Welcome to the DivorceCare for Kids family. Each week you will receive a Parent Page. This Parent Page will do three things: (1) make you aware of the theme for the week’s session, (2) give you tips to create stronger bonds in your single-parent family, and (3) enhance the parent/child relationship. We suggest you purchase or create a journal to record stories, comments, and funny things that happen in your family. For more information about DC4K, go to www.dc4k.org. Find single-parent resources at www.dc4k.org/parentzone.

SESSION ONE

What’s happening to my family?

This week’s goal:
To help the children develop a feeling of safety about the new family structure.

What the experts say:
“From age six to just before puberty, the most significant reaction to divorce is one of anxiety. Children are afraid of what is happening. They don’t have the skills to know how they can survive. They don’t understand anything, and when parents don’t keep them adequately informed, they imagine all sorts of horrible things,” says Dr. Archibald D. Hart.

This week in DC4K:
We talked about the importance of feeling safe. The children were told that the DC4K leaders are Safekeepers. As the parent in your home, you too can adopt this concept. Tell your children that you are the Safekeeper in your home. It is your job to keep them safe. It is their job to help you keep things safe.

One family’s story:
One mother reported that her son worried that someone was going to break in their house at night when everyone was asleep. This wise mother took him around to all the doors and windows and showed him the locks. She put a steel bat in the sliding door and had him try to open it. They talked about calling 911, including when and how to use the phone number. She made sure he had the phone number of their neighbor. She reassured him that he was safe. In your journal this week, write a story about how your family keeps safe.

This week’s Scripture focus:
Psalm 27:1: “The LORD is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?” (NIV).

Building family strengths:
Hold a family meeting. Find a place in your home that feels comfortable, warm, and safe. Tell the children this will be your meeting place and decide how often you will meet. Discuss fears each family member has. Brainstorm ways to overcome these fears. Take notes in your journal and date them. Later, you will be able to look back and see the progress your family is making.

Send your child with a recent picture of your family to DC4K next week. (If you don’t have a recent family picture, encourage your child to draw one and bring it.)

The best way to help your children is to help yourself. Link up with a DivorceCare divorce recovery support group, www.divorcecare.org.

* Church Initiative interview with Christian clinical psychologist Dr. Archibald D. Hart.
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God loves children in all kinds of families

This week’s goal:
To develop a healthy, connected single-parent family by establishing consistent routines and family rituals.

What the experts say:
When a child transitions from a two-parent home to a one-parent home, it’s important to set up routines and rituals immediately. “Rituals are not routines. Routines have predictability as their goal. Rituals have connection as their goal,” says Dr. Becky Bailey. A routine is a daily schedule of activities. A healthy ritual is a positive, predictable interaction between people, which occurs on a regular basis (such as a parent rubbing a child’s back each night at bedtime). Routines provide security while rituals build strong connections. Children create their own rituals, and as a parent, you might not be aware of the rituals your child is missing due to the divorce. Creating new rituals will help your child feel connected to you.

This week in DC4K:
We discussed how everyone’s family is different. God loves your children no matter which parent they live with or what kind of home they live in. God’s love is unconditional.

One family’s story:
One girl had a hard time going home after daycare. Coming home reminded her that her dad had moved out. The mother realized she had to think of something to help. They decided to create a ritual to do together every evening. On the way to pick up the girl, the mom would buy two bottles of water (or she would refill old bottles) for them to drink together on the ride home. They called this water “Sweet Dreams.” At first when they drank the water, the little girl was sad and would talk about how their life used to be. Eventually, she began to discuss her dreams for the future, and they began to laugh and joke with each other.

This week’s Scripture focus:
Philippians 3:13–14: “Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus” (NIV).

Building family strengths:
With your child, write out a daily routine that includes a list of each person’s responsibilities and chores. Also, have a family meeting to decide upon a ritual for your family. Some children may need a ritual when transitioning between each parent’s home. Another good time for connecting activities is at breakfast when everyone is rested or at bedtime at the end of the day. Be creative.

Encourage your child to write out your family’s daily routine and a description of one ritual you have developed as a family. Send it with your child to DC4K next week.

