

SINGLE PARENTS FORUM

Single parenthood has been in existence from time immemorial. In the book of Genesis 16: 6-8 & 11, we see an example of a woman called Hagar, Sarah's maid who became a single parent due to no fault of her and circumstances beyond her control, she was harshly treated and dealt with and eventually was sent out from Abraham's house and right there in the desert God appeared to her by sending an angel to her rescue. The same God is still and ready to intervene in your own situation if only you will allow him.

The questions that come to people's mind when they see or hear that someone is a single parent (1) how did she or he become a single parent? (2) how is that individual coping as a single parent? etc. The Bible says all things are possible to them that believe (Mark 9:23) God always gives the grace when we depend on him for all things.

The life of a single parent is challenging but God has special interest in women, most especially single women who are serving God with all their hearts. Single parents are faced with different kinds of challenges because of their status and circumstances surrounding them. But one thing is certain God loves single parents, as women are highly favored in the sight of God. There are different causes that lead to single parenthood. They are as listed below:

- Widows/widowers with children
- Separated/divorced with children
- Women who did restitution as a result of wrong marriages
- Women with children out of wedlock/teenage pregnancy

As single parents we must always depend on God for our day-to-day living and activities 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee'. God's word is forever settled in heaven, He will always be with you, for you, and His presence will be with you forever (amen) This should settle us that we are not alone on our journey (Isaiah 43:1-2)

WIDOWS/WIDOWERS

Widows are special in the hand of God. The most important of a widow's life that always give pain are the children, how to cope with the upbringing of the children and providing for their daily needs as they grow. Our God is interested in the widows and their children, the widows should be rest assured that God is a father to the fatherless (Ps.10:14,Ps.68:5, Ex.22:22, Isaiah 1:17) and He will always provide for their needs. God thinks about a widow each day and He knows what you are going through and His grace will be sufficient for you on a daily basis. (2Kings 4:1-2), the widow in that two verses of the scripture believed God for her provision, likewise for widows today should believe God for their needs for He will surely provide. The widow in these two verses demonstrated few qualities we need to emulate as listed below

- Openness
- Transparency
- Obedience
- Faith.

Integrity before God, sensitivity to the Holy Spirit, family devotion with children, physical and emotional obedience to godly leadership, our devotion to God and faith in Him will result in appropriation of God's promises to each individual.

The always-changing ages of the children will necessitate varying roles by the single mother.

Where a sister is young, it is preferable to marry when the right person comes along. As a matter of fact any widow or widower below the age of 75 years can still remarry again. Never compete with singles or couples, because you have tomorrow's leaders in your hands. Faith in God and faithfulness to your children are your primary privileges and responsibilities.

SEPARATED OR DIVORCED

The pressure of life, the onslaught of Satan, personal and collective sins have all contributed to separation or divorce in many homes. This has resulted in single parenthood with a large proportion of the responsibility borne by women. I do not believe that divorce is God's best, but unfortunately, sometimes it is unavoidable. If you have been through a divorce, understand that God still has another plan for your life. Just because somebody rejected you or walked out of your life and left you hurt, that does not mean you should retreat and settle where you are. That rejection did not change what God put inside of you. It does not mean that you cannot yet be happy. When one door closes, if you keep the right attitude, God will open another door. But you have to do your part and keep pressing forward. Too many people get bitter, they get angry, and they start to blame God. Instead, let that hurt go. You may not understand it, but trust God and move on with your life.. Do not look at it as the end. Look at it as a new beginning. Somebody may have rejected you, even your church may have rejected, but you can hold your head up high knowing this: God has not abandoned you, He accepts you, approves you and He has something better in store for you.

Friends, do not die with treasure still inside you. Keep pressing for new heights. Give birth for what God has placed in your hearts. Do not allow other people to talk you out of your dream. Listen what God says about you, not all the negative voice. When you face rejection and disappointment, don't stay there. That closed door simply means God something better in store. You may not have experienced God's favor in the past, but this is a new day, you have not seen, heard, or imagined the wonderful things God has in store for you. Do not be weighed down by the distraction and disappointments in life, instead, keep stretching to the next level, reaching for your highest potential. If you do that with confidence your best days are in front on you. God is going to show you more of His

blessings and favor, and you will become a better you, better than you ever dreamed possible.

