Dear Parents,

 Did you know that over 22 million children are being raised by single parents? I’m sure you can think of a few in your own life. Regardless of whether or not you are a single parent, we are all affected in one way or another. Have you ever thought to yourself, “I could really use some help” or “I wish I could assist in some way?” Hopefully we can help with some ideas; check out the video below!

<https://vimeo.com/parentministry/review/118054423/60ccab9fb1>

 Even though you may not be single, this topic affects you more than you previously thought when you look at your friends and family. The number of single parent households has more than tripled in the last 50 years. The following are some suggestions that might help your family find it’s rhythm.

**Find a schedule that works for your family**
 There is no ideal schedule that works for everyone. Each family has different activities and responsibilities that make them unique.

* If childcare and work schedules aren’t in sync, talk with your boss about possibly adjusting your hours. Be honest about your situation.
* Be very conscious about what you commit yourself and your children to do. You must be realistic about what you can accomplish. Consider location of activities, cost involved, time of activities/ practices. You can’t do everything and be everywhere, but you also want to set the standard for your children to be accountable for what you agree to do. Make sure that you also set aside time to be at home and spend time together.

**Childcare**
 Get creative about childcare. Create a babysitting network with friends and trade off on providing childcare. That way everyone gets time without the kids and no one has to pay babysitting fees!

**Support System**
 One of the most common difficulties of single parents is that they feel isolated and alone. Join forces with other parents in similar situations. This may be another single parent, or a friend whose spouse works odd hours. Maybe you have a friend whose spouse is deployed. Don’t be afraid to reach out to other people. Building community can provide social support and give a sense of belonging. Look into support groups through your church, social sites or YMCA. The other side of this is being willing to accept help if it is offered. Don’t be too proud to admit that it is hard to do it alone.

**Be organized**
 If your home is in disarray, it can be easy for things to become disorganized and hectic. Keeping things streamlined and organized can help daily routines to run more smoothly. Keep a calendar of daily activities so everyone knows what each day contains. Be prepared for urgent situations. Have emergency numbers of people you know you can count on and that you can call if something happens. We all get sick, work or family emergencies will happen. Have a plan in place and discuss it with your kiddos. As children grow, hold family meetings. Talk about everyone’s schedule and how to share responsibilities around the house. It helps when everyone is on the same page.

**How to help:**
 What about those of us who aren’t single, but we have single friends or family members? What are some ways that we can reach out and help them?

* Provide hands-on help. Offer to babysit, pick up the dry cleaning, cook dinner or drive their child to soccer practice. An extra set of hands can make a huge difference.
* Keep them on the guest list. Don’t leave out friends who are single because they don’t have a partner or seem too busy. Loneliness can be a huge problem with single parents. Even if they can’t make it, they will appreciate being included. This applies to holidays also. No one wants to spend holidays alone.
* Surprise them with a freezer-friendly meal. What a treat to not have to worry about dinner!
* Ask what it is like. Just be a friendly ear and listen. Being heard can be very validating.

 Above all, make sure to cover your family in prayer. Jeremiah 29:11 says, “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Every family situation is different. We hope that these suggestions can help your situation.

Building Young Disciples,

Pastor Sarah