

SiNGLE&TM PARENT!NG

HARD WORK, REAL HOPE

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Printed in the United States of America.

First printing, May MMXI.

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Cover and interior design by Roy Roper, wideyedesign, inc.

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SINGLE & PARENTING SESSIONS

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ABOUT SINGLE & PARENTING

SINGLE & PARENTING IS A NETWORK of single-parent care groups meeting around the world. It is a program that helps single parents find practical help and encouragement as they seek to successfully guide their children into adulthood.

MEET THE VIDEO COHOSTS

STEVE GRISSOM, founder and president of Church Initiative, became a single dad to his daughter after facing divorce. Knowing firsthand the devastation of divorce and the tough task of single parenting, he has followed God's calling over the years to create and produce small group care programs for people in life crises. Today, thousands of churches worldwide offer Church Initiative's DivorceCare, GriefShare, DivorceCare for Kids and now Single & Parenting ministry programs to bring help and healing to hurting people. Steve has a heart for single parents, and his desire is that other single parents come to know the hope, peace and freedom found in a relationship with the Lord.



ANGELA THOMAS became a single mom after fourteen years of marriage. As she faced reality with her four children, she learned to rely on God for strength, hope and comfort. During that season, she wrote **My Single Mom Life**, a book of lessons and encouragement for women who walk a similar path. She has authored numerous books since then, including **Do You Think I'm Beautiful?** and **Tender Mercy for a Mother's Soul**, and joyfully fulfills her calling as a speaker and teacher. Angela's passion is for others to know intimately the God who has never let her down.



HELP FOR HURTING PEOPLE

Listed below is information about other care group resources from Church Initiative, which publishes Single & Parenting. For further information, call **1-800-395-5755** (US & Canada) or **919-562-2112** (local and international), visit our website at www.churchinitiative.org or email us at info@churchinitiative.org.



DivorceCare, a seminar/small group resource to help people hurting because of separation and divorce



GriefShare, a grief recovery program to help people grieving the death of a loved one



DivorceCare for Kids, DC4K, designed to bring healing to children of divorce and to give them hope and the tools to develop healthier relationships within their families



Chance to Change, a Christ-centered gambling addiction recovery program to help gambling addicts find freedom from their addiction



Choosing Wisely: Before You Divorce, a marriage crisis intervention tool designed to help prevent divorce and save families



Facing Forever, a fascinating study of the issues of life, death and eternity

HOW SINGLE & PARENTING WORKS

Your Single & Parenting experience includes three key elements that work together for effective results in your life as a single parent. We encourage you to commit to taking part in all three aspects of Single & Parenting: video seminar, small group discussion and workbook-based personal study and reflection.



1 VIDEO SEMINAR Pivotal teaching on single-parenting topics

- At each session you will view a video featuring personal stories of single parents, insights from Christian experts on single-parenting topics and segments explaining how to handle challenging single-parenting situations. The videos average 40 minutes in length.
- We encourage you to take notes using the video outline in your workbook and refer to your notes during the group discussion time.

2 DISCUSSION Facilitated small group discussion time

- After the video you'll become part of a small group to discuss what was seen on the video and what's going on in each other's lives. You'll stay with the same group of people for the thirteen sessions. It's likely you will begin to see the people in your group as "family."
- Your group leaders will have discussion questions to help guide the group time. It's also important to take time to "catch up" on the trials, problems and successes experienced by members between sessions. Sharing your experiences will help you organize and clarify your thoughts on what is happening to you and allow others to understand how they can help you along your single-parenting journey.
- Each week your group will take time to discuss the daily workbook exercises and how they have helped you throughout the week.

3 WORKBOOK Personal study and application of concepts

- **DAILY “HOPEWORK” EXERCISES:** Completing the short daily questions and reading the insights and Bible verses can make a real difference in your parenting and your personal growth. They will guide you to a place of rest and hope.
- **REST FOR SINGLE PARENTS** is an article describing how you can receive the rest, peace and strength that God offers to everyone.
- **NOTE-TAKING OUTLINES** correspond with the weekly video seminars to take notes while viewing the videos.
- **BUDGET WORKSHEET:** Get started on the path to financial freedom using this tear-out worksheet.
- **CARE CARDS:** In the back of the workbook are thirteen Care Cards. Tear out a perforated card each week and place it where you will see it often throughout each day: bathroom mirror, computer screen, car visor, purse, wallet, etc.
- **SINGLE-PARENTING RESOURCE CENTER:** See page ix for further single-parenting resources, available both online and in print.
- **THANK YOU AND INVITATION CARDS:** These perforated postcards in the back of your workbook can be filled out and sent to your church leaders and friends.