The best way to help your children is to help yourself. Link up with a DivorceCare divorce recovery support group, www.divorcecare.org.
Facing my anger

This week’s goal:
To develop healthy ways for each person in your family to deal with angry feelings.

What the experts say:
Children may need to be reassured they are safe and that you will be there to take care of them. They also need to recognize that being mad is a normal reaction to the breakup of the family. Explain to your children that it’s okay to be mad, but it’s not okay to hurt others when they are mad. Children rarely know how to express their anger, and they may need to be given permission to say, “I feel mad,” without their parent becoming upset or defensive. As a divorced parent, you must make a conscious effort to set aside your own pain in order to help your child. Dr. Archibald D. Hart recommends that you make sure you and your child get enough physical activity. He says, “Physical activity strengthens muscles and bones, reduces fatigue, builds a stronger cardiovascular and respiratory system, and helps to release important and natural tranquilizers in the brain. Psychologically, it builds a feeling of confidence, makes a person more resilient, and helps to reduce frustration.” Angry children need physical activity to help them work through their anger.

This week in DC4K:
We talked about how to recognize the signals their bodies send when they are getting angry. The children were taught how to relax their bodies through breathing and stretching exercises. They were given examples of how to use their anger to be helpful, not hurtful. They were told to admit when they are mad and to tell others.

One family’s story:
Tess was the mom of two rambunctious boys. It seemed the boys were always getting into trouble because of their angry, aggressive behaviors. Tess decided each evening they would have “table talk.” At dinner, everyone had to tell three good things that had happened that day. At first it was hard because the boys were so angry about everything. But the only way they were allowed to talk about something negative was if they also explained how they could have changed their behavior into something good. They could say things like, “Today Sal took my pen and I hit him. But the next time Sal takes my pen, I will take a deep breath and say, ‘Sal, when you need a pen, ask to borrow it. I’ll let you use it when I’m through.’”

This week’s Scripture focus:
Proverbs 15:1: “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger” (NIV).

Building family strengths:
At your next family meeting, decide to do something fun that involves physical activity. It could be going on a walk or hike, skating together, or playing a sport together. Whatever you decide to do, promise each other that you are going to set aside all the frustration and anger and just have fun together. Children need to know that it’s okay to express their anger, but they also need to take a break from grieving the divorce and have fun.

The best way to help your children is to help yourself. Link up with a DivorceCare divorce recovery support group, www.divorcecare.org.

Journey from anger to sadness

This week’s goal:
To help you become familiar with the grieving phase of depression or sadness in your children.

What the experts say:
“Research has shown that children as long as 10 years after the divorce are still depressed. What is at root of the depression is the loss they have experienced. Not only the loss of a parent, but the loss of dreams, the loss of ideals, the loss of the intact home. God has designed us to respond to loss with depression, which can be damaging to children [if they do not learn how to recognize and cope with it]. Of all the emotional consequences of divorce, this is the one emotion that parents pay least attention to,” says Dr. Archibald D. Hart.

This week in DC4K:
The children were introduced to the sadness of grief that happens in divorce. We helped them to recognize the difference between feeling mad and feeling sad. They learned that it’s okay to feel sad and that God will provide comfort for them. They also learned that even though they may feel sad, they will get through this period and feel happy again.

One family’s story:
One divorced mom had an 8-year-old boy and a 12-year-old girl. Sometimes when the mom was sad, the boy was happy and the girl was mad. Other times the mom was happy, the boy felt mad, and the daughter was sad. They realized each one felt differently at different times. When the boy was sad, he liked to eat applesauce. So the mom bought him jars of applesauce. The daughter liked to go to her room and listen to music when she was sad. So the mom bought her some music CDs. It was decided that each person in the family would respect the others and give them some space when they felt sad or mad, but it was still important to connect with each other every day. They decided to hold family devotions each morning. They took turns reading out of a devotional book and praying for each other.

This week’s Scripture focus:
Deuteronomy 33:27: “The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms” (NIV).

