

Host: Today, many marriages end in divorce. As a result, millions of children are growing up in broken homes. Unfortunately, when these kids grow up, many are still negatively impacted by the effects of their parent's divorce.

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

Today we continue a series of programs that are looking at why adults with divorced parents often struggle to have healthy and lasting relationships. The goal of our coach, Kent Darcie, the founder of Adult Children of Divorce Ministries, is to provide resources that can help break the cycle of divorce that is so prevalent among adult children of divorce. Too often after a couple breaks up, their children have marriages that fail and their grandkids divorce as well.

But stay with us. Our coach is going to share great insights that can help you build relationships and marriages that not only honor God, but glorify Him to the world.

Music Theme out

Host: Coach, in our last program you spoke of how adults with divorced parents are unaware that they are being affected with anger, and fears as a direct result of their parent's divorce. What you shared made perfect sense. But, why have I, and I'm sure most of our listeners, not heard about these problems before?

Coach: My parents divorced when I was thirteen. Thirty years later I learned that millions of children of divorce, like me, dealt with anger, the fear of abandonment, the fear of doom, trust issues, and the fear of marriage. And I asked the same question. Why didn't I know about this?

The answers are intriguing and involve people on both sides of the divorce. On the one side are the parents. . Our parents love us and don't want to believe that their choices would harm us in the long term. Society has said that kids are resilient and bounce back from divorce quickly. So everybody wants to believe the divorce doesn't affect the children. They don't talk about it because they want to believe there is nothing to talk about.

On the other side of the divorce are the children who are now adults. First, they have been taught that their parent's split was a temporary blip and they should be over it. Basically, if they are any problems, they are not due to the divorce.

Secondly, .if they think the divorce is affecting how they respond in their current relationships they are faced with a dilemma; how do they admit that they have been negatively impacted by their parent's divorce without blaming them? Which brings up an important principal of our ministry, if I may continue.

Host: Please do.

Coach: In my presentations I don't teach on the topic of divorce. In these lessons, we won't discuss the theology of divorce or the pros and cons. It's important for your listeners to know that, if they are divorced, I'm not throwing stones at them or putting them down. In regards to our parents, the Bible is quite clear that we are to honor our fathers and mothers. So we will not cast blame. Unfortunately, when we speak about these issues, it may *feel* like we are casting blame. That is not my heart.

My approach is, our parent's divorce happened. How can we overcome its affects and decrease the likelihood of divorce in the future. The best way I've found to do this, is to honestly look at the problems. Even though it may feel like its personal, we have to talk about the impact in order to bring healing.

And today we are looking at trust.

Host: Is trust a major problem for adults with divorced parents?

Coach: Yes it is. Though most don't realize it on a conscious level, adult children of divorce have a difficult time trusting people. Friends, relatives, coworkers, even spouses, must earn their trust. Sometimes they test people to see if they are trustworthy. For example, a man who is afraid that his wife will leave him, might intentionally do things to make her mad. In provoking her, he is actually testing to see if he can trust her to stay with him. This man also doesn't realize that his unwarranted mistrust for his wife and others is rooted in his parent's divorce.

It is critical that adults with divorced parents understand issues like this because, in the case of trust, the people we deal with and love can get tired of being unfairly tested. Arguments can result or they might leave. Then the man says; see I knew that would happen. I knew I couldn't trust them. But we were the instigator of the problem. In essence, it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. We expect it to happen and we cause it to happen.

Host: Coach, I am sure that many eyes are being opened right now. Tell us how this mistrust starts in children with divorced parents.

Coach: Before the divorce, we trusted our parents unconditionally. Most of us had no reason not to trust them. As kids we live by, what I'll call, the kids rulebook. This imaginary book holds unwritten guidelines that parents are expected to follow.

Rule number one in the kid's rulebook states that mom and dad are supposed to love each other and be together in the family forever. Divorce shatters this rule. Even worse, the two most important people in their lives, who are supposed to be in love, are now saying horrible things about each other.

To the child, breaking this rule is like taking a favorite family picture, dropping it on the floor and watching it break. Then watching helplessly as mom and dad jump up and down on the broken frame.

Rule two says that parents are supposed to supply children's needs and keep them secure and safe.