IF YOU’RE ACTIVE IN A CHURCH, turn there for help throughout your single-parenting journey. If you’re not, you are missing out on a key element of support. Talk with your group leaders about how finding a church can help you. God doesn’t expect you to carry the whole load by yourself. He uses the church and the people in it to help.



Single & Parenting helps single parents find practical strategies and develop hope for the future. We encourage you to become committed to your Single & Parenting group and to look expectantly at what God can do in your life!

GROUP GUIDELINES

Each group will develop its own rules and guidelines, but here are some broad suggestions about how to be an effective group member.

SHARE: There is no requirement to talk or share in the group, but you're encouraged to do so!

LISTEN: Be willing to listen. When someone else is speaking, focus on what that person is saying in order to learn, comfort and help. Good listening builds relationships.

COMPLETE THE HOPEWORK: Doing the workbook exercises benefits both you and the group. By completing your Hopework, as well as attending the meetings, you'll be able to get the most out of Single & Parenting that you can. It also prepares you for the discussion time. Group discussions reach their full potential when everyone does their exercises.

BE SENSITIVE: Some of you are naturally outgoing and comfortable sharing your feelings. Some of you are a bit shy. If you are outgoing, make sure you don't dominate the group. If you tend to be quiet or shy, make an effort to participate (you'll be glad you did!).

DON'T DATE WITHIN THE GROUP: This is a group designed to help you and the other group members find help, support, healing and growth. It is not an environment to encourage dating relationships among group members (for those who are divorced or widowed, dating too early can add to your hurt!).

BE WELL-MANNERED: Take care to protect the integrity of the Single & Parenting program as well as each group member. Please make every effort to avoid speaking of others in disparaging terms.

MAINTAIN CONFIDENTIALITY: Don't talk about things you hear in the group to people outside the group. This will help develop an atmosphere of trust. (Keep in mind, there is no way the group can guarantee confidentiality, so use discretion about what you share.)



SINGLE-PARENTING RESOURCE CENTER

WE ARE ALWAYS GLAD TO HELP. That's why we designed these resources. Take a moment to familiarize yourself with each one, so you know what help is available. Visit www.singleandparenting.org, email info@singleandparenting.org or call us at **1-800-395-5755** (919-562-2112 international) with any questions you may have about the Single & Parenting resources.

SINGLE & PARENTING ONLINE HELPCENTER

Every week you can gain a deeper understanding of that session's topic. Plus, you can download exercises to help you better apply the concepts and strategies in your own life. Each session will have a web page with bonus material, which will include:

- Bonus video clips with further insights on the week's topic
- Angela's Reflections: Hear what Angela has to say about each week's topic
- Downloadables: Worksheets and additional exercises you can complete to help you on your single-parent journey
- Links to helpful resources



FIND A GROUP

Moving to a new town? Have a friend or relative who could be helped by a Single & Parenting group? To find groups in other areas, search our database at www.singleandparenting.org and enter a zip code, city or country. You can also call us at **1-800-395-5755**.



SINGLE & PARENTING CDS & DOWNLOADABLE AUDIO FILES

With a set of Single & Parenting CDs or the downloadable audio files, you can catch up on sessions you missed or find encouragement by listening to your favorite programs. You can also gift the audio version of Single & Parenting to others. You'll receive the audio tracks from each of the thirteen Single & Parenting sessions. To order, call **1-800-395-5755** or visit www.singleandparenting.org.

ONLINE BOOKSTORE

We know it can be difficult to find reliable resources to help with your single-parenting concerns. Our online bookstore, accessed through www.singleandparenting.org, includes books that are reviewed and selected based on the value they will bring to your life and the single-parenting process. You'll find books written by the Single & Parenting experts featured on the videos.