Building family strengths:
Pay close attention to your children and their emotions. Even if it seems impossible with your job and other responsibilities, take the time to notice changes in their behavior and talk with them about it. Set up a time for family devotions and pray with your children. A prayer time can become a solid foundation in your routine each day. During your devotions, take time for the children to share praises for what the Lord is doing in their lives. You need to share your praises also. Keep a list of prayer requests and a list of praises. Once a month during one of your family meetings, decide when and how to celebrate the good things happening in your lives. Celebrate with ice cream or have a pizza night. Do something fun with food—you might even have applesauce to eat. Play a special music CD!

The best way to help your children is to help yourself. Link up with a DivorceCare divorce recovery support group, www.divorcecare.org.

* Church Initiative interview with Christian clinical psychologist Dr. Archibald D. Hart.
I am not alone

This week’s goal:
To help every member in your household feel a part of the family.

What the experts say:
“Loneliness rarely occurs when everything is going just right. When you go through experiences of loneliness, invariably you’re going to begin looking inward, thinking, ‘Did I do something to set this up? Is there something wrong with me?’” says Dr. Les Carter. Children feel loneliness in a divorce situation. They ask themselves the same questions. When children feel alone within the framework of the family, it can affect their self-esteem. They need to be valued. Each child needs to be a contributing member of the family. Pull together and work like a family.

This week in DC4K:
The children learned that everyone has problems and they are not alone when they have problems. They recognized that there are other children like them. The concept of asking others for help was introduced this week.

One family’s story:
Upon arriving at church one Easter Sunday, a single mom and her children were invited to have a family picture taken. The daughter screamed, “We can’t have a family picture taken because we don’t have a family anymore,” and she ran into the church sanctuary.

The son said, “Didn’t you know our dad moved out? We don’t have a family.” The mother had no idea her children felt this way. After church, the mother sat the children down and explained they still had a family. The son said, “Look around, Mom. In case you haven’t noticed, there’s no dad in this house!” She told the children that God could be the other parent in their family. The mother told the children that they needed to work on creating a new kind of family. A few weeks later this family made some big decisions. They went to the paint store where everyone picked out new paint for his or her bedroom. Everyone helped to paint. After painting, they rearranged the furniture in every room. Slowly these three became a strong, Christian “new kind of family.”

This week’s Scripture focus:
Psalm 68:6: “God sets the lonely in families” (NIV).

Building family strengths:
“A common problem with one-parent families is that too often the parent tries to shoulder all of the responsibility of running the family. Do not make that mistake. Learn to delegate to the children, to relax too rigid standards, and to focus only on priority tasks,” says Dr. Bobbie Reed. Make a list of the chores that need to be done at your home. If you haven’t done so already, divide that list into a checklist and let everyone decide what he or she will be responsible for. After taking care of daily chores, decide on a household project you will do together as a family. It could be rearranging the furniture, cleaning out a closet or the garage, or painting a room. Let all family members contribute.

The best way to help your children is to help yourself. Link up with a DivorceCare divorce recovery support group, www.divorcecare.org.
God’s plan for me

This week’s goal:
To allow each family member the opportunity to make choices and decisions in his or her life.

What the experts say:
“Making good decisions is a characteristic of maturity, but one we often don’t develop early in life. The inability to make choices, or a lack of self-confidence in decision-making, creates an inner anxiety that is hard to handle at any age. Set the stage for your children to learn how . . . to make responsible choices,” says Dr. Bobbie Reed. ‘Starting with small decisions, such as what to wear or eat, can lead to larger decisions. These larger decisions include allowing God to be the center of their lives and accepting that God has a plan for them (and He has a plan for you too).

This week in DC4K:
We discussed making good choices. The children learned that some people make bad decisions that negatively affect those they love. They learned that parent problems are adult problems—not kid problems. We talked about setting boundaries. We also discussed that it’s okay to say “no” when something doesn’t feel right or okay. The children were introduced to the concept that no matter what has happened in their families, God has a plan for everyone.

