



WHAT WE FORGET TO TELL THE KIDS

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By Linda Ranson Jacobs

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Most little kids like me. It's always been that way. I've taught school, preschool, church classes, after school clubs, etc. and for the most part little kids like me. But do you know why they like me? It's because I tell them to like me and because I treat them well. They know they matter.

For years I ran a therapeutic preschool and school age afterschool program. I had a teacher who worked for me and she couldn't figure out why all the kids said I was their favorite teacher. Down through the years she taught early childhood classes, pre kindergarten classes, and

kindergarten classes and in the summer she'd work with our school age children. Every so often I'd hear her ask, "Who is your favorite teacher" and their reply would be, "Miss Linda!" It got to be a big joke and even a fun competition. The kids loved being part of it.

As the years rolled by she repeatedly asked me what I did to make the kids like me so much. One summer day upon returning from a swimming excursion she met me at the door. She had her hands crossed over her chest and she was tapping her toe. She said, "So I finally found out why all the kids think you are their favorite teacher! It's because you tell them you are their favorite!"

It was true. I had been caught. Any time a family came to enroll in any of our programs I would say to the child, "My name is Miss Linda and you know what? I'm going to be your favorite teacher. You and I are going to have so much fun together. You are really going to like being here." I noticed that the children whose parents were divorced or separated seem to cling to this fact.

While this might seem like a silly story there are take ways we can use in our church classes with the child of divorce.

1. **Tell children what you want them to know.** So many times we forget to tell the children the simple things. "I'm going to be your friend" or "I'm going to be the minister in charge and you can count on me when you need to talk to someone."
2. **Forge a relationship with these children.** Telling children you are their favorite helps form a bond between you and the child. Many children of divorce feel left out; they need to know someone cares enough to reach out to them.
3. **Tell them they are going to be safe.** Tell them, "I keep all the kids safe. And you know what else? We like to laugh around here."

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4. **Learn every child's last name.** Many children in single parent families and blended families have different last names. Don't assume every child has the same father.
5. **Think about how you will welcome a newly divorced family into your fellowship.** Plan ahead and be prepared. Don't be caught off guard when a new child says, "Did you know my dad moved out?" Or, "My dad's living in an apartment now. He's trying to get his act together before he comes back home."
6. **Don't let the child down by not following up or assigning someone to follow up.** I know many churches turn a family over to the "outreach" team but when you do this the child of divorce gets lost in the shuffle. If someone else contacts the new family, send a card or send a few comments to say to the child.
7. **Have fun and enjoy these children.** It really is okay to tell them you will be their favorite. And more than that tell them, Jesus is ready to be their best forever friend.
8. **Tell them Jesus loves them.** Explain that in your group they are going to learn just how much Jesus loves them.

What do you include in your welcoming new children of divorce to your church?

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. 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>).