

# Rest for Single Parents

**How to find true rest:** As a single parent, you know what it means to be exhausted. But God offers rest—not just physical comfort, but rest for your soul.

Find out God’s surprising plan to put an end to your suffering. You’ll discover:

- How God gently cared for a single mom in the Bible
- How God wants to care for you
- What can keep you from experiencing God’s comfort

## The Parent God Created You to Be [video: <https://vimeo.com/26620913>]

How God can help you become the best possible parent to your kids.

## Overwhelmed

If you’re a single parent, you can probably relate:

**“I can’t do another day. I can’t do another minute, let alone a whole day.”** —Rob, single dad

**“It can be really hectic and busy, and sometimes all I want in the moment is peace and quiet and no more fighting ... Isn’t that fair?”** —Julie, single mom

**“I’m worn out. I’m frustrated with life. I don’t know what to do that’s best for my kids.”** —Lois, single mom

Every day you work to meet the emotional and physical needs of your children, often at the expense of your own. You strive to be a good parent, but the struggle to do everything by yourself makes it seem impossible. Is there any chance of finding hope and rest?

## A tender God

Hagar probably wondered the same thing. The book of Genesis in the Bible describes the story of Hagar, a servant in Abraham’s household. She was a single mother who was betrayed and then banished into the desert.

Imagine how hopeless Hagar must have felt as she and her son were sent away from their home, with food and water strapped to her shoulders to last how long? The desert stretched endlessly as she wandered with her son, carefully rationing her provisions until, finally, the food and water were gone. With no other options, she laid her starving child under a bush and collapsed at a distance to avoid seeing him die. They both began to cry. In the parched wasteland, erased of human comfort, two frail voices rose up from the desert, perhaps the only sounds.

## Hope in a painful world

Do you identify with Hagar? Maybe you can taste her bitterness when you think about being rejected by your child’s other parent or her sadness when you can’t provide for your children like you want to. Perhaps you feel her despair and her loneliness when you wake up in the morning faced with living that day without anyone to help you.

Perhaps you want to believe God loves you, but you can’t understand why a loving God would allow pain and suffering in your life. If He cared about you, wouldn’t He do something about it? The answer is, yes.

God heard Hagar's son crying and called to Hagar from heaven, *"What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. Lift the boy up and take him by the hand."*

Hagar was truly in a hopeless situation. Only God could rescue her, and He did. God opened Hagar's eyes to a nearby pool of water. Her vision blurred by tears, she must have thought it a mirage at first—but it wasn't.



God's original creation in the Garden of Eden was perfect and sinless. Adam and Eve had a perfect relationship with their Creator until they disobeyed Him. As a result, their descendants are all born with built-in resistance to God and His ways. This is the reason we choose to disobey God. And it's that same disobedience that cuts us off from God and from experiencing His comfort and help. But as the story of Hagar illustrates, God is a tenderhearted Father. He *did* do something about sin; He sacrificed His only Son, Jesus Christ, to provide us a way out of the desert. According to John 3:16, whoever believes in Jesus has everlasting life—a life without tears or "death or mourning or crying or pain" (Revelation 21:4). While you are in this imperfect world, you have the hope that someday injustice, pain, divorce, death, betrayal and suffering will end.

## Rest for your soul

The same God who heard Hagar and her son hears your cries today. He knows the cries of your heart that are too deep for expression: the tears you've cried for your children, for yourself. And He hears the cries of your children, too. He says to you from Matthew 11:28: **"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."** He wants you to have abiding rest now in His Son Jesus Christ, even amidst the busyness and chaos of your daily life. How is this possible?

## A free gift

In the words of Julie, a single mom, *"We live in a culture that keeps trying to tell us you can do it all. That's just not reality."* You won't be able to fix everything, clean everything, cross off all the items on your to-do list. In light of this truth, the good news is there is nothing you have done or can do to earn God's love and favor and rest. Jesus has done it for you.

You can stop trying to work your way to a substitute salvation, trying to redeem yourself from shame and past mistakes by doing everything right. Ephesians 2:8–9 says, **"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast."**

You can also stop worrying about how other people see you. Because of Christ, God accepts you as you are. Psalm 103:12 says He has removed our sins as far as the east is from the west. And His viewpoint is the only one that truly matters!

The answer to your problems lies in Christ.

## Your story

Like Hagar—and Julie, Rob and Lois—you need to be rescued. Of course, you need help in your physical situation: perhaps you were wronged by others or are struggling financially. But you also have a spiritual situation that is far more serious. All of us are born sinners according to Romans 3:23, and our sin separates us from God eternally. Your ultimate need is for something far greater than temporary vindication or comfort; your heart's cry is for a Savior who is able to save to the uttermost. Only Jesus Christ can deliver you from hopelessness—totally, finally and eternally.



The comfort and hope Jesus offers you is not a mirage. His love is not superficial or fickle. He is able to keep His promises to you, and He faithfully will. Psalm 145:13b says, **“The LORD is faithful to all his promises and loving toward all he has made.”** Listen to Him: *Do not be afraid. Come to me. I will give you rest.* Trust yourself and your children to Him, because He has heard you.

## How to experience God's rest

If you have never asked God for His comfort and rest, you can come to Him by acknowledging your belief in who He is, what He has done for you, and your personal need for Him. You need to believe that you are a sinner, and because of that sin, you have been separated from God and the hope He offers. You need to believe that Jesus Christ died in your place so that you would not have to experience eternal death, the punishment for your sin. You can come to God with a simple prayer from your heart:

Lord,

I need Your help. I am overwhelmed with physical and spiritual needs that only You can meet. I've tried to make things right on my own, but I realize now that I can't. I want to stop working to save myself and trust in the grace of Jesus Christ for my salvation and eternal life. I need Your comfort as I face my daily struggles. Please forgive me for my sin and failure to acknowledge You as Lord of my life. Thank you for sending Your Son to die so I can live daily in the hope, joy and peace that is available to me when I entrust my life to You.

Amen.

## Things are different now

The problems and trials in your life will not instantly disappear when you entrust your life to Christ. But if you invited Christ into your life, things are definitely different now. For starters, you are no longer enslaved to the circumstances, people and troubles in your life. They have no power over you now.

## Here's what else has changed:

- **Your identity is in Christ.** You are no longer defined by your circumstances or your marital status. Second Corinthians 5:17 says, **“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”**
- **God accepts you on the basis of Christ’s finished work.** Jesus Christ lived a perfect life on your behalf, and because He paid your sin debt by dying on the cross, you are now perfect in God’s sight for eternity. Hebrews 10:14 says, **“[B]y one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.”**
- **God will be with you in your struggles.** Being a Christian doesn’t mean all your problems will magically disappear. In fact, Jesus told His disciples to expect adversity and tribulation in this life. But God promises not only to meet us in our suffering, but also to use our suffering for good. Isaiah 43:2a says, **“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you.”**
- **You received the gift of eternal life.** God considers you part of His family, and you will be with Him forever. Romans 6:23 says, **“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**
- **You can find God’s peace.** When you turn to Him with your problems and pain, God has promised to give you His peace. Philippians 4:6–7 says, **“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”**

## What’s next?

Because of Christ, you are now a new creation. You have been forgiven and restored to a right relationship with God, and you are free from sin’s power in your life. If you have questions about your new relationship with God, talk with your pastor, your Single & Parenting leader or a spiritually mature Christian friend. They can help you grow even closer to God and understand how the gospel (the good news of what Jesus has done for us) applies to your everyday life.