



CHRISTMAS TIME, SINGLE PARENTS AND THE CHURCH

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By Linda Ranson Jacobs

12/14/2012



A young single mom entered my class one Sunday close to Christmas. She was almost trembling and I could tell she was very upset. She just stood there looking at me and when I asked, "What's wrong?" She said, "I need a hug."

Single parenting is tough almost all the time. But Sundays seem particularly hard for single parents. It could be that they are exhausted from the week and don't have to rise as early as on the weekday so they sleep in for a few minutes or an hour. Then, it's hard to get out of bed and face getting the children dressed, fed and in the car by yourself. Or perhaps it is attending church where it seems like everyone is part of a couple.

Christmas time is no exception and many times worse because of the added stress of it being Christmas. The single mom above was one such mom. Added to the stress of Christmas was the birthday of her daughter who turned one year old a few days before Christmas. She had been parenting alone since before the baby was born. Plus she had a two year old.

This single mom did her best to make it to church each Sunday. On this particular Sunday morning as I hugged her she blurted out what had just happened. It seems as though the kids had slept in and with the house being quiet she had also overslept.

She woke with a start at 9:00 a.m. Our class starts at 9:45. She quickly got herself dressed; her two year old up, dressed and fixed a bowl of cereal for his breakfast. She then got up the baby and got her dressed. There wasn't time to give the baby a bottle so she put the bottle and some cereal in the diaper bag.

In exactly forty-five minutes she stood before me after dropping her children off in the nursery. You have to admit that was quite a feat! I'm not sure there are many two-parent families that could have accomplished that.

She should have been received with loving arms and a tender smile from her church family. It was after all Christmas time. But instead she was greeted with a lecture. A "chewing out" about how she needed to be a better parent and feed her baby before church.

After taking a deep breath I looked into her tear filled eyes and said, "What the nursery teacher should have said was,





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"We are so glad you are making an effort to get you and your young children to church. It must be so difficult to do that all by yourself. Thank you for trying so hard. Don't worry about your baby we will take care of her. You go onto to class."

"I am glad you are here to learn about the Lord and to learn how to single parent like the Lord wants of you. Now, sit down and relax."

Many times when we are training children's workers about the child of divorce we forget to train the nursery workers. Perhaps your church hasn't had young single moms or dads with babies or toddlers come to church. If and when you do, you need to have prepared your workers.

- Train them to hold their tongue when helping these single parents.
- Train them to love on the single parent. Most of these parents are simply doing the best they can.
- Train them to pray with and for the parent and child.
- Encourage your workers to place a scripture card in the diaper bag to be found and read at a later time.

In your training session, present different scenarios to the workers and ask how they might have handled different parenting situations alone.

How would some of you handle it if you had been our single mom friend? I imagine many of us would simply have skipped coming to church that day. To top it off, her kids had been sick the Sunday and Wednesday before so she had missed those times. She needed and wanted to be in the Lord's house where it was decorated with beautiful Christmas trees, lights and other Christmas decorations. She wanted to be with her single parent group so she could connect with others that were in a similar situation.

"And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn." Luke 2:7 (KJV)

Linda Ranson Jacobs is one of the forefront leaders in the area of children and divorce. She developed and created the DivorceCare for Kids programs. DC4K is an international program for churches to use to help children of divorced parents find healing within the arms of a loving church family. As a speaker, author, trainer, program developer and child care center owner, Linda has assisted countless families by modeling and acting on the healing love she has found in Jesus Christ. Linda offers support, encouragement and suggestions to help those working with the child of divorce. She serves as DC4K Ambassador (<http://www.dc4k.org>) and can be reached via email at ljacobs@dc4k.org.

Free articles and devotions for single parent families in your church can be found at Linda's website Healthy Loving Partnerships for Our Kids (<http://www.hlp4.com>).

