

Marriage Ministry Tip Sheet

for military blended families and marriages

Did you know?

- Stepfamily couples (stepcouples) undoubtedly are part of your chapel or 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: Publicly 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 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 step couples 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.

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FamilyLife.com/Blended
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