One family’s story:
After his wife moved out, one father stayed in the family home and tried to preserve the only home his daughter had known. When it came time to sell the house, he took his daughter to the townhouse he had chosen to buy. He did everything to try and convince his daughter to like this house. Minute by minute, the daughter got quieter and quieter. Then she disappeared. The dad found her outside crying and saying, “I don’t want to move out of my home.” The father gently consoled his child. He explained they had to move and his daughter could choose to adjust or she could choose to stay upset—it was her choice. When it came time to move, the dad had the daughter decide which boxes to pack. Then she helped make decisions about where to place the furniture in the new house. Many decisions were made in this move. The daughter eventually accepted the new home.

This week’s Scripture focus:
Jeremiah 29:11: ‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ says the Lord. ‘They are plans for good and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.”

Building family strengths:
As a single parent, have you taken time to make long-range plans? Do you have dreams for the future? Have you prayed about major decisions in your life? In your next family meeting or at a family meal, share with your children some of your dreams for the future. Ask the children to share some of their dreams. Together, plan a special family event you haven’t done before. Some suggestions are to attend a concert, serve a holiday meal at a homeless shelter, or help another single-parent family move.

The best way to help your children is to help yourself.
Link up with a DivorceCare divorce recovery support group, www.divorcecare.org.

* Adapted from Bobbie Reed’s Christian Family Activities (Standard Publishing, 1982), p. 33. Used by permission from the author.
Developing new relationships

This week’s goal:
To help your children know it’s okay to develop new relationships and realize that former relationships may change because of the divorce.

What the experts say:
You may be thinking that new relationships mean dating. You may be looking forward to having a new dating relationship, but, with few exceptions, your children are not. Make a point to truly look at this issue from your child’s point of view. A new dating relationship can be scary, confusing, and uncomfortable for your children. Your own perspective on a new relationship is nothing like the perspective of your children. Take time to let both you and your children heal from the divorce before entering a dating relationship. Give your children an opportunity to adjust to being in a single-parent home. Help them develop strong relationships with friends, extended family, and your church family.

This week in DC4K:
We helped the children realize it’s time to look at Mom and Dad differently and see them as individuals living in separate homes. We discussed that it’s okay to keep in touch with the parent the child doesn’t live with. We discussed how relationships with others change because of divorce. The children were encouraged to make new friends.

One family’s story:
One non-custodial dad decided to make some big changes when he went through a divorce. Out of desperation, he began attending church. At first, he only went when his son wasn’t with him. Then over time, he realized his son needed to meet his new friends, so he took his son with him to various events. This child became accustomed to meeting new people, and he enjoyed seeing how happy his dad was with his new friends. The son wasn’t worried any longer about his dad feeling alone when the son couldn’t be with him.

This week’s Scripture focus:
1 Samuel 20:42: “Jonathan said to David, “Go in peace, for we have sworn friendship with each other in the name of the LORD” (NIV).

Building family strengths:
It’s important to build safe relationships for you and your children. Find other single parents who have children similar ages as yours. Invite that family over for a meal or a movie. Attend church functions together and sit together at church services. Ask your church to plan social functions that include children. Friendships happen when people invest time in cultivating friendships. Make it a goal to call another single parent this week.

If your children haven’t had contact with both sets of grandparents, then have your children call their grandparents and make plans with each set of grandparents. Even though it may not seem fair to you, it’s important that children be allowed to have contact with all extended family members. Encourage your children to remember their grandparents on birthdays and holidays. Your children will benefit from this contact, and you will be teaching them to build solid foundations for family relationships.

The best way to help your children is to help yourself. Link up with a DivorceCare divorce recovery support group, www.divorcecare.org.
Developing money smarts

This week’s goal:
To help members of your family develop an understanding of money issues and sound principles of financial stewardship.

What the experts say:
According to financial advisor Larry Burkett, “Financial issues usually are emotional concerns for single parents. Many don’t really want to look too closely at the reality of their situation because it could be frightening.” However, you must plan and budget wisely, especially if you are on a limited income. Do not hesitate to ask your church for financial guidance. Write out a budget and your spending habits. Be prepared to make changes.

