FINDING AND RECRUITING YOUR LEADERSHIP TEAM

One of the most important things you can do to ensure the success of your Single & Parenting group is to find, recruit and train the right leadership. Warm, caring, mature group leaders (whom we call “facilitators”) set the tone for the group discussion time that follows the video seminars. Having the right group facilitators will help group participants feel welcome, comfortable and free to share their feelings and thoughts.

If your church is just beginning a single-parent ministry, you may be serving as administrator, group facilitator and snack caterer. If that’s the case, this section can help you get started in building a leadership team. As your group begins to grow, ask the Lord to help you identify people who can assist you in leadership. To prevent burnout, remember, never do ministry alone! If possible, always have someone serving with you. Remember the model that Jesus provided us in Luke 10:1–3, when He sent disciples out “two by two.”

Ideally, you’ll have a team of four (two men, two women). At a minimum you should have two people on your team. Whatever you do, don’t try and start this ministry alone.

If you are a pastor or lay leader overseeing this ministry, you will also find help here as you build your single-parent ministry team for your church.

WHAT KIND OF GROUP FACILITATORS DO YOU NEED?

The people leading the group serve as facilitators, guiding and shepherding the group. These facilitators do not need to be teachers or counselors (in fact, assuming these roles in a group setting is counterproductive). The primary role of the Single & Parenting group facilitators is to create an atmosphere of warmth, caring and trust in the discussion group. Group facilitators must also encourage discussion about what was seen on the DVD and a time of personal sharing about what is going on in the lives of each group participant.

You can begin your Single & Parenting group by recruiting a leadership team: a group primary facilitator and co-facilitator. One person can lead a group, but a team is preferable. You won’t be able to survive as a leader for very long if you don’t recruit and train people to help lead your Single & Parenting program.

As your program grows, ask other people to join the team and help with tasks like administration, publicity, food, registration, etc. (See page 127 for additional Job Titles & Descriptions.) Adapt the structure of your leadership team to meet the needs of your program and church.
There’s no best way to organize these kinds of responsibilities. Create an organization that works effectively for you!

IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL LEADERS

Effective leaders come from all walks of life. The right leadership will be the glue that brings together all the elements of the Single & Parenting program. A wrong selection of leadership can really hurt your program. The Leader Candidate Form (p. 131) and Potential Leader Questionnaire (p. 145) will help you identify potential leaders. Also, check out the Recruitment Letter for Potential Leaders on page 157.

Characteristics to look for in potential leaders:

- **PROFESS A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST**
  Single & Parenting identifies a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as the foundation for hope. Leaders must be able to model the hope and peace that comes from knowing Christ.

- **DEMONSTRATE SPIRITUAL MATURITY**
  Leaders should be mature Christians with a consistent walk. New believers can be recruited to help with administrative and support tasks but should not lead a group. We suggest your leaders be active, participating members of your church. Remember, these leaders will be representing your church to many people who may not attend church.

  There may be occasions where it is desirable to place someone from another church in a leadership role in your Single & Parenting program. If you’re considering such a person, discuss it first with your church leadership to ensure you have their support.

- **HAVE BEEN A SINGLE PARENT (OR WAS RAISED IN A SINGLE-PARENT HOME)**
  The Lord has a desire to take our difficult experiences and turn them and use them for His glory. This is seen in the experience of the Apostle Paul: “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God” (2 Corinthians 1:3–4).

  People who have been a single parent have an intimate understanding of the needs of other single parents. They will have a special sensitivity as they interact with group members. It is encouraging for group members to see someone who has faced many of the same struggles, fears and hardships and who exemplifies a life of peace, joy and inner strength.

  It is not essential that leaders have been single parents, or children of single parents, provided they demonstrate a sensitivity and calling to such ministry, but your best success will be in finding people who have experienced single parenting themselves.
HAVE RECOVERED FROM PAST HURTS
If potential leaders became single parents as a result of a deep loss, such as a spouse's death or a divorce, it’s essential that they demonstrate substantial recovery before leading a group as a facilitator. If they have a heart for helping others and are enthusiastic about your ministry, you may be tempted to plug them into a leadership position. We strongly encourage you to protect these people and your program by resisting this temptation. It’s almost impossible for people to effectively lead a group as a facilitator until they have experienced considerable healing (even if they are highly motivated). People who are still healing also face an especially strong vulnerability to developing relationships with group participants and are prone to quickly burn out.

These people may become effective group facilitators in the coming years, but don’t press them into service prematurely. As your group grows, you'll need administrative, publicity, food, registration and other support (see page 127 for additional Job Titles & Descriptions). People in the healing process can hold these positions of service. As you observe people heal, you can consider their readiness for these types of support functions.

You can also develop a one-on-one ministry relationship between a future group leader and someone from your current group who is hurting. Make sure these are same-sex relationships and that you develop a system to monitor them. A person who is faithful and consistent in this kind of personal ministry will indeed make a good future group facilitator.

HAVE A SENSE OF CALLING
Your best leaders will be those the Lord leads to you!

