

Children Of Divorce

A testimony



"To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven" [Ecclesiastes 3:1]

As I started to write this article, these two little phrases came to mind from the rather famous passage of Ecclesiastes chapter 3:

A time to weep

A time to heal

I feel these words summarize the feelings of those whom are most victimized by divorce, the children. We need to weep over the destruction of a sacred institution - marriage - and often along with the breakdown of the family - and we need to realize that we need healing and that in time, we can be healed of the hurt and betrayal that we feel, as our parents leave us on the sidelines while they fight it out and while they become preoccupied with what is best for themselves. Bear in mind that I don't mean to minimize the serious problems and challenges that face married couples who may have gotten married all too quickly and naively. However, I also believe that people can and should take responsibility for their part in a relationship and I also believe that **selfishness** is the ugly root cause of the demise of most relationships, although unfaithfulness and other factors can surely lead to the breakdown of a marriage.

My writing this article is to help those contemplating divorce to understand the long term ramifications of this sad chapter in their lives. In the battlefield of divorce there are usually far more than 2 casualties and the healing period can span a lifetime. Those who think that divorce is the best solution to a problem marriage are as disillusioned as I was when my mom and dad divorced 25 years ago, just prior to their 25th anniversary. I thought that the best solution and the only solution to restore peace in our lives was for my parents to divorce. I guess I never figured there was any remote possibility for them to become naive again, like when they were engaged to be married and felt that they could and should commit themselves to a lifetime *loving* relationship.

So, in retrospect, what is the result of divorce? How does it impact the children in particular? That's what I'd like to concentrate on now...

Bear in mind that the following things are not an indictment against my own parents but represent some of the many issues that children of divorce are apt to be confronted with. I consider my situation to have been far better than others and even far better than my younger brother's situation since I was already in college (though still living at home) when my parents were at the height of their war against each other. So I was soon able to move out to more peaceful quarters. Whereas, my brother not only had to deal with the fighting while still very young and emotionally immature, but he also had to deal with issues I was spared from, since he had to live with a divorced and very bitter parent which is an experience I escaped from, by the grace of God, having found an affordable apartment to share with a close friend I met in college who I felt confident I could trust as a roommate.

In many but not all cases, divorce, **to the children**, means:
never spending birthdays, holidays, graduations, weddings, funerals, births (and just time growing up) with both parents
living with one parent and seldom, if ever seeing the other parent
putting up with the bitterness of the parent you live with
being expected to take sides against the parent you are not living with
having to travel the globe visiting one or both parents as time goes on
the loss of the nurturing that both parents normally provide
not having the example of a father and mother cooperatively raising children
not having the example of a husband and wife relating to each other in a healthy way
having parents who use money and things as a substitute for being there
having less time with the parent you end up staying with because they need to go out to work to provide money for the home plus run the household as well
having to live with a parent who is usually more stressed out than before because of the added work and responsibility of doing things without a partner to help bear the day-to-day burdens
learning that marriages and spouses are disposable
learning that commitment and self-sacrifice is not as important as personal happiness

When one or both parents get remarried it usually means:
having even less time with your parents around the holidays and special occasions
having to figure out what to call your new "mother" or "father" and always feeling awkward about it no matter how you end up addressing them
having new brothers or sisters overnight (i.e. step-brothers and step-sisters), who may be as resentful or hurt as you about all that has happened as the result of one or both divorced parents remarrying
learning that reconciliation is not an option
So do the kids in a marriage want the fighting to continue? Certainly not. But do they want it to stop at the expense of the marriage. No way! They just want their parents to stop behaving like selfish brats and start treating each other with respect and love as described here:

"Love is patient, love is kind, it is not jealous; love does not brag, it is not arrogant. It does not act disgracefully, it does not seek its own benefit; it is

not provoked, does not keep an account of a wrong suffered, it does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; it keeps every confidence, it believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails;" [1 Corinthians 13:4-8]

We certainly don't want to be ostriches about all this and stick our heads in the sand pretending that we live in a perfect world where people with very sinful stubborn hearts are going to want to make their marriage work. There are surely many cases where one of the parties wants a divorce at all costs and will not back down. However, with God all things are possible and He can and does change people. He also explains how He changes people. In a marriage, He explains how a faithful Christian wife can win over her unbelieving husband by her attitude and actions towards her husband:

"Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." [1Peter 3:1-4]

Similarly, God's instructions to husbands for a successful marriage are explained here, in simple, commonsense terms, yet these instructions are often not followed:

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church" [Ephesians 5:25-28]

But for God's formula to work it takes TIME and EFFORT. And most people are not willing to invest any more time or effort in their failing marriages. They prefer to take the P-O-L-R approach which is quite common to us humans. What does POLR stand for? **P**ath **O**f **L**east **R**esistance... In a marriage, that means: "exit stage left", as fast as you can and maybe grab one or two of the kids and as much money you can from the joint bank accounts while running out the door.

In God's economy though, a relationship is only as good as what you are

willing to sacrifice to preserve it and nurture it. In order for the Lord of the Universe to have a relationship to His people, He was willing to make the ultimate sacrifice. How much of a sacrifice are you willing to make in order to preserve your marriage and to cause it to flourish like it did when you first met – now that you have discovered that there is more to marriage and more to life than a physical relationship with minimal commitment? Have you yet discovered that what makes a marriage wonderful is the giving and forgiving and the peace of knowing that you are doing all you can – to make the other person feel special, feel appreciated, feel respected and feel truly loved **sacrificially** and not just someone whom you want to use to get what you want? — *RM Kane*

Epilogue

A final note to those having marriage problems: Based on my own experience, I do not recommend going to paid Christian counselors, but instead go to a **mature Christian couple** you trust, who have a healthy marriage and who have wisdom and experience gained during that marriage. Otherwise you or your spouse may think your counselor is taking sides and that won't help the situation. And paid counselors may hold back saying certain things for fear of losing paying "clients". Some counselors may not even have much if any marriage experience.

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Reflections On Christian Marriage Counseling

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