



Nurturing Kids and their Single Parent Families

Volume 7, Issue 7

July 2003

Ministry Direction

"It's not just an American phenomenon: Across the globe, single-parent homes are on the rise." Genaudo C. Armas, Associated Press

"By 2000, one-quarter of children lived in single parent homes, mostly with mothers."
"America's Children" Key National Indicator of Well Being 2001

Single parent families are prevalent in every culture throughout the world today. What can your children's ministry doing to meet the needs of these kids and their families?

Attitude Check

What attitudes might be keeping your children's ministry team from addressing the needs of kids and their single parents?

The needs of single parent families are overwhelming. How can our ministry possibly meet them?

Yes, the needs of single parent families are overwhelming — family finances, childcare while the

parent works, emotional issues resulting from loss of one parent and loneliness of single parent, discipline of children, children's educational needs, etc. Can we turn our back on these needs?

Do you remember the story of Jesus feeding five thousand men besides women and children? The disciples were aware of their hunger and suggested that they be sent away to find food elsewhere. Jesus replied, *"They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat"* (Matthew 14:16, NIV). The disciples satisfied the hungry people with the resources that were available to them—five loaves and two fish.

Surely God does not intend for our single parents and their children to look elsewhere outside of the church for their needs to be met. Let's use the resources available to us and expect God to multiply our efforts.

If we target ministry to single parent families, aren't we condoning divorce?

It's true that God hates divorce but He is faithful to meet the needs of those who look to him regardless of their circumstances. He challenges us to do the same. *"Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress. . ."* (James 1:27, NIV).

Ideas You Can Use!



Meet the Challenges

Having children of single parent families in your children's ministry does pose some challenges. Don't ignore these challenges. Confront them and determine ways to overcome them.

Challenge #1. Alternate-weekend kids.

Children of divorce often spend every other weekend and an extended vacation time with the other parent. This means that the child does not attend your children's ministry regularly. How can you overcome this challenge?

- Don't overemphasize weekly attendance.
- Record both parents' mailing addresses and phone numbers. Mail important information to both addresses.
- If possible, keep track of each child's visitation schedule. When a child is absent, call him at the home of the other parent to let him know he was missed. If the child has e-mail, keep in contact regularly via e-mail.
- If you have a several children who are alternate-weekend kids, don't do projects that require more than one session to complete.
- As much as possible, plan fun events and special programs on the weekend that the majority of the alternate weekend kids will be present.

Challenge #2. Focus on the family.

How does your ministry depict family? Many times teaching, programs, events, and even logos and announcements focus on the two-parent family. Make a conscious effort to include every type of family in your ministry.

- Watch out how you label ministries and events. If you don't have a dad, a Father-Son fishing trip doesn't sound too inviting.
- Don't fail to teach God's plan for the family but do

Children's Ministry Newsletter is published monthly by Children's Ministries of the Church of God of Prophecy

Managing Editor: **Kathy Creasy**
Layout & Design: **Shaun McKinley**

P.O. Box 2910, Cleveland, TN 37320
Phone: (423) 559-5328 Fax: (423) 559-5302
Email: cgpkids@cogop.org
Visit Us On The Web: <http://children.cogop.org>

emphasize that God loves and blesses every family that seeks Him.

- Let each child and his parents know that they are an important and valued part of the local church family—which is God's family.
- Emphasize likenesses rather than differences.

Meet the Needs

Children and parents of single parent families often have unique or more pressing needs. Here are some ideas that you might implement in an effort to meet those needs.

Kids' Needs

- **Big Brothers/ Big Sisters.** Ask teens and single young adults in your congregation to volunteer to be a "big brother" or a "big sister" to a child from a single-parent family. These volunteers could spend time with a child helping with homework, teaching a skill needed for participation in a sport or hobby, or just "hanging out."
- **Divorce Recovery Support Group.** Offer children who have recently experienced the divorce of their parents the opportunity to participate in a support group. In the support group they can share their experiences and learn life skills that will help them cope better. Several programs are currently available:
- **Involve them.** Involve the child in the life and ministry of the local church. Don't let obstacles such as attendance on alternate weekends or lack of transportation, keep the child from being a part of ministry or service opportunities. Do everything possible to make sure he is a part of what's happening in your ministry.

Single Parents' Needs

- **Childcare.** Often single parents have no one to turn to when they need someone to care for their child. Develop a list of trustworthy people in your local church who would be willing to provide childcare when needed. As much as possible, offer childcare arrangements for all events that involve parents.
- **Parenting Tips.** Often single parents need someone to talk with about childrearing problems. Ask capable parents to come alongside of single parents as mentors. Also provide help with various parenting challenges in the form of information sheets, training materials (books, tapes, articles), and support groups.
- **A Sense of Belonging.** As much as possible, involve single parents in the life and ministry of the local church. Invite

them to be a member of the parent council or to chaperone a children's outing or teach a class. However, be sure that you don't place too many demands on them.

- **Recognition.** Acknowledge single parents in your local church.
- **Single Parent Sunday.** Some churches create an awareness of single-parent households and also provide encouragement to these single-parents and their children during Single Parent Sunday. Single Parent Sunday might include—
 - Single parents serving as greeters, ushers, etc.
 - Specific needs of single parents and their children such as carpooling, childcare, maintenance, tutoring, etc. listed in the bulletin. Provide a response form that can be completed and placed in the offering plate or given to an usher.
 - Invite a single parent to share his/her story.
 - A message that focuses on issues of single parent families and God's provision.
 - A prayer time for our single parent families.
 - Honor single parent families with a gift certificate or coupon for a free service such as housecleaning, childcare, meal preparation, car maintenance.
 - Fellowship with single parent families at a luncheon with the pastor's family and the children's ministry staff and their families.

Remember birthdays and holidays.

- **Parent Birthday.** Help the child of a single parent prepare a card and a small craft for his parent's birthday.
- Let each member of your children's ministry team sign a birthday card for a single parent. Include a small gift and notes of encouragement with the card.
- Make sure that single parent families have what is needed to celebrate important holidays such as Christmas and Easter. If they and their children will be alone on the holiday, make sure they have received an invitation to celebrate with another church family or plan a celebration for all the single parent families.



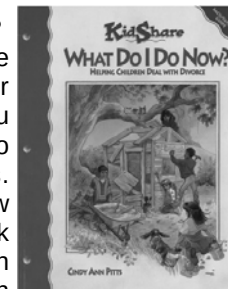
Resource Review

Kidshare: What Do I Do Now?

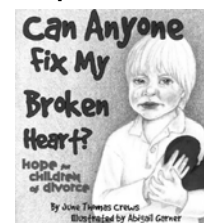
Designed for children whose parents have divorced or remarried, Kidshare helps you provide a safe place for kids to talk about their feelings. KidShare helps kids grow emotionally and spiritually, look forward to the future with optimism and discover they can trust God to help them daily.

Facilitator Guide

ISBN 0805498885, Price \$12.95



Can Anyone Fix My Broken Heart? Hope for Children of Divorce



The author draws from her own personal experience to bring hope to children affected by the tragedy of divorce. Illustrator Abigail Garner portrays a young boy walking through his parent's divorce.

ISBN 157921228X, Price \$6.99

Helping Children Cope With Divorce

Designed to help congregations plan and implement a support group for children ages 6-10 whose parents have experienced divorce, this all-in-one book includes 8 easy-to-use session plans, reproducible activity pages, a sample registration form, a leader training session and a bibliography of additional helpful resources.

ISBN 0881772704, Price \$19.95

These resources are available from Lifeway Christian Resources. Visit them online at www.lifeway.com or call 800-233-1123.