



SETTING THE CHILD OF DIVORCE UP TO FAIL

By Linda Ranson Jacobs

05/04/2012



For the past several weeks we've been discussing children of divorce who have challenging behaviors. Today I want to discuss reasons some of the children exhibit challenging behaviors. Many times it can be because of what we do to set them up to fail.

Things like attendance charts, bible memory drills, mother-daughter days or father-son events can cause the child of divorce to concentrate on their family problems. It can drive them away from the very thing that can help them heal, learning about Christ and our Heavenly Father. It's not that churches can't have these events, but it might take some special considerations to accommodate the child of divorce.

A Mother-Daughter Tea Disaster

When I owned a therapeutic child care, we had one elementary age girl whose behavior began to get out of control every year at springtime. She got agitated. She developed nervous tics. She was unkind and down right mean to other children. One year, as I was planning the Mother Daughter Tea to celebrate Mother's Day, it dawned on me. Mother's Day was tough for my little friend because her mother had deserted her at a very early age.

I took my friend aside one day and asked her what I could do to make Mother's Day easier for her. She was very bold and said,

"Do away with that stupid Mother Daughter Tea!"

By this time my friend was in forth grade. For years she had endured this event that was treasured by the other little girls in our program.

After much thought, prayer and discussion with my staff we decided to change the name of our event. We changed it to,

"Somebody I Love Day Tea"





SETTING THE CHILD OF DIVORCE UP TO FAIL

Page 2 of 3

By Linda Ranson Jacobs

05/04/2012

I explained this to my fourth grade friend. I told her she could bring anyone that loved her to this tea. She said,

“Can I bring my dad? I mean he is not my mother but he is the only parent I have in my home and he does the things that other mothers do.”

We certainly approved of this idea. That year her dad took off from work, and he came and sat at the tea with all the mothers. This little girl was beaming. The next year she brought her grandmother.

The name change was a simple solution to a big problem that haunted one little girl for several years.

With Mother’s Day coming up, please consider how celebrating this day might affect a child who does not have a mother living in the home. There are many more children in this situation than you might think. Research shows that almost 16% of kids live with a custodial dad.

<http://singleparents.about.com/od/legalissues/p/portrait.htm>

Attendance Chart Agony

Another event that can trigger a child of divorce is the dreaded "attendance charts." While I realize churches need to keep track of attendance, I think there are ways to do this without making it into a big deal.

Following is an example about a child who attended two different churches, one with her mom and one with her dad.

Take from *The Hidden Mission Field* by Theresa McKenna:

Wendy is a little girl of six who characterizes the problem. Her parents were both Christian when they divorced. She alternated weekends with her parents. On Sundays, her mother took Wendy to her church when they were together and her father to his on the weekends she spent time with him.

Wendy faithfully attended Sunday school in both churches. At her mother’s church, the Sunday School teacher did not keep track of attendance. But at the father’s church, the teacher rewarded the children with bright gold stars on an attendance chart for all to see. When Wendy first noticed that she was missing half of her stars, she complained.

“But you miss every other week,” the teacher said.

“No I don’t” she countered. “I go every week.”

At that point the other children sided with the teacher. One little boy said, “That’s a lie.



SETTING THE CHILD OF DIVORCE UP TO FAIL

Page 3 of 3

By Linda Ranson Jacobs

05/04/2012

"You never come every Sunday!"

Wendy was inconsolable. It took months for her to return to Sunday school at her father's church.

This teacher could have developed a special consideration for Wendy in this situation. Perhaps she could have checked with the father and could have written in the initials of the other church she attended on the "other" Sundays.

These are just two ways that we adults set the child of divorce up to fail. I believe if you pray and ask God to give you wisdom and discernment you will see events and things in your own church that can be revamped or altered to accommodate the hurting children in your environment.

*"Give me wisdom and knowledge that I may lead this people....." 2 Chronicles 1:10
(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.

