

Capstone Essay Sally F. van der Riet Light University Online FAPP 205  
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FAPP 205 Divorce Remarriage and Blended Families

Light University Online

## Module One

There are many aspects of Divorce and Remarriage that have to be looked at as an individual proceeds from a place of pain to a place of wholeness. As counselors, we can learn valuable steps in helping these individuals who have encountered the emotional challenge of divorce. In this essay, I will outline some concepts that have been eye-opening for me, and are constructive in the process of helping others. Firstly I will look at our role as counselor, taken from Module 1. I have chosen this because I find it very helpful to be equipped with tools in helping someone freshly out of the throes of divorce. I have learned how to communicate better with this person, with love and understanding, rather than prejudgement. In a real-life situation, I would want them to know that they are safe within the confines of the counseling time, and can be honest to the extreme. They can yell, cry, talk, but this will be a place where they can process the pain, and move to a place of hope. I am reminded of the Samaritan woman who was offered grace by Jesus, not judgement as she expected. When a person comes into our office, we can offer them the living water that Jesus talks about, that He loves them and has a future for them. They can grieve freely, and know that in the end, God can heal them and move them to a new place of wholeness, and ministry.

## Module Two

My second area of interest in this essay is the concept of forgiveness I learned about from Dr. R.T Kendall. I have chosen this section because for me, forgiveness is key to an individual's recovery and ultimate healing after divorce. I also see it emphasized as a recurring theme throughout the course. Matthew 6:14-15 says that if we forgive, God will forgive us, but if we don't, God cannot forgive us. Whilst this may seem heavy, it does place great importance on the need to forgive others with God's strength, in order that we may walk forgiven and free ourselves. In forgiving another person there are some important aspects to apply. Forgiveness begins in the heart. Truly letting the person go who wronged you, means giving it to God, for Him to deal with as He sees fit. It is a release that doesn't require any payback from that person or loss of dignity. It is choosing to pray for them, and as a person does this, they can release the burden over to God. As a counselor, I would want to help the individual walk out the various steps of forgiveness mentioned in Module 2, knowing that this may take time. I would want to help them see the vital importance of forgiving the spouse who wronged them, not because this spouse was right or even deserves it, but because the individual seeking healing, will find new freedom and release as they let their pain and vengeance for the other, go.

## Module Three

The next concept I will look at from Module 3 is identifying the problem areas children are facing as they are coming out of divorce. I have chosen this because for me, children are so important and valuable, and in the process of divorce, can often be forgotten or lost as the adult is processing his or her own challenges. If we can identify the challenging areas, we can better

equip them with necessary tools, as seen in my next paragraph. Children show grief differently. Identifying any depression and its manifestations is key to helping the child. There are many signs, loss of interest, withdrawal, physical pain, perhaps irritability. There may be physical expressions of the pain such as headaches or tummy ache in children. There may be behavior problems to look out for, lying, stealing. As counselors we can help them deal with their emotions. Children and teens must be given the freedom to talk out the pain and express themselves. They must be encouraged to release those feelings of negativity in order to move to place of acceptance. One can ask question such as “Do you feel sad?”, or “What do you feel you’ve lost?”. This can help a child to identify what is going on inside of them. As a counselor practically in a real-world situation, I would start with identifying what phase of development the child is in. Certain phases are more susceptible to anger and the full effects of divorce, such as the years between 9 and 11. I would identify the area of particular challenge for the child, and apply the above concepts of talking out the pain, helping them express themselves through key questions.

#### Module Four

In Module 4, I have identified another area I feel is crucial to the divorce recovery process, and it follows well, from the previous point. That is, how we can use the correct tools in helping teens through divorce. I have chosen this because a healthy teenager has a better chance of being a healthy adult. We must remember the importance of counseling children, not neglecting them in the face of the adult’s pain. There is a lot to this section but I will summarize in short, some key aspects. We need to help teens (and children), understand the divorce, separating the fantasy of what they dream of and hope for, from the facts. One can help identify patterns that may be hurting the child, such as negativity or fear of starting a task, and direct them to therapy. We want to help encourage the child to be a child, not carrying adult burdens on young shoulders. We want to help them through the grief in all its phases and encouraging them to love again, that there is hope again, and safety in the right relationships . The parents can be encouraged too, to play a role in the healing of the child. Their honest quest for wholeness and transparency, a strong marriage, and allowing the child to grieve, talk, love a stepparent as they are ready, all play a role in the recovering of the child from this divorce process. As a counselor, it would be my desire to help the child through the various steps of their pain and grief processing, and to involve the parent too, so that the healing process is best understood and shared for the wellbeing of their relationship.

#### Module Five

Lastly I find the subject of healthy Remarriage of importance, since it is a key concept in bringing healing and restoration back to the family unit. If it is done right, it can be glorious, done wrong, it can be a repeat of pain and bad cycles. So much of the success of this depends on the wholeness (not perfection), of the individual. If the individual is healthy, and dealing honestly with the weaknesses he or she may have carried from the previous marriage, there is a greater chance of success. The ability to communicate without reserve, and being able to share

thoughts and hurts without fear of rejection from the other, is crucial. Equipping the individual who is remarrying with a clear picture of reality - new responsibilities of children in a new marriage, stepchildren, financial changes, intimacy, both sexual and spiritual, give the person a realistic look at what they are taking on. I think the concept of honesty is key in this last topic I have chosen. As a counselor it would be my desire to help that individual deal with any past patterns that may hinder him or her. I would encourage them to communicate their hopes, dreams, disappointments, problems they have, fears, freely but in love. I would walk them through the various aspects of new responsibilities they will be taking on, each family situation differing from the next.

In conclusion, I would emphasize again the importance of concepts like transparency, forgiveness, and acceptance. Helping individuals going through this pain must be done from a place of love and a lack of prejudgement. Our role as counselors, is to encourage the eyes of their hearts to be opened with the help of the Holy Spirit. We want to equip them so that they can honestly and realistically embrace the changes they need to make in order to become whole. We can employ practical steps that help encourage this dialogue and and take an honest look at where they are, and the hope that lies ahead for them, in God.