

Our first Christmas as a Girl Gang, I started the tradition of a yearly ornament. One night before we decorate, we load up and go shopping for an ornament that represents something important about our year.

Did I choose a heart with a knife in it year one? Tempted. But, no.

Instead, I encourage my girls to think about an area where they've grown or something new they've learned, and to choose an ornament that represents that. We have a small tree that sits on a table in our living room that we hang our yearly ornaments on. It makes me smile when I see it—knowing that my girls and I are growing and learning and thriving.

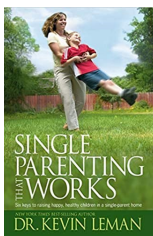
Listen. You can do this. It may take a few years to create a new "normal," and that's okay. Kids are resilient. But you know what? So are you.

You were chosen to be your kid's parent—married or single.

*By Holly Crawshaw, Parent Cue*

## Going Further — Resources

**Single Parenting That Works: Six Keys to Raising Happy, Healthy Children in a Single-Parent Home** by Dr. Kevin Leman. Discover how to build stability for your children by getting your own life in order; how forgiveness opens the door to healthy relationships; and help your child thrive in a single-parent home.



## Going Further — Church Support

**Fusion** is a great place for students (grades 6-12) to meet friends and learn more about God, faith, and much more! Fusion meets Sundays from 5:30-7:30 p.m. Get more info here:

- <https://staffordcrossing.org/fusion>
- Email [fusion@staffordcrossing.org](mailto:fusion@staffordcrossing.org)



[www.growfaithathome.org](http://www.growfaithathome.org)

# The Newly-Single Parent Holiday Guide

Helping families  
trust and follow Jesus

@home

First, let me say that getting separated or divorced just sucks. It does. Even if the dissolution of the relationship provides relief in many ways, it's still deeply disappointing. Not to mention embarrassing.

I know zero people who get married and think, "Man, I super hope this fails."

So, I'm sorry. I'm sorry life doesn't look the way you imagined—the way you dreamed.

I'll never forget the Monday morning my then-husband sat down on the stairs and simply said, "I want a divorce."

It was like he was speaking a different language. I didn't get it. I definitely didn't accept it.

But he meant it. That was March. By December, we were in a bona fide state of separation and barreling towards divorce. (I always laugh at the fact that the legalese is "bona fide." Like, since when could anyone take that word seriously?)

I share three girls with my ex. At the time of the divorce, we had an infant and two elementary-schoolers. Remembering the absolute joy of past celebrations, the holidays loomed at the end of my calendar like an ominous specter.

Would I cry all day? Would they cry all day?

What would I do during the time that he had them? What would I do during the time that I had them?

There were many questions. But really, whether or not you're married, the holidays can be tough for anyone. I tried to remind myself of that and not wallow in my self-pity. (Though I did take a dip in it from time-to-time.)

Fast-forward a few years later, and I wouldn't qualify myself as any type of expert in facing the holidays as a single parent. But there are a few things I have learned (mostly from other people or personal failures) along the way.

## Grieve what was.

Okay. So this part isn't fun. But it's absolutely necessary. If you put on the charade of, "No, things really aren't going to be that different," you aren't doing yourself or your kids any favors. Plus, you're bound to find yourself in the closet on Christmas morning sobbing the snotty kind of sob.

The end of a marriage is a death. And deaths deserve our grief. Mourning looks different for everyone. But try to be intentional about it. Acknowledging what was creates a blank slate to make what's new.

Grief is a release. So open your hands and let the past go. Now, this may take a few tries. And that's okay. Please, please, please—give yourself grace.

Your past doesn't need you. But your future does.

## Make a plan.

This is not a situation where you want to "wing it." Decide what you want your holiday to look like before it happens. If you're prone to unhealthy isolation, MAKE A PLAN THAT INVOLVES OTHER PEOPLE. If you're prone to over-extending, say NO early and firmly.

Sure, things may not go the way you plan. (When does it?) But having a general idea of how the day will go will not only calm your anxiety, but it will calm your kids' anxieties too.

Share your ideas with them. Invite them in on the planning process. Creating excitement that is real is such a richer experience than trying to manufacture the magic.

## Start something new.

I'm a traditions girl. Not necessarily a traditional girl, but I'm completely obsessed with making meaningful moments by repeating the warm and familiar. Families thrive when they're in sync. Synchronicity comes with rhythms. And by their very definition, traditions are rhythmic.

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