



UNDERSTANDING THE FAMILY'S SITUATION

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By Linda Ranson Jacobs

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Last week we looked at [knowing something about a single parent family's situation](#). It's one thing to have that information lodged in your brain about something. It's another thing to understand a situation enough that you can empathize, appreciate the frustrations involved in living in a single parent home and be tolerant of a family's situation.

This week I'd like to look at actually understanding what goes on inside a single parent home. Try to place yourself in the role of being a single parent. First of all there is no one to help you. I mean NO ONE! You are on 24/7 and that's not for just a day or week or a month or this year but for many single parents it is for years.

Let's look in on some typical single parents. In this first scene we see a mom sitting in the audience of a school concert. She is sitting there looking very calm on the outside but on the inside experiencing unbelievable turmoil.

"Now let's see, if Chase's group will just perform in the next fifteen minutes then I can sneak out of this concert and go across town, and if I don't hit too many red lights, I can get there just in time to see Heather play soccer. If I can just stay long enough to see one quarter, are they called quarters or what? Oh well, I have to learn about soccer on another day, I don't have time to worry about it now. Let's see where was I? Oh yes, I can come back here pick up Chase before the end of this performance and then we can rush back, get Heather, go home and make dinner. Oh yeah, I've got to remember to pick up some milk for breakfast. Then while dinner is cooking I can start the laundry. I hope those kids got the clothes sorted. Did Chase say he needs tape for that science project? Oh well, I might as well get some tape while I'm at the store. After dinner I'll have to remember to set aside some time to help Chase with that project. After I get the kids to bed I've got to remember to go online and pay the credit card bill. Please let my paycheck get to the bank before the credit card payment! I'm going to have to remember to check the date online on that bill and make sure I can pay it after 11:00 pm in our time zone and not get charged another late fee. I think there's a three-hour difference in our time zones. Honestly, I can't keep up with when everything goes through the bank and I've got to remember that I wrote a check for the school fundraiser. Did I even give Heather that check yesterday morning? Then I'll have to get my clothes ready for tomorrow. I think I'll wear that blue outfit but I have to remember to fix that tear. Gee, I wonder how many more washings that outfit can take. It must be five years old by now but I've got that important meeting at work tomorrow and I've got to





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wear something that looks half-way decent. Whew! Maybe I can get to bed by midnight. Oh well, that's earlier than last night. Oh, shoot I was supposed to call my mom tonight. I'll have to remember to try and find time tomorrow night."

This mom will be up by 5:00 a.m. to start the entire process all over again, and she'll do it alone every day.

Our second scene takes place in front of a church. A single dad has just sent in his overwrought daughter, and he is waiting for his child's bible study teacher to get to church.

"Miss Shirley I need your help. Today Jaimie's choir group is singing, and she wants her hair up in some kind of French braid or something. I worked and worked at it, but I just can't seem to get what she wants. She said that you know how to fix it. She is hiding out in the bathroom. Here's the brush and hair spray. Can you just get it back to me later? I'm late for work already, and her grandmother will be picking her up after church. I have to work overtime today. Where is her mother when she needs her?" He walks off mumbling to himself that he is just not cut out to be both a mom and a dad.

Ever wonder why some single parents come to church frazzled or why you can't get them to commit to anything? Maybe the above scenarios will help you truly understand their plight. Most single parents really do want to do better by their children. They want to raise healthy kids. They want their kids to attend church and become spiritually healthy. They appreciate all the church does but many times they simply forget to bring their child to the Fall Festival or the Christmas party.

We live in a busy world and most children's ministers and church volunteers have busy and hectic lives themselves. You may be wondering how on earth you can contribute to these single parents when you may be feeling overwhelmed yourself. You don't have to do it alone. Pray about what God wants from you. Maybe He wants nothing more than for you to be the catalyst for change in the lives of the single parents in your church. Pray that God would send you capable people that can assist you in caring for the widows and orphans.

It might be that another single parent who has older children can assist the newer and younger single parent. Be sure to always pair up single dads with men and single women with other women. Perhaps a family with a child the same age as a single parent child could be paired up, and the two-parent family could help this single dad or mom. It could be that senior adults in your church that have grandchildren living in another state could come alongside some of your single parents in an "adopt a grandparent" program.



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When you understand life in a single parent home; when you can empathize with those families; when you are tolerant of them, then the Lord can use His church to minister to this huge segment of population in our communities today. When that happens look out because the children in these homes will flood the doors of your church.

"May the favor of the Lord our God rest upon us; establish the work of our hands for us—yes, establish the work of our hands." Psalm 90:17

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: 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. More great articles about how to successfully minister to the child of divorce in your church can be found at Linda's website [Healthy Loving Partnerships for Our Kids \(HLP4\) \[http://www.hlp4.com\]](http://www.hlp4.com). Linda also offers support, encouragement, and suggestions to help single parents and those working with single parent children. She can be reached by e-mail at Linda@hlp4.com.