THE MATURE LEADER
On page 28 we identified “spiritual maturity” as one of the required attributes of potential leaders. Let’s examine more closely the underlying characteristics of a mature leader who will be serving as a group facilitator:

SHEPHERD
As sheep without a shepherd, many participants are floundering, confused, not knowing which direction to go. A group facilitator will develop trust with group participants and gently point the group discussion toward God’s support and direction for their lives. As a shepherd, a group facilitator will help protect members against things that can harm them.

COMFORTER
Most group facilitators have felt the same conflicting emotions group members are feeling. They can offer the special kind of comfort described in 2 Corinthians 1:3–4, mirroring the comfort and care they received from God during their years of single parenting.

If a potential leader has not fully healed from a spouse’s death or a divorce, direct him or her to a GriefShare (www.griefshare.org) or DivorceCare (www.divorcecare.org) recovery program.
ENCOURAGER
Many single parents begin to lose hope that things will get better, that daily life will become easier and that they will be able to provide in the best way possible for their children. The peace, strength and perseverance exemplified by the group facilitator will become an encouragement to members. The group facilitators are living proof that single parents can have a restful, hope-filled, successful lifestyle.

MORAL PURITY
It’s essential for the sake of individual group facilitators, participants and for your church that your group facilitators be morally pure. One report of immorality may cause serious emotional damage to a participant, jeopardize the ministry, affect the church’s public reputation and sidetrack an individual leader from public ministry indefinitely.

INTERCESSOR
Mature group facilitators will pray for their group and the people in it. Let the participants know this is being done for them; it brings hope and encouragement.

HOW TO FIND LEADERS
Here are five proven and practical tips for finding leaders. For additional insights, download the LeaderZone article “How Do We Find Single & Parenting Leaders?” in the Library/Articles section, “Leader Recruitment/Selection” category.

BULLETIN/NEWSLETTER/WEBSITE AD
We have found that placing an ad in the church weekly bulletin, newsletter or on the church website has yielded great results. The key is to find the communication vehicle most read by people attending your church. Here’s a sample ad you can run for two weeks.

Have you been a single parent? Have you learned valuable lessons and experienced some real success as a single parent? Would you like to help others do the same? Then please call or email to learn more about the different levels of volunteer opportunities with our Single & Parenting ministry. [Include contact info.]

Don’t try to combine a leader recruiting ad with your promotion to potential participants for your upcoming group. They are separate audiences, and you want to keep your messages simple and clear.

INFORMATION MEETING
Set up and promote an information meeting, usually after a service, for those interested in coming and hearing about the different volunteer opportunities in Single & Parenting. Attending the meeting carries no commitment: it’s an info-only meeting. Show the promo videos, and give a brief 10-minute overview presentation with the products and brochures. Get their contact and interest level information.
Follow up with phone interviews and emails as needed. Email a Potential Leader Questionnaire (p. 145) to those who show interest.

**MINISTRY EVENT TABLE**

Many churches sponsor “Ministry Fairs” or “Showcases” that allow church members to learn about volunteer or participation opportunities within ministries sponsored by the church. If your church has a ministry fair or similar event, staff a Single & Parenting ministry table or display during the event.

As an alternative, ask your church for permission to place a table or display in the foyer of your church as a way to create exposure for your group and recruit volunteers before and after Sunday services.

In either scenario, display a Single & Parenting participant workbook, Single & Parenting brochures and your Single & Parenting kit. If possible, add a television to your display that is showing the Single & Parenting promo videos (found on Disc 5). Be sure to get contact and interest level information from people who inquire about volunteering. Make sure you have friendly people staffing the display (leaders and alumni) to answer questions and take completed contact forms.

*Note:* If you are able to set up a table or display as described above, be prepared to answer questions from potential leaders AND potential participants. It’s likely you will get questions from both.

**SHORT PRESENTATIONS**

Hold short presentations to inform different groups within your church what Single & Parenting is all about. An effective way to get the word out to your church family is scheduling a “7-Minute Presentation” at already-scheduled church meetings. (See the LeaderZone, Library/Articles section, “Publicity” category for step-by-step instructions on conducting this 7-minute presentation.) If every month you asked to be a “guest speaker” at a meeting like the deacons’ meeting, choir practice, church staff meetings, Sunday school classes, home small groups, etc., you would have covered 12 groups in your church by the end of the year.

**“ALUMS”**

If you have been running your Single & Parenting ministry for one or more 13-week cycles, a powerful place to find leaders is from past graduates of your ministry. (This is also true of single-parent alums from DivorceCare or GriefShare programs.) Send out emails to past participants asking if they would prayerfully consider volunteering. If you offer different levels of leadership, a person can start on the hospitality team and grow into becoming a small group facilitator. As a reminder, a leader should meet the qualifications and characteristics of “potential leaders,” as identified in the Leader’s Guide, to effectively minister to others.

**ACCOUNTABILITY AND LEADERSHIP GUIDELINES**

It is essential that your leaders support your church and embrace its key values and policies. This ministry becomes an extension of your church and represents your church to people from the community who have turned to your program for help.