

SESSION AGENDAS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: SESSIONS 1–13

NOTES

“I WANT TO MAKE SURE MY KIDS TURN OUT OKAY.”

Session Agendas & Discussion Questions for each of the 13 sessions are included in this section.

The Session Agendas & Discussion Questions will help you maintain a schedule and give you ideas to jump-start the small group discussion time; however, we want to encourage group leaders to be sensitive to what is on the hearts of group members during each meeting. If group members do not seem to have much interest in talking about the content of the video seminar, there may be other things that have occurred in their lives in the previous days that constitute more pressing concerns.

The best thing you can do for group members is allow them to express their feelings, concerns, anger, fears and successes. Be careful not to let one member of the group dominate, and be sure to guide the group back on track if members are giving inappropriate advice, but also allow group members the freedom to express their hearts. There is great healing in this kind of sharing.

If you sense that the members of the group want to talk about other things, spend a few minutes reviewing the key points of the video to make sure there are no questions, comments or misunderstandings, then allow participants to share on the topics and experiences important to them.

Group leaders will find they can rely on the prompting of the Holy Spirit to guide the group in the proper direction.

Before each session, review both the primary and additional questions on that week's Session Agenda. Your goal is to complete the primary questions, and if time, ask the additional/alternate questions. Choose which additional questions you'd like to work through ahead of time.

It is essential that group leaders have the opportunity to view each of the video seminars before the day of the session they are to lead. Your leaders need time to process and absorb the material in order to lead more effectively. Also, make sure that each group leader views the Leader Training Video (DVD Disc 5).

Need copies? You are free to copy the Session Agendas & Discussion Questions (the following pages) for use by your facilitators as they lead a Single & Parenting group. Or, download and print them at the Single & Parenting LeaderZone at www.singleandparenting.org/leaderzone in the Library/Articles section.

NOTES

MAKE BIBLES AVAILABLE FOR PARTICIPANTS

Some participants will not have Bibles. Plan ahead of time to have gift Bibles available to give to your participants so they can complete the Hopework workbook exercises at home.

QUESTIONS? WE'RE HERE TO HELP.

Call the Single & Parenting helpline at **800-395-5755** or **919-562-2112**.

Visit the Single & Parenting LeaderZone at **www.singleandparenting.org/leaderzone**

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SESSION AGENDA & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1 TIRED & OVERWHELMED

REGISTRATION/ORIENTATION NIGHT

As you make your plans to start your 13-week cycle, consider having a Registration/Orientation Night prior to Session 1. See page 41 for more information.

OVERVIEW

Single parenting is a seemingly impossible task. This week's session offers hope for single parents who are tired and overwhelmed. Group members will learn:

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

TARGET AUDIENCE

All single parents should be welcomed, no matter what circumstances created their single-parent status. It's likely your group will include a mixture of people who are:

- Divorced
- Separated
- Widowed
- Never married

Make sure you stress to group members that they are welcome no matter what circumstances led to their single-parent status and that the information presented will be relevant to the issues they face.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Many participants may be nervous about coming to the group this first time, especially about what might take place during the discussion time after the video. Acknowledge to your group that you understand this and encourage them to stick with the group. Many will feel much better by the end of the first session; others will take two to three sessions to become comfortable with the group process. Encourage each participant to commit to attending at least three sessions (most will become fully committed to the group in that time frame).

30–60 MINUTES BEFORE YOUR SESSION BEGINS

Leadership team arrives 30–60 minutes prior to start time for setup and prayer. Leaders should circulate and show warmth, care and compassion toward group members as they arrive.

REGISTRATION

For first-time participants, have them:

- Complete a Registration Form and pay registration fee (if applicable).
- Get a personal copy of the workbook, a pen and any handouts.
- Get a name tag giving their first name only.

After first-time participants have registered:

- Offer snack/drink if available.
- Introduce them to the other leaders and participants.

Allow 10–15 minutes for fellowship PRIOR to session start time.

OPENING THE SESSION

Start the session promptly at the published time.

