



From the Manger to the Cross, the Men in Christ's Life: Lazarus
by Kris Swiatocho
Editors note: This is a part of a series.

My stepfather is only one example of a man who has impacted my life as a result of his relationship with Christ. Throughout this series, I want to share with you about some of the other men who have impacted my life solely because of their relationship with Jesus. I believe as I share that you, too, will connect with them and discover for yourself how God has always had a plan for you, is working it out in your life and will never leave you.

"You better stop it; I'm going to tell Mom. Mom!!!" Did that ever sound like your home?

I have many brothers and one sister. And I love them. I don't know all of them that well but I love and pray for them just the same. I grew up with three biological brothers. I also have one brother and sister who are step who I did not grow up with (but have a relationship with now) and one half brother who I have never met.

Now my three biological brothers have filled my life with some of the best and worst times. Yeah, we had our share of fights. I am the oldest and quickly earned the named "Angelica," the bossy, big sister from the cartoon "Rugrats" or for you older folks, "Margaret" from "Dennis the Menace." I made sure they knew I was in charge at all times. As long as I was bigger than them physically or could outwit them, I stayed in control. Of course, as the years past, I would lose my position of authority but I wouldn't go down without a good fight. LOL!

I also remember the many times when being the oldest was to their advantage. Times when I rescued my brothers, took their side, and protected them. Times when our biological father would yell at them and hit them. Times when I would cry for them when they were being punished unfairly. I also remember the good times. Times when we enjoyed a bowl of homemade ice cream, had tickle fights and laughed. Times when we played games of Red Rover, Hide and Seek and Mother, May I. Times when we ran in the fields catching fireflies outside my grandparents' home, climbed trees and occasionally gotten poison ivy. I also remember when it was time for them to protect me—from overzealous boyfriends to coming in to late after curfew. Sure, they aggravated me at times; but they also loved me. I am blessed to have them in my life.

Just like my brothers and me, can you imagine seeing Mary, Martha and Lazarus growing up together? Having fun hanging from trees, chasing each other and playing tag. Of course, it wouldn't have been Martha if she didn't fuss to her parents about Lazarus not cleaning up his part of their bedroom. Or Mary getting her hair pulled when she was trying to focus on her studies. I am sure they were like any family with its stress and frustrations, laughter and joy. However, this family had an edge. They not only loved each other very much but they also loved Jesus, their friend. They would quickly learn who He really was and would be in their lives.

Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now laid sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair. So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick." When he heard this, Jesus said, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it." Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. Yet when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days. Then he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea." "But Rabbi," they said, "a short while ago the Jews tried to stone you, and yet you are going back there?" Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? A man who walks by day will not stumble, for he sees by this world's light. It is when he walks by night that he stumbles, for he has no light." After he had said this, he went on to tell them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up." His disciples replied, "Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better." Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep. So then he told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead, and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe.



But let us go to him." Then Thomas (called Didymus) said to the rest of the disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home. "Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" "Yes, Lord," she told him, "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world." And after she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. "The Teacher is here," she said, "and is asking for you." When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there. When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. "Where have you laid him?" he asked. "Come and see, Lord," they replied. Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. "Take away the stone," he said. "But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days." Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me." When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

—John 11: 1-44

What I Have Learned from Lazarus:

1. Lazarus was loved by Jesus.

Jesus wants a special relationship with each of us. Do you feel loved by Jesus? Do you sense God's presence in your life? Do you know His calling on your life? His direction? Jesus loved Lazarus, just like He loves us. Lazarus was very special to Jesus. How do I know this? Because Lazarus's sisters sent word to Jesus commenting the "one you love" is sick. Mary and Martha knew Jesus loved Lazarus by his actions toward him, his friendship and his attention. Lazarus must have been teachable, a good listener and also a good friend to Jesus. Lazarus showed by his actions how much he loved Jesus, too. Are you showing Jesus how much you love him by your actions, attitude and obedience?

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—John 11: 2-3

2. Jesus was Lazarus's friend first, then his savior.

What I love about this is that Jesus loves to meet us at our needs first. In fact, he teaches this through Paul. Look at the



many examples in His Word of healing, feeding and restoring people. Jesus knows that if our physical, emotional and mental needs are met first, then He can minister to us spiritually. Thank you, Lord, for always meeting our needs first. For filling our bellies, listening to us, giving us friends, paying our bills, etc.

After he had said this, he went on to tell them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up." His disciples replied, "Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better." Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep.

—John 11: 11-13

3. Lazarus's death and resurrection was in God's perfect timing.

Aren't you glad God doesn't give us everything we want when we want it? I think of all the relationships in my life from the men I've dated or wanted to date, to friends, jobs and other things. I am so thankful God didn't give me all that I wanted. I couldn't see it at the time, but now—as I have grown more mature in Christ—I am much better at waiting on God.

Now sometimes while we wait, it can hurt. I can only imagine how Martha and Mary felt when Lazarus had died. They had sent word to Jesus to come. And because they knew Jesus was not only their friend but loved them, surely he would come and save their brother. Isn't that the way it is in our own lives? Why does God allow those we love to die? Why does He allow 9/11, Hurricane Katrina, the war in Iraq and the recent tragedy at Virginia Tech? Why does he allow some of us to get married, have children, while others stay single or barren? Why are some of us wealthy while others are poor? Why?