TELL A FRIEND

The Single & Parenting website, www.singleandparenting.org, includes a link to tell a friend about this site. Let other single parents know about Single & Parenting by having this email invitation sent recommending the Single & Parenting site.



REST FOR SINGLE PARENTS

HOW TO FIND TRUE REST: As a single parent, you know what it means to be exhausted. But God offers rest—not just physical comfort, but rest for your soul.

Read “Rest for Single Parents,” and find out God’s surprising plan to put an end to your suffering. You’ll discover:

- How God gently cared for a single mom in the Bible
- How God wants to care for you
- What can keep you from experiencing God’s comfort

OVERWHELMED

If you’re a single parent, you can probably relate:

“I can’t do another day. I can’t do another minute, let alone a whole day.” —Rob, single dad

“It can be really hectic and busy, and sometimes all I want in the moment is peace and quiet and no more fighting ... Isn’t that fair?” —Julie, single mom

“I’m worn out. I’m frustrated with life. I don’t know what to do that’s best for my kids.”
—Lois, single mom

Every day you work to meet the emotional and physical needs of your children, often at the expense of your own. You strive to be a good parent, but the struggle to do everything by yourself makes it seem impossible. Is there any chance of finding hope and rest?

A TENDER GOD

Hagar probably wondered the same thing. The book of Genesis in the Bible describes the story of Hagar, a servant in Abraham’s household. She was a single mother who was betrayed and then banished into the desert.



Imagine how hopeless Hagar must have felt as she and her son were sent away from their home, with food and water strapped to her shoulders to last how long? The desert stretched endlessly as she wandered with her son, carefully rationing her provisions until, finally, the food and water were gone. With no other options, she laid her starving child under a bush and collapsed at a distance to avoid seeing him die. They both began to cry. In the parched wasteland, erased of human comfort, two frail voices rose up from the desert, perhaps the only sounds.

HOPE IN A PAINFUL WORLD

Do you identify with Hagar? Maybe you can taste her bitterness when you think about being rejected by your child's other parent or her sadness when you can't provide for your children like you want to. Perhaps you feel her despair and her loneliness when you wake up in the morning faced with living that day without anyone to help you.

Perhaps you want to believe God loves you, but you can't understand why a loving God would allow pain and suffering in your life. If He cared about you, wouldn't He do something about it? The answer is, yes.

God heard Hagar's son crying and called to Hagar from heaven, *"What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. Lift the boy up and take him by the hand."*

Hagar was truly in a hopeless situation. Only God could rescue her, and He did. God opened Hagar's eyes to a nearby pool of water. Her vision blurred by tears, she must have thought it a mirage at first—but it wasn't.

God's original creation in the Garden of Eden was perfect and sinless. Adam and Eve had a perfect relationship with their Creator until they disobeyed Him. As a result, their descendants are all born with built-in resistance to God and His ways. This is the reason we choose to disobey God. And it's that same disobedience that cuts us off from God and from experiencing His comfort and help. But as the story of Hagar illustrates, God is a tenderhearted Father. He *did* do something about sin; He sacrificed His only Son, Jesus Christ, to provide us a way out of the desert. According to John 3:16, whoever believes in Jesus has everlasting life—a life without tears or "death or mourning or crying or pain" (Revelation 21:4). While you are in this imperfect world, you have the hope that someday injustice, pain, divorce, death, betrayal and suffering will end.



REST FOR YOUR SOUL

The same God who heard Hagar and her son hears your cries today. He knows the cries of your heart that are too deep for expression: the tears you've cried for your children, for yourself. And He hears the cries of your children, too. He says to you from Matthew 11:28: **"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."** He wants you to have abiding rest now in His Son Jesus Christ, even amidst the busyness and chaos of your daily life. How is this possible?



A FREE GIFT

In the words of Julie, a single mom, *"We live in a culture that keeps trying to tell us you can do it all. That's just not reality."* You won't be able to fix everything, clean everything, cross off all the items on your to-do list. In light of this truth, the good news is there is nothing you have done or can do to earn God's love and favor and rest. Jesus has done it for you.

