

## **MANAGING LIFE SERIES: FINDING WHOLENESS IN THE BLEND PRT 1**

Let me jump straight into my topic as we wind down on our Managing life series – I want to talk to you on **FINDING WHOLENESS IN THE BLEND**. I am talking about how to become whole and healthy when two families come together to form a new blended family.

### **1. Let's start with laying down the foundation:**

God's ideal family is made up of a male and a female that come together in marriage and bring about children and that is termed the nuclear family.

After God created Adam, He went on to create a help meet for him, Eve and thereafter, the two became one, resulting in the procreation of children.

*Genesis 2:18 And Jehovah God said, It is not good that the man should be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him...24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave to his wife and they shall be one flesh.*

Without a man and a woman coming together in marriage, there is no family. God's desire for the family is that it reproduce and multiply.

*Genesis 1:28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, Be fruitful, and multiply and fill the earth, and subdue it.*

- God desires families and marriages that are permanent.
- God desires children who respect their parents, parents who teach children how to live and exemplify those values in their own lives.
- God desires husbands and wives who are faithful to each other till death parts them.

### **2. When the ideal falls apart, what then?**

- The Bible says the enemy comes to steal, kill, and destroy and in this fallen world, some things go against God's ideals.
- From time to time, we see God allowing certain things to happen, not because it was His perfect will but because human beings are fallen by nature (during the days of Moses, divorce was permitted because of the hardness of their hearts).
- In a fallen world, some families never achieve God's ideal, where they are not always permanent or nourishing or respectful or loving.
- The body of Christ has a responsibility to embrace people where they are and assure them that they are welcome in the community of faith and that God still has a heart for them.

### **3. What is a blended family?**

- It 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.
- The word blended means “mixed together.” It suggests combining separate units into an integrated whole.
- Based on the definition of a blended family, we cannot help it but have to deal with the matter of remarriage.
- It is important that I dive into these murky waters in order to provide some insights based on my understanding that comes from the scriptures.

### **4. Let’s anchor this in Some stats:**

- According to Stats SA, about one out of every six marriages in South Africa ends in divorce.
- In South Africa, stepfamilies are more of a norm now than ever, with approximately 65% of remarriages has children from previous relationships.
- Nationally, an estimated 39,9% of households were classified as nuclear (couples, or one or more parent(s) with children)<sup>1</sup>.
- According to research compiled by blended family expert Ron Deal:
  - Approximately one-third of all weddings in America today form stepfamilies.
  - 42% of adults have a blended family relationship (with a stepparent, a step or half sibling, or a stepchild).
  - Of those who get divorced, 75% will remarry, and 65% will bring children from a previous union.
  - 1300 new stepfamilies are forming every day in USA<sup>2</sup>.
  - Over 50% of US families are remarried or re-coupled.
  - The average marriage in America lasts only seven years.
- Now that we have these realities to grapple with, it’s important that we get the heart of God regarding remarriage.
- As I dive into the difficult but necessary teaching, I do not claim to have said the last word on this issue, nor am I above correction, should I prove to be wrong.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.statssa.gov.za/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.stepfamily.org/stepfamily-statistics.html>

## **MANAGING LIFE SERIES: FINDING WHOLENESS IN THE BLEND PRT 1**

- I recognize that men godlier than I have taken different views. Nevertheless, every person and church must teach and live according to the dictates of its own conscience informed by a serious study of Scripture.

### **5. God's heart on remarriage**

- By and large, remarriage is permitted when the marriage covenant is broken by ...

#### **a) death**

*Romans 7:2-3 By law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage. So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress, even though she marries another man.*

#### **b) Sexual defilement (adultery)**

*Matthew 19:9 I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness (whoredom), and marries another woman commits adultery.*

- However, the above sexual defilement scenario should be seen as God's alternative/last resort and not His main idea. God's heart regarding marriage is that marriage is for life – till you are separated by death.
- In the eyes of God, remarriage should only happen when one of the spouses is dead, otherwise by all means possible, reconciliation should be sought.

*1 Corinthians 7:39 A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord.*

*1 Corinthians 7:10 To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. 11But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife.*

*Mark 10:2 And tempting Him, the Pharisees came to Him and asked Him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? 3 And He answered and said to them, What did Moses command you? 4 And they said, Moses allowed a bill of divorce to be written, and to put her away. 5 And Jesus answered and said to them, He wrote you this precept because of the hardness of your hearts. 6 But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. 7 For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife. 8 And the two of them shall be one flesh. So then they are no longer two, but one flesh. 9 Therefore what God*

## **MANAGING LIFE SERIES: FINDING WHOLENESS IN THE BLEND PRT 1**

*has joined together, let not man put apart. 10 And in the house His disciples asked Him again about the same. 11 And He said to them, Whoever shall put away his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. 12 And if a woman shall put away her husband and marries to another, she commits adultery.*

- Now, having laid that foundation, it is important to understand that is God hates covenant breakers. What are the implications of this if you remarried against God's word - This means that whether rightly so or wrongly so, you need to remain faithful to that second marriage till death do you part.
- Statistics show that 50% percent of first-time marriages, 67% of second marriages, and 74% of third marriages end in divorce.
- The initial act of remarriage whilst your spouse is alive might have been adulterous, but through genuine repentance, God will restore you and forgive you.
- Yes, God has forgiven you, but the consequences will be with you forever.
- This brings us to the issue at hand –

### **The challenges faced by blended families.**

- It is already a big challenge to raise a godly nuclear family, how much more a blended one.
- In biological families, love grows naturally over time. Two people meet, get to know one another, and fall in love.
- This is not the case with blended families – in a blended family, those bonds often exist only between the husband and the wife.
- Attempts to learn to love new family members are sometimes frustrated by anger, rejection, hostility, guilt, and competing loyalties.
- To become healthy, the parties to the blended family and the community at large must realize blended families are families that God is interested in and wants to use.
- Blended families have been in existence since bible times:
  - Abraham's family ended up being blended with the birth of Ishmael.
  - Jacob's family (the foundation of the nation of Israel) was blended after Jacob was cheated into marrying Leah, instead of Rachel. There were 2 more wives and out of the four wives, God raised the 12 tribes of Israel.
  - David's family – he had 8 wives and 19 children and counting.
- Blended families face unique challenges from a nuclear family.

## MANAGING LIFE SERIES: FINDING WHOLENESS IN THE BLEND PRT 1

- 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.

- 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 the realities of a blended family**
  - 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 accept the new parent

## **MANAGING LIFE SERIES: FINDING WHOLENESS IN THE BLEND PRT 1**

- New living arrangements, 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 realise that a blended family is not an ideal one
  - You realise that it will take cooperation of everyone to make it work
  - You realise that it will take God build the family and that He wants to use the family.
- Next, time, I am going to dwell on phase 3, unpacking what it takes to build a healthy blended family.