

Your Home Is Not Broken



Do your children live in a single parent family, or in a broken home? Do you realize that you have a family, even though there may be only one parent? Based on Jeremiah 18:1–6.

by Linda Ranson Jacobs

At the beginning of my single parenting journey my children lived in a very broken home with a very broken parent—me. I was so broken, that my children didn't have a mom in their home; rather, they had a devastated and overwrought adult living with them. Somewhere along the way the Lord took hold of me and brought me to my senses. Thankfully it was in time to step back and see what was happening.

My children are grown now; they are contributing adults in today's society. My children did not grow up living in a broken home. My children lived in a single parent family.

God's Plan for a Family

What was God's original design for a family? If we look in Genesis 2:22–24, we can find His original design.

“Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, ‘This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called “woman” for she was taken out of man.’ For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.”

Genesis 4:1–2 says, “Adam lay with his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, ‘With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man.’ Later she gave birth to his brother Abel.”

What a beautiful picture we see in Genesis. God designed the family to include a mother and a father. That was His original intention; however, look what happened to the first family. One brother, Cain, killed the other brother, Abel. Just as the original family was destroyed, or torn apart, many families today are fractured. You don't have to be one of those fractured homes.

Broken Home vs. Single Parent Family

You may be questioning what the difference is in a fractured, broken home and a single parent family. A single parent family is a healthy family with connectedness in the relationships. Broken homes are just that—disconnected with breaks in the relationships. Single parents families have their ups and downs, but they stay connected.

Many times the adults in these disconnected situations have not healed from the divorce or the death of a partner.

Dr. Archibald Hart in his book *Children and Divorce* says, “Usually, it is not the event of divorce or the death that necessarily harms

the children, but the bitter conflicts that follow, or the prolonged disruption of parenting as the adults sort out their lives.” I really believe that the “disruption of parenting” or the lack of parenting is the key component. I have observed many broken homes. From my observations and the study of various books, articles and different resources, I have concluded broken homes have certain traits.

The parent of a broken home ...

- can't cope with parenting.
- reacts in anger toward the child(ren).
- desires to teach the child a lesson, hoping to change the child's behavior.
- is motivated by revenge at the other parent, God or someone else.
- gives little or no warning regarding punishment; the child doesn't have a chance to stop the behavior.
- sets the child up to fail (rushes most mornings, leaves the child alone with no adult nearby, doesn't take time to listen to the child).
- gives no choices.
- puts his or her own social life before the child; or the parent has no social life.
- dotes on or hovers/mothers child.
- changes partners/lovers often.
- is unpredictable: laughs at behavior one day and is angry the next.
- allows the child to be disrespectful and controlling.
- sets no boundaries.
- rescues the child from consequences as a toddler, preschooler and adolescent ... it never ends.

At times these parents in the broken homes even look broken. They tend to carry themselves slumped over with a beaten-down

look. They take on the role of “victim”: victim of divorce, of death, of society, of their economic situation and even of their own children.

God Has Other Plans for You

God didn't intend for us to live in broken homes. God didn't intend for us to be victims. His plan is for us to be victorious in Him and for Him. God can rework or reshape your home into a home that can honor Him. Broken homes do not honor the Lord. To give you an understanding of what God can do, let's go to Jeremiah 18:1-6:

“This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: ‘Go down to the potter's house, and there I will give you my message.’ So I went down to the potter's house, and I saw him working at the wheel. But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him. Then the word of the LORD came to me: ‘O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter does?’ declares the LORD. ‘Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand.’”

Verse 4 says, “But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him.”

God designed the family to include a mother and a father. That was His intention; however, some of our “vessels,” or families, are spoiled. Allow God to be the potter who reshapes your family into what He wants for you and your children. Put it into your mind that you are a single parent family. Use the word *family* often.

Tell Your Children!

The first year that my children and I were alone, I had an opportunity that burned into my mind the importance of calling ourselves a family unit. It was on an Easter Sunday morning, and when we went to church that morning, there was a member of the congregation taking pictures of all the families. As we approached the church, he motioned for us to come over and get our picture made. I became upset at the audacity of this man. How dare he want to take a picture of my children and me? Hadn't he heard that the children's father and I were divorced?

He was insistent; then I heard my daughter shout, "We don't have a family," and she went running into the church. My son was quieter, but his words were just as lethal when he said to the man, "We aren't a family anymore. Don't you know my Dad left?" With his head down and his shoulders slumped, he walked off in the opposite direction and into the church. Oh my goodness, my children just verbalized what I had been thinking, but hearing them say it hurt.

All through the church service I thought about what had taken place, and after church when we got home, I sat my children down for a talk. I explained to them that we were indeed still a family. My son said, "Mom, look around. In case you haven't noticed, Dad left. We don't have a dad anymore. We're different." I diligently explained that God still loved us, and we would need to work at being a family. I told them that we still had each other. As I began to pray, the Lord revealed to me how to create a family from the pieces that lay before me. God became the Father in our home.

Characteristics of Single Parent Families

Single parent families ...

- set up schedules that are consistent but flexible.
- show that each member of the family unit is valuable by giving each person responsibilities that contribute to the well-being of the family.
- communicate with each other; everyone has a chance to contribute to the conversation, and consideration is given to what the parent has to say as well.
- support one another.
- are trustworthy; if you say you are going to do something, then do it.
- are reliable; you, as the parent, must be reliable.
- are respectful. All family members, including the parent, respect each other. In some situations the parent is going to have to model respect.
- show emotions. The adult models appropriate emotions for various situations.
- contribute to society; children are encouraged in this practice.
- read and pray together (Deut. 11:18–21).
- set up new rituals and continue some rituals and traditions from the past.
- problem solve together.
- share leisure time; play, laugh and share humor together.

To help you change from a "broken home" to a "single parent family," read Colossians chapter three. Colossians 3:5–11 describes a parent who exemplifies a "broken home," while Colossians 3:12–17 describes a parent who is creating a single parent home. Are you

the parent who is described in verses 8 and 9: “But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other since you have taken off your old self with its practices”?

If you are, then read the next section in chapter three, Colossians 3:12–17, which says to “clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other.”

Be the parent God intended you to be. Ideally each of us should have the relationship with our child that God wants to have with us. Remember that Satan is a liar. He will try to destroy our single parent Christian homes. If you remember in Genesis chapter three, it states that the serpent, Satan, was crafty. Adam and Eve had the perfect family. Satan told Eve to eat of the forbidden tree and that she would surely not die. Eve did eat from the forbidden tree, and later on she died. Don't let him destroy your family.

Stay close to God and to the Lord's family—the church. Don't listen to the evil one when he wants you to feel defeated because you are the only parent in your situation. You are not the only parent—you are the other parent to God, our Father.

© MMV by the author and/or Church Initiative. All rights reserved. Reproducible only when used with a Church Initiative ministry program.

Linda Ranson Jacobs is the DC4K creator and developer. For more information, email info@dc4k.org. To discover more about DivorceCare for Kids or to find a DC4K group near you, go to www.dc4k.org.