

# Does the Shape of Families Shape Faith?

## Words of Advice Regarding Children of Divorce

### FOR PASTORS, YOUTH PASTORS AND CHILDREN'S PASTORS

- Create safe space for children of divorce.
- They will question and struggle for meaning when it comes to faith.
- Be a faith role model.
- If married, be a marriage role model.
- Divorce shapes the life story of a person.
- Be genuine and listen however possible.
- Acknowledging the trauma or wound of divorce can open a space for healing and hope.

### FOR PARENTS

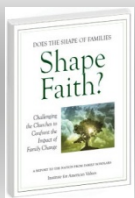
- If you want your child to be a faithful adult, strive to be a faithful person as a parent.
- Ultimately, your kids will likely practice their faith in a similar way to that you do.
- Kids tend to mimic your worship attendance patterns and will be involved in outreach, giving, and fellowship at similar levels to yours.
- The religious behavior of both mothers AND fathers matter.
- Your child's experience of the divorce is different from your experience of the divorce.
- You are always the adult in the family.
- Don't turn to your kids to cope.
- Your divorce impacts your child until death parts you. Remember that your child may feel like different versions of himself or herself in each of your respective households.

### FOR CHURCH MEMBERS

- The church is one of the few intergenerational places of community left in society.
- The role of grandparents, church members, and youth ministers can be pivotal in the faith development of a child of divorce.
- Be REAL and listen.
- Children of divorce tend to be "early moral forgers," meaning their questions and concerns are not necessarily a sign of precociousness.
- Help them feel safe to question and learn by listening and encouraging them to talk.
- If married, be a marriage role model.

### FOR CHILDREN OF DIVORCE

- God sees you and cares about you.
- The church cares about you and your family.
- The church will not allow the divorce of your parents define who you are.
- Your story is important and the divorce of your parents may be an integral part of that story.
- We care about how you make sense of the divorce of your parents in the light of your faith.



\* The advice contained herein is quoted or paraphrased from *Does the Shape of Families Shape Faith?* by Elizabeth Marquardt, Amy Zietlow, and Charles E. Stokes. For more information see our summary at <http://hope4hurtingkids.com/family/modern-families/spiritual-impacts-divorce-children-shape-families-shape-faith/>.