You can stop trying to work your way to a substitute salvation, trying to redeem yourself from shame and past mistakes by doing everything right. Ephesians 2:8–9 says, **"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast."**

You can also stop worrying about how other people see you. Because of Christ, God accepts you as you are. Psalm 103:12 says He has removed our sins as far as the east is from the west. And His viewpoint is the only one that truly matters!

The answer to your problems lies in Christ.

YOUR STORY

Like Hagar—and Julie, Rob and Lois—you need to be rescued. Of course, you need help in your physical situation: perhaps you were wronged by others or are struggling financially. But you also have a spiritual situation that is far more serious. All



of us are born sinners according to Romans 3:23, and our sin separates us from God eternally. Your ultimate need is for something far greater than temporary vindication or comfort; your heart's cry is for a Savior who is able to save to the uttermost. Only Jesus Christ can deliver you from hopelessness—totally, finally and eternally.

The comfort and hope Jesus offers you is not a mirage. His love is not superficial or fickle. He is able to keep His promises to you, and He faithfully will. Psalm 145:13b says, **“The LORD is faithful to all his promises and loving toward all he has made.”** Listen to Him: *Do not be afraid. Come to me. I will give you rest.* Trust yourself and your children to Him, because He has heard you.

HOW TO EXPERIENCE GOD’S REST

If you have never asked God for His comfort and rest, you can come to Him by acknowledging your belief in who He is, what He has done for you, and your personal need for Him. You need to believe that you are a sinner, and because of that sin, you have been separated from God and the hope He offers. You need to believe that Jesus Christ died in your place so that you would not have to experience eternal death, the punishment for your sin. You can come to God with a simple prayer from your heart:



Lord,

I need Your help. I am overwhelmed with physical and spiritual needs that only You can meet. I've tried to make things right on my own, but I realize now that I can't. I want to stop working to save myself and trust in the grace of Jesus Christ for my salvation and eternal life. I need Your comfort as I face my daily struggles. Please forgive me for my sin and failure to acknowledge You as Lord of my life. Thank you for sending Your Son to die so I can live daily in the hope, joy and peace that is available to me when I entrust my life to You.

Amen.

THINGS ARE DIFFERENT NOW

The problems and trials in your life will not instantly disappear when you entrust your life to Christ. But if you invited Christ into your life, things are definitely different now. For starters, you are no longer enslaved to the circumstances, people and troubles in your life. They have no power over you now.

Here's what else has changed:

- **YOUR IDENTITY IS IN CHRIST.** You are no longer defined by your circumstances or your marital status. Second Corinthians 5:17 says, **"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"**
- **GOD ACCEPTS YOU ON THE BASIS OF CHRIST'S FINISHED WORK.** Jesus Christ lived a perfect life on your behalf, and because He paid your sin debt by dying on the cross, you are now perfect in God's sight for eternity. Hebrews 10:14 says, **"[B]y one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy."**
- **GOD WILL BE WITH YOU IN YOUR STRUGGLES.** Being a Christian doesn't mean all your problems will magically disappear. In fact, Jesus told His disciples to expect adversity and tribulation in this life. But God promises not only to meet us in our suffering, but also to use our suffering for good. Isaiah 43:2a says, **"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you."**
- **YOU RECEIVED THE GIFT OF ETERNAL LIFE.** God considers you part of His family, and you will be with Him forever. Romans 6:23 says, **"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."**
- **YOU CAN FIND GOD'S PEACE.** When you turn to Him with your problems and pain, God has promised to give you His peace. Philippians 4:6–7 says, **"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."**

WHAT'S NEXT?

Because of Christ, you are now a new creation. You have been forgiven and restored to a right relationship with God, and you are free from sin's power in your life. If you have questions about your new relationship with God, talk with your pastor, your Single & Parenting leader or a spiritually mature Christian friend. They can help you grow even closer to God and understand how the gospel (the good news of what Jesus has done for us) applies to your everyday life.

SINGLE & PARENTING EXPERTS

You'll meet these people on the Single & Parenting videos in the coming weeks. They are respected experts on topics related to single parenting, and many have been single parents themselves.



