

Host: I will never forgive him for what he did to our family. Forgive *Him*? Not as long as I live!
Mike stormed out of the room and slammed the door.

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

Jesus spoke of the importance of forgiveness, but forgiving someone who hurt us can be very hard thing to do. For many reasons, forgiveness can be particularly complicated for adults with divorced parents. Our coach, Kent Darcie, will explain why forgiveness is such a challenge for these individuals and explore how they can overcome the obstacles. Kent is the founder of Adult Children of Divorce Ministries. As an adult child of divorce, he knows the challenges that can come when forgiveness is required. Whether you are from a divorced home or other situation, this discussion will give helpful insights and encouragement for those who stand in the shadow of an offense they must forgive. Please stay with us.

Music Theme out

Host: Coach, welcome back. [*if true* - My parents aren't divorced, but]
this series has really opened my eyes to the struggles many of my friends, coworkers, and even some of my relatives are having.

Coach: It's a privilege to be here and offer hope to those who have been affected by their parent's divorce. I do want to remind our listeners that, as we discuss these issues, we do not intend to blame or dishonor divorced parents. If you are divorced, you can relax. We won't demean you or try to make you feel bad.

I believe we have the same goal. Neither of us wants your adult children to experience a divorce. But in order to reduce that possibility, we must give them permission to learn about and discuss these things. As they start to heal, *you* will be one of the people who receive the blessing.

I can say this because after I learned how my parent's breakup impacted me, and worked through the healing process, my love for my mom and dad grew deeper and richer. So as we enter into the important topic of forgiveness, I ask for your grace.

Host: We hope *all* of our listeners will extend that grace to us as we deal with, quite frankly, an unpopular topic—the effects of divorce.

Coach: I believe, as God's people, we must deal with these issues.

Host: Indeed. So how are parental divorce and forgiveness connected?

Coach: Webster's definition of forgiveness is to give up resentment against or the desire to punish, or to give up all claim to punish or exact penalty for an offense; to overlook. Notice, that there are two sides in this definition. On the one you find the words "resentment", "punish", and "exact penalty". On the other side you have "to give up" and "overlook".

Forgiveness requires us to give up our desire for revenge or our right to be angry because of what someone did that hurt us.

But this gets complicated for adults who have divorced parents.

They have to accept that there is an offense. They must admit that there is something to forgive.

Host: What do you mean, admit that there is something to forgive?

Coach: The definition of forgiveness requires that you have to let go of an offense. Which means there has to be an offense in order to forgive. Sometimes, because our parent's divorce was years ago, we rationalize that whatever happened was not a big deal. Or there was a good reason for it to happen. So we don't treat it as an offense.

For example, maybe our mom wasn't able to see our games because she had to work. The fact that she had a good reason to miss our games doesn't take away the hurt we felt *because* she wasn't at our games. Over time, when the mom or dad misses a lot of things, hurt can become bitterness and unforgiveness.

If it's not dealt with in childhood, our unforgiveness will appear in adulthood. Again let's use the example of a parent missing our games. Only now it's our kid's games they are missing. You invite mom or dad and they can't make it and we get upset. But what we don't know is that we aren't upset because they're missing our child's game. We're perturbed because they ALWAYS miss his games... just like they "ALWAYS" missed *our* games. The unresolved offense from the past, that was probably forgotten, is suddenly triggered by an event in the present. Sometimes we'll be accused of "over reacting," which is actually true.

Host: But adult children of divorce don't see the connection.

Coach: Usually not. And if they do, another dilemma is created. Can you acknowledge hurt without blaming the parents you love? Often, we don't believe we can, so the original offense is ignored.

Host: But like the anger, anxiety, and fears we talked about previously, they don't just go away, do they?

Coach: No, contrary to the popular saying, time doesn't heal all wounds. The healing process begins with admitting the hurt.. This also lays the foundation for forgiveness. However, some of our listeners are thinking that there isn't anything to forgive. Hopefully that's true. But very often it is just wishful thinking. Deep down, we have an unwritten list of wrongs that were done to us.

