

Raising Children Alone

One of life's greatest blessings and sources of joy is being a parent. But if you find yourself raising children alone, you know better than anyone else that parenting is a job meant for two. That's why Dr. James Dobson calls single parenting "the toughest job in the universe." Few understand the loneliness and pain many single parents carry or how exhausting the role can be. So, how can you be hopeful and experience joyful success as a parent despite very challenging circumstances?

PRIORITY ONE: Keep your child's best in mind

Every parent is called to lay aside his or her own interests for the children. That calling takes extra commitment when you're going it alone. You may still be working through the painful circumstances that led to becoming a solo parent, or dealing with an ex-spouse who is a negative influence on the children or who tries to turn them against you.

Regardless of the emotions you may be experiencing, you are called to place your child's needs above your own. Give them as much stability and nurturing as possible within your limitations—even when they don't seem to appreciate the sacrifice you're making. Be assured that the Lord receives your selfless caring as an act of worship to Him because it reflects the spirit of Christ who "made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant" (Philippians 2).

Being a servant includes doing your best to maintain a Christ-like attitude when you go through court appointments, or seeing your ex with a new romantic interest, or juggling financial challenges, or maintaining a home, or having people ask awkward questions about your family.

Put your children as priority is all the more important if you don't have custody. Those small windows of time together are your opportunity to show love and influence your children toward God. Avoid getting caught up in disagreements over parenting differences. In your visitation, in your support, and all other opportunities to connect, your first priority must be serving the needs of your children.

PRIORITY TWO: Choose good relationships

Few people understand the load you carry. You're likely to be under stress with extra work and the constant demands of parenting. You know how your loneliness and desire to be loved can lead you toward relationships with the opposite sex that may be harmful, only adding to the uncertainty and anxiety. If you are not ready to marry, be very cautious about dating during this season of life. Having healthy friendships with other Christians can help you face this emotional maze and make wise decisions through it. It is of critical importance to be a part of a community of believers committed to forgiveness, restoration, and spiritual growth. Your children also need the support and modeling of other Christians. God can make your next chapter better than the last.

PRIORITY THREE: Become intentional

Be careful not to see yourself as a "second class" parent. Raising children alone is more difficult, but the goal is the same for you as it is for two parent families - to nurture Christian faith and values in your children. That means becoming intentional about building a strong relationship, modeling Godly character, and creating occasions for meaningful interaction about life's most important truths. Remember, it is no accident that God gave you the blessing of children. He also is eager to give you the grace to be the parent they need.

GOING FURTHER - Resources

Successful Single Parenting (by Gary Richmond, a single-parent pastor) provides practical help and Biblical principles for balancing your needs with those of your children.

Audio and Articles available at DesiringGod.org

[To the Sons and Daughters of Divorce](#)

[Should a Single Parent Get Married?](#)

Single Parent ***Raising Children Alone***