

Host: In the United States a marriage breaks up every 14 seconds.¹ But divorce is not limited to the U.S. As a result, over a million kids a year become children with divorced parents. Are you one of those kids? Is your spouse?

Welcome to Champions Arise. I'm your host _____.

Divorce can be a touchy subject. *Parents* want to believe that their breakup didn't have a negative effect on the kids. *The children* grow up convinced that the impact of the divorce diminished over time. But are these hopeful thoughts actually true?

Our coach today is Kent Darcie. He is the founder of Adult Children of Divorce Ministries. His ministry helps adult children of divorce identify how they are still being impacted by their parent's divorce. It also provides resources that can help those from broken homes enjoy healthier relationships and break the cycle of divorce. We'll hear Kent's story and look at this timely issue when we return.

Music Theme out

Host: Coach, divorce, directly or indirectly, touches nearly everyone in our audience. Why does your ministry primarily focus on adults with divorced parents?

Coach: My parents broke up when I was thirteen. Prior to their split, my life was pretty typical. I went to school, played games, and did normal kid stuff. After their divorce, things *seemed* normal, but in an abnormal sort of way. Those listening who have divorced parents know what I mean. But kids from divorced homes adapt, and I adapted. Life marched on with school, college, marriage, and children. From the outside, I looked well-adjusted, happy, and successful. But, unbeknownst to me, things were far from healthy on the inside.

Anger, fear, and other issues had built a foothold in me. And they altered how I responded to life situations. Consequently, a lot of damage to my relationships and my marriage resulted. But God is merciful—even with thick-skulled people like me.

Host: I think "thick-skulled" describes a lot of us, but what was the turning point?

Coach: God used a marriage retreat to reveal what was really going on in me. During that weekend, the Lord startled me with a revelation that, if I didn't change, I was heading toward divorce.

Host: Wait. You mean that your wife was going to file?

Coach: No, I believe God was saying that, because I was stuffing my emotions instead of dealing with them, I was slowly destroying the marriage. Basically, it would get to the point where the marriage was dead on the inside (a marriage in name only), or dead on the outside for all to see through divorce.

Host: That sounds... scary.

Coach: Terrifying actually. My purpose in life was NOT to divorce. I was stunned by what the Lord said. I was doing everything I knew to *avoid* divorce! But God's message was clear. And I needed to find out why I was on that path.

So, with prayer and a lot of research, I discovered that my parent's divorce was affecting me in significant ways. Also, there were millions of adults with divorced parents in the same boat. But now, I had hope. And as an encouragement to our listeners, my wife and I recently renewed our marriage vows after 30 years.

Host: Congratulations and Praise God! That's fantastic.

Coach: The Lord has been very good to us, and He's given me a passion to share what I've learned. 2 Corinthians chapter 1 verses 3 and 4 say:

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.*³

I've received God's comfort and God's comfort is available to all those from broken homes.

Host: What do you say to the listener who thinks their parent's divorce was no big deal and they are over it?

Coach: I understand. For years I believed the same thing. And they *might be* over it. However, I ignored warning signs. My wife *tried* to tell me that I was still angry about my parent's divorce. Back in high school, a teacher reached out to me. But I stubbornly refused to admit there was a problem.

So first, I'd ask that listener if they are getting warnings from loved ones that there is a problem? Then I would advise them that according to Professor Paul Amato, an expert on parent-child relationships, children of divorced parents are at least 50 percent more likely to get a divorce than those from an unbroken home. When both the husband and wife come from divorced families, the odds of divorce are 200 percent higher.²

Pretending everything is ok and ignoring the warnings hurts your loved ones and increases the chances of becoming a statistic. So listen, learn, and pray that God will speak to you about this. We thank God that you found us today. Hang in there. I think you'll find this series informative and encouraging.

Host: So Coach, what are some of the ways divorce impacts the kids?

Coach: The first thing is children of divorce can have unresolved anger. Kids respond in a variety of ways to the divorce, but anger is a common denominator. There are many reasons for the anger, but two we'll look at now are loss and blame.

Loss covers divorce like a blanket. Friends and family members are no longer accessible. Home and familiar routines can change. Church attendance often stops or is erratic. The losses keep building and seem horribly unfair and we get angry.

I need to insert something here. Children see things differently than adults. They have less experience and only limited knowledge of the big picture. As a result, issues, like anger we have as adults, was likely formed when we looked at the world as a child. Divorce is traumatic for adults, but it can be terrifying for a young person. Consequently, viewing these issues from the kid's perspective is critical to understanding the problems we're experiencing now.

Host: I never really thought about it that way.

