

Marriage Ministry Tip Sheet

for blended families
and marriages

Did you know?

- Stepfamily couples (stepcouples) undoubtedly are part of your church family. Nationally, 40% of couples with children are stepcouples and 100 million people in the US have a step-relationship of some kind.

Here's the problem:

- Stepfamily dynamics impact stepcouple health as much or more than the marriage itself making the typical marriage ministry only about half of what stepcouples need. Therefore, you might consider:
 1. Pointing stepcouples in your marriage ministry toward specific materials & training designed for blended families.
 2. Sprinkling brief side-lectures for stepcouples ("side-bars") throughout your general marriage teaching.

Challenges:

- Shame or embarrassment prevents many stepcouples from attending blended family training. **SOLUTION:** Publically communicate support and "come as you are" messages that welcome stepcouples.
- When blended families are formed following the death of a spouse, stepcouples often assume they won't have challenges. **SOLUTION:** Use examples that involve widowed people.
- Leaders who fear this ministry condones divorce. **SOLUTION:** Be clear in communicating God's design for lifelong marriage and that we are called to honor God with the marriage we are in.

Blended Family Ministry: A Redemptive Ministry

A healthy stepfamily:

1. Prevents redivorce.
2. Supports healthy child development.
3. Prevents divorce in the next generation by providing a new model of life-long Biblical marriage to children.

Strong stepfamilies can break the generational cycle of divorce!

What can you do?

- Offer a small group, workshop, Bible class, webinar, or conference/event specifically for stepcouples. Find curriculum at FamilyLife.com/blended.
- Host a quarterly forum to help couples anticipate calendar stressors (e.g. holidays) and find encouragement from others.
- Train marriage mentors.
- Offer stepfamily specific pre-stepfamily counseling/training.
- Make books and DVD resources available.
- Use social media and your church website to promote all of these.

Why blended family ministry?

- Marital isolation for stepcouples is often tied to stressors like ex-spouses, previous hurt, or holiday/special day traditions and expectations.
- First marriage couples frequently have conflict around topics like money and sex; stepcouples have conflict around kids and parenting.
- The process of "blending" is hampered by powerful and stubborn insider/outsider dynamics. When stress hits, insiders (biological family members) tend to lock down & defend each other against outsiders.
- Stepparenting is radically different than parenting.
- Traditional marriage and family ministry does not address the above. Let us help you strengthen stepfamilies.

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strengthening stepfamilies

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