his ministry. Barnabas stood behind Paul, the persecutor-turned-convert, as he introduced him to church leaders and testified of his conversion. Assisted by Barnabas' mentoring, Paul became the outstanding leader of the New Testament church. Paul recruited Timothy and passed along the importance of mentoring by building on the foundation Timothy's mother and grandmother had laid in the young man's life.

Need for Mentors

In *Counseling Single Adults* Doug Fagerstrom suggests people need five different types of relationships in their lives: parent figure; role model; casual friend; intimate friend; and spiritual director, which is someone who comes alongside and helps you reach your spiritual goals.

As people mature, the function of these relationships may change. The mentor who fills one of these relationships during a person's childhood may not continue to fill that role when the person reaches adolescence or adulthood.

As technology increases, growing number of people find themselves isolated. Equipment advances make it possible for individuals to work at home. E-mail and fax machines offer quick communication, but lack personal contact. Increasing numbers of people spend time communicating with others they may never meet. The need for mentors increases as this sense of isolation continues to grow.

Changes in the family structure often leave some people without an effective model for fathering or mothering. Those reared by a single parent frequently face unique fears as they enter marriage. While they may ask the same questions entering marriage as those who weren't raised in divorced homes, they are more likely to wonder if they will repeat the pattern of divorce or break the cycle.

Adults who were raised by abusive or emotionally absent parents also look for others to teach and model effective parenting.

Characteristics of a Mentor

Some common characteristics are found in most mentoring relationships. These include:

- ✓ Ability to see the potential in individuals.
- ✓ Tolerance to see the potential beyond mistakes and difficult personality traits.
- ✓ Flexibility in responding to the individual and situations.
- ✓ Patience and perseverance as gifts, talents, and abilities develop.
- ✓ Perspective and the ability to see down the road as the basis for the next step.
- ✓ The gifts and abilities to encourage others.

Mentors also give timely advice, write letters of encouragement, and provide helpful information from articles, books, and other sources.

Mentors are willing to risk their reputations as they give the mentored person opportunities to develop leadership skills. Mentors encourage mentees to reach beyond their accomplishments to accept the challenges of a new generation. Mentors invite their disciples to come alongside them and learn while doing. Eventually, the roles reverse as the mentored ones accept new roles—the mentors then step into helping roles.

Ideal mentors structure the mentoring relationship, conversations, and activities to help protégés reach their God-given potential. These mentors remember the relationship is a two-way street. While mentors teach skills and model behaviors, they are also willing to learn from the one they are mentoring.

Beginning a Mentoring Relationship

A mentoring relationship may be initiated by either the one who wants to mentor, or the one who wants to be mentored. Women should always be mentored by other women, and men by other men. At the beginning of this relationship, both people should take time to determine what they are willing to commit to and invest in the relationship.

What kind of questions should you cover as you evaluate starting a mentoring relationship?

- ✓ How easily do we communicate?
- ✓ How well do we relate to each other?
- ✓ What areas will the mentoring relationship involve?
- ✓ What are the expectations of the mentor and mentored?
- ✓ How frequently and for how long will we meet?
- ✓ Are our philosophies of life compatible?
- ✓ Are we both Christians? If not, how will this affect the relationship?

While professional mentoring relationships may not demand that both individuals be Christians, we need to exercise caution about entering such relationships. Even with the focus on professional or

work-related mentoring, Christianity is a lifestyle that permeates all aspects of life. Therefore, relationships involving a non-Christian and Christian may be less than effective because of different life perspectives.

Wait until you feel it is God's time to begin a mentoring relationship. Forced relationships or those resulting from pressure may not have the commitment necessary to foster true mentoring.

Identifying a Mentor or Mentee

I will never forget the first day of my teaching career. The teachers eagerly surrounded the desk of the principal's secretary for the first glimpse of their class lists. The other second grade teachers quickly formed a group as they scanned their list looking for "the name." With a sigh of relief, they looked from one to another attempting to pinpoint the unfortunate person. A first grade teacher looked over my list and marked one name. I realized "the name" was on my list.

Before long, I understood the others' apprehension about this student. I also remember how willing other first and second grade teachers were to help me during that school year. They listened to my frustrations, offered advice, and made suggestions for coping with that student.

While it was not part of a formal relationship, I reflect fondly on that mentoring I received from those teachers. Sometimes I asked for advice and at other times mentoring just happened during recess, over lunch, and at various meetings. Those relationships laid a foundation for me to build on during my teaching career.

Consider the people you know who are ten or more years younger than you are. Name three individuals in whom you see potential, ones you would like to get to know better, and share some common interests. These interests may be work or career related, similar experiences, or other shared interests. These commonalities open the door for a mentoring relationship.

As you contemplate beginning a mentoring relationship, consider these questions.

For the Mentor:

1. *Do I suggest a mentoring relationship or do I wait to be asked?* While a mentoring relationship may begin either way, one person must take the initiative. Who asks is not the important issue—establishing a relationship is. Due to the commitment of attention, interest, and encouragement, often the mentor first approaches the person she wishes to mentor.
2. *What time commitment does a mentoring relationship involve?* Each relationship is unique. Common interests, needs, and proximity are usually determining factors as you analyze the time commitment. If you live near each other, you may meet weekly or monthly. Some mentoring relationships are long distance with infrequent personal visits, maintaining contact by phone, fax, email, and letters. Other relationships are based on an as-needed frequency. At first, you may need to invest extra time in the relationship to become better acquainted and relaxed with each other. Relationship-building times can include walks; come-with-me invitations as you perform various duties and responsibilities; or spontaneous encounters that forge your relationship.
3. *What topics will you discuss during meeting times?* The meeting agenda is set by the mentee's needs. Discussions may include focus on decisions the mentee needs to make; problems for which the mentor can offer insights; listening as the mentee reaches a conclusion; update of concerns from previous meetings; reports of progress; prayer requests.