WELCOME THE PARTICIPANTS

- Introduce your leadership team.
- Share any announcements.
- Begin session with a prayer.
- Session agenda (what to expect, schedule).
- Briefly share your experience with single parenting.
- Briefly describe the Single & Parenting program.
 - Video seminar
 - Support group
 - Workbook
- Introduce participants to the online Single-Parent HelpCenter.
- Give quick overview of workbook sections and how structured. Be sure to explain how to use the perforated Care Cards in the back of the workbook.
- Encourage participants to do the Hopework exercises for the next week. Explain that this material will be reviewed during a portion of the discussion time.
- Encourage note-taking during the video – refer to workbook video outline.
- Go over group guidelines.
 - Attendance
 - Dating within the group
 - Confidentiality and commitment levels that are expected from leaders as well as participants
 - Everyone having a chance to share (speak only from personal experience and do not force your opinion on others)

1 CONTINUED

VIEW VIDEO (TIME: 31 MINUTES)

SHORT BREAK – serve snacks (if you did not offer them prior to the start of the meeting), then transition to small group(s).

DISCUSS VIDEO

LEADING THE DISCUSSION

Before your session, review the discussion questions. The primary questions are those we think will yield the most productive discussions. Additional questions are listed as well. They are designed to provide you extra material if needed or alternate questions that might be more relevant to the makeup of your particular group.

As a group facilitator, remember:

- Do not attempt to assume the role of a counselor
- Be in control, keep people on track
- Watch body language and eye contact
- Silence is golden—listen and probe
- No cross talk (do not allow side conversations when someone else is talking)
- Trust God to meet group needs
- Don't get into a debate (theological or any other)
- Use gentle interruptions

Remind group members of discussion group guidelines:

- Everyone is encouraged to share during the discussion, but not required to.
- The group is not designed for “advice-giving” or counseling.
- Speak from personal experience and do not try to force your opinion on others.
- Confidentiality – What is said in the group stays in the group. A good, simple rule to remember is “Never tell someone else’s story.”
- No cross talk (no side conversations when someone else is talking).

ICEBREAKER

- 1 In two to three sentences, have participants explain how they became a single parent and how old their children are.
- 2 Choose from the list of sample icebreakers on page 126.

PRIMARY QUESTIONS

“You learned in the videos that you can have hope, even when all hope seems lost. Let’s take time to discuss what you learned and how you were encouraged.”

- 1 **What are you hoping to get out of these 13 sessions?**
- 2 **What is one thing that really stood out to you on today’s video?** (10–15 seconds or less)
- 3 **What is one of the greatest challenges you face as a single parent?**

ADDITIONAL/ALTERNATE QUESTIONS

- 1 **Carol Floch realized that she could not parent alone. Give an example of how this is true for you.**
- 2 **Thinking back over the video, what is one change in your single parenting that you could make starting this week?**

WRAP-UP

PRAYER REQUESTS

CLOSE WITH PRAYER (*Reminder: A member of the leadership team should always lead this prayer*)

REMINDER TO DO HOPEWORK exercises in workbook for next week and to use the weekly Care Card found in the back of the workbook for encouragement

INVITE GROUP MEMBERS to return for the next session (and to invite a single-parent friend to attend as well)

NEXT WEEK’S SESSION TOPIC: Your Children & Your Fears. If you feel inept at times to help your children through their struggles, next week’s session offers practical guidance.

SHORT LEADER DEBRIEFING SESSION & PRAYER (10 minutes)

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SESSION AGENDA & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

2 YOUR CHILDREN & YOUR FEARS

OVERVIEW

Single parents worry a lot about their children and how the absence of the other parent will affect them. Session 2 offers hope, encouragement and help by covering topics such as:

- How children typically respond to losses
- How to help a grieving, hurting child
- How to release worry

WHAT TO EXPECT

At this stage in the development of your group, you will find a range of feelings among the group members. Some are still uncomfortable about expressing emotion and openly talking about how they feel. Others have returned enthusiastically after finding the first session helpful. It is important at this stage to continue to work on helping each person feel comfortable and accepted.

30–60 MINUTES BEFORE YOUR SESSION BEGINS

Leadership team arrives 30–60 minutes prior to start time for setup and prayer.

