

Tips and Tools for Single Parents

Flying Solo – Parenting Alone – Sheryl Giesbrecht

October 17, 2009, I became a single parent. My husband of 28 years, Pastor Paul Giesbrecht, was killed in a tragic motor-cycle accident. From the day he died, I made major decisions – about housing, income, vehicles, college funding, health insurance, life insurance. A decision I dreaded was how to love my children as a solo parent – how could I parent alone?

Single Parent – It's almost like a curse in this society of married couples. Wikipedia describes: A single parent (or solo parent) is a parent, not living with a spouse or partner, who has most of the day-to-day responsibilities in raising the child or children. A single parent is usually considered the primary caregiver, meaning the parent the children have residency with the majority of the time.^[1]

Please join me to speak this scripture ALOUD!

“Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, ‘The Lord is my portion, therefore I will wait for Him’.”
Lamentations 3:21-26

In our western society in general, following separation, a child will end up with the primary caregiver, usually the mother, and a secondary caregiver, usually the father.^[3]

Historically, death of a partner was a major cause of single parenting.^[4] Single parenting can result from separation, death, child abuse/neglect, or divorce of a couple with children.

An article by Kirsten Andersen, Jan 2013, says “The number of US children living in single-parent homes has nearly doubled since 1960, according to data from the 2010 Census.”

Today, one-third of American children – a total of 15 million – are being raised without a father. Nearly five million more children live without a mother. That's 20 million children raised in single-parent homes.

Vincent DiCaro, vice president of the National Fatherhood Initiative, blames this trend for many of society's ills. He claims the way to deal with poverty, drugs, crime and other hot-button cultural issues is to

strengthen the two-parent family. Deal with absent fathers, he says, and the rest follows.

A growing number of studies show that fatherlessness has a major negative impact on the social and emotional development of children. A 2011 University of Melbourne study found that absent fathers were linked with higher rates of juvenile delinquency, while a Canadian study showed that kids whose fathers were active parents in early and middle childhood had fewer behavior problems and higher intellectual abilities as they grew older, even among socio-economically at-risk families.

So how do we come against these startling statistics and make a difference in our world while we parent our children as Godly singles?

1. Understand Your Identity in Christ.

There's a big difference between who you are in yourself and who you are in Christ. The first chapter in the book of Ephesians talks about our Identity in Christ. You will be encouraged when you read how many times Eph. 1 says IN CHRIST.

Eph 1:3 "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ."

In and of ourselves, we are nothing. In Him – you and I are complete, lacking in nothing. Complete: satisfied, finished, perfected, filled up, assured, confident, secure.

Eph 1:4 "For he chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight."

If we know who we are in Christ, what you are or what you lack becomes insignificant.

Eph 1: 7 "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's

grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.”

In Christ - You are LOVED, You are SAFE, You are IMPORTANT
This concept of God’s unconditional love has especially ministered to me during days I couldn’t love myself.

There was a time in my life when I ran from God. At age 17, already an alcoholic and drug addict, I was working at a summer camp in Lake Tahoe. I remember the Christians at the camp sharing a five word phrase and how it rang in my ears, “Love covers a multitude of sins.” I couldn’t get it out of my mind.

“Love covers a multitude of sins,” the camp staff said when I threw fits over doing my chores or smoked cigarettes and dope. Though raised in church, I had never been around Christians like these. They didn’t tell me to change anything about my appearance, attitudes or addictions. These believers showed me what love looks like.

I began to believe God's love could cover my drug and alcohol addictions, my lying and stealing, my promiscuity and even my drug dealing. I didn’t have to clean up my act before coming to God; He loved me passionately just the way I was.

After two weeks of experiencing how “Love covers a multitude of sins,” I embraced it. Submitting to the overwhelming love of God, I allowed His abundant love to cover my multitude of sins. At seventeen years old, I committed and submitted my life to Christ and He hasn’t let go of me!