4. *Where do these meetings occur?* Anywhere you can enjoy personal, in-depth talk. Meetings may occur in restaurants over a meal or something to drink. At times, depending on the topics to cover, you may want a more private location—a walk in a park, your home, or your office. Remember much of mentoring is sharing your life with the person you are mentoring. Mentoring is an attitude more than a setting.
5. *How much advice do I offer?* Sometimes advice is asked for and accepted. Other times, the mentee simply needs an opportunity to talk and gain another perspective to a situation. When you give advice, remember the mentee decides what to do with it. The goal is not to make a clone of yourself, but to help the mentee develop God-given potential and abilities.
6. *How will I know when to end the relationship?* Ending or changing any relationship is difficult. A relationship may naturally die due to changing interests and needs or from a conflict. Whatever causes the change, make sure you maintain open communication so both people feel positive. Make sure you convey care, honesty, and fairness. Be sure to use “I” statements. End the discussion by assuring the mentee of your continued interest and support. Leave the door open for the future, too.
7. *Should I loan money to my mentee?* Though you might be tempted, loaning money can hurt a mentoring relationship, even if you take precautions of signing formal papers.
8. *What is the confidentiality level?* Extremely high. Never discuss with others information you shared or gained through a mentoring relationship.

Desirable Characteristics in a Mentee:

1. The individual is a person of integrity. As you look at this person, you see potential and someone in whom you want to invest time and energy.
2. The individual is enjoyable. You want to see this person succeed. This is someone you are willing to invest in for a lifetime. This individual is a person with whom you can be comfortable.
3. The individual is open to being nurtured and is an eager disciple. Look for someone who wants to learn from the experiences of others. A teachable attitude is a basic requirement for a mentoring relationship.
4. The individual is self-motivated. As the relationship progresses, this individual should take some responsibility for setting up meeting times and contacting you.

For the Person Being Mentored

As you consider a mentoring relationship, look for a person who is more experienced than you, believes in you, indicates an interest in your well-being, enjoys being with you, and encourages you.

The following characteristics are important as you identify potential mentors.

1. Mentors are honest with you. Honesty does not mean being critical; it reflects a willingness to help you face tough issues. Because the mentors are interested in your well-being, they are willing to address uncomfortable issues. Ideal mentors are honest, caring, and fair.
2. Mentors are a model for you. Remember the goal is developing your full potential—not to become a clone of the mentors. Mentors, however, should be people who live with integrity.
3. Mentors are deeply committed to you. The Scriptures contain examples of mentoring; Jesus and the disciples, Priscilla and Aquila, Paul and Timothy, Saul and Ananias. These examples show how individuals walked with others as they faced new experiences.

4. Mentors are open and approachable. Mentors share success stories as well as stories about situations that didn't turn out so successfully. It is important for you to see both sides and to learn that life goes on.
5. Mentors are good teachers. Mentors explain the "how" and "why" behind tasks and decisions and give you opportunities to learn new skills.
6. Mentors believe in your potential. Mentors are your cheerleaders. As you talk to mentors about discouraging times, they will encourage you to keep going, even when you may want to quit.
7. Mentors help define your dreams and develop plans to achieve them. This involves clarifying your dreams and determining how realistic they are. Part of the mentoring process is refining dreams into achievable goals.
8. Mentors are successful in your eyes; people you want to be like. This does not necessarily mean successful by the world's standards. Success should be defined as following God's leading.
9. Mentors are willing to learn from you. Mentors model teachability while teaching. Ideal mentoring relationships are a two-way street, with both of you giving to and receiving from each other.
10. Mentors are willing to follow your agenda. You determine the topics you will discuss during your times together.

As your mentoring relationship develops, be sure to thank your mentor. While your mentor does not expect any kind of compensation, sincere appreciation is always acceptable. Share how you have benefited from your time together. Be considerate of your mentor's availability and work together to determine meeting times and places. Express the admiration and love you feel for your mentor. Although watching you grow and develop is rewarding, your mentor will enjoy hearing you express those words.

Implications of Mentoring for Single Adult Ministries

Mentoring is not another program or ministry under the umbrella of Single Adult Ministries. Most successful mentoring relationships occur when single adults see others they'd like to be mentor by or to mentor.

The role of Single Adult Ministries is educational. We provide information and create opportunities for single adults in all strata of life to become acquainted. As they develop relationships and friendships, mentoring opportunities naturally evolve. New Christians become acquainted with mature Christians who provide encouragement as they live the Christian lifestyle; life-long Church of the Nazarene members share our denomination's history with new Nazarenes. Additionally, the Single Adult Ministries Director may demonstrate mentoring as she works with future leaders to develop their skills, and as she gives them opportunities to use these skills.

Consider the single adults in your congregation. Who has the potential to be a future Single Adult Ministries Director? Who are the new Christians who could benefit from another person discussing the implications of Christianity on their lives? Who are the new Nazarenes that need to understand the Wesleyan/holiness perspective and the influence of the Church of the Nazarene world-wide?

