**Helping the Single Fathers in Your Life**

 I often spend so much time in the world of single parent ministry that I forget there are plenty of strong and thriving marriages out there. I also am so directly engaged with single fathers on a daily basis that I tend to overlook those of you who may have a son, brother, friend, or grandson who is a single dad and aren’t exactly sure how to help him out.

 Single parent ministry is a whole new level of reaching people. It can be discouraging, messy, and rarely consistent. And unless you have ever been a single parent yourself, it can be quite intimidating to lend a helping hand to- let alone even knowing where to start. So to help guide you along, here are five very quick tips that you can use to help build a foundation for your single father son, grandson, or whoever.

1. Keep them covered

I know this may seem like an obvious one, but never underestimate the power of prayer; especially of a parent praying over their child. You may not completely understand everything your son is going through, and that’s fine. But pray specific and transparent prayers, not manipulative or selfish ones. Also be sure to love on the involved children unconditionally through it all and even pray with them whenever possible. Prayer can move mountains and when we pray within God’s will, we know we have the petitions we ask of Him. (Matt 10:20, 1John 5:14-15)

1. Seek godly counsel

Believe me when I say that I am fully aware of just how little there is for single fathers out there when it comes to Christ-centered help. Start by contacting some of the local churches in your area- ones that may have a higher single parent population than others. Even if the church doesn’t have an actual “single parent” ministry, many of the pastors have perhaps counseled some single dads in the past and at least have a general understanding of what they face regularly. Of course, you may also feel free to contact me anytime for additional help at [www.afatherswalk.org](http://www.afatherswalk.org).

1. Do NOT slam the mom!

This is our “Golden Rule” of the ministry. Yes, the entire situation may be a mess and perhaps she is being spiteful or manipulative. I am sure it can be quite painful to watch your son of friend go through it all. I am right there with you when it comes to experiencing how unjust some situations may be due to the other parent or the courts doing. Still, as followers of Christ we are called to hold to a higher standard and if we allow the sin of anger and bitterness to seep into our hearts, it will only overflow into other areas of our life- perhaps even around the children. Instead, ask the Lord to remove these negative emotions from you if need be (you may really have to do some hardcore praying here!), but a softened heart is the only way to honor God. (Psalm 57:7).

1. Help them build a foundation

Statistics show that less than 12% of single parents attend church on a regular basis. Even if they do, with the divorce rate skyrocketing the way it is and out of wedlock births now the majority, I have seen plenty of Christian men find themselves to be single fathers. Single parenting equals brokenness no matter how you slice it, and we all know the only path to complete healing and restoration is through Jesus Christ. You know your son better than anyone. Bible thumping and condemning talk isn’t going work- I will tell you that right now. What they need is to see the true love of Christ: I’m talking like the love that was spilled out in a bloody mess down a tree and down the hill for us sort of love. This may mean revisiting your own relationship with the Lord first. The main focus here needs to be a safe zone where your son, grandson, or friend can feel completely accepted and loved; somewhere where their feet can be set upon rock.

1. Stay focused on the long haul

Whether or not things ever get better between the dad and the mom no one knows. Dad’s focus needs to remain on the fact that he is Dad- for life. Things began extremely rocky between me and my daughter’s mom. Almost eight years later, it’s bumpy at best. Children get a huge part of their personality and self-perception from their father; and our enemy is a master at keeping us spinning around in circles instead of looking up to God for help. I once heard a great author say (I’m paraphrasing) [that as much as we would like to keep our children our little ones, our job as fathers is to prepare them for adulthood and then release them.] Christ is the head, followed by Dad. Any single father that holds fast to that will not only be able to persevere through the storms along the way, but will one day see God’s glory revealed through it all. (Romans 8:18)

 Once again, single parenting is a tough, tough situation for everyone involved. Our responsibility as Christian individuals is to show the unconditional love of Christ to others, and to do the same for the kids involved. The Bible tells us to hate what is evil and to cling to what is good. Love never fails and perfect love casts out fear. Hold fast to all of God’s promises, because we know in Christ all of His promises are “yes” and “amen”.

*Matt Haviland is the founder of “*A Father’s Walk*” single dad ministry and the author of the book, “*A Father’s Walk: A Christian-Based Resources for Single Fathers*”. He currently lives in his hometown of Grand Rapids, MI, is the co-founder of the Grand Rapids Single Parenting Expo, and is a single dad to a beautiful little girl himself. For more information on the ministry and how to form a single dad small group in your own church, please visit* [www.afatherswalk.org](http://www.afatherswalk.org).