



## *The Why & How of Single Parent Ministry*

### **What's Going On:**

- Approximately 15 million Single Parents in the United States raising 22 million children
- Fastest-growing sector of the population
- 49% of all babies today are born outside marriage
- Approximately 50% of today's marriages are still failing
- 78% of our current prison population was raised by a single mom
- 1 in 3 single moms live in poverty
- 75% of all government assistance is used by single parent homes
- 9 out of 10 single moms say they are overwhelmed/stressed
- Abuse is twice as likely in a single parent's home
- A child of a single mom is 10x more likely to drop out of high school and 5x more likely to commit suicide
- 2 out of 3 single moms DO NOT attend a local church
- And...only 1% of U.S. Christian Churches have a formal ministry and outreach plan for single parent homes

### **When Effective Ministry to Single Parents Exists, What Changes?**

An independent study conducted by The Life of a Single Mom Ministries to both church and unchurched single moms in 42 states resulted in the following finds:

- 94% felt more empowered after a church group than before
- 72% of our support group network attended 8 or more meetings
- 78% said partnering with a local church made them more likely to join
- 93% said a single mom church event changed their life
- 1 in every 5 single moms participating in a support group starts a savings account
- 1 in every 4 single moms participating in a support group improve their financial situation by purchasing a home, eliminating need for government assistance, and/or securing career-style employment
- Participants have repeatedly reported less struggles with depression and overwhelming stress, which results in better parenting.
- 78% of participants report that support group helped them develop professionally

- 100% of participants in program report greater confidence in parenting skills after regular attendance.
- Churches with single parent support groups are twice as likely to retain single parents in their church long-term.
- Participants are 4x more likely to connect to their local church, when active in a support group
- Churches with a single moms' support program have seen a 58% increase in the number of single parents attending their church

### **Debunking Myths to Single Parent Ministry:**

1. Doesn't single mom's ministry promote divorce or unplanned pregnancy? No, the heart of the church should always be Biblical teaching. Single Parent Ministries meet people where they are.
2. We have a singles ministry in our church. Isn't that enough? It is okay to have both. Single parent ministry may reach some that singles ministry doesn't and vice versa. We also often find that the demographic outreach of single parent ministry varies from singles ministry.
3. We offer Divorce Care/ Divorce Recovery Programs. Isn't that enough? It doesn't encompass all single parents (the never marrieds or widows), and it is for a limited time, not on-going discipleship. It is meant for recovery, but single parent ministry works beyond that. We love Divorce Recovery Programs, but we think there should be a discipleship method after the program is finished, also.
4. We don't have any single moms in our church. We realize that some churches may not have that many single moms, but we know they exist in communities, so think through creative ways to find these precious, unchurched moms. If you don't have any single moms, think through ways to find them in your community, such as daycares, outreach events, car prep, community colleges & high schools.

### **Establishing a Strong Pathway for Single Parents to the Church:**

1. *You must have pastoral buy-in!* Your church leadership must be on board with this. Don't run the program entirely on your own. Don't try to launch one in your home without pastoral approval. Honor your pastors. There is protection and covering in this method. Honor your church leadership. Do not every speak negatively about pastors or leaders.
2. *Single Moms Events create excitement and will increase your attendance.* Single moms events can include: Christmas parties, Easter outreaches, Night of Praise, Breakfast, Conferences, etc. Be creative. But you MUST have somewhere to plug them in before you have the event.
3. *Suggested meeting times for single moms ministries are always on the weekend (Friday night, Saturday, or Sunday night) and usually twice per month.* More meetings mean your volunteers get worn out. Less means you may not get the same relationship-building.
4. *Single parents will struggle in one or all of the following three areas:* Parenting, Finances, and Spiritual/Emotional Health. This means teaching must constantly be relevant.

5. *Switch it up!* Be fun. You don't have to cover 18 points in one meeting. Allow the Holy Spirit to be your guide. Do Scavenger Hunts. Do "field day" games. Just enjoy the ministry.
6. *Recruit, train, and empower volunteers.* They want to serve. NEVER TELL ANYONE NO in regards to volunteering. Volunteering gives them purpose. It allows them to feel effective and become more involved. It may also help them stay committed to the group.
7. *Provide a meal and childcare.* It can be done through potluck and volunteers, if budget is a concern. A meal and childcare can help you remove barriers that keep single moms from coming.
8. *Consider the single moms who are not yet attending your church/ministry.* Always think about the unchurched single mom. Single parents who are already committed to your Bible study will come if you hold it at 6am on Tuesday, because they are already committed to the house and the things of God. But consider meeting times and days that may attract single parents who don't yet know Christ or aren't active in a church yet.
9. *Don't allow your meetings to drone on & on!* These moms are busy, exhausted, and overworked, so be conscious of time. There are times when the Holy Spirit is moving a meeting may go longer for one reason or another. But in general, respecting the beginning and ending times of a meeting allow for single parents to best plan their evenings. (And for busy parents, this may help them stay more committed to your group).
10. *Make sure to diversify your volunteer base – race, age, etc.* It helps promote diversity within your group. We all like to see people who look like us. It's natural. So when you are recruiting volunteers, consider age, race, gender, etc, so that more people feel welcomed within your community group. Always stay in prayer about whether you are the one to lead it or if you are the one to start it.

*The preceding information are best practices identified by The Life of a Single Mom Ministries. We desire to serve you, the church. We recognize that different practices work differently at different churches regarding single parent ministry, so these suggestions are in no way meant to criticize an existing program as "wrong", but rather to enhance your existing work with a few fresh ideas. Please do not hesitate to contact our offices at any time if you need help with your ministry.*

**TLSM Services Available to Help You:**

- Become a Ministry Leader Member through our membership program. This membership allows you to receive very specific counseling, training, consultations, access to a private log-in system, along with lots of discounts, and the ability to converse with ministry leaders around the country.
- Sign up for our free monthly newsletter on our website for regular articles on ministry leader best-practices.
- We put free podcasts, videos, and articles on our website regularly to encourage you.
- We hold ministry trainings in churches around the country, so visit our Events Page.
- Follow us on all social media, as we host discussions throughout the week on Single Parent Topics that may be able to give you fresh ideas for ministry topics.
- The Single Moms Care Ministry Kit was designed specifically to enhance existing single moms programs or launch new programs. This kit includes a teaching DVD, 4 volunteer books, a 200-page comprehensive workbook that includes peri- and post-launch instructions, various print materials, and customizable CD's.



- TLISM Offers books on Parenting, Finances, Emotional Issues – all with a leader's guide and Bible study work guide.

