

15 Great Ways to Minister to Single Parents

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Ministry to single parents is an important part of your family ministry strategy—and it doesn't have to be difficult! Here are 15 ideas to get you started reaching out to single parents today!

1. Ask single parents what their needs are (time away from the kids, finances) and help meet those needs.
2. Form a committee with key single parents. [Empower single parents](#) to make the ministry what they need it to be. Let them “own” the ministry.
3. Pray weekly specifically for single parents. Ask God to give them strength and encouragement.
4. Encourage families and couples to welcome single parents into their homes for special occasions and holidays—and for no reason at all.
5. Start a support group.
6. Don't overburden singles. They often get too involved without getting their own needs met.
7. Have a parents' night out. (Singles, like married people, need time for themselves.)
8. Offer an active singles life separate from the Sunday school class. And when planning social events, don't place emphasis on couples.
9. Provide childcare because finances are tough for most single parents.
10. Set up a fund where these parents (and other church members) can get a loan. Help with financial hardships.
11. Consider organizing an old-fashioned co-op where single parents (and other church members) can exchange services without money. People with expertise in sewing, bookkeeping, mechanical work, and so on can participate.
12. Also consider developing a big brother/big sister program for single parents' children.
13. Have a single parent tell his or her story during the worship service to help raise awareness.
14. Remember these parents at holidays and birthdays. These days can be killers for single parents. Ask, “How does our church communicate what a family is?” Sometimes the message communicated is very subtle: “This is how a family *should* be.” This alienates many parents and gives them a burden of guilt.
15. Be aware of how family finances and visitation schedules impact single parent families' involvement in your church. Help them find ways to stay connected.

Janice Thatcher

AN OUTSTANDING OUTREACH

Ray and Lynn Roberts started [“Heart Healers”](#) at Emmanuel Faith Community Church, in Escondido, California, to minister to single parents and their children. Heart Healers is a 12-week course for single parents that deals with issues such as fear, shame, guilt, and blame.

In addition, their church has a worship service every Wednesday night specifically for single parents and their children. The pastor delivers a topical message on issues single parent families deal with.

Extra getaways for parents and children help families arrive at forgiveness and healing. Ray plans outdoor trips—white-water rafting, hiking, snow skiing, and camp outs.

“If you get parents and kids into that kind of environment, their problems fade away for a short time,” Ray says.

An annual trip to [Ensenada, Mexico](#), gives single-parent families a chance to experience another culture and visit an orphanage. The group goes down with a twofold purpose: to help out at the orphanage and to love the kids they're taking.

Ray says when children of divorce see the kids at the orphanage, they realize some kids don't have anything. It makes them appreciate what they have and helps create a bond with other people who are going through hard times as well. It helps them realize that "I'm not the only one hurting."