

GOING FURTHER

VALLEYDALE SUPPORT

Life Groups

Valleydale offers Adult Life Group for singles as well as groups combining singles and married couples. To get connected to a group or for more information, either stop by the Next Steps Desk in the lobby or go to www.valleydale.org/lifegroups and click on “Find a Life Group”.

Counseling

Valleydale provides onsite, Christ-centered professional counseling. Both male and female counselors are available. Counseling is offered for adults, teens and children. All counseling is confidential. For more information, visit www.valleydale.org/counseling or call 205.991.5282.

Stephen Ministry

This ministry is intended to match you with someone who has a similar life experience but is a little further along for the purpose of perspective, understanding and hope. You will be matched with a carefully selected church member who is supervised by the church and works in strict confidence. To learn more about this ministry, contact the ministry coordinator for a confidential conversation at 205.991.5282.

Podcasts

Valleydale’s podcasts are located on our website www.valleydale.org/podcasts. Click on the “Parenting Today for Tomorrow” link.

Divorce Care

A support group for those experiencing separation, the process of divorce and those divorced, and a recovery process for those rebuilding their lives after a divorce. For more information, call 205.991.5282.

For more
resources, visit
valleydale.org/family
OR
visit our resource
center in the
lobby

SINGLE PARENT

Raising Children Alone



RAISING CHILDREN ALONE

One of life's greatest blessings and sources of joy is being called somebody's 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 emotional hurt 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 more 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 at 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.

Regardless of the emotions your specific circumstances may be causing, 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 though they may not seem to appreciate the sacrifice you're making. Be assured, 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 2:7).

Being a servant includes doing your best to maintain a Christ-like attitude when you are navigating legal decisions, shared custody or seeing your ex with a new romantic interest. Putting your children first is also a priority if you don't have custody - if you are limited to small windows of time together. Those times are your opportunity to show love and influence and not to get caught up in disagreements over parenting differences. In your visitation, in your support, and all other connections, your first priority is 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. You want healthy Christian friendships that can help you face this emotional maze and make wise decisions through it all. You need to be a part of a community of believers committed to forgiveness, redemption, and growth. Your children also need the support and modeling of other Christians to give them a vision for their own future home. Pray that God would bring other families in to your children's lives to be a part of family meals, holiday events, etc. Others may not know how to help your family best, so give them the opportunity to be and receive a blessing by asking for their help.

PRIORITY THREE

Become Intentional

God can make your next chapter better than the last. Be careful not to see yourself as a "second class" parent. Raising children alone is harder, 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

Help and Hope for the Single Parent by Tony Evans

Single Parenting that Works: Six Keys to Raising Happy, Healthy Children in a Single-Parent Home by Dr. Kevin Leman