

SOW-REAPP™ for Single Parents

Single parenting can be both rewarding and challenging. Each day is a process in which questions are asked: Am I providing my children a healthy start to adulthood? Am I able to provide the time I need to devote to them? Am I able to provide their basic needs? Am I able to give them a childhood which is Christ centered? Can I find a balance with my own needs as I care for my child's needs? Single parenting is a process that requires self reflection and an honest assessment of yourself and how to balance the many challenges and rewards that come with single parenting.

To assist individuals in their preparation for single parenting, we offer a two-stage process and method of discernment called SOW-REAPP© (Silence, Openness, Waiting—Receive, Examine, Assimilate, Pray, Plan). SOW encourages guided self-examination, beginning with a time of silent reflection, and culminating with waiting for a response from both God and the intended *other*. SOW-REAPP incorporates reflection on four areas of formation: spiritual, intellectual, human and apostolic. When a single parent has completed SOW, they can then move to the REAPP stage of the process (see back of this page) which encourages their intentional embracing of the parent/child relationship as gift from God.

SILENCE

(S)ilence- Time to clear away the distractions of the world from our minds.

Frequently brought on by a time of crisis or a major turning point in their lives, many biblical figures and great saints took time to step back, take a deeper look at themselves, and honestly reflect on the future. As you became a single parent you reached a major turning point in parenthood.

If you have not spent time reflecting on who you are, you cannot know where you are going, what your purpose is, or why it matters. In silence, you begin to see yourself as you really are. If you are honest, you will come to know your wants, needs, joys, sorrows, and the deepest longings of your own heart. You can come to terms with your brokenness and weakness in this moment, and be more clear about the gifts and virtues which are your strengths.

As a single parent, reflection is important. Take time to slow down and spend some time not always “doing” but just to be in silence. This is a time to take a step back and reflect on what you want your relationship with your children to look like; to reflect on the challenges and rewards, as well as your parenting goals.

(O)penness-Vulnerability to the other.

With this increased self-awareness, you can interact more honestly with others. Proverbs 3: 5-6 tells us: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all ways acknowledge him , and he shall direct your paths..” Ultimately, the

OPENNESS

deepest and most intimate relationship we can seek in life is the relationship with Jesus Christ. In the case of single parenting, we must be open to the path which Christ has given us as gift and be prepared to receive the joys and challenges of single parenting completely trusting that God does lead us even when we feel we do not understand the path.

Consider how willing and able you are to be vulnerable and open to the work of the Spirit. You may be open in some areas and not in others. How open or closed are you in this moment?

(W)aiting- Preparation for an intimate encounter with the other.

Single parenting can be difficult. Sacred Scripture is filled with times of waiting for the Lord to come to his people. There are times we spend waiting for the next step or the next transition as we parent our children. The Lord, Jesus comes and goes at his own appointed time, often waiting for us to be properly prepared for his coming. This period of waiting often includes times of confession, penance, and restitution for sin. Regardless, what we are hoping for here is a recognition that there is something better, something more, awaiting us. This awareness prompts a readiness for each transition and a readiness to receive each of the joys and challenges of single parenting in a more complete way.

RECEIVE EXAMINE ASSIMILATE PRAY PLAN

Having completed the SOW stage with time committed to discern both your life as a single parent and your relationship with your children, the REAPP stage begins. This stage offers time to actively embrace your role as a single parent. We know from the writings of the saints that receiving your role as a single parent has a much greater meaning when intentional time is given to reflect on your vast array of experiences and enter a relationship with Jesus Christ more fully. The REAPP process builds on the teachings of the saints to help you prepare and not only fully grow in holiness but in your gift as a parent.

(R)ecieve- Openly encountering the other.

At this point in the process, we hope you are prepared to receive the gift of parenting in a new way.

Recognizing this, you can begin to seek out Jesus and invite him into your relationship with your children. Your seeking will ultimately lead to an encounter in which you can grow closer to Him as a single parent. This receiving requires active engagement, study, and intentional awareness.

Spending time with your children discussing Jesus and inviting him into your lives is a great way to begin. Deuteronomy 5:5-7 tells us: “Therefore, you shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, and with your soul, and with all your strength. Take to heart these words which I enjoin on you today. Drill them into your children. Speak of them at home and abroad, whether you are busy or at rest.”

Actively reaching out to Jesus to assist you as a single parent in every challenge and decision with your children may lead to insights and a framework as you guide your children to adulthood.

(E)xamine-Time to reflect on what is received.

This is a time to reflect on what has been received for you through this process as well as a time to reflect on the impact this process has had or will have on your children. This is a time to reflect on how the Holy spirit is speaking to you; through your emotions, your circumstances, and everything around you. This is a time to examine in which areas of parenting you wish to reach out not only to Jesus but to others for support.

(A)ssimilate- Understanding and integration of one’s own story with the story of salvation history.

In Christianity, the term *metanoia* is often used to express a life-changing moment. This involves an

intentional turning away from one path in life and intentionally walking toward another. Entering into the life of being a single parent may be a path you have never envisioned yourselves on, but this path is a part of a much greater story into which Jesus is inviting you to be a part. As you go through the various stages of being a single parent, incorporating the sacraments can help you invite Jesus into the various transitions. In this way single parenthood becomes a journey that Jesus walks with you. Will you accept or reject this gift?

(P)ray- Modeling and practice of prayer

Prayer as a single parent helps you discern the next right step in the presence of God the Father, His Son Jesus Christ, and with the power of the Holy Spirit. Giving voice to the desires of your heart and mind in prayer may not come easily. It is important to pray alone and together with your children. There are many resources to assist you, including your priests, pastors and parish staff. You are always welcome to contact the Center for Family Life Formation for assistance at any stage of family life.

(P)lan- Develop practical steps to change one’s life in accord with this new experience.

No change in direction can take place unless you actually take steps to make that happen. The Gospels repeatedly tell us it is easy to begin a new path, but difficult to complete the journey. A good plan, grounded in prayer, discipline and accountability, is helpful in overcoming any obstacle in single parenting.