Begin applying this information with Single Adult Ministries Council members. Role-modeling has many merits. However, you'll have a deeper and longer-lasting effect through mentoring. Become better acquainted and gradually implement leadership information as you become a mentor.

Summary

Mentoring is deliberately selecting another single adult in whom you are willing to invest yourself to help achieve life goals. Mentoring is not evangelism, discipling, modeling, or coaching. Mentoring is based on the needs of the mentee and revolves around the mentor helping meet those needs.

Mentoring requires a long-term commitment of time, energy, and availability. Mentoring draws from life experiences and requires a dedication to the agenda of the mentee.

As you mentor council members, develop strategies for educating other single adults about mentoring, and ultimately, inform the entire congregation.

One of the hallmarks of young adults is their need for relationships. Mentoring may be the key to reaching them.

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Differences Among Evangelism, Discipleship, Mentoring

While there may be elements of the various roles involved in mentoring, Biehl makes distinctions among these roles. The following charts state these differences.

EVANGELISM	DISCIPLESHIP	MENTORING
<i>Is it scriptural?</i>		
Taught and modeled in scripture	Taught and modeled in scripture	Modeled in scripture
<i>Models in scripture</i>		
Paul	Timothy	Barnabas
<i>Primary basis of interchange</i>		
Content	Content	Relationship
<i>Type of role</i>		
Convincing non-believers, defending the faith. Presenting the Good News.	Teaching new believers spiritual truths in all aspects of life	Caring for and helping a person
<i>Whose agenda?</i>		
Evangelist's agenda (the gospel)	Disciple's agenda (spiritual disciples)	Protégé's agenda (goals/problems)
<i>Training required?</i>		
Person equipped as evangelist	Academic knowledge and personal mastery of the spiritual disciplines	Pastoral life experience relevant to protégé
<i>Time frame</i>		
Less than one hour (typically)	Limited time course of study	Life-long as needed
<i>Long-term commitment required</i>		
Low	Low	High
<i>Focus of time together</i>		
Presenting the salvation opportunity	Teaching the spiritual disciplines	Supporting toward maturity in all areas of life
<i>Importance of personal chemistry</i>		
Respect required	Respect required	Respect and personal chemistry
<i>Approximate number involved</i>		
Possibly thousands evangelized over a lifetime	Possibly hundreds disciplined over a lifetime	Typically one to twelve mentored over a lifetime
<i>Modern role parallels</i>		
Brilliant, articulate, evangelist/apologist	Disciplined mature teacher	Loving aunt, uncle, or close (more experienced) friend
<i>Essential message</i>		
Repent, you must be saved! The kingdom of God is at hand.	To mature spiritually, here is what you need to know, do or become.	How can I help you get where you are going?

Chapter Six

Helpful Insights

Holidays and Single Adults

Many single adults face one of the most depressing times of the year during the holiday season. With the emphasis on the family, they are reminded of what is missing or lost.

The single parent facing the holidays wonders how to include the family of the former spouse. How much involvement do they want? The children should not be denied knowing both sets of grandparents.

The never-married person may find family gatherings uncomfortable. Cousins, aunts and uncles arrive as couples. They may still face the question, "Aren't you married yet?"

Widows and widowers approach the holidays with apprehension as they contemplate attending work and church festivities without a spouse. Questions such as, "Where will I sit?" "What if the tables have places for couples only, how will my presence affect seating arrangements?" "Should I get a family member or friend to go with me?"

This, along with the additional stress the holidays cause for everyone, almost makes some single adults wish they fast forward through the holidays. Surely, there is a way to cope with this. Here are some suggestions for coping with the holidays:

- *Recognize that stressful times are just ahead.* Knowing this somehow makes it easier to cope. With the increase in social activities, it is easy to eat too many sweets and lose needed sleep.
- *Count blessings.* It is easy to list the things that are perceived to be lacking. Look instead for reasons to be grateful. One of the best means of overcoming depression is to praise God.
- *Focus attention on others.* Becoming involved in the lives of others diverts self-pity. There are many benefits gained thorough physical activities and socializing during the holidays.
- *Consider the true meaning of Christmas.* Two thousand years ago, humanity received the greatest Christmas gift ever. Following the Wisemen's example, give gifts. Think of ways to give without spending much money.
- *Become involved in church activities.* During the holidays, there is always extra work involved in planning and preparing for church events. Volunteer to assist with the children's program, build sets for plays, assist with decorations, or help with the extra cleaning.

Here is a list of suggested activities for Christmas, and New Year's Day to help counter some of the difficult times.

- Encourage church families to invite a single adult to their homes for Christmas or New Year's.
- Have regular Bible studies on Advent themes.
- Encourage single adults to write short devotional thoughts to share with the group or the entire church.
- Plan a single adult shopping trip.
- Have a tree-trimming party. This might be for the church, someone needing assistance, or your home. Remember to include help with taking down and putting away the decorations after the holidays, too.

