



Hope FOR SINGLE MOMS

by Greg Brezina

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention recently reported that “of the 3,952,841 babies who were born in the United States in 2012, 1,609,619 (40.7 percent) were born to unmarried mothers. This marked the fifth straight year that 40 percent or more of the babies born in the United States were born to unmarried women.”¹

While this percentage has declined slightly since its peak in 2009, it is still a staggering statistic considering what the research shows about fatherless families. (See inside for statistics on fatherless families.)

Another statistic I recently read is that the fastest growing group of people to be medicated for psychological issues is preschool children. A new survey by Express Scripts found the rate at which American children are prescribed antidepressants almost doubled (49%) in 5 years.²

The American Institute of Cognitive Therapy reported, “Depression is widespread and it is getting worse. Fifty percent of children and adolescents and 20 percent of adults report some symptoms of depression. Even though many kids don’t “qualify” for the clinical diagnosis of depression, they have some of the problems that “truly depressed” people have--such as sadness, self-criticism, and the inability to enjoy their lives.”³

In spite of the alarming statistics, there is hope for single moms, single parents and fatherless children. I am living proof. My dad died when I was 7 years old. My widowed mom raised me and my 6 siblings. At the time of my father’s death, my oldest brother was just 12 years old and my youngest was 1. By God’s grace, all of us turned out to be responsible husbands and wives, parents, and grandparents. Each of us

has made a positive contribution to society with the life and families we have been gifted.

So how did mom do it?

If she were still here (Mom died two years ago at the wise old age of 92.), she would give God top billing. She would say it was her “faith in God” and some help from a great high school football coach, Gene Stogner, whom she asked to help guide her six sons and one daughter in the way they should go.

Here is some of what I remember about how mom raised us.

1. MOM LOVED US UNCONDITIONALLY.

While on a date, I wrecked her car. When I got home, I woke her up and told her. The first thing she asked was, “Are you all right?”

I said, “Yes.”

The next thing she asked was, “Is anyone hurt?”

Feeling like a failure, I said, “No, but Mom, I wrecked the car.”

Then she said, “I’m glad everyone is okay. Now, go on to bed, and we’ll take care of the car tomorrow.”

No anger, no worry, no anxiety, no guilt, no shame, no blame, and no condemnation from my mom even though her car was the family’s only means of transportation.

Mom loved us unconditionally and pointed us to her source of uncon-

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.”

POVERTY

Children in father-absent homes are almost four times more likely to be poor. In 2011, 12 percent of children in married-couple families were living in poverty, compared to 44 percent of children in mother-only families.¹

DRUG ABUSE

Researchers at Columbia University found that children living in two-parent household with a poor relationship with their father are 68% more likely to smoke, drink, or use drugs compared to all teens in two-parent households. Teens in single mother households are at a 30% higher risk than those in two-parent households.⁶

AGRESSION

In a longitudinal study of 1,197 fourth-grade students, researchers observed “greater levels of aggression in boys from mother-only households than from boys in mother-father households.”³

INCARCERATION

Young men who grow up in homes without fathers are twice as likely to end up in jail as those who come from traditional two-parent families...those boys whose fathers were absent from the household had double the odds of being incarcerated - even when other factors such as race, income, parent education and urban residence were held constant.⁴

