

MANAGING LIFE SERIES: FINDING WHOLENESS IN THE BLEND PRT 2

2 weeks ago, we started talking about blended families in a sermon titled **FINDING WHOLENESS IN THE BLEND** and this morning I want to conclude that teaching. We looked at the foundation of family and the notion of remarriage.

We said God's ideal is the nuclear family that is made up of father and mother with their biological children. We also established that because of the fallen nature of the world, sometimes the ideal is not easily achieved. This resulted in the formation of blended families.

A blended family is a family unit in which one or both spouses have been previously married and bring a child or children to the relationship, or one had a child before marriage, and they bring the child into the new marriage.

God has a heart for those situations when the ideal fails to materialize. I ended my teaching by mentioning that God is interested in blended families too, just as He is interested in the nuclear family.

- The question is how can blended families be healthy and whole in their "blendedness".

1. Accept and embrace the uniqueness of a blended family.

- This is a major paradigm shift you need to have, which acknowledges that yours is a unique family set up.
- It is unique on many fronts and one of them is that whilst other families start just with the two who fell in love, yours starts with more than the two and you need to quickly become a mom and dad before you even grasp the notion of being married.

Philippians 3:13 My brothers, I do not count myself to have taken possession, but one thing I do, forgetting the things behind and reaching forward to the things before,

- You need to be prepared to start on a new slate – forget about the past and embrace what is before you. When the parents adopt this approach, the blended family will have a chance of being functional and healthy.
- Accept the role that comes with being a mother or father in a blended family. Jesus spoke about the need for commitment as a qualification of being His disciples.
- *"No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."* These are the words of Jesus to a man who promised to follow him after saying good-bye to his family in Luke 9:62.

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- That is why you cannot lightly take the decision of becoming part of a blended family – it will take a lot out of you.
- Accept that you will be building on someone else's foundation – it means that it will take time to reshape the way things should happen in the new blended family.
- Accept the fact that the family will go through stages on its way to wholeness:
- **Phase 1 – Fantasy/honeymoon phase**
 - There are usually unrealistic expectations.
 - There is a dream of achieving happiness through a new marriage.
 - There is a dream that you will love your spouse's children as your own.
 - There is a thinking that your love for one another will conquer any mountain.
- **Phase 2 – Realization of facts related to a blended set up.**
 - Things are not as rosy as you thought – the family is not as united as you thought.
 - Bad vibes from previous relationships surface (guilt, jealousy and anger)
 - The realization of loss of biological parent and refusal to accept the new parent.
 - New living arrangements are more challenging than thought.
 - Custody issues start surfacing.
 - Discipline issues become apparent (who is responsible for disciplining the kids).
- The realization stage is the testing time for the blended family and the natural reaction is to bail out. That is why the divorce rate for second marriages is double that of first marriages.
- This is when you need to stand your ground and call on Jesus for wisdom to hold on.
- **Stage 3 – the emergence of a wholesome blended family**
 - Now that you know the realities, you are ready to build a whole family unit.
 - You realize that a blended family is not an ideal one.
 - You realize that it will take corporation of everyone to make it work.
 - You realize that it will take God build the family.

What will it take to attain wholeness in a blended family?

1. Commit to God's principles for healthy families.

- When you live by the principles prescribed by God for the ideal family, your blended family will experience the blessing of God's ideal family.
- The father in a blended family must aim to manage his family well and raise children who respect him.
- Speaking of an elder, Paul says in *1 Timothy 3:4* "He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive."

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- There is a call for fathers to lead well in their household – commit yourself to be responsive to all the kids in the house, to take initiative in building a homely environment.
- The mother in a blended family must aim to show unconditional and impartial love towards her children.

Titus 2:3 Let the aged women likewise be in reverent behavior, not slanderers, not enslaved by much wine, teachers of good; 4 that they may train the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, 5 to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, subject to their own husbands, that the Word of God may not be blasphemed.

- Children in a blended family should be obedient to and honor their parents, as long as the parents do not ask the children to do anything against God's will.

Ephesians 6:1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), 3 so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth.

2. Understand the Losses

- In most blended family situations, one or more of its members have suffered some loss.
- There is a history behind most blended families, and it is usually a painful one.

Philippians 2:3 Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

- Children may have suffered the loss of their biological family.
- Spouses may have suffered abandonment or betrayal by a former spouse. Children may feel abandoned, as well.
- Sometimes children have lost relationships with extended family, including grandparents.
- Children often hope their biological parents will re-unite. Remarriage signals the loss of that dream.
- There may have been the loss of friends, a familiar school and neighborhood, a family home, financial security, and more.
- Sometimes spouses and children have lost a loved one through death.

3. Grow in Compassion

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- When you genuinely seek to understand the loss, God is calling you to heal, you will be overcome by compassion.
- Compassion is the ability to understand someone else's distress and want to help alleviate it.
- The glue that binds the blended family together is an overdose of compassion – you can't have enough of it.
- Compassion is essential to growing love in a blended family and all relationships.
- The apostle Paul gives us an idea of how it looks like to grow in compassion in the context of a blended family.

Romans 12:9-12 (NKJV) Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer.

- The blended family will thrive when genuine love is shown towards everyone in the family. It is easier to love your own children than it is to love someone else's child.
 - Paul says let your love be without hypocrisy or without partiality, without being two faced or without sincerity.
 - The temptation is high to pay more attention to your own children and this is when most blended family's breakdown.
 - The family must decide to call out all manner of evil – Paul says abhor (detest, repulse, despise) all manner of evil (unpleasant behavior).
 - A blended family is susceptible to animosity, unhealthy competition, and all manner of hostilities.
 - Right from the onset, a new culture that does not entertain any manner of animosity should be developed from top down.
- The blended family must develop a culture of honor towards each other – this speaks of placing weight and respect on every family member.
 - In other words, everyone is honorable, what they have to say is worth listening to, their feelings and how they feel is worth of attention.
- The blended family must quickly learn selflessness – Paul says give preference to one another.

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- This is so powerful guys – if there is one slice of bread left, allow the other sibling to have it. If one is crying, try and figure out the reason and provide comfort if needed.
- Human beings are selfish by nature and that is the genesis of most of the problems in the blended family.
- The blended family must place God at the center – Paul says be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord and continuing steadfastly in prayer.
 - It will only take God to keep the family together – it is through God, that a blended family can find its identity.
 - No one can love another before being touched by God's unconditional love. When you realise how gracious God has been to you, you can also extend grace to others.
 - When a family finds purpose in God, that family will have something to fight for – their newly found purpose in God will bind them together.
 - A family that prays together, stays together, a family that serves together, stays stronger together.

Romans 12:17-18 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

- The blended family must shun away from a lifestyle of retaliation – arm for an arm, tooth for a tooth. This can only create a conducive environment for war.
- If someone does you wrong, choose to not retaliate – another wrong does not make a wrong right.
- The blended family must always consider the impact of ones behavior on others (be more thoughtful before acting in order to do good before all)
- It is within your control to be a peace maker in the family – choose peace over war.