

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your correspondence to the Al Denson Show and for tuning in every week to our program. My prayer for you is to be encouraged in your daily walk with Christ through the words of this booklet. Our hope is that in turn you will tell others of what God is doing through our ministry to youth and parents on TV. I am convinced you will not find another program on any network anywhere that deals with issues today's youth and their parents are facing, and provides answers from a Godly perspective.

In addition, we would love for you to help us by going to our web site at www.aldenson.com. Here you can write to us, order additional material like this booklet, check out all my music, have a daily bible study, and stay up to date on the ministry. You can also send us a prayer request and questions for the TV show. But more importantly, please continue to be in prayer with us as we work together to help those that are in need.

Thanks for watching and God Bless!

Sincerely,



An Outreach of Celebration Ministries

The Al Denson Show
Box 220 Grapevine, TX 76099
Toll Free 1-877-HOPE101
Email: aldenson@aol.com
Web Site: www.aldenson.com





Most artists create for only a brief moment in time. That phenomenon was once known as "15 minutes of fame". Yet even in a fickle world, there still emerge a talented few that transcends time and trends. With nearly 15 years as a major label recording artist and seven hit

albums to his credit, Al Denson is that kind of artist.

But the attention and acclaim his artistry has brought him over the years are anything but the routine rewards of worldly success. Rather, they are the fruits of a life of purpose and passion, and a mission that has always reached far beyond merely making music.

The millions of young people Al has performed for, befriended, counseled, consoled and clowned around with in his career already know that. And thousands more are finding out every day.

This past year has seen Al expand his efforts to a global audience through the reach of his daily syndicated television production, "The Al Denson Show." "You've got to reach out to people where they are with the most powerful means and this form of media allows you to build trust and a rapport," says Al. "This has all been so amazing. I can't imagine what lies in store when the Lord finally calls me home, but I don't have to wait for heaven to receive rewards. I get them every time a kid comes up to me and says, 'I heard what you said, and I accepted Christ.' You can't ask for anything more or better than that."

Write Al at: Box 220 Grapevine, TX 76099
Email: aldenson@aol.com Web Site: www.aldenson.com

Fractured Families

I grew up in Houston, Texas on the south side of the city, half an hour from the Gulf of Mexico and only a few feet above sea level. The soil there is not really soil, it is something that we call "Texas gumbo" (it's a lot like clay).

All of the houses there are built on concrete slabs that sit on the gumbo. Now the only problem with this is that gumbo swells when it rains and shrinks when it is dry.

Eventually the constant shifting causes fractures in the foundations of the houses there.

Foundations can be fractured for years before you see outward evidence of the damage.

Then one day doors simply won't open and close properly, and cracks begin to appear in the walls.

Foundation repair costs thousands of dollars and is very messy, but if the repairs aren't done eventually the house will be damaged beyond repair. This problem can be prevented by digging down about 4 feet into the ground, removing all the gumbo, and replacing it with a substance that doesn't shift. Then when the slab is laid, the foundation is secure. This is a very costly and time-consuming procedure, and most home builders would rather take their chances because they are just not willing to take the time and pay the price before they build a house.

I think this is a pretty good description of divorce, too. When two people are not willing to take the time and pay the price to prepare a proper foundation before they build a marriage together, the results are very similar to

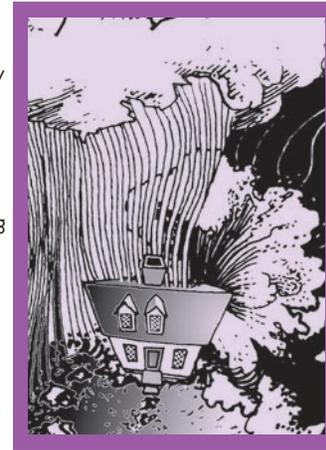
what happens when you build

a house in Houston on gumbo. In every marriage there are dry seasons and rainy seasons, and the problems, pressures, and stresses of life can do a number on your marriage if you don't have a good foundation.