OPENING THE SESSION

Again this session, you should plan to spend extra time setting the foundation for the Single & Parenting program. You won't go into this much detail in subsequent weeks, but doing so at the beginning of the first two sessions helps group members understand the process and structure of your program.

WELCOME THE PARTICIPANTS

- Introduce your leadership team.
- Share any announcements.
- Begin session with a prayer.
- Session agenda (what to expect, schedule).
- Briefly share your experience with single parenting.
- Briefly describe the Single & Parenting program.
 - Video seminar
 - Support group
 - Workbook

- Introduce participants to the online Single-Parent HelpCenter.
- Give quick overview of workbook sections and how structured. Be sure to explain how to use the perforated Care Cards in the back of the workbook.
- Encourage participants to do the Hopework exercises for the next week.
- Encourage note-taking during the video – refer to workbook video outline.
- Go over group guidelines.
 - Attendance
 - Dating within the group
 - Confidentiality and commitment levels that are expected from leaders as well as participants
 - Everyone having a chance to share (speak only from personal experience and do not force your opinion on others)

DISCUSS HOPEWORK EXERCISES FROM PREVIOUS WEEK

- 1 Who would like to share what was most meaningful to you in the Hopework exercises this past week?
- 2 What does God promise when you cry out from being tired and overwhelmed? (Day 1, Q3)
- 3 Why is it okay to let others help you when you are tired and overwhelmed? (Day 2, Q2)
- 4 What are the benefits of trusting God with your situation? (Day 5, Q3)

BIG IDEAS FROM THIS WEEK'S HOPEWORK:

- DAY 1** – God won't let you down.
- DAY 2** – It's okay to let others help.
- DAY 3** – You can be a good parent.
- DAY 4** – Even the worst situation can be turned around.
- DAY 5** – God makes all things right again.

VIEW VIDEO (RUNNING TIME: 41 MINUTES)

SHORT BREAK – serve snacks (if you did not offer them prior to the start of the meeting), then transition to small group(s).

2 CONTINUED

DISCUSS VIDEO

LEADING THE DISCUSSION

Before your session, review the discussion questions. The primary questions are those we think will yield the most productive discussions. Additional questions are listed as well. They are designed to provide you extra material if needed or alternate questions that might be more relevant to the makeup of your particular group.

As a group facilitator, remember:

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Remind group members of discussion group guidelines:

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- No cross talk (no side conversations when someone else is talking).

ICEBREAKER

Icebreaker statements or questions are a great way to help group members relax and become comfortable. There is a list of sample icebreakers on page 126 of this Leader’s Guide.

PRIMARY QUESTIONS

“This week’s video gave you ideas on how to help a grieving, hurting child. In today’s discussion, we’ll talk about how these concepts can be used with your children.”

- 1 **What is one thing that really stood out to you on today’s video?** (10–15 seconds or less)

- 2 **What are two fears you have for your children? And two you have for yourself?**

- 3 **LaVerne said she blamed herself for her child’s failures. In what way can you identify with her?**

- 4 **What is one practical step you can take this week to entrust your children to God?**

ADDITIONAL/ALTERNATE QUESTIONS

- 1 **The videos encouraged us to become experts on our children. Share one way you can learn more about each child this coming week.**

- 2 **What changes have you seen in your children’s behavior since you became a single parent?**

- 3 **What are some warning signs that you’re putting too much pressure on yourself to control the outcome of your child’s life?**

- 4 **What are your dreams for your children?**

- 5 **How have your dreams for your children changed since you became a single parent?**

WRAP-UP

PRAYER REQUESTS

CLOSE WITH PRAYER (*Reminder: A member of the leadership team should always lead this prayer*)

REMINDER TO DO HOPEWORK exercises in workbook for next week and to use the weekly Care Card found in the back of the workbook for encouragement

INVITE GROUP MEMBERS to return for the next session (and to invite a single-parent friend to attend as well)

NEXT WEEK’S SESSION TOPIC: Rest & Comfort

You’ll discover how to find rest for yourself. Having a hard time believing that? Come back and hear what others have found out.

SHORT LEADER DEBRIEFING SESSION & PRAYER

(10 minutes)

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