Through embracing my Identity in Christ, I could let go of my past feelings of shame, blame, lack of worth. I let the blood of Jesus cover my sin, accepted God’s forgiveness and learned how to walk in my identity in Christ; the truth of what God says about me. Now I can say:

“How joyful are those who fear the Lord and delight in obeying His commands. Their children will be successful everywhere; an entire generation of Godly people will be blessed.” Psalm 112:1-3

2. Recognize God is Your Partner – You are NOT flying solo. God is your partner. Do you think it's a surprise to God that you are a single parent?

Eph 1:11 “In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will.”

Coram Deo (before the face of God) is to understand that whatever we are doing and wherever we are doing it, we are acting under the gaze of God.

God is omnipresent. There is no place so remote that we can escape His penetrating gaze; even during the times when you might think, “God, do you know about this?” To be aware of the presence of God is to be acutely aware of His sovereignty. Living under God's sovereignty brings recognition that there is no higher goal than offering honor to God. Our lives are to be living sacrifices - oblations offered in a spirit of adoration and gratitude. The big idea is that all of life is religious.

You are chosen in him. You are walking according to his plans!

Several years ago, I was given a diagnosis of stage 4 non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. There was a blood cancer in four places in my body – it was in my bone marrow. It was not only in the lymph node of my lower left eye-lid, but in the bone marrow of my right arm, shoulder, elbow and the femur of my left leg. I prayed to God for my healing and so did many other people. Some nights and days, we anguished in prayer for my healing - if it was God's will.

During this season of cancer, I studied the healing of the lepers in Luke 17. There were ten lepers who asked for healing, and all ten were healed; but only one went back and thanked Jesus for that healing.

What lesson did I learn from the leper story? Following six months of chemotherapy and lots of prayer, I was full of praise and thanksgiving when my doctor called and said, “Sheryl, I can't believe it, there's no more cancer!” I wanted to be like the one leper - to thank God and glorify Him whenever possible for my healing. Indeed, to thank Him for my life. In fact, I borrowed this prayer of Moses from Psalm 90:12 that says, “Teach me to number my days, that I might present to you a heart of wisdom.”

PRACTICE GOD'S PRESENCE with CORAM DEO – THERE IS POWER IN PRAYER: Join with at least one good friend (single women with other women) (single men with one man) to pray for your children.

Guard this time together.

I use the Moms in Touch prayer method to pray for my children. (This method is in my book, Get Back Up: Trusting God When Life Knocks You Down in chapter 4.)

Use God's prayer book, the Bible to help you enter into: Praise, Confession, Thanksgiving, Intercession.

Is. 54:4 (NIV) "Do not be afraid, you will not be put to shame. Do not fear disgrace, you will not be humiliated. You will forget the shame of your youth and remember no more the reproach (disappointment) of your widowhood."

3. Ask God to be Your Children's Father/Mother

**Single parents in the Bible all had one thing in common:
They knew God's word and went to God to meet their needs.**

2 Kings 4 – The Widow who couldn't provide for her two sons – the Little Pot of Oil

"What do you have in your house?"

"Nothing except a small jar of oil."

"Go ask your neighbors for empty jars, don't just ask for a few. Go in your house, shut your door, just you and your sons. They brought the jars to their mother and she kept pouring. When all the jars were full, she said to her son, bring me another one. But he replied, there is not a jar left. Then the oil stopped flowing. She went and told the man of God. He said "Go sell the oil, pay your debts, you and your sons can live on what is left."

Ruth 1, 2 – Naomi, Ruth

Naomi's husband and two sons had died. As was the custom in the culture, she released her Moabite daughters in law to go back to their family homes, since Naomi was going back to her home of Bethlehem in Judah. She gave them a blessing in Ruth 1:8 "Go back, each of you, to your mother's home. May the Lord show you kindness as you have shown kindness to your dead husbands and to me. May the Lord grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband." But Ruth committed to her mother-in-law, as she now served the Lord God Almighty. She said in Ruth 1:16 "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me." The family relative, Boaz, learned of Ruth's commitment to God and Naomi and all that she had done for her mother-in-law, since the death of her husband. He also knew the law of Israel, with the kinsman-redeemer clause. He spoke a blessing over Ruth, allowed her to glean in his fields. The fairytale ending was that Boaz married Ruth; through their union came Obed, the father of Jesse, the father of David.