THERESA M. AGOSTINELLI

is a Pennsylvania Licensed Psychotherapist and founder and owner of Glen Mills Counseling Center. At her church, Covenant Fellowship Church

in Glen Mills, she assists her pastor in counseling and speaks to groups on single parenting, grief, loss and other significant life changes. She became a single mom after her husband's death.



SANDRA P. ALDRICH

is president and CEO of Bold Words, Inc., in Colorado Springs and is an international inspirational speaker. The former senior editor of *Focus*

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The former editor of *Thriving Family* magazine, Elsa now writes and speaks full-time, traveling

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DR. MICHAEL R. EMLET is a faculty member at the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation in Glenside, Pennsylvania. He holds a master's degree from the University of Pennsylvania and a Master of Divinity degree from Westminster Theological Seminary. He has counseled for many years and is an author. Before joining CCEF, he worked as a family physician for twelve years.



ELYSE FITZPATRICK holds a master's degree in biblical counseling and is a member of the National Association of Nouthetic Counselors. She has authored and coauthored many books, including **Give Them Grace: Dazzling Your Kids with the Love of Jesus**; **When Good Kids Make Bad Choices**; **Overcoming Fear, Worry, and Anxiety**; and **Idols of the Heart**. www.elysefitzpatrick.com



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and has authored **The Single Mom's Devotional**. Carol is a single mom of three. www.carolfloch.com



BRAD GOAD is pastor of the single-parent ministry at Second Baptist Church in Houston, Texas. Brad oversees the Bible study classes for single parents, Divorce-Care classes and special events, including an annual single-parent family vacation. Brad is a graduate of Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene, Texas, and received a master's degree from Trevecca Nazarene University in Nashville, Tennessee.



DR. LAURA HENDRICKSON is trained as a medical doctor and is a board-certified psychiatrist. She ministers as a professor, author, speaker and consultant through Gospel Balm Ministries. The single mother of an adult son who has recovered from autism, she is author of **Finding Your Child's Way on the Autism Spectrum** and coauthor of **When Good Kids Make Bad Choices**. www.dr.laurahendrickson.com



MICHELE HOWE has authored several books for women and published over 1200 articles and reviews. She has been featured on numerous radio shows across the country speaking on parenting and other topics. Michele's single-parenting titles include **Going It Alone: Meeting the Challenges of Being a Single Mom** and **Still Going It Alone**. www.michelehowe.wordpress.com



LINDA RANSON JACOBS is a speaker and child care expert with over thirty years experience working with single parents, children and teenagers. Having been both divorced and widowed, Linda was a single mom who learned firsthand the emotional and support needs of single-parent families.

Linda is the creator and developer of DivorceCare for Kids, a weekly program helping children whose parents are separated or divorced. www.dc4k.org, www.hlp4.com



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MONICA KIM is a counselor at the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation in Glenside, Pennsylvania. She has been counseling for over seven

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SUSAN LUTZ served as a counselor at the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation in Glenside, Pennsylvania, for over fifteen

years. She now counsels through her home church, New Life Presbyterian Church of Dresher, where her husband is senior pastor. While at CCEF, Susan edited a series of books and booklets by the faculty and staff, including her own booklet, “Thankfulness: Even When It Hurts.” She continues to edit, teach and speak at conferences.



ADAM MALCOLM is a family life pastor at Covenant Life Church in Gaithersburg, Maryland, serving families that have youth from the age of middle school through late

teens. He also leads the single-parenting ministry. He is a graduate of Hood College in Frederick, Maryland, and the Sovereign Grace Pastors College in Gaithersburg.



