

◇ A WORD IN SEASON ◇

God's Special Grace for the Orphan and the Widow

By Doug Stringer

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Fatherlessness has had devastating effects on our society. It is an issue that burns passionately in my heart. For many years I have had a great burden for those who do not know a father's love and affection, so much so that I have already written two books on the subject (The Fatherless Generation, published in 1994 with an update and republish under Hope for a Fatherless Generation in 2009, and Who's Your Daddy Now?, published in 2007). My heart cries out for healing and justice for a generation of spiritual and natural orphans. I know that these precious souls have a destiny in Christ, and I know that the love of their Father in heaven can set them free.

But one of the things not often talked about is the effect of fatherlessness on mothers. Although it is not true in every case, the overwhelming statistics are that children living with only one parent in the home are being raised by single mothers. In many communities, this sad reality is the norm, and the number of fatherless homes is staggering.

While acknowledging the tremendous accomplishments of

many single parents, let us be clear—this is not God's design. God never intended for women to have to play the role of both mother and father. God made mothers to be life-givers and nurturers. But when they are forced to wear multiple hats all at the same time—comforter, disciplinarian, provider, counselor, and on and on—the result can be burn-out.

God's design is for children to be raised with both mother and father, benefiting from the inherent strengths and gifts he has given to both genders. But, the sobering truth is that the statistics for single parent homes are not much different within the

without fathers learn not to expect a faithful and committed husband. And so the cycle goes on and on. What is the answer? Where is the hope?

Psalm 68:5 says, "A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling."

There is an answer for the children who do not know the love, provision, and protection of a father. There is an answer for the single mother who is struggling to do everything on her own. God sees you. He knows you. You are precious in His sight. He has a plan for you.

God has a special place within His heart for orphans and widows.

Body of Christ as they are in the world. Although we know the truth of God's word, we have failed to live by a different standard.

◇ Hope for the Fatherless and the Widow

How do we stop the cycle in our homes and communities? Boys raised without fathers learn that men don't stay with their wives and children. Girls raised

◇ Grace Abounds

Scripture makes it abundantly clear, with dozens and dozens of scriptures that proclaim this message: God has a special place within His heart for orphans and widows. Psalm 146:9 says that He will support them. Exodus 22:23 says that He will hear their cry and will vindicate them. Proverbs 15:25 says that He will protect their property. Deuteronomy 10:18 tells us He

will grant them justice. There are many scriptures that tell us about God's intimate relationship to the orphan and the widow.

I don't believe that it is only those who have lost a father or husband to a physical death that qualify as orphans and widows. I believe there is both a literal and figurative meaning to these terms. Our society is full of children whose fathers are absent from their lives, for one reason or another. There are countless women who have been abandoned by their husbands, physically, emotionally, or spiritually. But God has a special grace for these ones.

Romans 5:20 states, "where sin abounds, grace abounds all the more." This is good news for a society in which absenteeism among fathers abounds. There is great grace from our Heavenly Father that is available to us! Even when the statistics seem to get worse, we can rejoice in the grace that we can access through the blood of Christ!

◇ Finding and Trusting the Father

I know firsthand the effects of living without a father. My dad was in the military, which often took him away. He also struggled with alcohol, and so even when he was around, he was still absent. Eventually he and my mother divorced and I was left searching to fill the void in my life. I drank, I took drugs, and I was homeless for a time. But ultimately, it was a journey that led me to the One who

cared for me like no other—my Heavenly Father.

If I have any advice for single mothers or for their children, it is this: Trust Him. Trust in His Word. Trust in His promises that He will provide for you, protect you, love you, heal you, and restore you. No matter how hard the journey is, you can trust that He will not fail you.

When you trust in Jesus and activate your faith in His word, you allow your eyes to be opened to things unseen to the natural eye. You will experience the heart of God for you and for your family. And soon, you will begin to see His presence and His provision in your life in practical and tangible ways. Never forget—if you are an "orphan" or a "widow," God has special grace and care just for you.

God has bound Himself to look after and care for the orphan and the widow. Moreover, He has commanded His Church—the Body of Christ—to take up this same responsibility.

◇ Becoming a Demonstration of the Father's Heart

God has bound Himself to look after and care for the orphan and the widow. Moreover, He has commanded His Church—the Body of Christ—to take up this same responsibility. The people of God must become a living, breathing, moving revelation of the Father-heart of God. We must reach out to those who have been abandoned, and become spiritual fathers to the fatherless, and a source of support and provision to spiritual widows.

If you know a child who has lost his or her father and who is struggling with their sense of

identity and purpose, or if you know a mother who has lost her husband and who is just trying to make ends meet and keep things together, God does not merely suggest that you help them. He commands it! The cycle has not been broken and the statistics have not changed because the Church has not yet answered the call of God.

The Lord told Israel that when they went out to gather their harvest, they were to leave some behind for the alien, the widow, and the orphan (Deut. 24:19, 26:12). His heart and His principles have not changed. We must care for one another, even as He so generously cares for us.



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