

Ten Subtle Ways Your Church Can Marginalize Single Parents (without really trying)

1. Encourage them to join a small group, which is hosted by Bob and Evelyn Smith and facilitated by Mike and Sandi Thompson.
2. Have them take parenting classes where material asks them to complete homework with their spouse in preparation for next week's discussion, which occurs at round tables with 6 chairs.
3. Invite them to a Couple's Retreat and tell them that rooming alone can be relaxing and that they can adapt the material for their own unique situation.
4. Give visiting parents registration cards that ask for both parent's names but only one phone number. Then hand out a flyer that reads, "Couples Needed to help out in Sunday School."
5. Encourage single moms to come to church on Father's Day, where their child is told to "make this craft and give it to your daddy today after church."
6. Encourage single dads to come to Church on Mother's Day where their child is told to "make this craft and give it to your mommy after church."
7. Invite them to join the Single Adult Ministries so they can get out of the house with other "single adults" who have plenty of free time, little responsibility, and loads of cash to spend on snow skis, biking gear, kayaks, and latest state-of-the-art camping equipment. (Hint: "single adults" and "single parents" do not always need the same things.)
8. Give them a bulletin with an insert that reads, "We need godly couples to serve as greeters and to distribute the communion elements ... Contact Don and Betty Wilson."
9. Solicit their help for the All Church Family Picnic where they can hand out the prizes for the three-legged race, the chicken fight contest, the wheelbarrow race, and the couple's balloon toss.
10. Encourage them to become an active member by filling out the Membership Application and then checking off areas where she and her spouse would be most willing to serve.

NOTE: Please understand that the above list is not intended to be a cynical attack on our church community. In every one of the instances above, pure motives and a genuine desire for compassionate ministry is evident. This list is simply a compilation of real-life examples that subtly marginalize single parents in the church. These subtleties, according to many single parents, are the very reasons they stop attending our weekly worship services.

Dr. Andrew Stenhouse
(Email: Andrew@BetaFamily.com)