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JOANNE MILLER, RN, BSN, is a registered nurse and has been a pediatric nurse for over twenty-five years. She is cofounder of the National Center for Biblical Parenting and has coauthored books on parenting, including **Say Goodbye to Whining, Complaining, and Bad Attitudes in You and Your Kids**, a book about honor and how to teach it in family life. www.biblicalparenting.org



DAN MILLER is author of **48 Days to the Work You Love** and **No More Dreaded Mondays**. He writes regularly for many magazines and web portals, including CBN.com, Crosswalk.com, *New Man*, *AARP* and *Success*. Dan specializes in creative thinking for increased personal and business success. www.48Days.net



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LOIS RABEY, author and speaker, focuses on relationship issues for those who have suffered a loved one's death and/or are raising children as a single parent. Lois was widowed at the age of thirty-four when her two daughters were seven and ten years old. She has authored many books, including **Daughters Without Dads** and **The Snare: Understanding Emotional and Sexual Entanglements**. www.rabeywords.com



DAVE RAMSEY is a personal money management expert, national radio and television personality, speaker and best-selling author of **The Total Money Makeover**. Dave understands financial peace from the personal experience of establishing a four-million-dollar real-estate portfolio only to lose it four years later. He has rebuilt his financial life and now devotes himself to helping ordinary people understand the forces behind their financial distress and how to set things right—financially, emotionally and spiritually.



GARY RICHMOND is pastor to single parents at the First Evangelical Free Church in Fullerton, California. He teaches and provides oversight to Friends Becoming Family. Gary has authored over twenty books for adults and children, including **Successful Single Parenting** and **The Divorce Decision**.



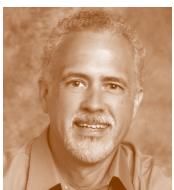
EDUARDO SALAZAR, Licensed Professional Counselor, founded Compass Counseling Solutions, Inc., a private practice in Houston focusing on children and families. Since January 2009, he has served at Champion Forest Baptist Church as associate pastor of counseling in the pastoral care ministry. www.championforest.org



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STEPHEN VIARS has served as pastor and a biblical counselor for twenty-five years at Faith Baptist Church and Faith Biblical Counseling Ministries in Lafayette,

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DR. EDWARD WELCH is a counselor and faculty member at the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation in Glenside, Pennsylvania. He has been counseling for over thirty years and has written extensively on the topics of depression, fear and addictions. His books include **When People Are Big and God Is Small**, **Depression: A Stubborn Darkness**, **Running Scared** and **When I Am Afraid: A Step-by-Step Guide Away from Fear and Anxiety**.



DR. THELMA WELLS is an inspirational speaker and founder of A Woman of God Ministries. Her book titles include **Ready to Win over Depression**, **Ready to Win over Worry and Anxiety** and **Don't Give In ... God Wants YOU to Win!** She is also heard daily on the radio through her "Mama T Says..." radio spots. www.thelmawells.com



HELEN WHEELER, Licensed Professional Counselor, is a Family Court Mediator at The Center for Families and is in private practice. After being a single mom for nine years, Helen and her husband established the nonprofit organization Changing Families, providing ministry to single parents. www.helenwheelercounseling.com



H. NORMAN WRIGHT is a grief therapist and certified trauma specialist. He is the author of over seventy books, including **Experiencing Grief** and **Recovering from Losses in Life**. www.hnormanwright.com

SESSION 1

TIRED & OVERWHELMED

SINGLE PARENTING CAN BE RELENTLESS. You're the chef, the maid, the breadwinner, the entertainer, the teacher, the rule enforcer, the playmate, the confidant, the bedtime storyteller. Your responsibilities never stop.

Will the pressure ever let up?

This week, after viewing the videos and completing the Hopework exercises, you'll discover:

- Why single parenting is never a solo endeavor
- Reasons you can have hope when all seems lost
- How deeply interested God is in your situation

VIDEO OUTLINE

Use this outline to write down important concepts, encouraging words or questions you may have while viewing the video.

COMMON EXPERIENCES

A busy lifestyle _____

Emotional distress _____

Financial difficulties _____

Conflict _____

Feeling isolated _____

Feeling overwhelmed _____

Exhaustion _____

Guilt and shame _____

REASONS FOR HOPE

Help from God and others _____

Help from this series _____

SINGLE-PARENT HELPCENTER

Weekly online bonus material:

- ☐ View helpful video clips
- ☐ Enjoy reflections from Angela
- ☐ Apply what you've learned (exercises/worksheets)
- ☐ Discover valuable resources

www.singleandparenting.org/helpcenter

IN THIS WEEK'S HOPEWORK You'll learn more about Liz, a single mom who felt pulled from all sides and became ill with the pressure. Find out how she's doing now and what she does to keep from being overwhelmed by the stress of single parenting.

