



**May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2009**

Good morning,

As I sit here in the early hours of Thursday morning, feeling warm and cosy with my coffee, laptop in front of the fire I wonder where all of you are. How is the day beginning for you? It is my hope and prayer that you will awake refreshed and ready for a day serving the Lord.

I have been reading Ephesians in my personal quiet time and hope you might feel the same encouragement I do when I read these words, *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him."* from Ephesians 1:3-13

I love this passage! As I've been looking at it this week I've found that it tells of four things God gives to us – he adopts us as children (v5), he redeems and forgives (v7), gives us an inheritance (v11) and seals us with the promised Holy Spirit (v13). Throughout this passage **God acts purposefully, with tremendous grace**, and what is required of us? *That when we heard the word of truth, we believed in him* (v13). God's love abounds and at the simplest level, all we need to do is believe. What amazing love is this!! Praise God!

This is true for us and it's true for those coming to your Playgroups who can also be recipients of God's grace when they hear the word of truth and believe in Him. Have faith my friends, God **is** gracious.

Seeing as we're not actually here for Biblestudy I will move on but thank you for letting me share with you.

Today we are looking at the second part in our series, Supporting Playgroup Parents in their Singleness. Thanks to those who responded to last week's email, I really appreciate every email I get from you even if at times it takes me a while to respond. I love hearing about what's happening in your churches & am so encouraged by the faithfulness and passion I see in you!!

## Supporting Single Parents in your Playgroup

I should say upfront that this topic is probably the one I feel least equipped to share about, but I also think it's really important that we consider how we minister to single parents because for many of you, this demographic makes up a significant portion of your Playgroup membership!

As I have reflected on this topic I have come up with a list of suggested "Do's and Don'ts" that I'd like to share with you...

### **Don't**

There are lots of reasons people are single parents,

- Don't assume you know someone's story and even if you do, don't assume you know how they feel about it.
- Don't pry. People will share what they want, when they want and it's important to give people the space to do so. If you sense there's a story trying to get out offering to meet for a coffee (child free if possible) or just sit quietly together in Playgroup might give the space needed for this to happen.
- Don't judge.
- Don't make assumptions about how a person feels about being a single parent. If a single parent is upset or frustrated avoid statements such as "It must be hard because it's just you..." rather use statements like "How do you feel about what's happening" and give encouragement "You are doing a great job" (without the qualification of "especially on your own"). All parents face challenges and doubts in their parenting and we shouldn't make assumptions about why, rather we offer support and love.
- In the case of bereavement you'll need to assess if it's appropriate but most counsellors encourage the bereaved to talk about their loved one and so if you knew them don't hold back on remembering them.
- If it's appropriate you can offer to babysit so the parent can have a night off, however you'll need to be sensitive to the social network of the parent. One example I recall is where a woman had been bereaved and a couple of women wanted to support her, so one offered to babysit while the other suggested they go out together.

### **Do**

- Pray!
- Make your Playgroup a safe place for all your families.
- Offer love and support
- Be sensitive to the needs of an individual parent, again not making any assumptions.
- In the case of divorce and bereavement, work as a church to offer the practical support you can as well as the emotional and spiritual.

Some resources that you might find useful are:

[http://singleparents.about.com/od/support/tp/single\\_parent\\_ministries.htm](http://singleparents.about.com/od/support/tp/single_parent_ministries.htm) - This might seem like a silly site to direct you to however it mentions a program called [Divorce Care](#) which has been run in churches in Australia, perhaps in your own church even and is one to be aware of.

<http://www.childrensministry.com/article.asp?ID=1637> – some suggestions from the fabulous Children’s Ministry Website, *I highly recommend reading this article.*

It’s inevitable that I have brought my own assumptions into this email, as much as I have tried not to. I hope that these suggestions can be a helpful springboard for your own thinking about this topic.

If this issue is a significant one for your Playgroup and you would like some more information or support in this area please let me know.

I encourage you to forward this email to your fellow Playgroup Leaders and to find some time to talk about its application in your setting. If any of your team would like to be added to this e-newsletter list people let me know.

*Blessings,  
Louisa*