This week in DC4K:
The children learned how they could help at home with money issues. We talked about ways to cut expenses, such as turning off lights, the TV, and other electric items when they are not in use. We talked about making good choices in earning and spending money.

One family’s story:
One single mom who had successfully raised her two children on a limited income and without child support was asked to share how she was able to survive. She said that she sat down and wrote out expenses for the household every month. She showed her children the tight budget and asked them to contribute. As a family, they collected coupons from the newspaper. They were frugal when it came to outings. They took good care of clothes and belongings. She said, “At the time I hated what my kids were missing out on—designer clothes, extracurricular activities, church camps, and other normal things kids like to do. But as adults they are wise when it comes to financial issues. My son worked his way through college, and my daughter is financially savvy. I’m proud of what they were taught and how they turned out. One other thing, as a single parent, you must rely on the Lord. There were many times when I didn’t think I was going to make it, and somehow He provided through friends, church family, extra jobs for me, and on and on. Reliance on God is the only way.”

This week’s Scripture focus:
2 Thessalonians 3:10: “If a man will not work, he shall not eat” (NIV).

Building family strengths:
Sit down with your children and discuss ways they can contribute to the family’s budget. It could be as simple as turning off light switches or helping you write out a week’s worth of menus. Collect coupons together this week, and take your children to the store to help you shop. Decide how much money can be spent and only buy the items on your list. If there is money left over because the children shopped wisely, buy a special treat for the family. Clean out your closets and have a garage sale. Take the money earned to treat your children to a special event. Look around and find free activities that you and your family can attend together. Think more and more about how to save and spend wisely.
It’s not my fault

This week’s goal:
To communicate to your children that divorce is an adult problem between two adults and to help your children understand the divorce is not their fault.

What the experts say:
God designed children to rely on their parents. That is why children are naturally self-centered. Is it any wonder that over half of the children involved in a divorce think the divorce is their fault? Some younger elementary-age children think they can pinpoint the exact time and cause of the divorce. They may think that not cleaning their room caused the divorce. Or perhaps it was the time they yelled at their sibling. Or maybe it was when they ran the toy car into the wall and caused Mom and Dad to start arguing. In their creative, self-focused minds they conjure up all kinds of reasons why the divorce must be their fault. Some children even think the divorce is a punishment for some sin they have committed. Unfortunately, most adults forget to tell the children that the divorce is not their fault.

This week in DC4K:
We focused on the fact that divorce is between two adults. The divorce is not the children's fault. We discussed not taking responsibility for their parents’ problems. We also talked about respecting their parents.

One family’s story:
In one family, both children thought the divorce was their fault, but they kept it to themselves. At church after completing this DC4K session, the second-grade boy went to his workbook and wrote in the margin of one of the pages, “It’s not my fault.” His older sister saw him writing and went over to read it and responded with, “You thought it was your fault? I thought it was my fault. I guess it’s really an adult problem between Mom and Dad.” Neither of their parents had thought to sit them down and explain to them that the divorce wasn’t their fault.

This week’s Scripture focus:
1 Corinthians 13:11: “When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me” (NIV).

Building family strengths:
Realize that children are children. They don’t think like adults nor should they be expected to. Tell them repeatedly that the divorce is not their fault. Think through the past week. How many times did you hug your children? How gentle were you with them? How many times did you turn and look them in the face and give them your full attention when they were talking to you? Did you touch their shoulders or arms when they were talking to you? How much physical attention are your children getting from you? People don’t touch elementary-age children very often, yet the children need the gentleness of a soft touch. Jesus said in Luke 18 to let the children come to Him. Jesus was known for His healing touch. Plan ways to provide soft healing touches in your family. Hugs can do wonders for stomachaches and heartaches. You might want to start a “Family Hug Time” where everyone hugs each other at the same time. Try shouting “Family Hug Time” and see what happens.
Telling my parents how I feel

This week's goal:
To encourage your children to openly acknowledge their feelings and pain and tell you how they are feeling about everything.

