



## A CHANGE IN PERSPECTIVE ON DIVORCE

By Wayne D. Stocks

Originally Published 08/01/2011

Part of the issue with advocating for the children of divorce in this country is that divorce is largely viewed from the wrong perspective. As adults, we have a tendency to view the act of divorce from the perspective of the parents. To truly effectuate change in the way the children of divorce are ministered to, we need to begin to look at divorce through their eyes.

Allow me to explain. When parents get divorced, they tend to see the event from their own perspective. From their point of view, the divorce may be welcome relief or even a tragic occurrence, but eventually the parents “get over it” and move on with their lives. For children, divorce is not merely an event that happens in their childhood, but a trigger that changes the course of their entire lives.

In the book Between Two Worlds, Elizabeth Marquardt writes:

*For too long, the debate about divorce in this country has been dominated by the adult perspective on divorce, with some adults charging that divorce is unjustifiably rampant and others retorting that divorce is a right that no one can question.*

It is time that we changed that! In order to effectively minister to children of divorce, we must first change how we look at the divorce. We must try to get inside the minds and hearts of the children affected by divorce and view it from their perspective. Here are some examples:

ADULT PERSPECTIVE	CHILD PERSPECTIVE
Though potentially traumatic, to an adult, divorce can mark the end of a difficult and stressful marriage.	To a child, the divorce of their parents turns their world upside down. Everything they have come to count on in terms of stability and support is gone in an instant.
Adults tend to presume that a divorce will make them happier and that their happiness will “trickle down” to their children.	Children are largely unaware of their parents’ level of happiness, and studies have shown that this theory of “trickle down” happiness does not work.
Adults often tend to reassure children that they will now have “two house where they are loved.”	Divorce begins a time in a child’s life where they are constantly moving between two worlds and never fully belonging to either.
Adults tend to think that kids are resilient and will “get over it” quickly.	Studies show that the impact of divorce on children lasts well into adulthood and changes the way they view life.
Adults view divorce as one event.	Children view divorce as a process and relive the divorce, and the grief that comes along with it, at each developmental stage in their lives.
Adults view divorce as a “new beginning.”	Children view divorce as the end of life as they know it.
Adults view divorce as a chance to find “new love.”	From a child’s view, divorce shows that love does not last forever, and they begin to wonder if their parents will stop loving them too.
Adults view divorce as an “adult” issue that doesn’t really involve the kids.	Kids view divorce as permanently altering their lives without allowing them any input into the decision.
Adults argue that it is the “quality” of the divorce that impacts kids and not the divorce itself.	To kids, no matter how amicable the divorce is, it still forever changes the world that they know and live in.
Adults view divorce as something kids will just have to get used to.	Divorce fundamentally changes a child’s world, causes them to question basic spiritual beliefs and forces them to “grow up” quicker than they otherwise would have had to.