They slowly begin to cause fractures in a weak foundation, sometimes without the couple even realizing what is

happening. Then one day cracks begin to appear where they are finally noticeable and if the needed repairs aren't made, a divorce happens. When it does the marriage is not the only casualty, a family is fractured as well.

It reminds me of what Jesus said in Matthew 7:24-27, "Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rains came down, and the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man



Forgiveness is not a feeling. It is a decision you make with an act of your will.

who built his house on the sand. The rain came down, and the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

On the surface it looks like there are many causes for divorce, but in reality there is only one—a weak foundation. The foundation on which the marriage is built will determine whether it is able to withstand the storms of this life. A foundation that is built on Christ and commitment to Him will stand. A couple who honestly counts the cost, works hard, prepares sufficiently, deals with the hard questions before marriage, and is anchored to Christ will not only survive the hard times, but will grow stronger as a result of hard times.

In Malachi 2:16 God says, “I hate divorce.” One reason God feels this way is because He knows there is not anything in this life more devastating than divorce. The feelings of pain, rejection, anger, loss, depression, confusion, fear, guilt, and failure are probably only matched by the death of a loved one. Divorce does fracture lives. God said in Genesis 2 that a man is to leave his father and mother and “cleave” to his wife. The word, “cleave,” comes from a word picture in the Hebrew language where two pieces of board are glued together (like plywood) to make one piece. If you try to separate the two after they become one you will splinter both boards. That is what divorce does, it fractures and splinters lives.

When divorce happens no one suffers any more than the children. Divorce is something that is not their fault, that they don’t want to see happen, that will effect them more than anyone else, and yet they have no control over it. Is it any wonder that so many kids never fully recover from the effects of their parents’ divorce? If you are hurting right now because your parents are talking about divorce, are in the middle of a divorce, or have gotten a divorce, you need to know that all is not lost for you and that you can come out of this OK. There is hope for you, but it is a choice. YOUR CHOICE.

Let’s look at some things you can do to help get you through this difficult time in your life. But, before you can do any of these things, there is something very important that you must do first.

Forgive Your Parents

The emotional wounds that parents inflict, whether intentional or unintentional, are the deepest and most long-lasting of any that we can ever receive in life. Many teenagers carry those wounds for the rest of their lives. You need to understand that unfortunately, solid, stable, functioning families in this world are the exception and not the rule. Family time for most people will always be the best of times and the worst of times. Life is a mixed bag of hurts and helps, and the only way to deal with all of this and get on with your life is to forgive. Hurt will happen; that is a fact of life,

and the only way those hurts can be healed is through forgiveness. This is the key to dealing with your pain and anger in a healthy, constructive way. Unfortunately, not even many Christian teens understand much about real, scriptural forgiveness. Here are some facts about forgiveness that you need to know:

- 1.** Forgiveness is not a feeling. It is a decision you make with an act of your will. It has nothing to do with the person who has offended you. It is first done for your own good. It is an emotional and spiritual release that must happen before there can be healing in your life.
- 2.** Forgiveness is undeserved pardon and an undeserved release. If you think forgiveness is only for those who ask for your forgiveness or deserve your forgiveness, then you don’t understand forgiveness at all.
- 3.** Forgiveness is not denying, or excusing, or minimizing what happened. It is being honest and objective about the offense, the pain, and the consequences caused by the offender.

Maybe you have a hard time with forgiveness because you believe that if you forgive your parents you will be excusing their behavior, or letting them off the hook. Nothing could be further from the truth. Forgiveness is acknowledging that what was done is wrong and inexcusable, but choosing to show your parents the same kind of forgiveness God has shown you. Colossians 3:13 says, “Bear with each other and FORGIVE whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as God

forgave you.” The forgiveness that Jesus offers is unconditional and complete. You don’t deserve it, and He provided it before you ever asked for it or even knew you needed it.

