



WHO AM I?

By Linda Ranson Jacobs

11/02/2012



Imagine looking like your father and being proud of that fact. Perhaps at some point in your young life your grandmother proudly said to her friends,

“This is Sonny’s boy. Doesn’t he look just like Sonny?”

And all of her friends proclaim that yes you were the spitting image of your father and you even look a lot like your grandfather. A smile crept up on your face as you listened to this talk.

Maybe you have your mother’s talent. She plays the piano and you are also musically inclined. Your mother sang a solo in the annual Christmas cantata at church each

year, and your heart swelled because she was your mother and you believed that you too would one day sing solos like she did.

All of us have had these kinds of thoughts and memories as children. We are proud of our heritage. When we were small we wanted to be known as Sonny’s son. We were excited to know that we looked like one of our parents, aunts or uncles.

Many children of divorce do not get to experience this happy childhood encounter. Instead, some of these children are embarrassed they look like their parent. Just imagine living with mom but you are the spitting image of your father. What if every time you go to your grandparent’s house a negative comment is made about how you look? Or the comment isn’t made, but you hear the constant comments about “that man” and what he did to your mother. Very quickly you discern it is not good to look like “that man”.

Elizabeth Marquardt in her book, Between Two Worlds says,

“Growing up in two worlds creates endless and often painful complications for a child. But one of the first and most troubling consequence is that resembling a parent is no longer the mark of being an insider, a part of a larger family to which the child and other family members belong. Quite the opposite. Suddenly, resembling a parent, or sharing any kind of experience with a parent can also mark the child as an outsider.”





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Have you ever thought about the children that come to your church classes as children who feel split, torn in two and feeling like they are an outsider in their own family unit? Have you thought about what you can do to help them feel put together as one whole being?

Here are some ways you might want to consider:

- Compliment them about their talent. "Isaac, I noticed you really sing out when we are singing our praise songs. Does your dad sing like that? You must have your dad's voice. I imagine that makes you very proud to be your dad's son."
- Comment on their physical traits. "Cierra you are getting tall. Is your mom or dad tall? How nice that is that you have a dad that is tall. I think you might grow up to be as tall as he is. Be proud of that."
- Notice a child's spiritual gift. "Tad, you have such a tender heart toward the younger children when they are hurting. I knew your dad when he went to church here with your mom. You have his heart you know. That is something you can be grateful for and look forward to using it for the Lord."

Just a few comments about talents, looks or spiritual gifts will go a long way in helping the child feel whole and complete. If you know both parents, don't be afraid to speak often about the better side of each parent. If you know the child well ask him or her about what they think about looking, acting or having a parent's talent.

While it won't make them immediately feel like an insider in their two family units, it might help take the edge off the situation. It will also help them feel comfortable with you. It will go a long way in helping these children understand healthy relationships.

When my son became a teenager he was working on his car one day in the garage. When he yelled "ouch" it dawned on me how much he sounded like his dad. I then took notice that he was beginning to look a lot like his dad also. I began to make comments about him to other people in his presence. I said things like,

"Doesn't Brian look and sound just like his dad? His dad was so handsome when he was Brian's age and still is a nice looking man."

Sometimes I would say,

"I'm so proud of Brian. He has my heart and his dad's looks. What a lucky kid he is."

Not every child has a single parent that can talk about the other parent in a good frame of mind. Some single parents are still hurting to their core about the separation or divorce. As children's workers we can stand in the gap for these kids.





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“He who has compassion on them will guide them and lead them beside springs of water.” Isaiah 49:10b

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. Linda offers support, encouragement and suggestions to help those working with the child of divorce. She serves as DC4K Ambassador (<http://www.dc4k.org>) and can be reached via email at ljacobs@dc4k.org.

Free articles and devotions for single parent families in your church can be found at Linda's website Healthy Loving Partnerships for Our Kids (<http://www.hlp4.com>).