- Maybe we're holding unforgiveness toward our parents for being shuttled back and forth between two homes and losing our weekends.
- Maybe we're annoyed at having to explain to our kids why they have 5, 6, or more grandparents.
- Maybe changing schools two years before graduation is on the list
- Maybe, because of the divorce, you lost that yearly special family vacation
- Maybe you're angry because you saw your dad shower gifts on his new wife and step-kids, but he never did that for your family
- Maybe the offense is your mom leaving with another man and devastating the family.
- Maybe it's because you had to do all the chores in the house and take care of your brothers and sisters. Consequently, you weren't able to have fun with your friends.

- Maybe it's because your father was so abusive your mom had to divorce him to protect you.
- Maybe on the list is that special event that your parent promised he or she would come to, but didn't
- Maybe it's because of the loneliness.
- Maybe it's because you think if they had stayed together you wouldn't have done some of the things you did.
- Maybe it's because you hate having to worry about how your parents are going to behave every time they get together.

Because each divorce happens to an individual family and is interpreted personally, the list of hurts varies. The wrongs or hurts are different from sibling to sibling. But, the offenses need to be dealt with and forgiven.

Host: Did you have a list of offenses from your parents?

Coach: Unfortunately, yes. This was a tough one for me, because I love my parents. But I had to come to a point where I admitted that I had a list of things that needed forgiving. Some items were big things and some small. And my parents weren't bad parents, but when I worked through this process, I was surprised by the amount of loss and hurt their divorce created.

This is not easy. It can be very difficult to admit you have unforgiveness against a parent. In most cases, we DO love our parents. So we block out, deny, rationalize, or bury the offenses and hurts. But, as a result, we don't heal and our relationships don't reach their full potential.

[used as the intro to session 8]

Host: Coach, what do you say to the person that believes they don't have a list; that they don't have an issue with unforgiveness?

Coach: If you have taken the steps to work through your unforgiveness, praise God. Help others to overcome their areas of unforgiveness as well. However, if you haven't, I would ask if you have any of these characteristics:

- Do you have a problem being around certain people? You "can't stand" being with them.
- Do you find yourself wanting to strike out at people when certain things happen? Like the example we used earlier of the divorced parent that always missed games. Would something like that upset you? Upset you too much in the opinion of people you love and respect
- Do you lose your temper over little things
- Do you have a secret desire for vengeance? Do you think how great it would be if things went bad for them or they would finally know how it feels?

If you can say yes to any of these questions, you probably have unforgiveness in your heart. And God is very specific about His position on forgiveness.

Host: There are a number of scriptures that talk about forgiveness.

Coach: Yes there are. When Jesus taught the disciples to pray In Matthew 6 verses 9 through 12, He said,
“Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.”¹

Jesus was more direct in Matthew 6 verses 14 and 15,
"For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”²

That is a very strong statement. And we might be tempted to think, well that’s easy for God to say. But God doesn’t just tell us to do things, He leads by example. We see this illustrated in Romans 5 verse 8 where it says.

“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”³

Host: While we were still sinners.

Coach: While we were still sinners. So when we look at any offenses we may have received from our parents, it is very important to deal with them from that perspective.

Unforgiveness can also affect us physically. It can lead to chronic anxiety, serious depression, poor self-esteem, anger, hatred and resentment.

Holding unforgiveness in our hearts greatly damages our relationships with others too. God only asks us to do two things; love Him with all of our heart and mind and soul and strength, and love our neighbor as ourselves. If we are holding unforgiveness against one or both of our parents because of the divorce, our relationship with God *and* our “neighbor” is affected.

Oddly enough, we sometimes see unforgiveness in the lives of one of our parents. Divorce can be very traumatic and hurtful. As a result, parents may hold a grudge or unforgiveness against the other for many years. It is very sad to see a person who allows the poison of unforgiveness to seep into their soul and slowly kill their joy, hope, and faith. I hope our listeners will take this message to heart and join us next time when we’ll look at how to take steps to forgive and explain what forgiveness isn’t.

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HOST: Thank you for listening to Champions Arise where men are equipped and strengthened to meet their God-given potential
To contact us, or to learn more about this series, go online to www.championsarise.org. and click on the “Breaking the Cycle of Divorce” link. Choosing to forgive may be hard, but it is always best. We hope you’ll join us next time when we finish our look at the challenges adult child of divorce have with forgiveness.

I'm _____, for _____. Thank you for listening to Champions Arise.
May God mold you into the man He knows you can be.

¹NKJV

²NKJV

³NKJV