Forgiving is not a suggestion, it is a commandment, and God gives it to you for your own well-being. When you have been offended, you experience the pain of the offense when it happens. But the initial pain of the wrong done to you is usually quite small compared to the pain of reliving the offense over and over again in your minds. Unforgiveness is like a tape recorder on automatic rewind that plays the hurtful experience again and again.

God knows that unforgiveness is also the soil in which bitterness grows. Bitterness is a poisonous plant with deadly fruit: depression, anger, hostility, resentment, rage, physical, mental and emotional disorders; and the inability to love and trust others. Bitterness will make you extremely vulnerable to unwise decisions and destructive patterns of living. It can keep you from being able to love and be loved unconditionally, it can cause you to doubt your salvation, it can keep you from being able to pray effectively, and make it impossible for you to live a consistent Christian life. In short, it is like a cancer of the soul that will go on to destroy you physically, mentally, spiritually and emotionally. This is a highly contagious condition that will spread down through generations if left unchecked.

When you choose to forgive you are simply saying, "I refuse to allow the actions of my parents to control and destroy my life. Life is precious and not to be wasted in anger and bitterness. Satan may have meant this for evil in my life, but I choose to use it for good. Satan may have meant it to destroy me, but I choose to let it grow me instead. Satan may have meant it to tear me down, but I choose to let it help make me stronger, wiser and more mature."

Remember, no matter how horribly you have been treated, it could never compare with how horrible you were to God. Your sin drove the nails through the hands and feet of His only Son, and yet He forgave you completely while you were still in your sin. Don't let unforgiveness keep you from being in fellowship with God, and from being able to live a consistent, godly life. What choice will you make? You can't control what your parents do, but you can decide not to allow the actions of your parents control or destroy your life. God loves you, and wants you to live life full and free. You need to understand that while forgiveness will be hard, it is not an impossibility because God NEVER asks us to do the impossible.

The thought of forgiving your parents may truly seem impossible to you because you have never known real forgiveness yourself, and you can't give what you have never received. Maybe the place where you need to start is by admitting to your Heavenly Father that you are

a sinner and in need of His forgiveness. God wants you to be clean and free of all of your sin. You can become His child by accepting Jesus' death on the cross as payment for your sin, by asking Him to forgive you and to save you. You simply must be willing to open wide your life for Him to come in and take control. The Bible says at the moment you do that, that the "old" you dies and a "new" you is born in your place. The new you is completely and totally forgiven. Once you have received God's forgiveness you will be able to pass that same forgiveness along to everyone who has hurt or offended you, including your parents.

After you have forgiven your parents (and this will need to be an ongoing process as new offenses and hurts happen), you will be free to face some of the hard issues surrounding what



is happening to your family. Here are some of the most common questions that I get from teenagers like you, and some action steps you can take:

A. What can I do to stop my parents from getting a divorce?

This is probably the first question every kid asks when they hear their parents are talking about divorce. The answer is not easy to accept but the truth is, there is probably little, if anything, you can do. You can let your parents know how you feel and encourage them to get counseling before they do anything final; however the only real cure is for both of them to be willing to look to God as their only source of help and to do whatever it takes to save their marriage. Unless both are willing to do this, the divorce will probably happen.

As upsetting as this is, you do not have to allow your parents' wrong choices to destroy your life. There are some positive things you can do to ensure this:

1. The first step in dealing with all of your hurt is to be honest about it. Talk to someone who can help--a pastor, Christian counselor, or any Christian adult who is mature and wise enough to help you work through your feelings. Talking to the right person helps, and dealing with these negative emotions now will keep you from dragging them around for the rest of your life.

2. Find another teen or young adult you admire who has gone through the same thing and done well. It helps to talk to someone who has "been there."

3. Allow yourself time to grieve. Divorce is a loss, just like if one of your parents had died. Grief has stages and you must allow yourself the time to get through each one. Life will seem very painful at first, but in time the pain will lessen and life will go on. The only way to "get through" is to "go through." You just have to let the deep pain hurt and not be afraid of it.

4. Make God your source of strength, help, and comfort. Spend time with Him and in His Word every day. Pour out your heart to Him and make your relationship with God your focus. Stay close to your church family and to your Christian friends.