Well, first of all, we live in a wicked world filled with the sin of people. But yes, we have a sovereign God who is in control. And because I know he IS in control, I can only believe he allows all things to happen for his glory. It's not about us, and it never has been. Oh, we try, with our own greed, wanting more and more of everything. But in the end, it is always about God. Yes, while waiting, while seeing the world around us, it can be very painful but the hope in knowing God's way is better gives me the peace I need in all things. Knowing that through our sin, our mistakes, and our separateness, those that are lost spiritually will become believers. It's worth the wait, isn't it?

So then he told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead, and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him."

—John 11:14-15

4. Lazarus's life shows me that friends sharpen friends.

Because of Jesus' example, Lazarus and his sisters had many friends. I believe because of their kindness to each other, their loyalty and support, that many loved them. So what type of friendships do you have? Do your friends help lead you to Christ or pull you away? Are they friends who are there in the good times and the bad? How have you helped to grow your friends in Christ?

On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

—John 11:17-20

As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.

—Proverbs 27:17

5. Even though Lazarus was dead, and there seemed to be no hope, Jesus still produced a miracle. If nothing is impossible, what is possible? Even when things seem senseless to us, we must believe God can do a miracle.

"Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will



give you whatever you ask."
—John 11:21-22

6. Lazarus's death shows me that Jesus cries with us and for us.

Yes, Jesus, even though he knows ALL things, still cries for us. He cries when we hurt from a broken heart, a death, a lost job or home. He cries when we have joy from a new baby, graduating from college or our wedding day. He cries tears of joy when we ask him into our heart and cries tears of sadness when we sin. Yes, Jesus cries. And because he cries, it's OK for us to cry.

When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. "Where have you laid him?" he asked. "Come and see, Lord," they replied. Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"

—John 11:33-36

7. Lazarus's death shows me we need to be reminded of who Jesus is and His purpose.

I may say I know the Word, but I declare. If I really did, then why do I keep forgetting it and go back to my ways? Thank you, Lord, that you use others, our churches, sermons, books, radio broadcasts, music, your Word and circumstances to remind us of who you are and your purpose in our lives.

Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. "Take away the stone," he said. "But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days." Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?"

—John 11: 38-40

8. Lazarus's death shows me we need to pray and thank God out loud.

Can you imagine Jesus needing to talk with God? What an example for the rest of us! Does God require our prayers, our comments or our pleading? Doesn't he know all things? Doesn't he know what we need before we even say it or think it? Yes, of course he does, but he also wants us to talk with him, ask things of him, thank him and acknowledge him. We pray not to strengthen God or have him believe in us, but we pray to strengthen and help us believe in him.

So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me."

—John 11:41-42

9. Lazarus's resurrection produces faith.

When we wait on God and allow his best, it can produce faith not only in ourselves but also in those around us who see our lives. How do you handle stress, frustration and aggravation? How do you make decisions? Do you trust God fully?

Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, put their faith in him.

—John 11: 45

10. Lazarus's life, death and resurrection may have brought risks, but the blessings far outweighed them.

Lazarus's friendships and relationships with Jesus and his sisters, his sickness, death and new life were all used to teach others about who Jesus was and is. To show us God's power, his purpose and his desire is for a relationship with us. Are you willing to allow God to work in your life? Are you willing to suffer now for the sake of Christ? Are you willing to be used by God no matter what way that might be? Remember, the enemy doesn't want you to prosper, to have direction or purpose. He will do whatever it takes to destroy you, so YOU must do whatever it takes to have life. Our life comes from the Savior.

Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of him but also to see



Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and putting their faith in him.

—John 12: 9-10

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

—John 10:10

11. Our lives, like Lazarus's, can produce a legacy.

When we follow the Lord, be obedient and share our faith with others, we produce a legacy. It's like when you throw a rock in a pond, and the ripples go out. Our lives, whether we live for God or not, affect others. So let's make sure it affects them in a way that draws them to Christ. Keep praying for each other, pouring into each other and loving one another. You never know where it might go. It might even spread like wildfire.

Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word. Many people, because they had heard that he had given this miraculous sign, went out to meet him. So the Pharisees said to one another, "See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!"

—John 12: 17-19

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

—John 11:25-26

I can only pray that as I continue to grow in my walk with the Lord, that others would one day say . . . "there goes Kris, the one Jesus loves." Loves, because of not only what He did on the cross for me but as a result, I have learned to love Him completely. I pray this for each of you as well so that many, many others would come to Christ . . . and it spreads like wildfire.

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another."

—John 13:34

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TheSinglesNetwork.org Ministries helps churches, pastors and single adult leaders evaluate, develop and support their single adult ministries through high-energy speaking engagements, results-oriented consulting and training and leadership development conferences and seminars. Click here to request a FREE "How to Start a Single Adult Ministry" guide.

FromHisHands.com Ministries is Kris's speaking ministry. If you've ever heard her speak, you know that Kris is the kind of speaker who keeps the crowd captivated, shares great information and motivates people to make a difference in the lives of those around them! She speaks to all church audiences on everything from "first impression" ministry to women's topics to singles and young adults. She can speak on a Sunday morning, at a woman's retreat or for a single adults conference. Bring Kris to your church today!

Singles and Relationships by Kris Swiatocho and Dick Purnell

Many singles are Christians who wonder if God will ever bring a mate their way or if they should just stop focusing on a future with a marriage partner and live the single life to the fullest. Kris Swiatocho and Dick Purnell offer solid biblical



answers for singles in this newest title in Dick's popular 31-Day Experiment Bible study.