

## **Children of Divorce: Between Two Worlds**

An adapted review by: Lynda Savage, M.S., LMFT, LPC

One out of four adults reading this is likely a child of divorce.

The title of this article is also the title of a book about children of divorce written by Elizabeth Marquart. This book was reviewed in 2005 in the emagazine of Christianity Today. This is a paraphrase of that review.

The voices of children of divorce, old or young, are beginning to be heard. Literature covering the impact of divorce from the child's point of view is now available. Adult children of divorce, college educated; (1500 of them), were interviewed as data for the book. This is not the hopeful "how to" overly filled with stories of the resilience of children. Divorce clearly is a heavy burden for children: A heavy burden even in the "best" of divorces.

Divorce shapes the lives of children forever in subtle yet pronounced ways. People, who have read Wallerstein's book *Second Chances*, will see a similar theme in Marquart's book. Wallerstein's most significant finding is that the effects of divorce on children are not short-term and fleeting. Other research has confirmed the same findings.

Typically, divorcing spouses go through a period of high conflict and intense pain during the divorce process. The pain continues for years after divorce, but healing is usually more or less completed for the divorcing couple within three years after divorce. Wallerstein's research indicates that this isn't true for children. The effect of the divorce for children continues for decades.

*Between Two Worlds* shines a light for those ready to see the effects on children of divorce, but it is also impactful for what it says about marriage: that the couple's essential task is to make one home from two conflicting selves, creating a combined context for a child's spiritual and emotional growth. In intact families, this struggle/task goes largely unnoticed and is not shouldered by the children. After divorce the age appropriate and role appropriate tasks/conflicts/struggles meant for adults, no longer rests on the parents' shoulders. These overwhelming responsibilities take root in the heart and emotional template of the child. The burden children carry when parents divorce, hurts them in ways adults and our culture as a whole is only beginning to realize (and only if they dare to look).

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P.O. Box 1676, Appleton, WI 54912 (920) 720-8920*

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