5. Resist the temptation to find an escape for your pain in alcohol, drugs, or sex. Whatever relief they might give you will be temporary, and you will end up with more problems than you started with.

6. Don't give up on life. When your world gets rocked, the temptation is to give up and bail out of everything in life that is important--to quit caring about school, grades, and the future. Remember, God has promised in Jeremiah 29:11 that He has "good plans for you, not plans to hurt you. Plans to give you a future and a hope." Life isn't always easy, but it isn't hopeless, either.

Life isn't always fair, so learn now to make the best out of what you have been given to work with.

B. Why do I feel like my parents divorce is my fault?

Divorce feels like rejection, so you assume that if you are being rejected it must be because you have either failed at being a kid, or have become unacceptable in some way. So, you begin to play the "Blame Game" that says: "Those who do fail are unworthy of love and deserve to be punished." Your logic, at that point, tells you that the divorce is your punishment for not being perfect. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Although it is normal and natural for you to feel like your parents' problems are your fault, they are not. You are not the cause of your parents' divorce. A child can never be bad enough to wreck a good marriage or good enough to fix a bad one. The problem is with your parents, not you. The decisions that have been and are being made in their relationship are theirs. You did not make the mistakes, they did. When you are young it is very difficult to see your parents as people and to admit that they aren't perfect. Somehow that realization seems scary to face because it makes you feel less secure. But they are human, and like the rest of the human race, have to take the responsibility for who, what, and where they are in life.

C. The Judge says I have to choose which parent I want to live with. I don't know what to say.

Understand that this is a no-win situation so you have to decide what will be best for you and not feel guilty about your decision. If one parent can't support or take care of you, or has been abusive to you, then the choice will not be difficult. If both parents love you and want you to live with them, then of course, the choice will be hard to make.

You need to first decide which parent you are the closest to and feel the most comfortable with. Also ask yourself, "Which would cause the least amount of upset my life?" If you would have to change schools, churches, leave your friends, or move away, this would definitely be a big deciding factor. The less change you have in your life, the less stress you will experience. Another very important thing to consider is this: which of your parents has a closer relationship with God, is more stable, and would have the strength to set limits for you and enforce them? The parent that will challenge you to always do the right thing and to grow is probably whom you need to be with.

Seriously pray about this decision and ask others to help you pray. Ask the opinion of adults that you respect and trust who know your family. Remember, you are being put in a very unfair situation and being forced to make a decision that no child should ever have to make. Life isn't always fair, so learn now to make the best out of what you have been given to work with. Make the best choice that you can, and leave it in God's hands.

D. My parents are divorced and I hate it when they "bad mouth" each other to me. How can I get them to stop?

What your parents are doing to you is very wrong, but try to see what is really going on here. You must first understand that your parents have both been wounded very badly. Until they are willing to forgive each other, they are going to be "stuck" emotionally in the war zone where they live. They need healing in their lives that only God can give.

Your parents are probably feeling very insecure right now. They have lost each other and they may be fearful of losing you, too. Your mom may be afraid that your dad will turn you against her, or your dad may fear that your mom will turn you against him. They both may mistakenly believe that the only way to keep that from happening is to let you know that the other is not perfect.

Because they can't communicate with each

other, they may try to use you as a go-between to get back at the other. They truly don't mean to hurt you, but they are very hurt and it is a fact of life that "hurting people hurt people." Unfortunately, instead of acting like adults who control their emotions, they are acting like children who allow their emotions to control them.

There is something you can do. You need to let them know how you feel and you can do that by writing each of them a letter. Tell them how much you love them and assure them that your love for them will never change. Let them know that you need both of them in your life very much. Without condemning them or trying to make them feel guilty, let them know how much you hate it when they put your other parent down.

