

JAMES CRUISE MINISTRIES

"God chooses what we go through. We choose how we go through it."

STEP, BLENDED & BLENDING FAMILIES

You and your partner have decided to make a life together and form a new, blended family that includes children from one or both of your previous relationships. Congratulations. What lies ahead can be both a rewarding and a challenging experience. It can take a long time for a blended family to begin to feel comfortable and function well together.

While you as parents are likely to approach remarriage and a new blended family with great joy and expectation, your kids or your new spouse's kids may not be nearly as excited. They'll likely feel uncertain about the upcoming changes and how they will affect relationships with their natural parents. They'll also be worried about living with new stepsiblings, whom they may not know well, or worse, ones they may not even like.

To give yourself the best chance of success...

It's important to start planning how a blended family will function before the marriage even takes place

- First and second marriages are like apples & oranges. Nothing alike... ▪

- 1300 new stepfamilies are forming every day.
- The average marriage in America lasts only seven years.
- One out of two marriages ends in divorce.
- 75% of those divorced remarry
- Over 50% of US families are remarried or re-coupled.
- 66% of those living together or remarried break up, when children are involved.
- 70% of second marriages end in divorce
- 80% of third marriages end in divorce
- 80% of remarried, or re-coupled, partners with children both have careers.
- The average time between first divorce & remarriage is about 3.5 years
- 54% of women will remarry within 5 years of first divorce and 75% within 10 years
- 50% of the 60 million children under the age of 13 are currently living with one biological parent and that parent's current partner.
- 75% complain of "not having access to resources as a stepfamily,"
- It is generally considered by researchers that couples today have a deficit of skills with which to make partnerships last.
- 80% of married women have careers and women are less dependent on the support of the male partner.
- Over 80% of women who enter into stepfamilies are career women. These women do not have to endure the unexpected rigors of remarriage.
- Men who choose to end a marriage also know that career women cost less to divorce.
- 50% of all women, not just mothers, are likely to live in a stepfamily relationship, when we include living-together families in our definition of the stepfamily."
- 1/3 of all children entering stepfamilies were born to an unmarried mother rather than having divorced parents

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Laying the foundations for a successful Blended family...

Having survived a painful divorce or separation and then managed to find a new loving relationship, the temptation can often be to rush into remarriage and a blended family without first laying solid foundations. By taking your time, you give everyone a chance to get used to each other, and used to the idea of marriage.

- **Too many changes at once can unsettle children.** Blended families have the highest success rate if the couple waits two years or more after a divorce to remarry, instead of piling one drastic family change onto another.
- **Don't expect to fall in love with your partner's children overnight.** Get to know them. Love and affection take time to develop.
- **Find ways to experience "real life" together.** Taking both sets of kids to a theme park every time you get together is a lot of fun, but it isn't reflective of everyday life. Try to get the kids used to your partner and his or her children in daily life situations.
- **Make parenting changes before you marry.** Agree with your new partner how you intend to parent together, and then make any necessary adjustments to your parenting styles *before* you remarry. It'll make for a smoother transition and your kids won't become angry at your new spouse for initiating changes.
- **Don't allow ultimatums.** Your kids or new partner may put you in a situation where you feel you have to choose between them. Remind them that you want *both* sets of people in your life.
- **Insist on respect.** You can't insist people like each other but you can insist that they treat one another with respect.
- **Limit your expectations.** You may give a lot of time, energy, love, and affection to your new partner's kids that will not be returned immediately. Think of it as making small investments that may one day yield a lot of interest.

Given the right support, kids should gradually adjust to the prospect of marriage and being part of a new family. It is your job to communicate openly, meet their needs for security, and give them plenty of time to make a successful transition.

Ministries for Step, Blended & Blending Families

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FamilyLife www.familylife.com
FamilyLife Blended www.familylife.com/blended
Blending A Family www.blendingafamily.com
In Step Ministries www.instepministries.com
Designing Dynamic Stepfamilies www.designingdynamicstepfamilies.com
Focus on the Family www.focusonthefamily.com
National Stepfamily Resource Center www.stepfamily.info
Coparenting International www.coparentinginternational.com

Books for Step, Blended & Blending Families

The Smart Step-Family by Ron L. Deal
The Smart Stepmom by Ron L. Deal & Laura Petherbridge
The Smart Stepdad by Ron L. Deal
Life In a Blender—A Guide for Kids by Ron L. Deal
Loving Your Stepfamily by Dr. Donald R Partridge & Jenetha G. Partridge
Saving Your Second Marriage Before It Starts by Drs. Les and Leslie Parrott
Making Your Second Marriage A First-Class Success by Doug and Naomi Moseley
Living In a Step-Family Without Getting Stepped On by Dr. Kevin Leman
When Your Parent Remarries Late in Life by Terri P. Smith with James M. Harper, PH.D.
God Breathes on Blended Families - Second Edition (2009) by Moe & Paige Becnel
God Breathes on Blended Families - Second Edition (2009) Workbook by Moe & Paige Becnel