What the experts say:
As a single parent, it is easy to get caught up with just trying to survive. You may not realize your children need you. Sometimes children feel there is a wide distance between their parent and them. They hesitate to tell their parent how they feel; they don't think their feelings are important; or they don't want to bother the parent. Sometimes children are afraid to talk because they are afraid the parent will get mad. Even if it's not true, it is the child's perception. It's important to dispel these perceptions and keep the lines of communication open.

This week in DC4K:
The children learned to name and communicate their feelings. They explored ways to tell people, especially their parents, what they need from them. They were also told that it's okay if they don't want to share things right away. It's also okay to think about the divorce, but at some point they need to open up and talk about how the divorce is affecting them.

One family's story:
One day a teacher noticed that one of the boys in her class was really down. Upon asking what the problem was, the boy told the teacher that every weekend his dad would sit in front of the TV and go to sleep, and it was getting very boring. The teacher told the boy that maybe he should tell his dad what he thought. The child said, “I couldn't do that. He might get mad. Besides, what would I say?” The teacher worked with the child on what to say. They wrote everything down, and the child practiced in front of his mirror every day. The following weekend, he said, "Dad, I need to talk to you. Will you turn off the TV and talk to me?" First thing Monday morning, the teacher got a call from this dad thanking her for working with his son. He said he had no idea his son was upset with him. They ended up making a list of different things to do on Saturdays. They decided to do things like shoot hoops and hang out together.

This week's Scripture focus:
Hebrews 10:24: “Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds” (NIV).

Building family strengths:
Notice what TV shows your children are watching. Sit down and watch TV together. Use this as a time to explain why you do or do not agree with the show. This is a good way to teach moral values to your children. Go a step further and decide that one night a week for the next four weeks there will be no TV, movies, phones, computers, or other electronic devices. Plan things to do so you can connect with each other. Some suggestions: play charades, cook an exotic meal together, invite grandparents over (if grandparents are not available, then adopt an older couple at church and invite them for dinner), let the children cook and serve a meal. Connect with your children now and you will open the doors for better communication when they are teenagers.
Forgiveness

This week’s goal:
To model forgiveness to the children in your family and help mend the hurts that fester due to unforgiveness.

What the experts say:
Exposing your children to forgiveness can be the most precious gift you give them. Grudges and unforgiven hurts can keep them from being free to enjoy an abundant life in the Lord. Children will find comfort in knowing that God is fair, just, and loving and that living together in the spirit of forgiveness is the secret to a joyful Christian life. Forgiveness is something you need to choose, apply, and practice. You can make it a lifelong habit by training your mind to reject thoughts that cause you to harbor unforgiveness, resentment, or blame.

This week in DC4K:
We discussed what forgiveness is and how to ask for and grant forgiveness. We learned about God’s forgiveness, and we encouraged children to take responsibility for their actions and attitudes.

One family’s story:
One brother and sister often got into horrible fights with each other. They would yell, scream, slam doors, and retreat to their rooms, turning up their music loudly. The stressed single mom would sigh and try to find out who started it. But her intervention seemed to make matters worse. After studying forgiveness in DivorceCare, she decided to start working on forgiveness at home. She sat the kids down one day and asked them to forgive her for intervening in their disagreements. The kids were a little shocked. She told them she would no longer become involved unless they needed her. But they could only come to her when they had calmed down and were ready to tell her they were sorry for disturbing her peace. Then she would forgive them. In a short time, this household calmed down considerably.

This week’s Scripture focus:
Colossians 3:13: “Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another” (NIV).

Building family strengths:
Most parents work with their children to say “I’m sorry,” but often forget to teach them the rest of the apology: “Please forgive me.” How often do you ask your children to forgive you when you have wronged them, even if it’s just a bump or an irritated voice? Are you teaching forgiveness in your home? Or are your children’s hurts festering and you don’t know how to help them heal? Try forgiveness. If children start by forgiving small things, it will become easier to forgive large hurts, wrongs, and misunderstandings as they grow.

Another suggestion is to extend grace. In other words, let the children off without a consequence for certain misbehaviors. You might give them a few coupons with the word “grace” written on them. Explain that they can redeem these coupons when they are facing a consequence for their actions. Isn’t that what Jesus did for our sins when He died on the cross? What better way to learn about grace and forgiveness than from your own earthly parent!

