

Are the Children the REAL Problem in Your Blended Family? Part 1:

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In our discussions with many blended families, the subject often turns to problems the parents are having with their children. One or more of the children in the new family are often seen as "the problem", or at least one of the major problems. We must realize that there are always two sides to a story, and we offer you a view from the children's perspective.

We read a story about a firefighter who was fighting a forest fire. As he walked through the charred forest, he saw a bird with its wings spread out at the base of a tree. It caught his eye because it moved. As he looked closer, he found that the bird was obviously dead because its body was charred, but beneath the bird was a baby bird that had survived. The mother bird had sacrificed itself so that her baby could live. Other animals display "unto death" protection of their young. There is not a more aggressive animal than a female grizzly bear protecting her cubs. A herd of elephants will circle the young in the herd when a threatening situation occurs.

Children of divorce do not live that same experience. They become innocent victims, propelled into brokenness by at least one of his or her parents. They are often caught in the blaze of selfish and/ or angry parents, and get severely wounded. To make matters worse, parents too often speak negatively of their former spouses in front of their children, reopening the wounds. Other times, parents use the children as a communication tool, to avoid having to speak to the former spouse. Rejection or even abandonment by one of their parents often becomes an undeserved reality.

With this in mind, it is not surprising to us when children of divorce respond negatively to again being propelled --- this time into a new relationship, a new family, with a new parent figure, and possibly new siblings. The children may experience a multitude of emotions, from fear of another home life failing, to competition between them and the new people in the home for their natural parent's time and attention.

Often the new family relationship occurs before some or all of the children have found healing for the hurt in their soul from the previous broken home. Their natural parent may have moved through the healing process -- or think they have -- and are ready to try again to build a lifelong marriage. However, one or more of the children may still be dealing with the pain from the previous divorce.

Parents need to be sensitive to their children --- to what they are feeling, and to what we put them through. We are not advocating that parents have to live their entire life for their children. We are advocating that God expects parents to love and nurture their children at all times, not just when it is convenient. Psalm 127:3

states, "Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from him."

Malachi 4: 6 says, "And He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse."

As parents, we have responsibility to love, care for, provide for, defend, teach, and guide our children. We need to help our children find their healing from past hurts. They may need help to forgive those who hurt them, to manage their anger, to trust people again and to sense that there is abundant life ahead. They also need to learn to quit looking at their past, and to look forward to the new thing that God wants to bring them into. In Isaiah 43: 18-19 God says to His children, "Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland." God is always trying to do something new in our lives and in our children's lives. The new family that you may be in can be a great place for your children. It can be a positive, Godly influence to you and your children. It is the parents' responsibility to create that positive atmosphere. Show your children the positive things about God and your family.

Your lives may never be the same after experiencing divorce, or death of a spouse and parent, but your lives can be better! The story of Job in the Holy Bible is an incredible story of a man who lost everything. But because he loved God, God restored to him twice as much as he previously had. His life was never the same, and he probably had scars on his body from the sores and on his heart from the loss of loved ones. But his life got even better! Scars are not bad --- scars appear after healing has taken place.

Commit your life to God!

Then commit your life to your new family! Purpose in your heart to see all your family healed from their past, forgetting their past and moving into the new things that God has for your future. Take steps to bring wholeness into your family.

1. Pray together, and for each other.
2. If you have never done so, read some divorce / grief recovery material, and share it with your children.
3. Learn your children's dreams and desires, and help them attain their goals.
4. Involve yourself in their lives.
5. Communicate with your natural AND new children --- let them know that they are a vital part of your family.