WOMEN WITH CHILDREN OUT OF WEDLOCK/TEENAGE PREGNANCY

When through ignorance, childishness, lust, peer pressure, tradition etc. We have children outside marriage and thus become single parents, it is essential for us to know that God loves us and forgives our past. Having reconciled with the Lord, we are precious in His sight. His promises in Isaiah 43:1-2 hold true for you. He has called you to serve him and promised to be with you in the waters and it will not overflow you, in the fire, you will not be burned. Se should always be conscious of God's presence in our lives , when this is settled in our hears, we will be able to pass through many trials and difficulties with ease and we will always be over comers in Jesus Name (amen).

Anytime we are down or discouraged we should always encourage ourselves in the Lord, for God has given us the Holy Spirit to guide and comfort us at all times. When we need the presence of a male-figure to talk to or share our problems with, we should turn to God, have a table conference with Him and ask for more grace and receive godly counsel for godly leadership.

We have examples of women in the Bible that were commended for their good works for God.

- Hannah spiritually and materially provided for Samuel in Eli, house
- Eunice and Lois brought up Timothy with love, integrity and good example

We have to be devoted to God and his service, be zealous for God and put the past behind us and look into the future and leave the mess of the past for the mission that God has called us into. There are different kinds of services we can render in the house of God to give our best to God and as we do this,. God will be pleased with us and look after us and the children. We should not allow the past to affect us in fulfilling the purpose of God in our lives.

CHALLENGES FACING SINGLE PARENTS

- Insufficient income
- Divided allegiance of children
- Negative social stigma on mothers
- Mockery by children's peers
- Misunderstanding by children
- Insecurity when children are away from home
- Mothers, role as "father"
- Loneliness
- Depression
- Stress

HELP AND SUPPORT FOR THE SINGLE PARENTS

One cannot shy away from the fact that single parent's life is a life of pain, struggle, Loneliness and confusion.

The government gives support financially, socially, and emotionally. There is an Association called 'Ginger Bread' who looks and work to support the single parents in counseling, advising and giving information of what help that is available, such as single parent benefit, support for children, school meals, assistance with rent payment etc. With the new coalition government necessary information must be gathered to know the appropriate benefits you are entitled to.

However with all these benefits available, they give temporal relief and last for a while because the emotional wounds are still there but God is there to heal all emotional wound and give permanent peace. With all the government assistance of various benefits, single parents cannot still cope with life because they still get depressed as a result of stress and loneliness, which sometimes lead mental health problem to be hospitalized and make the government through Social Services Dept. to take their children into care.

Help is always available from your local Church, if you have a regular place of worship where there is a forum for single parent.

WINNING WAYS FOR SINGLE PARENTS

- Do not be lazy, take up convenient job that will enable you to look after the children and at the same be in service for God
- Intimacy with children- talk with the children always, either when eating or cooking in the kitchen
- Closeness with the children, give them little gifts, always remember their birthday, mothers with teenage boys should always seek assistance with youth leaders, male figure among family or your local pastor.
- Attend parent evenings at their schools
- Always praise the children when necessary, this will give them self esteem
- Always be assured that God is always with the children at all times
- Live a godly life and be a good example to the children because they will follow your footsteps.
- When lonely, depressed or stressed out, have a table conference with The Almighty God and the same time remember the past blessing of God upon you and the children.

WISDOM KEYS TO COPE WITH LIFE AS A SINGLE PARENT.

- Must know God, be born again Matt11:28-30
- Must be consecrated Ps,69:9
- Must have a goal and be focus Phil.3:14

- Must be in the service of God Ex.23:25-26
- Attend weekly meetings and fellowship with other brethren Heb:10:25
- Daily asking for grace from God
- Living an exemplary life (holy life) Acts 24;16
- Avoid idleness – keep busy for the Lord
- -Socialize in your local church
- Go for knowledge, read anointed books to get freedom from any type of challenge Hosea 4:6
- Be a woman of secret place, pray at all times, Matt.7:7
- Give praise to God at all times Ps.104:1 Ps.34:1-4
- Give from the little you have e.g. the widow of Zarephat 1Kings 17:10-15, Mk.12:42-44
- Always remember what God says you are every time, knowing that all the promises of God are yea and amen in Christ Jesus. Ex.33:13, Isaiah 49:25,Is.41:10 Is.43: 2-2, Ps66:12, Ps.118:6

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