

Men-2-Pray: Fathers: Single and sane

Becoming a single father can be a life-changing experience. It requires massive adjustments and a host of coping skills, but many dads bravely do it alone. With the divorce rate at an unsettling 75% according to *FAMSA* figures, single fathers are now a common phenomenon, as in many instances they gain custody of the children after a divorce. Divorce is not the only reason for fathers raising their children on their own. The death or severe illness of a spouse rendering them unable to care even for themselves is another reason. How do you pray for yourself and your children as a single father? How can you as parents pray for someone in this situation? The following are a few practical hints for single fathers, with related Scripture verses:

1. You have to make the most of it when you have limited time with your children. Do not take time with them for granted when they live with you. Pray that God will give you wisdom how to spend the time you have with your children. Ask Him to show you small needs they do not necessarily express and wisdom on how to meet these needs. Ask the Lord to give you the capacity to be able to listen and relate to them in situations that are of concern to them.

SIMPLE PRAYER: Out of heaven let me hear Your voice, instruct me concerning Your ways (**Deut.4:36**).

2. You have to change your lifestyle and learn to plan things carefully and in advance. The planning of your business life or career must revolve around your children and their school holidays. Pray that God will give you favour in your work situation so that it will be possible for you to be available to your children. Also ask God for wisdom in your job/career and how to organise it in practical and beneficial ways, to the advantage of both your work situation and your children.

SIMPLE PRAYER: Show me Your way now, that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight. And also consider my children Your children (**Ex.33:13**).

3. Children adore both parents because they know they are part of both. When one parent is angry or resentful towards the other, they feel guilty. After a divorce, parents will have a life-long relationship to negotiate, accommodating the children. Ask the Lord to bring peace between you as parents. Ask the Lord to help both of you to work out your differences and to find a peaceful way to live with each other. Pray without ceasing about this vitally important issue, not only for yourself, but even more so for your children.

SIMPLE PRAYER: Father I pray that grace and peace be multiplied to us as parents in the knowledge of God and our Lord Jesus (**2 Pet.1:2**).

4. Often one parent cannot cope with the children due to chronic depression or self-destructive tendencies, addictions etc. In such cases this spouse still stays in the house, but is completely unable to care for the family. Sometimes there are no other relatives or family or support in this task which has now fallen on the other parent, e.g. the dad. Pray that God will show you in wisdom how to care for your incapable spouse in a really meaningful way, even if it means getting full-time help. Ask Him to show you how to minister to both your weakened spouse and your children in times such as these. Pray that most of all, they will have a revelation of their heavenly Father as they see you care for them in simple ways.

SIMPLE PRAYER: I pray that they may have eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent (**John 17:3**).

5. If your spouse has passed away, you need a lot of wisdom with your children. Continue to pray for yourself until you experience a breakthrough that God will heal your own heart and that of your children in the loss and all you have suffered. Ask for grace to accept the situation and for strength to face each day ahead. Also ask God to protect you from rushing into another relationship with someone because of your own needs and to also provide care for your children.

SIMPLE PRAYER: Keep my soul, and deliver me; let me not be ashamed, for I put my trust in You (Ps.25:20).

6. It is a major issue whom to entrust your children to when you as a single father are not around at times because of other responsibilities. Ask the Lord to show you trustworthy female mentors for your girls, whether it be their mother (if she is still alive), or the mother of a school friend, an aunt or someone from your church or work. Pray for a breakthrough in this area until you find individuals whom you respect and whose values are sound. This may be the greatest gift you can give your children.

SIMPLE PRAYER: I ask that my children will know and rely on the love You have for them. You are love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him (1 John 4:16).

7. It is not so important to do everything perfect as it is to be available to your children. Communicate with your children when you are together as a family, but also individually. Negotiate some 'alone time' with them, both together and individually on a weekly basis. It needn't be an hour at a time, but it does need to be at least once a week. Make sure you ask them questions and get honest answers. After such a session, always try to end your discussion in prayer for them and with them. In this way you model to them to always take their problems to their heavenly Father, even when you are not available. Ask the Lord to make you sensitive at these times; not to be in a hurry, but to be able to make them feel completely 'heard' by you, giving them your full attention even in the short while available.

SIMPLE PRAYER: Father, like Jesus, give me wisdom to explain Your ways to my children (Matt.13:36).

8. It is important that you spend time with friends who can build into and enrich your life too. Ask the Lord that your path crosses that of friends your age and if possible also in similar circumstances, who could also be prayer partners. If the opportunity arises, why not start a small group of three or four men to pray for each other and encourage each other on a regular basis. Be careful not to bury yourself in your work.

SIMPLE PRAYER: Father grant me friends to pray with, because You say; when two or three come together in My Name, there am I with them (Matt.18:20).

9. Ask the Lord to show you a fatherly figure that you look up to. Consider asking this person to become your mentor or spiritual father. This is a wonderful opportunity to receive insight and wisdom from someone with more experience. Jethro was like this to Moses in the matter of ruling Israel.

SIMPLE PRAYER: Lord I have many instructors in Christ, but lack a true spiritual father. Send someone my way that I can imitate as he imitates Christ (1 Cor.4:15,16).

10. Give thanks for what you have. We so easily get depressed and discouraged when we see what we lack or need. Nothing lifts one's heart so much as making a special effort to look at the things you do have and then to start thanking God for them. Even when you're driving your car or walking from one meeting to another, ask God to remind you to give thanks to Him.

SIMPLE PRAYER: I give thanks to You o Lord, for You are good; Your love endures forever (Ps.118:1).