



## THE NEWEST PHENOMENON TO IMPACT CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

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By Linda Ranson Jacobs

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Have you heard about the new divorce phenomenon? It's called the gray divorce, senior adults who are divorcing after years of marriage. (<http://tinyurl.com/cf2t2w5>) You may wonder why I would bring up the gray divorce to children's ministers. You are probably thinking,

*"I deal with children, not senior adults."*

If you haven't had to face this newest divorce crisis, you will more than likely be facing it in the future.

Recently a children's minister emailed me about an issue she was facing for the first time. Her question was,

*"I have a family dealing with divorce of grandparents. Do you have any articles or insight for them as they talk with the children? They truly want to make this a teachable moment."*



This is a tough issue and one that hasn't received a lot of attention in the past. However, now with the rise in divorce among senior adults, it is becoming a very important issue.

When dealing with this issue in your ministry your goal may become two fold, reaching out to the grandchildren and soothing and comforting one of their parents. Some research shows the older a person is when his or her parents divorce, the harder it is on them. The divorce becomes a crack in their foundation. Everything they learned as a child about marriage and two people loving each other is now at risk. Some adults wonder if what they have based their marriage upon is a lie. Some may wonder if this will happen to them, as they grow older.

While one or possibly both parents are stressed and grieving over the divorce, the grandchildren are also affected. At a time when a grandchild might want to ask questions about why granddad is now living in another place, they sense it is a hurtful subject to bring up to their parents. Many kids will suffer in silence as they try to keep the peace at home. Some may even wonder,

*"If my grandmother and grandfather got a divorce, are mom and dad going to get a divorce too?"*

Children's ministers can play a major role in helping grandchildren process the divorce of the grandparents. You don't even need to know the details of the grandparent's situation. You just need to be available to the children.



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Give the children permission to ask questions and to talk about the divorce. Many children who have not been exposed to divorce will need to know exactly what a divorce is. They may have heard the word thrown around but they really don't know what it means. Perhaps simple explanations of different words would calm a child's fear.

They may worry about grandma being able to take care of herself. They may be concerned about who will do grandpa's laundry and cook his food. While you may not know the answers to these questions, you can offer up prayers for the safety and well being for the grandparents. Since children think in the here and now even praying that both grandparents will eat healthy meals and stay well will be comforting to a child.

They may wonder what is going to happen to family events around the holidays. Ask the child for permission to talk to their parents about the concerns they have shared with you. Most parents will not be aware of their children's concerns surrounding the grandparent's divorce. When this is brought to their attention, most parents will appreciate your assistance.

Remind the parents to be open and to talk to their children about the grandparent's divorce. Ask the parents to assure their children that they are not getting a divorce. Ask the parents to allow their children to visit with both grandma and grandpa. Above all intercede with prayers for the entire family.

For an article to give to parents to assist them with their children see, "When Grandparents Divorce, What about the Grandchildren?" ([www.hlp4.com/node/130](http://www.hlp4.com/node/130))

*ABOUT THE AUTHOR: 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. More great articles about how to successfully minister to the child of divorce in your church can be found at Linda's website [Healthy Loving Partnerships for Our Kids \(HLP4\) \[http://www.hlp4.com\]](http://www.hlp4.com). Linda also offers support, encouragement, and suggestions to help single parents and those working with single parent children. She can be reached by e-mail at [Linda@hlp4.com](mailto:Linda@hlp4.com).*