HOPEWORK: TIRED & OVERWHELMED

EXERCISES TO HELP YOU PARENT WITH HOPE



LIZ'S STORY

Liz had four children, no family nearby, and was going through a divorce and court proceedings. She came home from work with migraines and developed an ulcer. Even so, she says,

"I wanted people to think that I was okay. I played the game at church, and I played the game at work. I had the professional face and I had the church face, and inside I wanted to believe it, too. I wanted to be strong, and I wanted to be okay, but I really wasn't. I was kind of decaying; I was falling apart."

ARE YOU KEEPING UP A FRONT, TOO? Wanting people to think you've got it together, when inside you're barely surviving? You don't have to pretend anymore. Through research and interviews of single parents, we've found that you will make it through, and with God's help, any bad situation you are facing can be turned around to something good.

DAY
1

GOD HEARS THE CRIES OF THE OVERWORKED

You may work one, two or three jobs. You're exhausted. Your home is in chaos. You drop into bed, only to face it all again the next day.

Be assured that God hears your cries, and you will make it through!

GOD'S WORD TO YOU

The Israelites were slaves in Egypt, and they cried out to God for help. **"The LORD said, 'I have indeed seen the misery of my people ... I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them.'"**

(EXODUS 3:7-8A)

1 Describe how overworked you are from day to day.

2 Why were the Israelites crying out to God (see Exodus 3:7–8a)?

3 At first, their workload became even harder, but as time went by ... **“the LORD gave them rest on every side ... Not one of all the LORD’s good promises to the house of Israel failed; every one was fulfilled.” (JOSHUA 21:44–45)**

Which promises did God come through on?

REMEMBER: GOD WON'T LET YOU DOWN

“I can only do what’s in front of me next. I can only take one more step,” shares Lois Rabey.

“God promises me that ...

- ☐ *He will be there.*
- ☐ *Things will be taken care of.*
- ☐ *I can rely on Him.”*

DAY

2

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

Single parenting can be a lonely job. Take heart that you are never alone.

GOD’S WORD TO YOU

“For I am the LORD your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you.” (ISAIAH 41:13)

“The LORD replied, ‘My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.’” (EXODUS 33:14)

1 In Isaiah 41:13 and Exodus 33:14, what does God promise you?

2 **“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!”**
(ECCLESIASTES 4:9-10)

Many times when feeling alone, you may wish for a physical person just to be there, to talk with or to help you out. What does the Bible say about the need for you to accept help from friends?

NOTE: Please be careful about becoming involved in a dating relationship unless you have experienced complete personal healing. While you are healing, look for support from same-sex friends.

3 If you do not have a godly, loyal friend as described in Ecclesiastes, write a short prayer below asking God to lead you to such a friend.

*“God are You there?
Do You hear me?”
—Dan*

REMEMBER: IT’S OKAY TO LET OTHERS HELP

“Once I took that mask off, people were more than willing to help out. I’m not sure why I was so afraid to actually let them know the real me, but once I did, it was a lot easier.” —Liz

“I sought to talk to God more. The Bible is full of precious encouragement for women who are alone, and by extension, men who are alone. God uses the metaphor frequently of ‘our maker is our husband.’ I was tremendously comforted [by talking to Him].” —Dr. Laura Hendrickson

WORRY ABOUT BEING A GOOD PARENT

“I keep hearing on the radio and TV that children should be brought up in a two-parent home. So I’m thinking to myself, ‘Okay, my kids are doomed then.’” —Izuru

GOD’S WORD TO YOU

God appointed Nehemiah to do a certain job, and other people were trying to discredit him and intimidate him into giving up. In response, Nehemiah prayed, **“Now strengthen my hands.”** (NEHEMIAH 6:9B)

“But I said, ‘Should a man like me run away? ... I will not go!’” (NEHEMIAH 6:11)

- 1 God has appointed you, too, with a job—to parent your children. What worries do you have about being a good parent?

A PRAYER

If you feel alone and feel that God is not there, you can say, **“Lord, help me to know that You are near.”** He will answer your prayer.