- Go Christmas caroling with hot chocolate and donuts afterwards. This may be to church families or to nursing homes.
- Have a cookie decorating party and make gifts for home bound church members or nursing home residents.
- Visit the home bound. Take along cookies, fruit, or small gifts made during the cookie decorating party.
- Plan a Christmas party. Invite other single adult groups to join.
- Plan a retreat after Christmas and before New Year's. If this time doesn't work, make it part of the plans for the first of the year. It provides something to anticipate.
- Attend Christmas Eve or other services geared for the family as a group. Remember Single Adult Ministries may be someone's family.
- Plan a New Year's Eve Party ending with breakfast together.
- Spend New Year's Day together with each one bringing something for a potluck.
- Appoint prayer and care partners for the holidays. Suggest they contact each other at least once a week.
- Have a late Christmas Day gathering for those who may spend the day alone.
- Look at the Christmas decorations together. This may be a city's special place or a drive through different neighborhoods.
- Plan to serve others. Volunteer to help the service organizations that provide meals on Christmas.
- Attend a special performance of a Christmas celebration together. Plan to eat dinner before the performance or dessert afterwards.

Image, Image, Image

In preparation for a workshop entitled "Great Things about Being Single," input was gathered from a cross-section of single adults and ministry leaders. Most responses provided additional insights. Feelings about singleness vary from person to person and depend greatly on one's mind set. There are days when many emphatically say singleness is "great." Another day may find them saying it's "terrible." It was easy to quickly conclude that today's emphasis on the family often served to reinforce negative feelings. The word "family" in church names often was interpreted as loudly proclaiming "single adults aren't welcomed here." While the intent may be defined as the community within the church, persons without families often felt out-of-sync.

What was the role of Single Adult Ministries? What image did the ministry project? For those on the outside looking in, did the ministry project an image of demanding persons wanting things done for them? Was it viewed as exclusive and its participants unwilling to mingle with the entire church community? Perhaps one of the great challenges of Single Adult Ministries is maintaining a positive image with single adults.

Some view Single Adult Ministries as a complainers' convention. But then, who better understands the trauma of divorce, death, or single-parenting than someone who has walked the path? The challenge is to provide encouragement and support and to enable individuals to begin forming new hopes and dreams. Others may perceive Single Adult Ministries as something for younger single adults. For some with long-term and strong ties to a church, their need for fellowship has been met through a variety of networks. With the transience of today's society, the need to form friendships with

single adults will always be present. For new persons, Single Adult Ministries may be the entry point into the entire community of believers.

Single Adult Ministries in today's church is responsible to manifest the premise that singleness is an acceptable, legitimate lifestyle, and to welcome, affirm, and support single persons in life's challenges. The image of Single Adult Ministries is one of the most important factors to consider as the ministry is forged. If we are to attract sharp, growing single adults to our ministry and church, then Single Adult Ministries should be viewed as a place led by and filled with bright, capable, creative adults who are living life to its fullest. The activities planned for Single Adult Ministries should enhance this positive, healthy image, rather than reinforcing the old myths and stereotypes about the single adult lifestyle.

Here are seven ways to change the church's attitude toward and improve its image of single adults.

1. Provide Single Adult Ministries information and positive support from the pulpit by the pastor, staff members, and church leaders.
2. Encourage the placement of single adults in leadership positions throughout the congregation.
3. Encourage single adults to give testimonies in the worship services or at church meetings, explaining how God has ministered to them through the church.
4. Include articles in the church newsletter and Sunday bulletin with demographic information about the community's single adults, profile of the single adults attending your church, and articles featuring single adults who have made a difference in the church and community.
5. Initiate programs or conversation with all church boards and committees, providing information about the unique ministry opportunity single adults offer.
6. Help single adults focus on becoming part of the church's agenda and vision.
7. Be patient and prayerful. Attitudes don't change overnight.

Focus on being consistent with re-educating the congregation. Along with the single adults in the congregation, set the best example you can for faithful church service.

Keys to an Effective Single Adult Ministry

Once a need is identified, people want a prompt resolution or means of meeting that need. It is difficult to invest time in long-range planning. The need becomes the focus rather than planning. Time devoted to planning produces few immediate results. However, to attempt to address a need without an effective plan causes the ministry or program to resolve few, if any, needs.

The first step in developing an effective Single Adult Ministry is to accept the reality of investing large amounts of time, energy, and resources into planning. Effective long-range planning helps a ministry or program to achieve its mission and to be viewed by others as successful.

Dr. Kennon L. Callahan in *Twelve Keys to an Effective Church* writes that long-range planning is diagnostic in its focus, strategic in its decisions, and responsibly and courageously hopeful. It is diagnostic as a congregation concentrates on characteristics in the local church and community that are critical in developing substantial, solid ministry plans. In other words, a church knows its strengths and the needs of the community well enough to focus on the greater needs. Discussion and

study are vital prerequisites for long-range planning. The planning process produces measurable goals and objectives and provides motivation as the ministry or program develops.

Callahan identifies two types of keys: relational and functional. Functional keys are more visible and, therefore, easier to label. Relational keys focus on the bonds that form between individuals involved in the ministry or program.

The first relational key is for a program or ministry to have **specific, concrete mission objectives**. This requires the ministry to identify the group or groups in which to invest its financial and leadership resources. A new Single Adult Ministry is well advised to start slow by beginning with one ministry. Other ministries and programs are identified for future implementation.

Concrete refers to the ministry delivering effective help, hope, and new life in a skillful, compassionate, and courageous manner. The objectives need to be measurable. An objective to help individuals grow spiritually is difficult to measure. An objective to see individuals involved in the diverse aspects of the church is measurable. For example, it is easy to determine that three persons introduced to the church through SAM are now involved in the church as they serve as nursery workers, ushers, and choir members.