Isaiah 57:1- 2 says, "The righteous perish, and no one ponders it in his heart; devout men are taken away, and no one understands that the righteous are taken away to be spared from evil. Those who walk uprightly enter into peace; they find rest as they lie in death."

Thank you for your prayers for me and my family during the past six years since Pastor Paul was killed in a motorcycle accident. It's been difficult, this time of healing, questioning God, and trusting God for my future. I never would have imagined I'd be a widow at my age. As many of you have experienced, there are times when God's will doesn't make sense.

But this is my resolve. I must trust God's character. He loves my late husband, Paul. He loves me. He loves my son, Ben. He loves my daughter, Sarah. My reactions to circumstances are part of my walk of holiness. Jerry Bridges in his book The Pursuit of Holiness, says it well. "Holiness is not a series of do's and don'ts; but conformity to the character of God and obedience to the will of God."

On your handout, let's speak out: Psalm 68:5,6 (NIV) "A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling. God sets the lonely in families, he leads out the prisoners with singing; but the rebellious live in a sun-scorched land."

God wants us to follow the example of a well - known single parent - Mary the mother of Jesus - , to offer ourselves, willingly to God for His will and purposes. Stepping out in faith means, we don't wait to see the bottom line, the end of the story, before we walk with God, even if the outcome doesn't make sense. Will you say, like Mary, "Behold, the bond slave of the Lord, be it done to me according to your Word?" In the weeks after Paul was killed, I decided to accept God's will, and pray Mary's prayer: "Behold, the bond slave of the Lord, be it done to me according to your word."

In closing, I ask you to bow as I pray over you:

Eph. 1:17,18 "I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people and his incomparable great power for us who believe."

The Father's Love Letter video

More resources on Single Parenting:

1. An Open Letter for Single Mamas

<http://www.foreverymom.com/open-letter-single-mamas-one-whos/>

2. How to Thrive as a Single Mom

<http://www.perfectionpending.net/2014/04/05/how-to-thrive-as-a-single-mom-even-when-you-didnt-expect-to-be-one/>

3. Restore Your Soul When You Feel Like You are Losing

<http://club31women.com/2014/11/restore-soul-feel-like-youre-losing-mind/>

4. Single Parenting from Crosswalk

<http://www.crosswalk.com/family/parenting/single-parents/>

5. Single Mom Survival Success

<http://singlemomssurvivalsuccess.com/>

6. Encouraging Single Parents with Joyce Meyer

[http://www.joycemeyer.org/articles/ea.aspx?
article=encouraging_single_parents](http://www.joycemeyer.org/articles/ea.aspx?article=encouraging_single_parents)

7. Hope for Single Parents from Today's Christian Woman

[http://www.todayschristianwoman.com/articles/2013/september/hope-for-
single-parents.html](http://www.todayschristianwoman.com/articles/2013/september/hope-for-single-parents.html)

8. Cornerstones for Parents with Angela Thomas with Amy Simpson

<http://www.cornerstonesforparents.com/>

9. Helping Children Cope with Divorce

<http://www.focusonthefamily.com/parenting/single-parents>

10. How Do Single Moms Afford to Live?

<http://singlemomsincome.com/single-moms-afford-live-heres/>

11. Life of a Single Mom – free stuff

<http://thelifeofasinglemom.com/free-stuff/>

12. Single Mom Christmas

<http://www.notconsumed.com/christmas-and-the-single-mom/>

13. Children Talk About Divorce – Must Have Conversations

[http://www.justoneoftheboys.com/2014/10/08/mommy-do-you-still-love-
daddy/](http://www.justoneoftheboys.com/2014/10/08/mommy-do-you-still-love-daddy/)

14. Five Tips for Talking with Your Kids About Divorce

<http://letslassothemoon.com/2013/10/11/kids-divorce/>

15. Encouraging Books for Single Moms

<http://latoyaedwards.net/encouraging-books-for-single-moms>