PREGNANCY

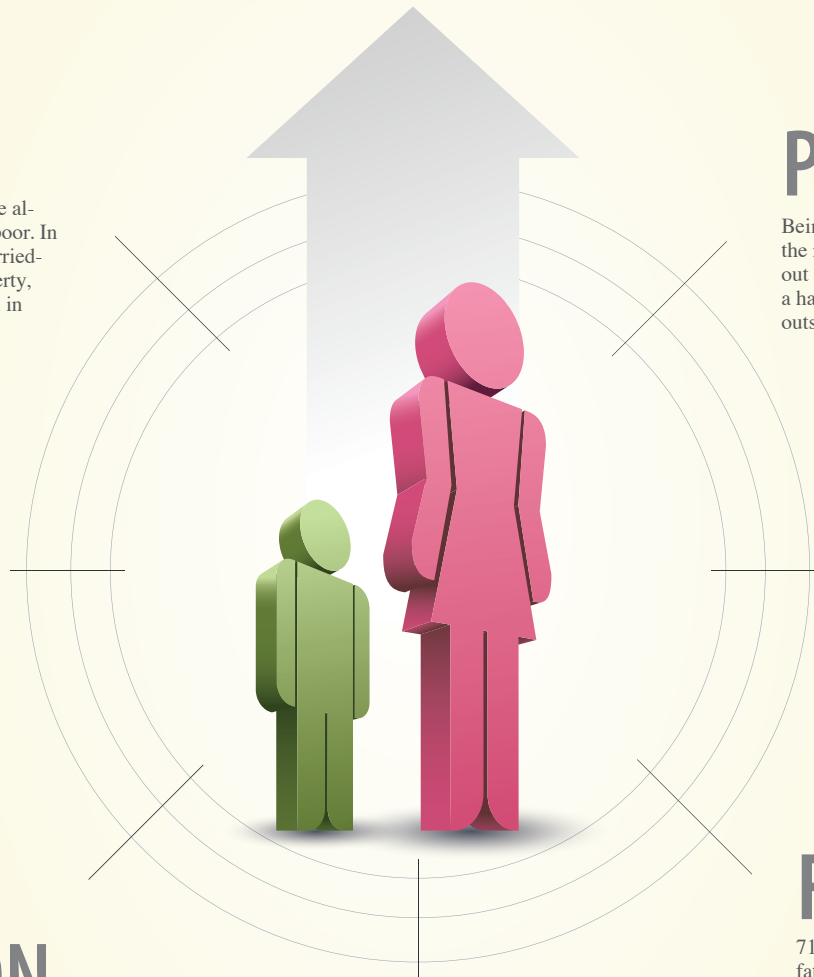
Being raised by a single mother raises the risk of teen pregnancy. Girls without a father in their life are two and a half times as likely to get pregnant outside of marriage.⁷

SUICIDE

Children of single-parent homes are more than twice as likely to commit suicide.²

FAILURE

71% of high school dropouts are fatherless. Fatherless children have more trouble academically, are more likely to be truant from school, more likely to be excluded from school, more likely to leave school at age 16, and less likely to attain academic and professional qualifications in adulthood.⁵



The average single mother faces many challenges. The statistics of fatherless families are sobering. Children from fatherless homes are more likely to live in poverty, abuse drugs and alcohol, be overweight, end up in prison, suffer from emotional problems and behavioral disorders, drop out of school, and achieve less. As you view these daunting statistics above, please know there is a way for children of fatherless families to avoid most of these consequences.

1 U.S. Census Bureau, Children's Living Arrangements and Characteristics: March 2011, Table C8. Washington D.C.: 2011

2 Ringbäck Weitof, Gunilla, Anders Hjern, Bengt Haglund, and Måns Rosén. "Mortality, severe morbidity, and injury in children living with single parents in Sweden: a population-based study." The Lancet 361.9354: 269-356. Web. 17 Feb. 2014.

3 N. Vaden-Kierman, N. Jalongo, J. Pearson, and S. Kellam. "Household Family Structure and Children's Aggressive Behav-

ior: A Longitudinal Study of Urban Elementary School Children," Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology 23, no. 5 (1995)

4 Cynthia Harper of the University of Pennsylvania and Sara S. McLanahan of Princeton University cited in "Father Absence and Youth Incarceration." Journal of Research on Adolescence 14 (September 2004): 369-397.

5 Kruk, Ph.D., Edward. "Father Absence, Father Deficit, Father Hunger." Psychology Today 23 May 2012. Web. 17 Feb. 2014.

6 "Survey Links Teen Drug Use, Relationship With Father." Alcoholism & Drug Abuse Weekly 6 September 1999: 5.

7 Teachman, Jay D. "The Childhood Living Arrangements of Children and the Characteristics of Their Marriages." Journal of Family Issues 25 (January 2004): 86-111. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services press release, Friday, March 26, 1999.

Hope

continued from front

ditional love. Mom told us about Christ and then lived Christ before us. Mom was faithful.

2. MOM PRAYED FOR US AND TAUGHT US HOW TO PRAY.

She prayed and prayed, and then she prayed some more for us. I still vividly remember her gathering all of my siblings together and having us kneel around her bed to pray.

Did some wander from the path she showed us?

Yes. Yet, even in my wildest rebellious days, God would remind me of Mom's prayers. No matter how hard I tried, I couldn't get her prayers out of my mind – out of my heart.

