

## HELPING KIDS MINISTER TO OTHER CHILDREN OF DIVORCE

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By Linda Ranson Jacobs

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If you have ever worked in the nursery at church you have observed altruism in the very young. Babies who can crawl and toddlers will do their best to comfort a crying newcomer. They will do this by crawling over and handing the other child their pacifier or their blankie. You might say they extend the hand of welcome to newcomers who are distraught.

When I had my infant / toddler rooms in my childcare I loved to observe the interaction of these little people. I believe God created our brains and their brains to want to comfort others. We see Jesus extending comfort to many in the Bible. So it stands to reason in our churches we should be modeling what Jesus modeled.

This is never truer than when working with the child of divorce. Keep in mind many children of divorce might not get to see these kinds of interactions at home. This is especially true of children who have warring parents in the throes of divorce.

When these children begin to heal and survive the divorce of their parents, if they have found healing in a church, they instinctively want to comfort the other distressed children of divorce. They want to model what has been projected onto them.

Years ago I had worked with a child of divorce for several years. It was a sad situation but my little friend had come a long way. We registered a newcomer, and the first day I saw my friend bend over the table talking to her. As she walked away I noticed she was a bit teary eyed. I went to her and before I could say anything she said,

*"Oh Miss Linda that girl is really angry right now about her parent's divorce. I told her I used to be like that and I would help her. She is going to need a lot of love and care but I'll be here for her."*

My friend discovered that by helping others she was actually helping herself. She may not have realized it at the time as altruism, but she knew she felt better about herself when she reached out to help others.

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The three components of altruism are:

1. Loving others
2. Helping them during their time of need
3. Making sure that they are appreciated

Endorphins flood the brain when you are being kind. These feel good chemicals can help children want to help others because it helps them feel good about themselves. Think about a time you were kind to someone and how good that felt. That is altruism at work in your brain. Kids are the same way. For some children you might need to point that out at first, but eventually they will come to realize that kindness to others and helping others feel good.

So, how do we teach/disciple kids so that they can help other kids to deal with stressful situations like divorce? In my experience this has been accomplished by:

- Teaching children to care for others
- Modeling what caring for others looks like
- Giving them exposure and opportunity to be kind and caring to other kids
- Allowing them to experience the joy that comes with discipling others
- Pointing out, gingerly, when one child has been a good disciple to another
- Carefully explaining when an adult has helped them or others
- Telling them stories from the Bible where Jesus and others have helped people in stressful situations and then relating those stories to situations in the group
- Giving them scripture that helps children understand their own hearts such as. "A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones." Proverbs 17:22
- Helping children memorize scriptures that will impact their daily lives. "A peaceful heart leads to a healthy body;" Proverbs 14:30a
- Providing scriptures that offer encouragement. "May God, who gives this patience and encouragement, help you live in complete harmony with each other, as is fitting for followers of Christ Jesus." Romans 15:5

Eventually these children will come to have a heart understanding of,

*"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God." 2nd Corinthians 1: 3-4*



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*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](mailto:ljacobs@dc4k.org). You can find additional articles from Linda on her blog at <http://blog.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>).*