Visitation is as important to a program or ministry as it is to the total church program. More and more individuals find their way into the church as a result of their involvement in a ministry or program. This often occurs as friendships are formed, pressing needs are met, and awareness of spiritual needs increase.

It is important to maintain a balance with visitation. One woman said she received coupons for a free meal from one church, cookies from another, and a pie from a third church. She felt as if the churches were trying to “buy” her attendance and participation. She continued her search for a church. Many experts recommend a short phone call or note from the church acknowledging the visitor. This avoids situations of unwelcome visitors or scheduling a convenient time for a home visit.

The importance of friendly greeters cannot be over stressed. These individuals must be comfortable in talking with visitors and skilled in creating a comfortable atmosphere. It is a strong asset if they easily remember names and faces. People feel welcomed and accepted when called by their names on the second and third visits.

A vital component for the development of a successful program or ministry is long-range plans to establish *significant relational groups*. Most individuals have four life searches: for individuality, community, meaning, and hope. For new ministry and programs, this is more easily achieved. It is easier to form new relationships while the program is also new, flexible, and in developmental stages.

Leadership with a vision for the ministry is necessary. A ministry reflects the excitement, compassion, and commitment of its leaders.

Leadership also must have the responsibility for and authority to direct the ministry. Leadership training needs to be high on the financial priority list. Without effective leadership, the success of the ministry is jeopardized.

The decision-making needs to be *participatory*. That is, those involved in the program need to feel their opinions are valued. While everyone does not have voting rights, they need the opportunity to voice their concerns. Many good ideas and plans are sabotaged because the individuals affected by the changes did not have adequate time to process them. Changes create anxiety; giving people time to consider the changes allows them time to lower their anxiety levels.

The functional characteristics of an effective ministry refer to the physical features of the facilities. Effective and successful churches have at least one competent program that is respected by the

community. This program might be divorce recovery, ministry to single-parent families, or Bible study. With this program in place, the other programs and ministries tend to rise to its level of competence. Members of the community assume that all programs offered possess the same level of excellence.

An effective ministry strives for **easy accessibility to the meeting room**. Since this characteristic is not one that a ministry easily controls, there are ways to compensate for this weakness. For example, a meeting room that is not close to the main entrance can be made more accessible by directional signs. A better solution is to station greeters along the route to the room. A warm welcome from these individuals help visitors feel safe in the new environment.

Good publicity and high visibility in church newsletters and bulletins and newspapers serve to enhance the community's impression of the ministry. Remember a ministry or program never receives another opportunity to make a first impression.

Many ministries and programs have members with computer skills that make the task of good publicity much easier. Using these members' skills benefits the ministries and provides these individuals with opportunities for ministry.

Adequate meeting space needs to be considered as rooms are selected. A room can be uncomfortably crowded or uncomfortably empty. The meeting room should allow room for growth without feeling too crowded. Empty chairs easily accessible without climbing over people are important for those arriving late.

While one goal of most ministries is to become self-supporting, new ministries and programs need financial support. In addition to providing the necessary funds, financial investment from the congregation often means interest and support as they watch for investment returns.

A new ministry needs finances during the planning stages. Training is part of the planning process and training requires financial investments. New resources and materials are needed as beginning ministries develop their strategies. Publicity and promotional materials are essential to new programs. Many ministries and programs become self-supporting and begin to generate additional funds within three to five years.

Meeting the relational characteristics leads to feelings of satisfaction among attendees. If the functional characteristics are not met, feelings of dissatisfaction rise. Many leaders are more attuned to dissatisfaction than satisfaction levels. People are more vocal regarding those happenings that cause dissatisfaction than expressing appreciation for the events that leave them feeling satisfied.

It is easier to react to and perhaps solve the problems that create dissatisfaction. Raising levels of satisfaction require long-range planning.

Ministries need to identify their strengths. Power for the future comes from strengths. Developing and expanding strengths are fundamental to growth. Concentrating on weaknesses leads to deterioration of strengths.

Four steps are important for effective and successful ministry.

1. Develop a realistic assessment of where the ministry is. What are the current goals and objectives? Are they being achieved?
2. Make fundamental decisions for its future direction. What are the dreams and visions of the ministry? What tools are needed to make them reality?
3. Study its strengths. What are the ministry's strengths? How can these strengths be expanded?

4. Decide the strategic objectives that will advance long-range effectiveness in ministry. Are the current objectives realistic and measurable? Do the objectives reflect the needs of the community today?

Developing an effective ministry or program requires an investment of time, energy, and finances. Planning is difficult and results may not be visible for months. Yet an effective ministry will not happen without adequate planning.

Single Parents—A Vital Part of the Church

With the increase in single-parent families, the Church must prepare to minister better to them. This includes the children as well as the parents. Not all single-parent homes result from death or divorce. An increasing number of women are choosing medical technology to have a child before marriage. Other single-parent families result from adoption and births out of wedlock.

Many professionals see the grief process for the divorced or widowed single parent as similar. While these similarities exist, the relationships are quite different. Those single-again as a result of death experience finality to the relationship that divorced people do not. Due to the children, divorced couples maintain contact as their parenting roles continue. An effective ministry recognizes and addresses the uniqueness of each situation.

According to Mervin E. Thompson in *Starting Over Single*, the first stage is shock. It is almost impossible to feel or decide anything. Individuals are numb all over. Shock is a state of disbelief, an inability to accept what has happened to us.

Second is denial. This occurs when a dinner place is still set for the absent spouse, clothes remain in the closet, not accepting the reality of death, or signing cards using both names. Denial is living a lie.

Third is emotional overload. Holding feelings inside causes this. Verbalizing feelings help to put them in proper perspective.

Disappointment and failure are the fourth stage. While most common as a result of divorce, the widow/er may share these feelings. Persons deal with their failure as well as those feelings coming from family members and friends. They must cope with perceptions of disgrace, disappointment, and shame. They grieve over time poorly spent and the rough edges of the relationship. The widow/er faces questions of "Could I have prevented my spouse's death?"

Fifth is fear. It includes fear of the future, losing control, coping with all the changes, and managing life to name a few. Times of anger and crying come when least expected or appreciated.

Anger is the sixth stage. Feelings of abandonment, rejection or perceived rejection, and bad memories cause anger. There may be anger at the ex-spouse, someone else, or even God that such a thing could happen.

Feelings of anger are normal and natural, although there are appropriate and inappropriate ways of expressing them. Not expressing anger leads to depression. Depression is the most dangerous dynamic of the grief process. It lowers resistance to physical illness. It may be an attempt to escape reality.

The eighth stage is dependency. While grieving, it is easy to become overly dependent on another. A person may give the decision-making authority to someone else. This should not lead to a new relationship before finding a spirit of independence.

For the person experiencing divorce, there is often a surprising sense of sadness. This sadness results from the loss of friends, family history, and good memories. It is normal for these feelings to come and go during the divorce proceedings.

The children of single-parent homes face many adjustments and questions. Children of divorce often blame themselves saying, "If I'd behaved better or if I hadn't gotten so angry, then Mom and Dad would still be married." After losing a parent due to death, children may blame themselves for the illness or accident causing the death. While ministering to the parents, recognize the pain and questions of the children.

Workers in the children's department have an important role in the children's lives. These teachers must be aware of the questions children will ask and how to answer them. The questions may center on why, love, and self-worth. Answer the questions honestly, giving encouragement and building self-esteem.

A child may say, "Mommy says Daddy doesn't love us/me anymore." In response, affirm the child by saying, "You're such a neat person your daddy loves you. Sometimes daddies and mommies say things they don't mean because they have hurt feelings."

Or "Is my mommy or daddy bad?" "Everyone makes mistakes. Sometimes mommy or daddy need time to think—to figure out what is the right thing. They sometimes forget to tell or show how much they love you."

It may be necessary to consult with the parent, making sure you don't contradict what's said at home. Make it clear you don't want to confuse the child or contradict the parent. Most parents understand and appreciate the concern. This also allows others to befriend and encourage the parent.

The increase of single-parent homes provides the rationale for evaluating the criterion of contests and participation in activities. Can a child be denied winning a contest or participating in a musical or play because of absences caused by court-ordered visitations? The child isn't responsible for the decisions. The distance between homes may prevent attending practices. In a small church, both parents may be uncomfortable about being present for the same services.

Sunday School teachers need to remember birthdays and other special occasions. Spending time with single-parent children gives them a sense of importance. Teachers often fill a needed role. This includes attending sports, school, and other activities as often as possible.

Be aware of the children of single-parent homes as trips, parties, retreats, and other activities requiring money are planned. The single parent, especially the single mother, may be living on a limited budget. Some of the extras taken for granted by others often become luxuries for them.

As a result of court-ordered visitations, some children will attend your Sunday School on an *irregular-regular* basis. The attendance may be every other week or just once a month. Recognize these patterns and work to make the child feel part of the class.

Some churches may address single-parent needs during Sunday School. There are three basic philosophies:

1. Keep them in classes with all other adults regardless of marital status.
2. Put them in the single adult class or start a single adult class.
3. Begin a class designed for single parents.

Many churches face difficulties resulting from building limitations and size of the congregation. Consideration of adult needs is often a low priority when facing space limitations. If space prohibits forming a new class, there are other ways to meet their needs. If the adult class is aware of single

parents and their needs, compassion, understanding, and support often come naturally. Other classes may require education before much integration occurs. Some single parents feel part of a class and continue to attend following divorce or death. If this happens, the teacher must be aware of these individuals and circumstances during class discussions.

The second philosophy states single parents are part of the Single Adult Ministries. While they are single adults, children can cause conflict. Those without children may have difficulty understanding the experiences of single parents or have difficulty comprehending the restrictions children place on parents. While it is possible for the two groups to mesh, some education needs to occur. This provides single adults without children the opportunity to support single parents. This creates a give-and take situation. Giving love, encouragement, emotional and financial support fills the free time and conquers some of the loneliness single adults without children may experience. Investing in the lives of others gives a sense of fulfillment and usefulness.

The third position is to begin a single-parent ministry. While this is ideal, it will not be immediately possible for all churches. Since this does not relieve the church of its responsibility to single parents and their children, design a single-parent ministry to meet the needs of the parents and children at the same time. While attending support and recovery groups for the parents, the children participate in programs dealing with childhood stresses and pressures. If the programs run simultaneously, babysitting is only necessary for pre-schoolers. Sharing feelings and concerns allows children to realize many of their feelings are normal and acceptable. They often share anger and other emotions with peers they might not readily share otherwise.

Before these sessions end, bring the parent and children together. Help them to see themselves as a family. They need to realize they are OK just the way they are. Develop some family pride and provide time to practice in a controlled environment the skills learned during the previous meetings.

