



NESTING AND THE CHILD OF DIVORCE

Page 1 of 2

By Linda Ranson Jacobs

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Nesting is a term often used by family courts, lawyers and divorcing parents. It means the parents continue to share a residence after the divorce for the sake of the children. The parents stay at the family home with the children when it is their scheduled visitation time. The other parent stays someplace else during that time. The thought behind this premise is that staying in the family home will make the transition from the intact family to the divorced family easier on the children. All I can say about this idea is the verdict is still out on whether this actually makes it easier on the children. It does appear to work for some people.

While it is good for church leaders to understand the concept of nesting some courts and family mediation groups are suggesting, today I don't want to discuss "nesting" in that context. I want to discuss nesting of a different sort. The types of nesting children create themselves. Most parents are not aware of this type of nesting.

Many times children of divorce become unusually attached to their things. This is particularly true if both parents have become emotionally distant or have deeply disappointed the child. Keep in mind this is the child's perception of how things are.

You may find children bringing things to church classes that will not make any sense to you. For instance an eight or nine-year old boy will bring what appears to be a regular looking quarter. However, if anyone should even touch that quarter, mayhem breaks out. You will be at a loss as to how that simple ordinary looking quarter could lead to such chaos. What you may not realize is that quarter may have been the last thing the child remembers his dad giving him before he left. Perhaps it is an old button the child found on the floor the day his mom walked out. Or some very old toys that used to belong to the parent when he or she was a child.

Children will take these things, these treasures, this stuff and put it around them. A lot like a bird, these children will create a "nest." The child sits right in the middle of their nest with their entire collection of thing surrounding them. Some perceive this as children trying to create a nest of things they hope will keep their past alive and their memories active.

Some will want to take their things with them everywhere they go even to church classes. You can alleviate the children stress by helping the child to keep their treasures safe.





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When the child has healed and progressed in accepting the divorce, tell them the story found in the sixth chapter of Matthew. Help them to understand that while they needed earthly treasure for a while, the real treasure is in finding a relationship with Jesus Christ. Explain to them it is okay to save their keepsakes, but at some point it will be better to put them in a special place or box at home.

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Matthew 6:19-21 (NIV)

Linda Ranson Jacobs is one of the forefront leaders in the area of children and divorce. She developed and created the DivorceCare for Kids programs. DC4K is an international program for churches to use to help children of divorced parents find healing within the arms of a loving church family. As a speaker, author, trainer, program developer and child care center owner, Linda has assisted countless families by modeling and acting on the healing love she has found in Jesus Christ. Linda offers support, encouragement and suggestions to help those working with the child of divorce. She serves as DC4K Ambassador (<http://www.dc4k.org>) and can be reached via email at ljacobs@dc4k.org.

Free articles and devotions for single parent families in your church can be found at Linda's website Healthy Loving Partnerships for Our Kids (<http://www.hlp4.com>).

