Blending **FAMILIES**



Building your family's faith at home

— Guides

SUCCESSFULLY BLENDING FAMILIES

"Did you ever notice how The Brady Bunch got just about all their stepfamily challenges worked out in the first episode?" asks Ron Deal of Successful Stepfamilies.

Ron works alongside a growing number of ministries coaching families on biblical principles to overcome the challenges of blending their families. Any home in which at least one spouse brings children from a prior relationship knows that it is much harder in real life than it was for the Brady family. That's why blended families need to add an extra measure of intentionality, including several important steps.

STEP 1 Recognize a Higher Calling

Even though blended families are becoming a more common family structure, making them work well remains a real challenge due to the extra logistics and emotional landmines that are part of merging two homes into one. The additional challenges you face in building a strong marriage and family make following Jesus' example of laying down your life for others even more essential. That calling is clear in the letter Paul wrote to the Philippians:

Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bond servant, and coming in the likeness of men.

- Philippians 2:4-7 (NKJV)

Regardless of your circumstances – whether your new family was the result of a death, divorce or some painful choices – you are called to lay aside your own interests in order to serve those God has placed in your home (Matthew 16:24–25).

STEP 2 Focus on the Children

Various family experts stress that strong families start with strong marriages – as the relational health of the couple goes, so goes that of the children. That's not necessarily the priority, however, with blended families. Ron Deal has found that couples must first invest in the children they've brought together in order to be able to experience a growing marriage.

This is especially true in the area of establishing authority. Children need parents to exercise legitimate authority over them. Unfortunately, children often see the authority exercised by non-biological parents as illegitimate. When this becomes evident, stepparents are tempted to either bulldoze their way to authority or just leave most of the work to the biological parent. Either of these options leads to greater stress. Non-biological parents still need to exercise an appropriate measure of authority – but they do need to earn respect, not just demand it. Ask the Lord to give you an extra measure of patience and humility in dealing with stepchildren – especially when you know they have experienced the pain of divorcing parents or the grief of a deceased mom or dad which can cause long-term emotional trauma.

STEP 3 Allow God to Redeem Your Story

In Joel 2:25 (NIV), God says, "I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten." Every stepfamily brings with it the hope for a redeemed life story – the hope that difficult chapters of the past can be followed by better days. Stepfamilies quickly learn that better days don't appear magically. As they submit to God's calling and trust His ability to write their stories, however, they find He is still able to make all things new.

Going Further Resources

The Smart Step-Family: The 7 Steps to a Healthy Family by Ron Deal // Provides a solid biblical framework and practical guidance for helping stepfamilies work to honor God

Saving Your Second Marriage Before It Starts by Les & Leslie Parrott // Prepares couples for what lies ahead and enables them to tackle the challenges with faith, perseverance and hope

Familylife.com/blended

Provides biblically based resources that help prevent re-divorce, strengthen step-families, and help break the generational cycle of divorce

Going Further Prestonwood Support

LifeGroup Bible Studies

Prestonwood offers a variety of Adult LifeGroups for every season of life. Consult the Group Locator Guide at the campus information booths to find one that fits your schedule and family life-stage or visit prestonwood.org/groups.

DivorceCare

A support group for those experiencing separation and in the process of divorce, and those divorced, and a recovery process for those rebuilding their lives after a divorce (Plano Campus). For more information, visit prestonwood.org.

Professional Counseling

Prestonwood can refer members to offsite, Christ-centered professional counseling for adults, adolescents and children.

Mentors4Couples

Mentors4Couples combines Christ-centered, biblical marriage principles with applied training that helps to strengthen marriages. Couples desiring marriage discipleship (mentees) are paired with one of our godly and vulnerable, trustworthy mentor couples. Together, you walk through a curriculum to enrich your marriage. Your mentors will help you build the marriage you've always wanted through a six-to-nine-month discipleship process.

For additional resources, scan code:



