



Dear Kris, I lead a ministry in Raleigh, NC that presently does not allow separated people to be in the singles ministry. We have several divorced singles who are opposed to this rule. It has caused some problems and even divisions. What should we do? Beverly D.

Hi Beverly, it's nice to meet you. First let me tell you that the decision to have separate people in singles ministry is an ever changing disputing separate people are still married, their place should not be among singles in a singles ministry. But if they aren't allowed there, where should they go? Because most other Sunday school/small groups are made up of married people, most separated do not feel they belong. They have lost their community of marriage and are seeking a new community. But where do they find this community? Especially while they heal from a broken marriage..in the married class?

The problem:

If a separated person on the last day before their divorce is complete, were to go back to their spouse, asking forgiveness and a chance to fix their marriage you should feel convicted to at least try. But if you heart has moved on, if you have gotten emotionally involved with someone else (even date), you would not make an effort to fix your marriage. By allowing you to be around other singles, you can easily become involved in a new relationship.

The Solution

If you are a large church then I would recommend starting a "Transitions" class or small group for anyone going through a transition. Transitions such as separation, death, job loss, etc. In the past I have seen these type of classes offered and led by trained counselors at other churches. The counselors were there to help determine your mental and emotional health. They would steer you into the right therapy such as Griefshare, Divorcecare, one-on-one counseling, etc. The other option is to simply have a class for those separated.

If you are a small church and you do not have the option above, then I would suggest 3 things:

1. Meet with each separated person, asking the right questions to make sure they are ready to be around singles. Newly separated people might need some time before joining your ministry.
2. Encourage them to go through a Divorce Recovery program before coming into your ministry. Divorcare encourages reconciliation. This is hard to do when you are around singles.
3. Ask the separated person to wear their wedding ring, and verbally letting others know they are separated as needed. This is to protect both sides.

Ultimately you are the final decision when allowing separated people into your ministry. For some churches it has worked and for others it has not. The more singles you have in your ministry, the harder it will be to keep up with who is coming in and out. If you have this guideline clearly marked in your vision statement, then you should not have any issues.

Blessings, Kris

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