



# Teaching Children of Single Parents

**S**ingleness is a growing trend. Although a large number of adults are single by choice, others are single because of death, divorce, or cohabitation. Many of these single adults are parents. More and more of the children attending Sunday School come from single-parent homes.

## Know Your Students

How many single-parent children are in your class? If you do have single-parent children, is this the result of death, divorce, or previous cohabitation? How recently did the father or mother absent the home? The emotional and spiritual well-being of a child whose parents divorced just last week is different from that of a child who has lived with one parent for several years. Ministry approach to them will be different as well.

When teaching children from single-parent homes, be sensitive about using references to traditional whole-family units. This can be especially unsettling to children whose homes have been recently torn apart. If the whole-family unit is presented as the only right way to live, children from single-parent families may feel unacceptable and hopeless.

## Help Students Know God's Plan

On the other hand, help children realize the whole-family unit is God's choice for the family. Most children sense this to be true and would like it in their homes. Reinforce this desire in their lives without criticizing their parents. The children in your class will one day consider a marital relationship. Help them develop a healthy view of the home while they are still young and impressionable.



## Love Your Students

Provide a climate of love and acceptance in your classroom. Many single-parent children suffer from a tremendous sense of guilt, feeling they are responsible for their parents' breakup. They need

to know someone loves them for who they are, no matter what their home is like. Your love can help them accept God's unconditional, unchanging love for them.

Children from single-parent homes may feel guilt or great sadness and have the need to talk. Be available to listen. Let a troubled child express his feelings freely.

In ministering to single-parent children, it is important to get to know the parents and assure them of your love for their children. Include single parents in class activities. Do all you can to build a sense of trust with the parents so you can minister to both the children and the parents.

A majority of single-parent children live with their mothers. This means the children grow up without a father figure in the home. A husband-wife team in the classroom helps provide a male role model for children. It is important for single-parent children to see a healthy marriage relationship in the context of a church environment. Help the children view God as a loving Father. Even though they may not have an earthly father at home, their Heavenly Father will never leave them.

Single-parent children have special needs. Providing godly, loving care to help them through the difficult times they face can be a rich and rewarding part of your ministry.

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### Questions for Further Study—

1. How many single-parent children are in your class(es)?
2. How recently did those families become single-parent?
3. List some ways you can show more sensitivity to children of single-parent homes.
4. List some ways you can show God's love to children of single-parent homes.



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