

# Raising Children Alone

by Kurt Bruner, *The Center for Strong Families*

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 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 to cause even more pain.

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 when they don't 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

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

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. 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 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**

(Available at Bellevue Christian Bookstore or Library)

### **Recommended Book:**

***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.

### **Recommended Websites:**

**Troubledwith.com** offers helpful articles, resources, and referral organizations. Go to the Single Parenting section.

**bellevueyoungadults.org** offers up-to-date information regarding opportunities for encouraging night outs as well as contact with other single parents.

## **GOING FURTHER – Church Support**

Visit Bellevue's website at [www.bellevue.org](http://www.bellevue.org) for maps which will help you locate these classes:

### **Life Groups – Sunday, 9:30 am**

Single Moms of All Ages (Suzan Watson) F245  
20s – 40s Women Attending Alone (Jen Threadgill) E344

**Experience The Source! A night out for single moms with free food and free childcare!** At The Source, you will find other women who have walked a similar path who will encourage you along the way, or maybe a woman who is traveling a road you have already been on who needs some encouragement from you. Call (901) 347-5740 or e-mail [youngadults@bellevue.org](mailto:youngadults@bellevue.org) for more information.

**Biblical Counseling** offers support and guidance through life's daily challenges. For more information, please call (901) 347-5830.

**Women's Ministry** offers a place to grow in intimacy with God and the Scriptures as well as a place to connect with others in your life stage. Call (901) 347-5730 for information on activities and classes.

# Single Parent Raising Children Alone

