



TEACHING SPIRITUAL MANNERISMS

By Linda Ranson Jacobs

10/14/2011



Last week, [we looked at how we can help children of divorce to develop spiritual mannerisms by modeling such behavior for them](#). This week, I want to talk about some specific areas and things you can do to help children of divorce develop spiritual mannerisms and hopefully avoid the exodus from church which is so common after parents divorce.

Prayer

Ask children to pray for other members of the congregation. Getting the child outside their world by praying for others is one of these spiritual mannerisms we can teach. Model the act of praising God for small things. Share on a regular basis how God answers prayers. Share small parts of your life with the child. Build relationships with each child through the act of prayer. Praying with a child and for a child tells the child you care enough and they matter to you.

Andrew Root in his book, "The Children of Divorce" says that when children go through their parents divorce that their very being is shaken. They wonder if they are even real. When children take part and contribute it helps them feel real. It helps them connect to the family of God. It gives them purpose. It gives power and meaning to their being.

Rituals

As children's leaders, take a minute to think through the rituals at your church. To the child of divorce things that become rituals might be different than what you think. Special events such as baptisms, communion and even greeters in front of the church building can become rituals to a child. Why not ask the child of divorce to be part of those events. Even it's behind the scenes, they would still be contributing.





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Routines

As adults many times we look at routines as something that just happens. We even get complacent about certain routines. But to a child of divorce, routines at church lend to stability in their world. It's something they come to depend on happening. The passing of the collection plate becomes a routine. In one church I attended boys helped pass the offering plate with their father. It was very moving and you could see how proud the child was to be doing something with his father. I kept thinking, but what about the boy whose father isn't around? Not to take away from the fathers and sons in the church but why couldn't the little eight year old boy who sits on the 3rd row with his single mom every week be adopted on Sundays by an older man and take part in the routine of passing the offering plate?

Kindness and Thoughtfulness

When routines are going to change, make the child of divorce aware of the possibility of change. This is modeling kindness and thoughtfulness to the child. If you are going to change the time of the Sunday service wouldn't you alert the congregation to show up at a different time? Yet, does anyone think to actually call or send a note to the child who comes to church without a parent? Many children of divorce attend church without their parent, and they are usually left out of the loop when it comes to changes taking place.

Contributing

In my [DC4K](#) classes, I have watched children come alive when they are depended upon to contribute and give back to the group. Imagine the power a second grade boy feels when the 5th grade boys depend upon him to run the DVD player? I always have a "jobs" sign up list in my classes. It gives the child a choice of how and when he or she wants to contribute and give to the group. For many children of divorce we become family depending upon one another for our very survival. A lot of children have shared with me that the two hours at DC4k every week is the only time they feel normal and like they belong.

We can give example after example of teaching spiritual mannerisms to the child of divorce but why not use this article to stimulate your own thinking? Take time to pray about how God wants to use you or others in your particular faith community to teach spiritual mannerisms to children of divorce.

I think Andrew Root says it best in his book, "The Children of Divorce" (page 125):

"The congregation cannot take away the fact that the young person's most fundamental mirror of geological union has cracked, but the congregation can, if it is brave enough, become a mirror that through its life can reflect back to young people who they are and where they belong."





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“This, then, is how you should pray: ‘Our Father in heaven hallowed by your name...’”
[Matthew 6:9, NIV]

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.

