

LIVING IN SINGLE-PARENT HOMES

by Denise Turner

PURPOSE

To share feelings about single-parent homes, to provide support to those in such homes and to help the young people understand God is always with them.

PREPARATION

Gather Bibles, paper, pencils, blackboard and chalk.

OPENING

Ask: What causes divorce?

Direct the young people to brainstorm and call out quick answers. Jot the ideas on the blackboard. If they need help, ask what they think about changing attitudes toward marriage, altered roles for women, or mistakes the church is making in the area of family and marriage.

THE "MEAT" OF THE MEETING

Divide into groups of five or six. Direct each group to spend about 10 minutes listing at least 10 questions a young person whose parents are newly divorced might want to ask God. Tell them to word the questions as if God were going to drop by earth for a news conference and answer them.

Ask the groups to exchange lists and then answer the questions as they think God might answer them. Spend another 10 minutes on this, and then ask the groups to share the questions and answers.

Talk for a few minutes about the special problems that arise in a home where a parent is widowed.

Talk about the stages of grief—denial, emptiness, anger and freedom—and ways these feelings apply to people touched by both death and divorce.

Ask for volunteers to participate in the following role plays. Allow discussion after each one. What would you do differently? What would you do the same?

- Several youth are trying to comfort a friend's parent who has just lost his spouse.

- A youth feels he or she is being asked to choose between parents. The youth decides to talk with a minister or counselor.

- A young person is angry with his or her parents because they have divorced. He or she is getting poor grades in school and hanging with the wrong crowd. A friend decides to have a talk with the youth.

- A teenager is living with a single parent. The parent decides to begin dating again, and the youth is angry, hurt and confused. They talk about it.

RESPONSE (OR CLOSING)

Ask: How can you help a friend who is trying to cope with living in a single-parent home?

Encourage those who are not in that situation to think of ways they

have seen young people help each other. Encourage the others to talk about ways their friends have helped them. Jot ideas on the blackboard.

Read Romans 8:28-39. Explain God can use everything that happens to bring about something that is good. Talk about God being present in all situations.

Ask the youth to share one thing about their homes for which they thank God. Lead the group in a prayer of thanks for these things.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

Check with your library for books on the grief process and coping with divorce.