Jesus said in Matthew 6:25-26 "do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?"²

But many of us did worry about these things. Because after the divorce, food, shelter, and clothing, often seemed dependent on a timely child support check.

Rule number three, in the children's imaginary rulebook, says parents are expected to honor their words. As a father of three, I learned that when my kids would ask a question that required a yes or no answer, I had to answer yes or no. "Maybe" was interpreted in their little brains, as

yes. "I'll think about it" meant yes. "Let's talk about that later" meant yes. In their minds, any phrase or word, other than the word "no", was yes.

After the divorce, kids expect parents to continue to honor their words, but often, well-meaning moms and dads don't. Statements are made like:

- *Of course I'll still see you all the time*
- *The divorce won't affect my love for you.*
- *I wouldn't miss your game*
- *Or, yes your mom and I are getting a divorce, but things won't change for you*

To adults, these are statements. But sometimes things have to change even though they had good intentions. As adults we understand that.

To children, though, these are not statements. They are promises. And promises should be honored not broken.

So when unmet promises are combined with parents who have animosity toward each other, and the feeling of being insecure and unsafe, cracks form in the foundation of a child's ability to trust.

And major cracks are formed when **the next rule** is broken. Kid's rule # 4 says that parent's should practice what they preach. Divorce often wreaks havoc with this one.

Host: That makes sense Coach, but can you give us an example of how divorced parents might teach one thing, but act differently?

Coach: One example involves something every young child is taught; don't talk to strangers. This works until the parents split up. This gets murky when they start seeing other people. The adult, for example the mom, is happy to have the attention and companionship of a new man. However, the child grew up with the familiarity of the dad. This new man, though familiar to the mom, is a stranger to the eight year old.

They are expected to trust this new person, but then the relationship stops. Then another man the child is supposed to trust is on the scene. From the child's perspective, the line separating who or what he can trust blurs. This becomes confusing and frustrating.

A more troubling example happens in *Christian* homes that breakup. Too often parents who, before the divorce, were very particular about following moral rules and the guidance of the scriptures, act very different after the divorce. And the kids see this inconsistency. While the younger children still want to trust anyway, teenagers see the hypocrisy and their trust is deeply challenged.

So the bottom line is, when these rules are broken, children of divorce start to accept the lie that all people can't be trusted. And as they become adults, this lie can undermine trust to such a degree that they often believe the only person they can trust is themselves. They expect people and situations to fail them. And that list of people can include friends, coworkers, spouses, and even God.

Host: Coach, Proverbs 3:5 says, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart.”¹ Are you saying adults with divorced parents can have a problem with that?

Coach: Unfortunately, yes. We have to remember to look at things from the child’s perspective. As a child, if you can’t trust your mom and dad, who you *can* see to “follow the rules,” if you will, how do you trust a God who you can’t see? And one step further, how do you trust a God who let all this happen? Who let your world collapse?

The answer to these questions we must acknowledge the fact that God has rules too. One of them doesn’t allow God to interfere with our choice to do right or wrong. This is best illustrated in Genesis chapters two and three. There we see that Adam and Eve could choose to follow God’s plan and avoid the tree of good and evil or choose their own plan. They chose to follow their own plan and mankind has suffered the consequences of sin ever since.

Our parents had a similar choice. They could follow God’s plan for a healthy marriage or their own plan. Unfortunately, one or both of them chose to follow their own plan. And we have suffered the consequences ever since. It’s not that God doesn’t love us, or isn’t trustworthy. It’s about Him allowing us to make choices.

Host: And trusting God’s plan is always our best choice.

Coach: Absolutely. Regardless of what may have happened in our pasts, God has a plan for our future. But we have to choose to trust Him and His word—the Bible. This is crucial as we go forward with this series. We will need God’s strength and His truth to conquer the issues we’ll be addressing. Case in point is what we will be looking at in our next lesson; the problem of anger.

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HOST: At Champions Arise we are committed to strengthening marriages and breaking the cycle of divorce. One way we can do this is to encourage you to apply the tools we are learning in this series. To learn more about this series, go to our website www.championsarise.org and click on “Breaking the Cycle of Divorce”

We trust this program has been informative and encouraging to you. Join us next time as we continue to look at issues that affect adults with divorced parents.

I’m _____, for _____ thanking you for taking time to listen to Champions Arise. May God bless you.

Music Theme out

¹[NKJV]