Whichever philosophy the church decides to take, the goal is ministry to single parents. One of their basic needs is for friends who listen.

The single parent doesn't need platitudes or judgmental remarks. Their need is for a friend to listen while expressing emotions. They need someone to hold them accountable for attitudes and signs of self-pity. They need someone to pray for them and walk beside them during this dark time. They need hugs, pats on the shoulder, and words of encouragement; someone to tell them they have value and worth.

Another need is for assistance. Many single mothers face a dramatic change in lifestyle following death or divorce. Many live at the poverty level. They need scholarships for the children and themselves to attend camps, retreats, and other activities. This also includes many social activities whether as a class or as a part of a group. Many will need assistance when faced with house and car maintenance. They often need food and clothing. The holidays are difficult as they accept the difference between what was and what now is. While it may be court-ordered, many receive only partial child support payments. There is a large number that never receive any support payments. The never-married mother rarely receives any child support.

Parenting should be a team effort. The single parent faces responsibility for the household as well as the pressure from work. *Here are some ways members of the congregation can minister to the single parent:*

1. Volunteer baby-sitters to allow the single parent time alone.
2. Provide casseroles or surprise meals that free the parent of one responsibility.
3. Assistance with house and car repairs and maintenance.
4. Make offers for help specific, including date and time.

10 Things Any Church Can Do to Become Single Adult Friendly

1. Identify the single adults in your congregation and on your responsibility list. Remember that single adults includes those who have never-married, divorced, and widowed. In other words, any person without a spouse is a single adult.
2. Become single adult sensitive. Attempt to listen to announcements, lessons, sermons, etc. as a single adult. Does “man” equate “husband”? Does “woman” mean “wife”? Would single adults feel comfortable? Would they feel out-of-sync since “family” appears to be the norm? Does “family” mean husband, wife, two kids, two pets, two cars?
3. Recognize singleness as a viable lifestyle. It is possible to read some of Paul’s writings in his New Testament letters and build a strong case for singleness. Admittedly, that probably was not his intent. It is possible to affirm single adults and their singleness without undermining any family ministries. Some single adults are unmarried due to their dating standards as Christians. Others have experienced the death of a spouse. Some are single as the result of the decisions of others to leave their family responsibilities or continue abuse behaviors directed toward themselves and others. Remember, it is statistically impossible for every person to be married, even eliminating age and race barriers.
4. Realize single adults will be a permanent part of the population. As baby-boomers continue to mature, there will be an increasing number of single senior adults. Consider the following statistics: Single adults represent more than 40 percent of the population of those over 18 years of age in the United States.
5. Build a relationship with a single adult. While you may know a person who is a single adult, do you know how that person thinks? What feelings does he or she experience during and as a result of a church service? Do you know what his or her goals, hopes, and dreams are? If not, take time to develop a relationship. Walking beside an individual provides valuable insights into the issues and challenges he or she faces.
6. Recognize the adulthood of single adults. Many societies recognizes marriage as the rite of passage into adulthood. When individuals do not observe this rite, they tend to feel out-of-balance. Single adults hold responsible positions in the corporate world. Some own and operate their own businesses. Yet when they attend church, they frequently find themselves being viewed as less than mature.
7. Encourage involvement in Single Adult Ministries’ events. This may be in your church or it may mean participating in events offered by other churches. It is not necessary to fear that single adults will begin to attend other churches. Experience shows that single adults whose spiritual needs are being meant in a congregation seldom begin to attend the ‘other church’ on a regular basis. They have established an identity with the local church, while the ‘other church’ provides the opportunity to network with other single adults.
8. Realize that some single adults have reached a place of contentment with their singleness. Accept this contentment. This does not mean they have closed the doors to future relationships. Rather, it means they have learned to be content at this stage of life.
9. Be aware of events that create stress for single adults. These events will vary with each single adult. However, here are some trigger-events:
 - ✓ loss or threatened loss of employment.
 - ✓ financial difficulties. Remember there is only one person to provide an income.

- ✓ parenting challenges. Parenting was designed as a two-person responsibility. Single parents may need assistance in providing role models and mentors for their children.
- ✓ death of a parent. This is especially difficult for never-married adults. These individuals have lost a major identity. Some report feeling like an orphan.
- ✓ death of a friend. Friends for many single adults become like family. Therefore, the death of a friend is traumatic.

10. Remember we are all part of the Body of Christ. Our identity in Christ is based on a personal relationship, regardless of marital status. When the Body of Christ functions at its best, there is a role for each person.

Necessary Elements of Single Adult Ministries

During a gathering of Single Adult Ministries leaders, we discussed the question, “Where does SAM need to be in five years?” As the group distilled several key elements, I considered the question for SAM in the Church of the Nazarene.

The term, single adult as used here refers to people who are divorced, never-married, or widowed and over the age of 25. As SAM prepares for the future, it needs to recognize the difference among the various life stages. Those less than 25 years of age typically have a different perspective. Life experiences, such as divorce and death, lead to a different perspective. Never-married people see life through other lens.

This means that we need to be sure all perspectives are covered, even if that means preparing and presenting different information to different life stage groups. If you’re in a small ministry, you can accomplish this by presenting the information to the whole group and then dividing into life stages and age groups. What affects a person at 25 years of age is different from that of a 55-year-old person. The principles may be the same, but life applications are different.