Tell them how upset it makes you and how bad it makes you feel. Say that you don't believe that kind of talk is good for any of you, and tell them that you would appreciate it if they wouldn't say anything negative about the other in your presence. It would be a good idea to let an adult you trust read your letters before you give them to your parents to make sure they are worded well. If the letters don't make a difference in their attitudes, you could ask a third person (like your pastor or a counselor) to meet with the three of you, where you could say these things to them at the same time.



E. My mother got remarried and I don't like my stepfather. What do I do?

You may have just gotten used to the idea of your parents being divorced, and you may have been enjoying having your mother all to yourself. If your parents' marriage was a very unhappy one, you may even have a sense of relief or may be enjoying the lack of tension and fighting. Now another big change has come into your life, and once again, it is a change over which you had no control.

First, you need to decide why you don't like this man. Be honest--is it because you resent sharing your mother? Is it because you are angry over having no control over a situation that affects you so greatly? Is it because you think that this man is trying to take your dad's place?

You need to understand that no one can take your dad's place in your life or in your heart. For the sake of all involved you need to make every effort to get to know him and accept him, even though he may be very different from your dad. Trying to blend two families is awkward and painful at times. The thought of being a part of a new family may be very hard for you to take, but with God's help, you can do it.

You must decide how you are going to see your life. Some kids have no family and no one to love them. You now have an expanded family with many more opportunities for love and relationships. You must decide whether

you are going to live in the past, the land of "what ifs" and "what might have been" and make yourself and everyone else miserable, or move forward. Paul says in Philippians 3:13b, "But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind, I reach forward to what lies ahead."

You must be willing to let go of the past. Past events can hold you captive. Unless you are willing to be free from the bondage of the past, you will never be able to experience all God has for you. You'll never be able to look to the future if you are focused on the wounds, hurts, struggles and pain of the past. You can't run the race God has for you by running backwards!

You also need to realize that it takes time to build relationships, so keep your expectations low. It may take years to really feel like a family. That doesn't mean that you can't be friendly and kind in the meantime. Treat your stepfather as a friend, not a parent. Look for things that you have in common and be willing to spend time developing the friendship just as you would with any new friend. Most of the time you will find what you look for. If you are only looking for negative things, you are most likely to find them. But if you look for the positive in your stepfather you will probably find that, too. Give the guy a chance. If he is kind and loving to your mother, be grateful.

One other thing, don't feel that you are being disloyal to your real dad by accepting your step-dad. Again, the divorce was not

your idea or in your control. Neither was your mom's remarriage. All you can do now is make the best of it and move on. If your dad has a hardtime with your mother's remarriage or your stepfather, that will have to be his problem to deal with. Don't allow the hurt from your parents wrong choices to continue to spill over into your life. The thoughts you think, the words you say, the attitude you have, and the way you choose to live today will determine what is on the other side of tomorrow for you.

Your family has been fractured. The pain and anger have been exposed and expressed. Is life ever the same again? No. That doesn't mean that life has to be bad, just different. It is like a man who has had a leg amputated. For a long time there is a fierce and continuous pain. If treated properly, the stump where his leg was will heal.

Eventually, he will regain enough strength to function with a wooden leg. He will still continue to have pain occasionally, and will have some good days and some bad days. In time, the man will be able to do almost all of the things he did before he lost his leg, but there will never be a time when things won't be different. Getting up, sitting down, bathing,

dressing will all be different, because his life has been changed. The scar will remain, but health will replace the pain if the healing process is allowed to take place.

You have been through one of the most painful experiences in life--a divorce. There may be bitter memories that need to be forgiven and laid aside. There may be wounds that need to heal and remembered no more. You need a new beginning and you need hope.

Christians have a solid reason for hope and it is the Person of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. He is "...a friend who sticks closer than a brother" (Proverbs 18:24). He is your hope and that hope will get you through. If you are feeling

hopeless about your life, your family, and your future, you can make a choice to take your eyes off the hurt and the problems in your life and put them on Jesus. You can make the choice to trust God to take all the pieces of your shattered, fractured family and make something beautiful again. When you do, hope will follow.

Don't allow the hurt from your parents wrong choices to continue to spill over into your life.