3. MOM INDIRECTLY TAUGHT US BY BEING A POSITIVE PERSON.

“Leave room for God to work things out. Pray, work hard, do what you do the best you can, and He will take care of the results,” she would say. She gifted us the freedom to succeed.

4. MOM TAUGHT US TO RESPECT AUTHORITY.

Mom never allowed us to disrespect her or those in authority. She disciplined us and expected the school principal and/or coach to discipline us also if necessary.

5. MOM SACRIFICED HERSELF FOR THE FAMILY.

When dad died, relatives wanted to split the family thinking that many children would be too much for a single mom with a full time job. Mom kept us together. She said, “God gave me these children, and He will provide for us.” God did. Mom took a lessor paying job so she could take us to school and be at home for us after school so that we would not be latchkey kids.

6. MOM TAUGHT US HOW TO TAKE INITIATIVE AND WORK.

If we saw something that needed to be done, we were to take the initiative and do it even if it meant spending extra time for which we would not be reimbursed. She taught us how to serve.

7. MOM WAS A WOMAN OF HER WORD.

Mom also taught us to keep our word. If we said we were going to do something, we were to do it. If we ever over spoke, we were to ask forgiveness and make it right. One amazing fact about keeping our word is that there are no divorces among Gertie Brezina's seven children. Bob and Mary have been married 51 years, Gus and Jari 48 years, Bernie and Judy 43 years, Greg and Connie 44 years, Malcolm and Nancy 45 years, Mark and Debbie 40 years, and Steve and Ruby 40 years.

It is amazing how this wonderful woman did what she did - raise 7 children (ages 12 and under) to be God loving, responsible adults who are assets to society not liabilities. Looking back, what this special mom

did was only done by the leading of the Holy Spirit. She wasn't trained in the Scriptures, she simply listened to His voice and followed Him.

She did tell me that shortly after dad died she was deeply grieving his departure thinking about how in the world she was ever going to raise her children alone. Not many available men wanted to marry a widowed woman with 7 kids 12 and under. At the depth of her anxiety, she said an angel appeared to her and told her to trust God for He would care for her and the children. She trusted God, and it has turned out just as the angel said.

Did she suffer many hardships parenting without a husband? Yes. Did her children suffer many hardships without a father? Absolutely. For years, we struggled emotionally and financially. She told me that there were some months that she did not see how we were going to make it. But, God fulfilled His promise to her and saw her through. She kept her word and paid her bills.

Please know that God will be just as faithful to you as He was to my mom and her children. He is not a respecter of persons. He met all of my mom's needs, and He will meet yours.

In Philippians 4:19 He has promised to supply all our needs. Paul says, “And my God shall meet all your needs according to His riches in Christ Jesus.” Trust Him with your whole heart, and He will provide for you and your precious family. Psalms 68:5a says that He is “a father of the fatherless and a judge for widows.” And again in Psalms 146:9, it states that “the LORD... supports the fatherless and the widow.”

Solomon understood this truth and told us of it in Proverbs 3:5-6, “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on our own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight.”

Trusting in the LORD means to submit your will to the Holy Spirit who lives within you. As you do, you will experience His power to accomplish what God has called you to do which is to raise godly children.

Jesus said it this way in John 16:13, “But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.” God will tell you what to do and how to raise your children to be godly. He has already gifted you the power to obey Him.

Because God has not made you a robot, you can choose to submit your will to what the Holy Spirit tells you to do. When you do, you will experience love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and control of self.

The greatest thing that you as a single mom can do for your children is to guide them to Christ and then teach them how to submit their wills to the Holy Spirit who lives within. The best way to teach children this truth is to live it out before them and use words only when necessary. When you and/or your child submit your wills to the Spirit, you will spontaneously love others unconditionally, pray without ceasing, believe God is working all things together for your good, respect authority, sacrifice for your family, take initiative and work responsibly, be a man or woman of your word and avoid most of the worldly consequences of children of fatherless homes.

In Christ,

¹ CDC National Vital Statistics Report Volume 62, Number 9, December 30, 2013

² Rabin, Roni. “Antidepressant use by preschoolers rises dramatically.” Los Angeles Times 12 Apr. 2004. Web. 17 Feb. 2014

³ Leahy Ph.D, Robert. “The Cost of Depression.” The Huffington Post 30 Oct. 2010 [US]. Web. 17 Feb. 2014.

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OUR LIFE COACHING MAY BE ABLE TO HELP YOU DISCOVER THE ANSWER.

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