

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 113 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.
- ◇ Attend the Summit on Stepfamily Ministry, the only event geared toward equipping the church to ministry to stepfamilies.

SummitonStepfamilies.com



Why Blended Family Ministry?

- ◇ Marital isolation for stepcouples is often tied to stressors like former 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.