



HOW TO SERVE THE FAMILY OF DIVORCE

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By Jackie Glass, MACP, LPC

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While serving children and their families, our hearts are tuned in to their care. So, what are we to do when we find out a child's parents are getting or have gotten divorced? Here are a couple of thoughts as we seek to serve the family.

1. Ask Questions & Listen

Every family loves to be listened to and to be heard, especially families experiencing a divorce. Ask questions. Ask both surface questions as well as deep questions, and then your job is to listen. Truly listen. This type of listening includes repeating the same words and phrases back to the family to see if they agree with your statement. If they continue on in their conversation that means you've listened correctly. The main thing to be aware of with asking questions and listening is to always respect the level of information the family wants to share. Not

respecting their level of privacy demonstrates that you as the caregiver are seeking to know information more than wanting to do what's best for the family.

2. Volunteer consistently, allowing church to be a consistent place with a consistent face.

Perhaps there is much change going on in the family - maybe with schools, houses or family members. How great would it be if church was a consistent place where both the children and parents could expect to see the same volunteers every week? Realize the value of your place in their lives, even if they never tell you.

3. Expect behavior and emotional change

Divorce can produce feelings of anxiety, depression, uncertainty, and loss for children and their families. Because of this, it is important to remember to expect some level of behavior and emotional change with the people involved. It is healthy and normal to see this change and can actually produce greater health as the family is able to feel the feelings involved with divorce and come to a new understanding of what life is going to look like.

4. Link to resources in the church and outside the church

Continue to be an avenue of valuable resources for the family, maybe connecting them with books, articles, babysitters, meals and support groups for families going through divorce. But, make sure to lean back on #1-listen and ask questions and make sure you are helping in the ways they want to be helped, not in a way that makes you feel better as a caregiver.



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5. Patience, Pray, and Proper Role

And finally, demonstrate patience, pray consistently for the family, and recognize your proper role in their lives. Often when we see families going through the pain of divorce, we want to take on the responsibility of taking away all their pain. Not only is that not possible, but that is not your role. Instead, voice to the family your desire to serve them in the ways they need help and above all else, just continue to serve. After all, serving children and their families is what connected you to them in the first place. It's what you're fantastic at!

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