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Loving my parents

This week’s goal:
To allow your children to express their love to you as you model expressing love to your own parents.

What the experts say:
In the middle of a frustrating day when everything seems to go wrong, it is easy to want a little extra love and attention. If we don't get it, we may feel deprived and even unloved. Children have those days too. In many divorced families children are reluctant to ask for attention or to express love to the parent. You will want your family to learn to express their feelings and be able to ask for a hug when needed. Children will model how they see you treating your parents. Encourage the children to have contact with their grandparents. Grandparents can add a different and refreshing dynamic to children's lives.

This week in DC4K:
We discussed loving each parent in different ways. We reminded the children that their parents still love them. We explored ways to show love and discussed ways to ask for love and attention. We also talked about accepting love from our heavenly Father.

One family’s story:
One single dad had a hard time expressing his love to his daughter. The 10-year-old daughter shared with her counselor that she didn't think her dad loved her. When the counselor asked her why she felt this way, the daughter replied, "He never hugs me. I see other kids' parents hug them. I asked him about it one time, and he said he didn't like to hug people, but I need a hug or something!" The counselor called the dad into the office and had the girl explain how she felt. This father had no idea his daughter thought he didn't love her. He admitted he felt strange hugging her because his parents had never hugged him. The counselor asked for another suggestion from the daughter. She asked the dad if he could brush her hair every night. That would help her to feel wanted. During the next visit to the counselor, the daughter asked if maybe she could hold her dad's hand sometimes. Eventually, this dad and daughter developed ways for the daughter to get some attention and for the dad to feel comfortable giving her the love and attention she needed.

This week’s Scripture focus:
Psalm 31:21: “For he showed his wonderful love to me” and Psalm 100:5: “His love endures forever” (NIV).

Building family strengths:
In a family meeting, read Psalm 23. Read it again, but this time make up a list of all the ways the shepherd took care of his sheep. Now make up a list of all the ways the people in your family care for each other. Then make up a list of other ways family members can show how much they care and love each other. Then practice, practice, practice!
**Moving on: Growing UP and closer to God**

This week’s goal:
To encourage your children to openly acknowledge their feelings and pain and tell you how they are feeling about everything.

What the experts say:
Some people feel that because they’ve been divorced or have made so many mistakes in their past, God cannot use them to be godly leaders, teachers, role models, or to help other people. This isn’t true. As a single parent you are a leader, a teacher, and a role model. You make the decision to be a godly person who fulfills these roles. Our heavenly Father has placed your children under your guidance. Whether you are a custodial parent, a non-custodial parent, or you share joint custody—you are a parent. Your kids depend on you. Many others have succeeded in surviving and raising children in a single-parent home, and so can you.

This week in DC4K:
The children found out that it’s okay to enjoy life even if their parents are divorced. They were taught that they have a future, and they will grow up and mature. And just because their parents divorced doesn’t mean they will divorce when they are adults. The children were told they can choose to allow God to love them and accept Jesus as their personal Savior and become part of God’s family. We hope you have made that decision also.

One family’s story:
What’s your family’s story? Take time to write your own family story and share it with someone at the church that sponsored DC4K.

This week’s Scripture focus:
Job 8:21: “He will yet fill your mouth with laughter and your lips with shouts of joy” (NIV).

Building family strengths:
Throughout the last few weeks, we have given you many ways to strengthen and build a solid single-parent family. We hope you have acted on the suggestions and have enjoyed them. Our last idea is to let you know that it is okay to laugh and have fun in your home. Take time to enjoy your children. They are only children for a short while.

If you have enjoyed the Parent Pages and would like to share how your family is building family strengths, or if you have suggestions, email info@dc4k.org. If your children did not get to participate in a complete 13-week DC4K cycle or your children would like to repeat DC4K, check with your church to see when the next DC4K program is scheduled. Please tell your friends about DC4K and send them to the DC4K website (www.dc4k.org) for more information.