- 2 What did Nehemiah do in the face of opposition from others and worries?

- 3 Record Nehemiah’s prayer from Nehemiah 6:9b right now on a sticky note, calendar, phone or other electronic device—anyplace you will see it throughout your day. Whenever you worry that you cannot complete the work God has appointed you to do, follow Nehemiah’s example in prayer.

REMEMBER: YOU CAN BE A GOOD PARENT

“There are plenty of single parents that are far better parents than the parents that are married,” says Connie. “I’m a teacher; I’m in the schools and I see this. You can do [a good job] if you commit yourself to it, and that’s God’s plan for all of us.”

Certain things in your life may look pretty bad right now. The most amazing hope you can receive into your life comes with the promise that God always turns bad to good.

GOD'S WORD TO YOU

Joseph's brothers betrayed and abandoned him. He was forced to live far from home, facing slavery, prison and false accusations. Eventually, through a series of events only God could have orchestrated, Joseph became the highest official in the Egyptian palace and was able to help many people.

Then came the day Joseph faced his brothers again.

“But Joseph said to them, ‘... You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.’” (GENESIS 50:19–20)

- 1** Joseph was in a powerful position to do or say anything he wanted to his brothers, whom he was seeing for the first time after their hateful deed. Describe Joseph's response to the situation.

- 2** What good things did God accomplish through a very bad situation (see Genesis 50:19–20)?

- 3** When we're in the middle of a tough, painful situation, it's hard to see anything beyond the moment. How would it be reassuring for you if you knew for a fact that something good would result from the tough situation you're in?

REMEMBER: EVEN THE WORST SITUATION CAN BE TURNED AROUND

"We cannot ruin God's plan for our lives." —Eduardo Salazar

"You have to look up. You have to hope in what will come, because things will change. You make the best of the situation now, and you make the best of the next situation." —Dr. Thelma Wells

"God's purposes for you are good, and He will accomplish those purposes. But if you just look at what's happening around you, you're going to miss it." —Susan Lutz

DAY
5

REASONS FOR HOPE

We draw conclusions about our situations based on what we see and hear and know today. God's perspective is not limited like that. He sees the beginning, middle and end of the story.

Our lives and our children's lives are chapters in the middle of a much larger story. And the conclusion of that story, God says, is awesome!

GOD'S WORD TO YOU

"He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain ...' He who was seated on the throne said, 'I am making everything new!'" (REVELATION 21:4-5A)

1 What things in your life as a single parent have you felt hopeless about?

2 What does Revelation 21:4-5a say is the conclusion of life's story?

*"There's always a reason for hope."
—Stephen Viars*

3 **"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." (ROMANS 15:13)**

What are the benefits of trusting God with your situation (see Romans 15:13)?

4 Who, according to Romans 15:13, is the source of hope?

Please read “Rest for Single Parents,” p. xi, to better understand the hope that God offers you.

REMEMBER: GOD MAKES ALL THINGS RIGHT AGAIN

“The suffering I’m going through and the pain I’m going through, God is going to make it worth it.” —Paige

“The storyline of Scripture reminds you of several things,” explains Dr. Michael R. Emlet. “It reminds you that ...

- *Suffering at the hand of other people is not the end of the story. You and your children’s ultimate well-being isn’t fatalistically determined by someone else’s mistreatment or abandonment.*
- *God hears the cries of His people. He understands their suffering, their pain.*
- *God takes an injustice in hand and is going to make that which is wrong, right.”*

THE CONCLUSION OF LIZ’S STORY

“A lot of times God provided what I needed and I didn’t even ask for it myself. But there were other times I should have asked more people to step in and give my kids rides or to take the kids off my hands for an hour or two.

“I did the best I could at that time, and God sent other people in my children’s lives to pick up the slack when I couldn’t be there myself. He sent church people, coaches and teachers.

“I look at my kids now and I am so grateful for them. I feel so blessed that they made it through, just like I made it through. God worked in a situation that wasn’t a good situation. He made good things happen out of it.”



NEXT WEEK If you feel inept at times to help your children through their struggles, next week’s session offers practical guidance.