



Divorce Ministry

SARAH FLANNERY

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Introductions

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Coming up...

Please share your
own experience
and/or expertise!

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Use the chat!

Questions
Topics to cover
Stories

Why include Divorce in Family Ministry?

- Prevalence in church and culture
- Affects whole family system
- Historically low church support
- Shameful connotations
- Long-term effects on family members

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*Divorce care starts with
our approach to
marriage*

Life Cycle of Divorce

①

**Anger, hurt, &
optimism**

②

**Anger, hurt, &
pessimism**

③

Anger & apathy

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*Assume that significant
trauma and hurt have
already occurred once a
divorce is announced.*

Why are Marital Problems so Private?

- Shame
- Cultural expectations
- Discomfort with giving/receiving vulnerability

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Discussion

Share your experience, either as a person affected by divorce or supporting a divorcing/divorced family.

- What was most helpful?
- What was most hurtful?

Supporting Families Through Divorce

- Become okay with divorce
- Recognize absence of closure
- Questions to ask:
 - Counseling
 - Prayer
 - Confidentiality—Who knows? What do kids know? Who can know?
 - Needs
 - Custodial arrangements

Supporting Families Through Divorce

- A big question:

Who gets to keep the church in the divorce?

Divorce Care for Parents

- Interrogate discipleship categories for adults: Where do divorced parents fit?
- Interrogate teaching about marriage
- Provide childcare

Divorce Care for Kids

- Holy Listening
 - More to offer older kids than younger kids
 - Listen for what they do share, and what they don't
 - Let kids know what confidentiality to expect
- With permission, prepare small group leaders
- Urge counseling
- Keep ministry time normal and predictable
- Do not insert yourself inappropriately

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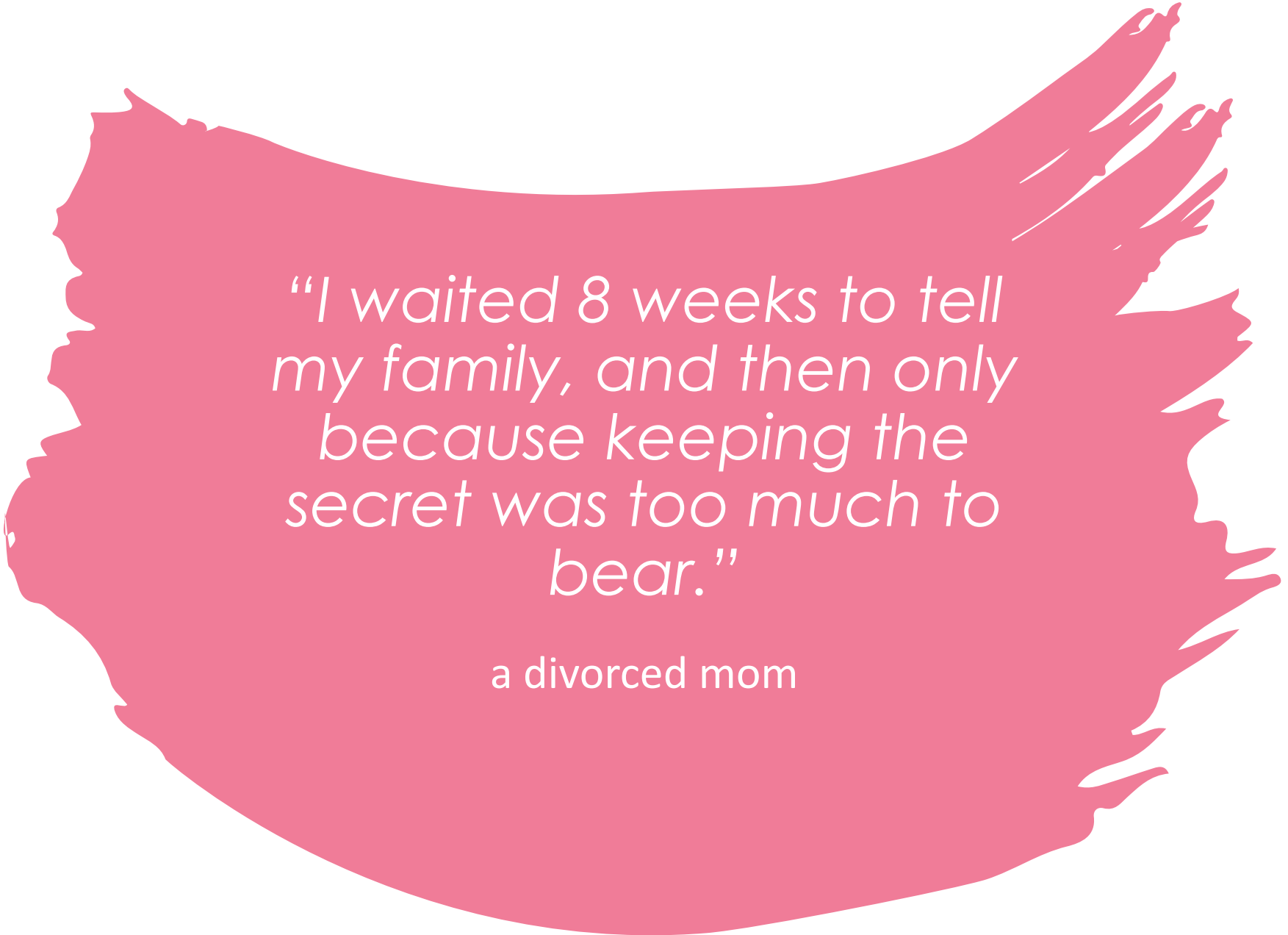
*“Being a spouse was
synonymous with
calling...”*

a divorced mom

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*“Even when a choice is
right, that doesn’t
mean it doesn’t hurt.”*

a divorced mom

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*“I waited 8 weeks to tell
my family, and then only
because keeping the
secret was too much to
bear.”*

a divorced mom

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*“God was at work all
the way through.”*

a divorced mom



Need to offer
kids more
examples of
family

Jesus

Jacob

David

Ruth



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Questions & Discussion

Comments or feedback?

Seeking input?

Resources to share?

Further Resources

- Mary Ellen Konieczny: “Individualized Marriage & Family Disruption Ministries in Congregations: How Culture Matters”
 - Realistic but confident about marriage
 - Empowered lay members
 - Cultural transformation of marriage ideals
 - Utilization of professional counseling

Further Resources

- Esther Perel: Mating in Captivity: Reconciling the Erotic and the Domestic
 - Today, we turn to one person to provide what an entire village once did: a sense of grounding, meaning, and continuity. At the same time, we expect our committed relationships to be romantic as well as emotionally and sexually fulfilling. Is it any wonder that so many relationships crumble under the weight of it all?"

Further Resources

- UMC Social Principles

However, when a married couple is estranged beyond reconciliation, even after thoughtful consideration and counsel, divorce is a regrettable alternative in the midst of brokenness. We grieve over the devastating emotional, spiritual, and economic consequences of divorce for all involved, understanding that women and especially children are disproportionately impacted by such burdens.