

**MOVIE: “Stepmom”****Sub Topic Theme:**

Loss Through Divorce

**Lesson Objective:**

The purpose of this lesson is to help students see that what they are personally experiencing is probably not unusual for families going through divorce. It can be easy for them to feel like nobody else understands or think that what they are going through should be kept secret, but that only makes divorce worse. This lesson focuses on understanding others’ feelings and perspectives on divorce while also encouraging students to be vocal and share their needs.

**Intro to the Movie:***Stepmom*

According to IMDB.com

Anna and Ben, the two children of Jackie and Luke, have to cope with the fact that their parents divorced and that there is a new woman in their father's life: Isabel, a successful photographer. She does her best to treat the kids in a way that makes them still feel at home when being with their dad, but also loves her work and does not plan to give it up. But Jackie, a full-time mother, regards Isabel's efforts as offensively insufficient. She can't understand that work can be important to her as well as the kids. The conflict between them is deepened by the sudden diagnose of cancer, which might may be deadly for Jackie. They all have to learn a little in order to grow together.

**(The 3D Lenses)** When watching the movie make sure to watch for the ways that the divorce affects the lives of Anna and Ben. When we join them, they will have already coped with a lot, but there is still much more to come. Focus on helping students see all aspects of the divorce and how it wears on all members of the family. Then focus on how they can help while still being aware of their own needs in the midst of this loss of a parent.

**Discussion Group Questions:**

1. What are some things you saw that really stuck out to you? Why do you think they did? Were they funny? Could you relate to them?
2. Anna, Ben, Jackie, Luke and Isabel are the five main characters in this movie. What are different things that each of them had to deal with and learn to overcome or work through? How do you think they felt going through each situation?
3. Thinking about the five main characters and their struggles, what are things that each of them lost? How would this affect them? Would this change how they interacted with each other?
4. How did the parents and stepparents have to learn to work together? What do you think some of their specific struggles were? How could Anna and Ben have helped out more or differently?
5. What are better ways Anna could have communicated her needs?

**Group input:**

Leader-solicited responses from the large group on reactions to some of the questions.

Gathering of ideas and themes recognized in the discussion groups with a focus on guiding the audience toward the main objective: *The purpose of this lesson is to help students see that what they are experiencing is probably not unusual for families going through divorce. It can be easy for them to feel like nobody else understands or think that what they are going through should be kept secret, but that only makes divorce worse. This lesson focuses on understanding others feelings and perspectives on divorce while also encouraging students to be vocal and share their needs.*

**Bullet Objective:**

*Put this summary section in your own words, but here are some ideas you can use:*

When we look at this movie, we see an example of what many students (maybe you) deal with on a daily basis. It can be hard having so much of your life change. We experience great loss when divorce becomes a reality in our lives, but we don't have to let that control who we are and what we become.

It takes time to work through the different things that come up in the battlefield of divorce; often times it gets ugly, but as we have seen in the movie, sometimes it does not have to be so gruesome. Sometimes when we communicate with each other, we can be a

part of building something better. Eventually, Jackie and Isabel were able to share their fears with one another, and it helped them to understand each other better. It helped them to get along better and accept one another. All because they were honest!

I'm not saying sharing your fears is easy, but if you're already in the middle of the battle and nothing else seems to be working, why not try it? When we understand one another better, we can love and care for one another better. Think back to the scene at the ice rink. Jackie shares with Isabel about the birth of her two children. At first it may have sounded weird, but what she was really doing was giving the new stepmom insight into her children's lives and hearts. You see, even though Jackie may not have liked it at first, she at least recognized that Isabel was there to stay, so she helped her out.

That's another thing. As students, you're not the ones getting divorced; your parents are. There is only so much you can do to change things or make things better because you're on the sidelines. This isn't a game you get to play; it's one you just have to be at and coach from the side. You can suggest things, pray for them and be present with them, but only they can choose to forgive, to love again and be present with you. It's hard because maybe you see what they can't. You see them slipping away or not being themselves. You feel yourself losing them, but they don't. What do you do? It's very tough when you're not in control of that.

Check out this scene where Jesus has some interaction with a crowd about marriage and divorce.

## Matthew 19

### Jesus Teaches about Divorce

**19** When Jesus finished saying these things, he left Galilee and went to the territory of Judea on the other side of the Jordan River. **2** Large crowds followed him, and he healed them there.

**3** Some Pharisees came to him and tried to trap him by asking, "Does our Law allow a man to divorce his wife for whatever reason he wishes?"

**4** Jesus answered, "Haven't you read the scripture that says that in the beginning the Creator made people male and female? **5** And God said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and unite with his wife, and the two will become one.' **6** So they are no longer two, but one. No human being must separate, then, what God has joined together."

**7** The Pharisees asked him, "Why, then, did Moses give the law for a man to hand his wife a divorce notice and send her away?"

**8** Jesus answered, “Moses gave you permission to divorce your wives because you are so hard to teach. But it was not like that at the time of creation. **9** I tell you, then, that any man who divorces his wife for any cause other than her unfaithfulness, commits adultery if he marries some other woman.”

**10** His disciples said to him, “If this is how it is between a man and his wife, it is better not to marry.”

Jesus, like his heavenly father, did not care for divorce, because he knew what pain and loss it caused for all involved! You can be assured above all else that Jesus knows what you are going through if your parents are getting (or have gotten) a divorce. He knows it rips relationships apart, hurts our hearts deeply, and creates a deep sense of loss. It is never the way that it's supposed to be, but it happens.

As Jesus loves you, you can become free to love those who have caused brokenness in your life. Divorce does not mean that your parents are lost to you forever. Remember that others in your family are struggling too. Find ways to love them in their pain as well. Pursue Jesus and see others from his perspective.

### Challenge:

1. As you walk through this season of life, challenge yourself to get into God's word more than you ever have. That's why God gave us his word, to guide us. Get into God's word at least three times this week if you don't read it very often. If you are already digging into God's word, do it at least five times and try memorizing parts of scripture that speak truth to you. You'll be surprised how God's word starts to shape your life in bigger and bigger ways.
2. What does a new rhythm for your family look like? Change is hard; it takes time to figure things out. The challenge is to help in the ways that you can. Talk to your siblings. Maybe it's awkward at first or hard. Maybe they don't even want to talk, but be patient. Sometimes it takes one person being honest first to open up others.
3. Keep a pulse on your own heart. Know when you are struggling and don't be afraid to speak up. We can only be there for others when we are willing to dig deep ourselves. Find a friend or mentor you trust and have them check in on you. Maybe it's someone who has walked this road already or someone you just trust. Sometimes it's good to have someone outside the family to help you gain another perspective. Be open with them and pray with them for the healing and guidance that you and your family need through this season.

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*Pray for God's purpose and love to put it into action and transform lives. Remind them of the online personal journey at ReZilient Life for further involvement with this topic of Losing a Parent: Loss Through Divorce.*