

What Is a Blended Family?

Blended families, with their many challenges, have been around for a long time. They are formed for different reasons. When a spouse with children remarries after the death of a partner, the situation is difficult. But when the family unit becomes a blend of his children, her children, and their children, the recipe for success requires a great deal of understanding and forgiveness. ...

“Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.”
(Colossians 3:13)

- The blended family is a family unit in which one or both of the spouses have been previously married and bring a child or children to the relationship.
- The word *blended* means “mixed together.” It suggests a combining of separate units into an integrated whole.
- The stepfamily is a family unit in which at least one spouse has a parental relationship with a child based on marriage, not blood.

What Is a Nuclear Family?

The nuclear family is a traditional family unit composed of ...

- One husband and one wife
- One marriage
- One or more children from one union

A blended family is like a jagged jigsaw puzzle. If you force the pieces to fit, you destroy the potential design. If you wait for God to work it, the picture comes—in time.

—June Hunt

God’s Heart on Remarriage

- **Remarriage** is permitted when the marriage covenant is broken by ...
 - Death (Romans 7:2–3)
 - Defilement (adultery) (Matthew 19:9)
 - Desertion and divorce (a controversial position)
 - Allowed only because of a hardened heart on the part of the one who leaves, but God’s heart is one of reconciliation. (1 Corinthians 7:15)
- **Remarriage** is not permitted ...
 - To an unbeliever (1 Corinthians 7:39)
 - To a former spouse who has married another (Deuteronomy 24:1–4)
 - To a divorced person whose spouse has not broken the marriage covenant (Matthew 19:9)
- **Remarriage** is not God’s preferred state for everyone. (1 Corinthians 7:7–9)

Insights for the Instant Parent

- **Realize** that becoming an instant parent is a challenging task.
- **Remember** that you’re not replacing a parent; you’re offering a new relationship.
- **Rebuild** a gradual authority system to function by biblical guidelines.
- **Reflect** the love of God by providing security for the child.
- **Refuse** to judge or criticize the missing parent.
- **Resist** the temptation to withdraw emotionally if you are not immediately accepted.
- **Resolve** to pray for the child and for your marriage.
- **Relinquish** your right to be respected and loved.

Stages of Blended Family Adjustments

1. **Fantasy Stage ... unrealistic expectations**
 - **The dream** of gaining happiness and wholeness through a new marriage
 - **The dream** of marrying a model parent who will love my children
 - **The dream** that I will love my spouse's children as my own
 - **The dream** that our love is enough to conquer all problems
2. **Factual Stage ... reality sets in**
 - **The dream** of a unified family life is not reality.
 - **The children are mourning** their lost parent and are not accepting the stepparent.
 - **The transition** to a new family becomes more difficult than expected.
 - **The problems** seem too difficult, accompanied by a strong temptation to give up.
3. **Fruitful Stage ... growth and maturity**
 - **The realization** that a blended family is not ideal; there will always be a unique set of family problems
 - **The realization** that it is going to take the cooperation of both partners to overcome difficulties and make the marriage work
 - **The realization** that it takes time, and it may be years before there are any signs of unity or smooth functioning relationships
 - **The realization** that God will use this blended family as a source of spiritual growth, a means of healing the past and a demonstration of His unconditional love

*“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts,
since as members of one body you were
called to peace. And be thankful.”*
(Colossians 3:15)

The Stepfamily Sabotage

Although no two families are alike, all will have varying degrees of the following emotions:

Loss

- All members are dealing with the loss of the nuclear family.
- Children are grieving the loss of a parent.
- Spouses are grieving the loss of significant relationships.

Fear

- Children fear loss of affection.
- Spouses fear a second failure.
- Stepparents fear rejection.

Anger

- Both children and stepparents may be angry over lack of acceptance.
- Children may be angry over too little or too much discipline from a stepparent.
- Stepparents may be angry over additional financial commitments and responsibilities.

Guilt

- Children feel guilty over divided loyalty.
- Children feel guilty about being responsible for the failure of the first marriage.
- Spouses feel guilty over the divorce and its effect on the children.

*“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past.
See, I am doing a new thing!”*
(Isaiah 43:18–19)

Preparing Children for Your Remarriage

- Meet alone with your own children.
- Communicate your unconditional love for them.
- State your belief that remarriage is God's direction for your life.
- Share the positive future you see for them.
- Encourage them to be open and to share their feelings.
- Explain that the stepparent *will not* replace their natural parent.
- Make your marriage commitment clear.
- Ask for their help in this transition.
- Communicate their secure position.
- Let them know that Christ will be the center of their new family.

*“Gracious words are a honeycomb, sweet to
the soul and healing to the bones.”*
(Proverbs 16:24)

The Shared Custody Shuffle

If you share custody, it is important to remember to do the following when a child returns to your home:

- Stop what you are doing.
- Greet with a warm hug.
- Allow reentry time.
- Give focused attention.
- Ask nonthreatening questions.
- Expect children to try to manipulate your feelings.
- Don't assume all they say is true.
- Distance yourself emotionally from any anger.

Key Verse to Memorize

“Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.”

(Romans 14:19)

Key Passage to Read

Colossians 3:12–15

God’s Recipe for Loving Others

- **Know** that you are chosen by God. (Colossians 3:12)
- **Realize** that you are loved by God. (Colossians 3:12)
- **Reflect** the character of Christ (compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience). (Colossians 3:12)
- **Lift up and support** each other. (Colossians 3:13)
- **Forgive** those who offend you. (Colossians 3:13)
- **Act** in love. (Colossians 3:14)

- **Know** that love builds unity. (Colossians 3:14)
- **Live** in peace with one another. (Colossians 3:15)
- **Have** a thankful heart. (Colossians 3:15)

Blended Family *Bonding*

Build a solid relationship with your spouse. (Genesis 2:24)

Observe family traditions and holidays with flexibility. (Romans 12:10)

Nurture the children’s nuclear family relationships. (Exodus 20:12)

Determine to stand firm. (Proverbs 29:15, 17)

Initiate family structure. (Proverbs 3:12)

Negotiate mutual ground. (1 Corinthians 1:10)

Grow in dependence on Christ. (Colossians 2:6–7)

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