Coach: Most people don't—including, ironically, grown children of divorce. With 20/20 hindsight we tend to look back and justify or rationalize the things that happened. Which sounds like the proper way to handle things, but the anger doesn't go away. It remains unresolved.

Host: So the losses kids experience after a divorce can lead to anger.

Coach: Yes. Another cause is blame. We may blame the parent we think caused the divorce. We could be totally wrong in our assessment of who the guilty party is, but our anger will be focused on them. For me, my mom was the target of my blame. We also feel angry when our parents blame each other. When digs, sarcastic jabs, or outright slander is hurled at a spouse, it hurts *us*. After all, that's *our* mom or dad they're talking about. *They* may not love them, but we still do.

So what happened if we showed our anger? It probably wasn't received well. Our parents had too much emotional pain themselves to deal with it, or adults didn't connect our misbehavior to our anger about the divorce. Regardless, we quickly learned to bury our anger.

A lot of us buried our anger from the start and never consciously expressed it. Probably thought we were doing the right thing. But, sooner or later, something will trigger that unresolved anger, and boom! Our loved ones are caught in the firestorm of our anger. Or it comes out in addictions, adultery, or in other negative ways. We blame other things or people—our wife, our kids, or our boss, or that crazy driver for example. But, anger can have its roots in the divorce. We'll dig deeper into the causes and ways to deal with anger later in this series.

Host: I'm glad we are coming back to this issue. I suspect anger touches the lives of many of our men. So what is another lingering effect from parental divorce?

Coach: Fear of doom. When you have the fear of doom, you live your life with the expectation that things will go wrong at any time. It might be at the job where you're afraid of getting fired, even though there is no reason to feel that way. Maybe you're worried your wife is going to leave you, even though she has been totally faithful and devoted. The fear of doom is the constant state of waiting for the other shoe to drop.

The fear of doom can be birthed when the divorce is announced to the kids. Most divorces don't have a lot of screaming and yelling. From the child's viewpoint, there were no warning signs before they heard the words, "your father and I are getting a divorce." This announcement is traumatic enough that most of us never forget hearing them. But this trauma programs our

brains to expect life to change catastrophically and unexpectedly. Now, life *can* change unexpectedly, but adult children of divorce can carry this burden like a ball and chain. We rarely relax and carry anxiety with us all the time. We'll look at this in more detail later in this series as well.

Another fear is the fear of abandonment. Suddenly one of the parents is gone and that can cause us to fear being abandoned. But also there's a little voice that says since Dad left, Mom can leave too.

This fear of abandonment lurks beneath the surface and can manifest itself as a clingy or standoffish adult.

The clingy person wants to know where their wife or husband is at every moment. Their demands are cloaked in caring, but are rooted in the fear that their loved one will leave. The standoffish person has problems maintaining strong relationships. When a relationship starts to get serious, they break it off. Their excuse is usually along the lines of, "it wasn't the right person," The sad truth is, they would rather run than take the risk of being abandoned.

Host: Is that why we see good people going from relationship to relationship?

Coach: There can be a number of factors, but for adult children of divorce, it is something to be aware of.

And the last issue we'll cover in this session is connected to this; the fear of marriage. Adult children with divorced parents fear marriage usually because they fear divorce. Here's an example.

One day I was talking with a teenager who had divorced parents. The topic of marriage came up and he declared, "I'm never going to get married."

That surprised me so I asked why. After some thought, he replied, "Well, maybe I'll get married, but I'll never have kids." Again, I asked why. His response grieved my heart. He said, "if the marriage doesn't work out, I would never want my kids to suffer what I went through."

HOST: This was a teenager.

COACH: Yes. And because of the fear of marriage he may not marry or might live with a girlfriend instead. Cohabiting is on the increase, but men need to choose the godly way, not the way of perceived lowest risk. We hope to help that choice with this series.

Music Theme In

HOST: Thank you for listening to Champions Arise where men are equipped and strengthened to meet their God-given potential. This is the first in an eye opening series that is looking at issues adult children of divorce face. To learn more, go to our website www.championsarise.org and click on "Breaking the Cycle of Divorce."

I'm _____, for _____. We hope to see you again when we continue our look at how parental divorce continues to impact their adult children. And we hope you'll invite a friend as well.

May God mold you into the man He knows you can be.

¹ U.S. Bureau of Statistics; Mckinley Irvin <http://www.mckinleyirvin.com/blog/divorce/32-shocking-divorce-statistics/>

²<http://www.smartmarriages.com/before.breakup.html> accessed 11/6/12 Penn State Professor Paul Amato

³[ESV]