First, there needs to be a strong emphasis on developing healthy relationships. This includes same gender and cross gender relationships, including friendships and dating relationships. Relationships are a huge topic that often requires several presentations. Since most single adults want to be married at some point, teaching and discussing these topics need to include everyone.

Single adults want, and maintain, good cross gender friendships that provide another perspective and affirm their personhood. Since many single adults live alone, friendships become an essential part of personality development. Interactions with others provide and require personality adjustments during the give-and-take of life.

Understanding personality types is one means of developing healthy relationships. As we understand the various personality types, people understand themselves better and gain insights into their relationships with others. A web search identifies many sites that provide information on this topic. There are also many books that address personality types:

- *The Five Love Languages for Singles*, by Gary Chapman
- *The Birth Order Book: Why You Are the Way You Are* by Kevin Leman
- *Personality Plus: How to Understand Others by Understanding Yourself* by Florence Littauer.

Dating is a topic that creates challenges for SAM. If there is a series on dating, people may wonder if the goal is to “get everyone married.” Then if people meet a future spouse in SAM, what does that

say about those who don't get married? For these reasons, SAM has often ignored the topic rather than dealing with difficult issues.

However, the question remains, "Is there a better place than SAM to meet healthy, Christian people?" The answer should be "No." While some come into SAM in need of healing, there should also be people who are healthy and ready for marriage. Once again, it's time to face and address a difficult topic--the "both/and" aspects of SAM. Some will get married and some won't. It's reality.

This means we need to help people develop and maintain healthy boundaries while dating. This is especially true with the number of people using online dating services wisely, how to safely meet face-to-face people, what's appropriate information to give, and how to verify the information people give.

An internet search located this website, <http://www.dangersofinternetdating.com/>. There is good information posted, including stories from individuals about their internet dating experiences. There were also great tips for building relationships as well as identifying red flags.

One of the first rules of internet dating is to be careful in disclosing personal information such as home phone number and address. This is great advice to follow whenever and wherever meeting new people—even at church and church sponsored events.

Suggestions on internet dating recommend meeting in a public place. Here's another suggestion—have the person attend a service or church event. This creates a safe environment, provides opportunity to observe behaviors and interactions with others, and allows others to give their insights and observations. Remember, even as adults, it's easy to see only what we want to see. Others, therefore, have a more objective point of view.

Second, there needs to be an emphasis on **preparation for life's transitions**. As single adults, many transition from one stage to another with little input from others. This sense of independence can become a weakness, if we fail to make preparations for the future.

Since single adults live on one income, saving for retirement can be a struggle, or one of the last items to include in a budget. Yet, many financial counselors give staggering figures of how small amount of money invested or saved regularly grow into significant amounts.

Job transition is another area of concern. With companies downsizing and out-sourcing, many people face this challenge. This gives SAM an opportunity to network with other ministries in the local church to encourage and support individuals as they transition from one job to another.

Caring for elderly parents and other relatives is another issue many people face. Learning to balance the demands of work and elder-care creates many challenges. This is often complicated by distance. How do they live in one state or town and care for people in another? Making decisions regarding the types of care and considering all the options is often overwhelming. Fortunately, there are books that help when facing these circumstances. While not all written from a Christian perspective, the following books may be helpful when facing this transition:

- *Taking Care of Parents Who Didn't Take Care of You* by Eleanor Cade
- *Coping with Your Difficult Older Parent* by Grace Lebow, etc. all.
- *The Hard Questions for Adult Children and their Aging Parents* by Susan Piver
- *Doing the Right Thing* By Roberta Satow

Third is the need to **celebration**. During another meeting of SAM leaders, one staff member said a single adult in his congregation talked about the lack of celebrations in her life. "The last time I was recognized by the congregation was when I graduated from high school. The next time I'll be recognized may well be when my casket is rolled in." After the initial shock, many affirmed the

accuracy of the story. Build in periodic times to celebrate the milestones in the lives of single adults. These include:

- ✓ New jobs
- ✓ New degrees or training
- ✓ New grandchildren
- ✓ New daughters-in-law or sons-in-law
- ✓ New nieces and nephews
- ✓ New great-nieces and nephews
- ✓ New homes or apartments
- ✓ New cars or other significant purchases
- ✓ Vacation plans
- ✓ Life-changing decisions such as job changes to care for others
- ✓ Community involvement
- ✓ Service to the local church
- ✓ Job milestones--years of service, promotions, or other accomplishments
- ✓ Retirement

Fourth **build bridges** to young adults and new single adults within the congregation. Perhaps one of the greatest challenges of SAM is the potential for people to form cliques. While understanding the importance of relationships, these relationships need to have elasticity so others can become part of the group, feeling loved and accepted.

Consider a step-family and how easy it is to exclude some by reminiscing about past events. These conversations typically eliminate some of the family members from the conversation because they don't have the same history. If this happens often enough, some family members may give up trying to find common ground.

SAM must continually monitor and adjust ministry strategies to meet the needs of people as they realize singleness may be a longer term lifestyle than they anticipated. What works for today's ministry, probably won't work tomorrow. Effective leaders are listening to young adults to determine their needs and interest.

It may be necessary to form a new group under the SAM umbrella. Just as many adults don't want to be "promoted" to another class, younger single adults may not wish to join a group they perceive to be for older people.

1 Natalie Schwartzberg, et. al. *Single in a Married World*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1995), 14.

2 Ibid., 16.

3 Ibid., 15.

4 Ibid., 28.

5 Ibid., 29.