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I Didn't Come From a Normal Family

Erin Olson

Dordt College, erin.olson@dordt.edu

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I Didn't Come From a Normal Family

Abstract

"Divorce and re-marriage from the perspective of a child. 'God didn't intend for divorce to happen, but we live in a broken world and divorces happen. God can take broken things and make beauty out of them.'"

Posting about having divorced parents and adjusting to the realities of step families from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/i-didnt-come-from-a-normal-family>

Keywords

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Disciplines

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Comments

In All Things is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service](#) at [Dordt College](#).

I Didn't Come From a Normal Family

 [all in allthings.org/i-didnt-come-from-a-normal-family](https://allthings.org/i-didnt-come-from-a-normal-family)

Erin Olson

And the One who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new!" Revelation 21:5

My parents are divorced.

There, I said it.

Actually, they have been divorced for over twenty-five years now. Having divorced parents is a norm for me, but while growing up in Northwest Iowa, divorce happened, but it wasn't too common. My family attended a small Christian Reformed Church and I attended very small Christian schools until I went to college. I often felt ashamed admitting that my parents were divorced. I often felt like I needed to disprove certain assumptions about what kids from divorced families were like. And while my family might not have been "normal," I have come to the conclusion that no family really is. I'm not even sure what "normal" family looks like.

I distinctly remember the night my parents told us my dad was leaving. I was eight-years-old and it was December—just a few weeks before Christmas. My little brother and I were watching TV and my fifteen-year-old sister was off with her friends. I remember my brother sitting on my dad's lap as I watched his six-year-old face try to grasp what my parents were saying. I understood. I had a friend whose parents had divorced and I knew when her dad left he didn't come back home. But I was stoic. I didn't shed a tear that night. In fact, I didn't shed a tear until a few weeks after my dad moved out.

My mom and dad did end up divorcing and it was official eight months after my dad moved out. By the following December, my dad was remarried. Soon after, my stepmom and Dad had two sons together; they are my half-brothers. The summer before I turned fourteen, my mom remarried. I was relieved to know that my mom would have someone who would love her and support her, but I was a little apprehensive about gaining a stepfather, not to mention two stepsisters and a stepbrother.

After my mom and stepdad were married, we essentially became the *Brady Bunch* although not all of us were living under the same roof. My older sister was eighteen and had gone off to college. My younger stepsister and stepbrother were living with their mom in a nearby town. My mom and stepdad decided to sell the only house my brother and I had ever known and we moved across town into my stepdad's house where he and my older stepsister had been living.

My stepsister was almost seventeen at the time when our parents got married. I was thirteen and my brother was twelve. Moving three "teenagers" in together could have been a nightmare. But it wasn't. One would think I'd remember that time as being a huge period of transition, but I really don't. I think my mom and stepdad spent a lot of that time steeped in prayer. I know there were people in our small town and small church who were also praying for us. I know many prayers were prayed for us as we transitioned into a "blended" family. I'm sure my mom and stepdad were also praying for themselves. I'm guessing there were frequent prayers about how to "blend" our families in the "right" and "best" way possible.

When I went to college, I continued to run into opinions about what a normal family should look like. During my sophomore year of college, I was explaining my family to a group of other students; telling them that my family was “complicated.” I explained how my parents had divorced and both remarried. For siblings, I had one sister, one brother, two half-brothers, two stepsisters, and a stepbrother. The first response from someone in the group was, “Wow, talk about dysfunctional.” The message I received was that my family couldn’t possibly be functional or normal because we were the product of marriage, divorce, and remarriage. At the time, I was too timid to speak up and defend my family. I was too afraid to say how much I loved my “dysfunctional” family and how thankful I was for them.

Are you facing a divorce or remarriage? How can you help your kids adjust to this significant life change?

Andrew Root’s book, *Children of Divorce: The Loss of Family as the Loss of Being*, emphasizes what I experienced and what I believe helped me become one of the divorce “success” stories.¹ While the primary “community” of my nuclear family significantly changed after my parents divorced, my family and I were embraced by our local church. They loved us, they cared for us, they prayed for us, and they helped us maintain our center. If you or someone you know are going through a divorce, **find a church community** where you feel loved and cared for and where you can talk about your struggles and needs.

Next, **pray a lot**. Pray for yourself, your kids, and your family. Ask other people to pray for you and your family too. And if needed, seek professional or pastoral help for you or your kids.

Your relationship with your ex-spouse may be tenuous, but it is important to **maintain that relationship for the sake of your kids**. No one expects you to be friends with each other, but you will forever be co-parents and you need to learn how to function as such. This is another area where professional intervention and help can be helpful.

If you have kids and you’re going to remarry, please keep the following considerations in mind: **Tread lightly, go slowly, and don’t push your kids into anything or any relationship**. They’ll develop relationships with their stepparent and step-siblings when they are ready. Listen to your children. Allow them to talk and share their thoughts, feelings, and concerns with you.

God didn’t intend for divorce to happen, but we live in a broken world and divorces happen. God can take broken things and make beauty out of them. Often at holidays or family get-togethers, I can’t help but think about the beautiful thing that is my family. Normal? Maybe not. Beautiful? Yes, beautiful.

“You make beautiful things, you make beautiful things out of the dust. You make beautiful things, you make beautiful things out of us”. -Gungor, *Beautiful Things*, 2011.

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Footnotes

1. Root, Andrew. *Children of Divorce: The Loss of Family as the Loss of Being*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010) [↩](#)