

Marriage Ministry Tip Sheet

For Military 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.

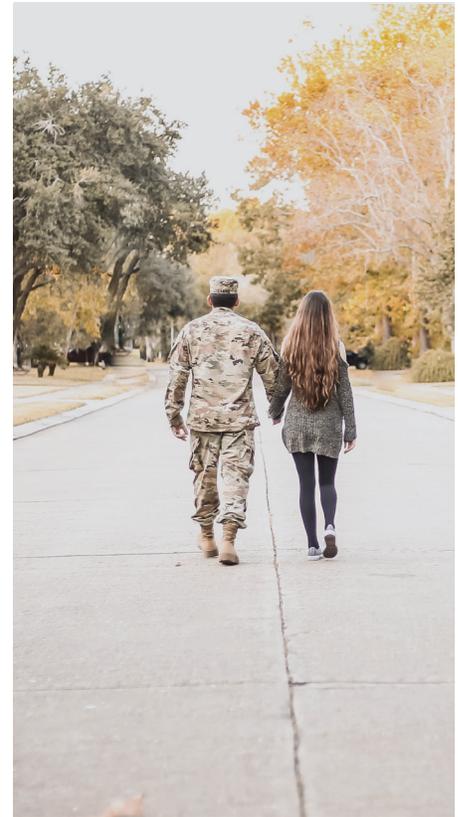
Blended Family Ministry: A Redemptive Ministry

- ◇ 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, an annual event that will equip you to minister to stepfamilies. SummitonStepfamilies.com



Why Military Stepfamily Ministry?

- ◇ Prior to 9/11, more than one third of military families involved a remarriage for at least one of the spouses in the marriage, many of which created stepfamilies.
- ◇ Military couples marry, divorce, and remarry at a younger age and more frequently than their civilian counterparts.
- ◇ Military stepcouples experience added stressors beyond the normal conflicts of blended families.
- ◇ Distance between parents and children due to military relocations creates emotional and legal challenges.
- ◇ Deployments challenge military stepfamily visitation schedules and legal guardianship and can force court hearings to adjust custody arrangements.
- ◇ Traditional marriage and family ministry does not address these challenges of blended military life. Let us help you strengthen military stepfamilies.