

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

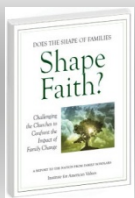
- If you want your child to be a faithful adult, strive to be a faithful person as a parent.
- Ultimately, your kids will likely practice their faith in a similar way to that you do.
- Kids tend to mimic your worship attendance patterns and will be involved in outreach, giving, and fellowship at similar 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/>.

