

SESSION
1

TIRED & OVERWHELMED

SINGLE PARENTING CAN BE RELENTLESS. You're the chef, the maid, the breadwinner, the entertainer, the teacher, the rule enforcer, the playmate, the confidant, the bedtime storyteller. Your responsibilities never stop.

Will the pressure ever let up?

This week, after viewing the videos and completing the Hopework exercises, you'll discover:

- Why single parenting is never a solo endeavor
- Reasons you can have hope when all seems lost
- How deeply interested God is in your situation

VIDEO OUTLINE

Use this outline to write down important concepts, encouraging words or questions you may have while viewing the video.

COMMON EXPERIENCES

A busy lifestyle _____

Emotional distress _____

Financial difficulties _____

Conflict _____

Feeling isolated _____

Feeling overwhelmed _____

Exhaustion _____

Guilt and shame _____

REASONS FOR HOPE

Help from God and others _____

Help from this series _____

SINGLE-PARENT HELPCENTER

Weekly online bonus material:

- View helpful video clips
- Enjoy reflections from Angela
- Apply what you've learned (exercises/worksheets)
- Discover valuable resources

www.singleandparenting.org/helpcenter

IN THIS WEEK'S HOPEWORK You'll learn more about Liz, a single mom who felt pulled from all sides and became ill with the pressure. Find out how she's doing now and what she does to keep from being overwhelmed by the stress of single parenting.

HOPEWORK: TIRED & OVERWHELMED

EXERCISES TO HELP YOU PARENT WITH HOPE



LIZ'S STORY

Liz had four children, no family nearby, and was going through a divorce and court proceedings. She came home from work with migraines and developed an ulcer. Even so, she says, *“I wanted people to think that I was okay. I played the game at church, and I played the game at work. I had the professional face and I had the church face, and inside I wanted to believe it, too. I wanted to be strong, and I wanted to be okay, but I really wasn't. I was kind of decaying; I was falling apart.”*

ARE YOU KEEPING UP A FRONT, TOO? Wanting people to think you've got it together, when inside you're barely surviving? You don't have to pretend anymore. Through research and interviews of single parents, we've found that you will make it through, and with God's help, any bad situation you are facing can be turned around to something good.

DAY
1

GOD HEARS THE CRIES OF THE OVERWORKED

You may work one, two or three jobs. You're exhausted. Your home is in chaos. You drop into bed, only to face it all again the next day.

Be assured that God hears your cries, and you will make it through!

GOD'S WORD TO YOU

The Israelites were slaves in Egypt, and they cried out to God for help. **“The LORD said, ‘I have indeed seen the misery of my people ... I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them.’”**

(EXODUS 3:7-8A)

1 Describe how overworked you are from day to day.

2 Why were the Israelites crying out to God (see Exodus 3:7–8a)?

3 At first, their workload became even harder, but as time went by ... **“the LORD gave them rest on every side ... Not one of all the LORD’s good promises to the house of Israel failed; every one was fulfilled.” (JOSHUA 21:44–45)**

Which promises did God come through on?

REMEMBER: GOD WON'T LET YOU DOWN

“I can only do what’s in front of me next. I can only take one more step,” shares Lois Rabey.

“God promises me that ...

- He will be there.*
- Things will be taken care of.*
- I can rely on Him.”*

DAY

2

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

Single parenting can be a lonely job. Take heart that you are never alone.

GOD’S WORD TO YOU

“For I am the LORD your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you.” (ISAIAH 41:13)

“The LORD replied, ‘My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.’” (EXODUS 33:14)

1 In Isaiah 41:13 and Exodus 33:14, what does God promise you?

2 “Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!” (ECCLESIASTES 4:9-10)

Many times when feeling alone, you may wish for a physical person just to be there, to talk with or to help you out. What does the Bible say about the need for you to accept help from friends?

NOTE: Please be careful about becoming involved in a dating relationship unless you have experienced complete personal healing. While you are healing, look for support from same-sex friends.

3 If you do not have a godly, loyal friend as described in Ecclesiastes, write a short prayer below asking God to lead you to such a friend.

“God are You there?
Do You hear me?”
—Dan

REMEMBER: IT'S OKAY TO LET OTHERS HELP

“Once I took that mask off, people were more than willing to help out. I’m not sure why I was so afraid to actually let them know the real me, but once I did, it was a lot easier.” —Liz

“I sought to talk to God more. The Bible is full of precious encouragement for women who are alone, and by extension, men who are alone. God uses the metaphor frequently of ‘our maker is our husband.’ I was tremendously comforted [by talking to Him].” —Dr. Laura Hendrickson

WORRY ABOUT BEING A GOOD PARENT

“I keep hearing on the radio and TV that children should be brought up in a two-parent home. So I’m thinking to myself, ‘Okay, my kids are doomed then.’” —Izuru

GOD’S WORD TO YOU

God appointed Nehemiah to do a certain job, and other people were trying to discredit him and intimidate him into giving up. In response, Nehemiah prayed, **“Now strengthen my hands.”** (NEHEMIAH 6:9B)

“But I said, ‘Should a man like me run away? ... I will not go!’” (NEHEMIAH 6:11)

- 1** God has appointed you, too, with a job—to parent your children. What worries do you have about being a good parent?

