



HAVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT THE CHILD OF DIVORCE AND CHILDCARE?

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By Linda Ranson Jacobs

05/18/2012

Who Is Raising Our Children?

We all know that our children are our next generation. Unless there is a conscious effort on the part of an adult, people will parent their own kids the way they were parented. Being parented doesn't necessarily mean that a mother and/or father raised you. For generations, people like grandparents, aunts, uncles and friends have raised children. We have even had children being raised by people unknown to the child such as foster parents.



The Bible, as well as history books, are full of stories of children being raised by someone other than their birth parents. These people grew up and became parents and did fine for the most part. The differences in children being parented today are societal influences (computers, internet, video games, TV, etc.) and other entities that are raising our children especially children from single parent families. The significant other, or a cohabitating partner, is one example – a situation which, by the way, says, “I can’t commit to marriage but I will commit to letting you influence my child for several years.”

Who Is Influencing Our Children?

Children from single parent families spend the majority of their waking hours in group care. They either have parents that are attending school full time or parents that are working - some of these parents are working two or more jobs or going to school and working. One small study showed that school age children might very well be in child care 300 to 400 hours more per year than even in public school. When one counts summer, school vacations and holidays, early outs and parent teacher conference days the child will spend many more hours overall in the childcare facility.

Who is raising the next generation of parents? Who, or what, are these children going to mimic when they become adults and parents? In case you haven't quite grasped the picture that is being presented, let me explain it to you. Underpaid, untrained and inconsistent caregivers are raising these children from single parent homes. For many children no other entity in a child's life holds more influence over a child than the childcare giver.

The child is dropped off early in the morning, many times before 6:00 a.m. The following is an example of the child's daily routine.



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"Hang up your coat, sit down, be quiet, get in line, go to the bathroom, wash your hands, eat your breakfast, sit on the rug for circle time, go outside, come inside, hang up your coat, it's time for your mom (or dad) to come, clean up, get your artwork, get your coat, see you in the morning."

Then when the single parent takes the child home after nine to ten hours in care outside of the home and outside of the parent's influence, more times than not the child plops in front of the T.V. or goes online. These mediums then portray immediate gratification in all situations of life – feel bad, take a pill; want to celebrate, grab a beer; don't like your marriage partner, get a divorce - and this is all done in a thirty minute time span.

Television and movies sear the young mind with graphic visions of violence and sexual escapades. Time and time, hour after hour television pours in inappropriate scenarios over and over again. The child goes through their entire day without parental influence. The only conversation between parent and child are usually commands or directions, and many children are shuttled back and forth between two homes and two parents.

What's the Problem With Childcare?

Churches, pastors and children's workers need to realize the importance of childcare in these children. Childcare is a fact of life for the single parent. Children from single parent homes need high quality childcare programs, but statistically they receive low quality childcare programs. Realistically, many single parents struggle to afford any daycare let alone pay for a more expensive quality program.

Many states that provide childcare assistance, such as Title XX, do not pay a high reimbursement rate. Thus, the children on childcare subsidy do not have quality childcare available to them. Some childcare centers only allocate a certain percentage of subsidized childcare slots due to the fact the reimbursement rates are low.

When I owned a childcare all of my subsidized clientele were single parents, but not all of my single parents were on state assistance. Some single parents made a few dollars over the limit and therefore did not qualify for assistance.

What Can Churches Do?

Many times the role of single parent is thrust upon the parent quite unexpectedly. They don't have time to learn about single parenting, they just react. They don't have time to research the best childcare or even what childcare is all about. This is where churches can fill in the gap for the single parent.

1. Develop a checklist to educate the parent on what to look for in a childcare facility.

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2. Send someone with them when they go to look for a childcare for their children.
3. Create a list of “helpers” - people who can assist when a single parent has to work overtime and the childcare closes before the parent can pick up the child. Helpers can pick up a child from care and take them to the parent or take the child to their home for the evening as needed or fill in the gap when a child gets ill and needs to be picked up from childcare.
4. Subsidize the childcare tuition, but don't enable the single parent. Provide ways for them to work off the extra financial help.
5. Provide respite care for the out of control child. Research shows that one of the reasons “welfare to work” reform did not work in the beginning was because children from single parent families tended to have out of control behavior problems and they got ‘kicked out’ of childcare and school. Single parents lost their jobs when they continually had to leave work to pick up a child.
6. Provide counselors and parenting classes for single parents.
7. If a church has a counselor on staff, have the counselor donate a couple hours a week to a local childcare.

Next week we will continue discussing childcare, the church and children from divorced homes.

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.