

Single & Parenting offers support, hope

By Joanna Hammond

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The statistics on single parent households can look pretty grim. Most parents have heard that children do best in a two-parent home. However, the reality is that for many parents, this is not an option. Many circumstances conspire to make a two-parent household impossible for parents.

Help, however, has arrived at First Baptist Church of Navarre with the new Single & Parenting series lead by Linda Ranson Jacobs. Jacobs spent many years as a single mother herself, and as an author, speaker and trainer, she has a wealth of experience and education on which to draw.

Jacobs has worked with single parents for years, but the Single & Parenting program is new. The 13-week, small group sessions are held every Wednesday at 6 p.m. in the FBC administration building.

Designed to be group support, members can network with and help each other deal with the day to day challenges of being a single parent.

"I was a single parent for years," said Jacobs. "I also ran a therapeutic child care where many of the children lived in single parent homes. I saw how hard it was for them especially if they didn't have a support system around."

Single & Parenting aims to help create a support system for single parents at all levels of their journey.

"It's encouraging," Jacobs said of the group dynamic. "It lets single parents know that they are not alone. That was the first thing someone said in our group, 'It's encouraging to know others are going through what I am experiencing.'"

Everyone in the community is welcome to attend the group meetings; one need not be a member of the First Baptist



Church in order to attend.

Some of the topics the group covers in each 13-week session are how to survive being tired

and overwhelmed, finances, money and careers, talking and listening, communicating with your children, and experiencing God's

love through adversities.

Jacobs said one of the things that helped her when she was living day to day as a single parent was when she realized that there were examples of single parenting in the Bible.

"Hagar is the first single parent," she said.

In the Bible, Hagar was the second wife of Abraham, given to him by his wife Sarah, who then cast Hagar out into the desert when she became pregnant with Abraham's child.

"I want (single parents) to know that you can do this if you have to do it. The statistics don't have to be your child," Jacobs said.

"We've been told that children are resilient," Jacobs went on to say. "They are resilient, when they have a support system. The church can be your support system."

Faith is an important component of the Single & Parenting system. It is biblically based and Christ centered, said Jacobs.

"Each of the 13-week topics center around how God can get through this time and help you help your children," Jacobs said. "In our support group, we share how our faith brings us through every day."

Childcare is available at the Single & Parenting meetings, including activities for older children to help facilitate single parents attending. There is no cost for the classes or the child care services.

For those who cannot attend the meetings, or who simply want to learn more about the program, information is available at singleandparenting.org

Jacobs also has a personal website that offers tips for single parents, as well as a help center with tips for parents, articles, videos and devotionals. Her site can be reached at www.hlp4.com

"I just want to give back," said Jacobs.