A PRAYER

If you feel alone and feel that God is not there, you can say, **“Lord, help me to know that You are near.”** He will answer your prayer.

- 2** What did Nehemiah do in the face of opposition from others and worries?

- 3** Record Nehemiah’s prayer from Nehemiah 6:9b right now on a sticky note, calendar, phone or other electronic device—anyplace you will see it throughout your day. Whenever you worry that you cannot complete the work God has appointed you to do, follow Nehemiah’s example in prayer.

REMEMBER: YOU CAN BE A GOOD PARENT

“There are plenty of single parents that are far better parents than the parents that are married,” says Connie. “I’m a teacher; I’m in the schools and I see this. You can do [a good job] if you commit yourself to it, and that’s God’s plan for all of us.”

Certain things in your life may look pretty bad right now. The most amazing hope you can receive into your life comes with the promise that God always turns bad to good.

GOD'S WORD TO YOU

Joseph's brothers betrayed and abandoned him. He was forced to live far from home, facing slavery, prison and false accusations. Eventually, through a series of events only God could have orchestrated, Joseph became the highest official in the Egyptian palace and was able to help many people.

Then came the day Joseph faced his brothers again.

“But Joseph said to them, ‘... You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.’” (GENESIS 50:19–20)

- 1 Joseph was in a powerful position to do or say anything he wanted to his brothers, whom he was seeing for the first time after their hateful deed. Describe Joseph's response to the situation.

- 2 What good things did God accomplish through a very bad situation (see Genesis 50:19–20)?

- 3 When we're in the middle of a tough, painful situation, it's hard to see anything beyond the moment. How would it be reassuring for you if you knew for a fact that something good would result from the tough situation you're in?

REMEMBER: EVEN THE WORST SITUATION CAN BE TURNED AROUND

"We cannot ruin God's plan for our lives." —Eduardo Salazar

"You have to look up. You have to hope in what will come, because things will change. You make the best of the situation now, and you make the best of the next situation." —Dr. Thelma Wells

"God's purposes for you are good, and He will accomplish those purposes. But if you just look at what's happening around you, you're going to miss it." —Susan Lutz

DAY
5

REASONS FOR HOPE

We draw conclusions about our situations based on what we see and hear and know today. God's perspective is not limited like that. He sees the beginning, middle and end of the story.

Our lives and our children's lives are chapters in the middle of a much larger story. And the conclusion of that story, God says, is awesome!

GOD'S WORD TO YOU

"He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain ...' He who was seated on the throne said, 'I am making everything new!'" (REVELATION 21:4-5A)

1 What things in your life as a single parent have you felt hopeless about?

2 What does Revelation 21:4-5a say is the conclusion of life's story?

"There's always a reason for hope."
—Stephen Viars

3 **"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."** (ROMANS 15:13)

What are the benefits of trusting God with your situation (see Romans 15:13)?

4 Who, according to Romans 15:13, is the source of hope?

Please read “Rest for Single Parents,” p. xi, to better understand the hope that God offers you.

REMEMBER: GOD MAKES ALL THINGS RIGHT AGAIN

“The suffering I’m going through and the pain I’m going through, God is going to make it worth it.” —Paige

“The storyline of Scripture reminds you of several things,” explains Dr. Michael R. Emlet. “It reminds you that ...

- *Suffering at the hand of other people is not the end of the story. You and your children’s ultimate well-being isn’t fatalistically determined by someone else’s mistreatment or abandonment.*
- *God hears the cries of His people. He understands their suffering, their pain.*
- *God takes an injustice in hand and is going to make that which is wrong, right.”*

THE CONCLUSION OF LIZ’S STORY

“A lot of times God provided what I needed and I didn’t even ask for it myself. But there were other times I should have asked more people to step in and give my kids rides or to take the kids off my hands for an hour or two.

“I did the best I could at that time, and God sent other people in my children’s lives to pick up the slack when I couldn’t be there myself. He sent church people, coaches and teachers.

“I look at my kids now and I am so grateful for them. I feel so blessed that they made it through, just like I made it through. God worked in a situation that wasn’t a good situation. He made good things happen out of it.”



NEXT WEEK If you feel inept at times to help your children through their struggles, next week’s session offers practical guidance.