



Enhancing Family Discipleship with Personal and Practical Support

By Jay and Tammy Daughtry

“Made in the image of God”—the complexity and majesty of the concept is both stunning and beautiful. To allow ourselves to imagine that we are not only vessels of the divine but somehow a uniquely accurate representation of that same triune godhead can be overwhelming. For me, the concept of three in one shows up in multiple ways when we consider how God’s image is manifested in His creation.

In general, we can create, destroy, and restore. Our best life always seems to be expressed in relationship, especially in the context of family. Individually, we find ourselves wired to demonstrate a human existential trinity—spirit, body, and soul. Because of how God has wired and shaped us, I believe our best discipleship and ministry work will be done with a holistic approach that not only attends to the spiritual needs of those we serve but also addresses the physiological as well as the emotional and relational needs. In this article, we will consider the unique dynamics of stepfamilies and how to provide practical support in discipling those that are remarried.

Blending Family Challenges

As a family embarks on the journey of blending, there are several challenges that are not present in first time marriages. First to consider is the flexibility of parental roles in relation to discipline. At its simplest, such roles break down into two categories: the enforcer and the nurturer. As the titles imply, one parent usually takes the lead on accountability and consequences while the other attends more often to the emotional needs in the context of correction.

Expectations and Consequences

In a stepfamily, parents will need to move between those roles fluidly as they address either their biological children or their stepchildren. Expectations and consequences will be heard differently

when coming from a bio parent. The history and connection between bio parents and kids provides a foundation of compassion and care that makes a difficult conversation less threatening. In contrast, the relationship between stepparents and their step kids is still developing. Their bond is incomplete, which makes the relationship more likely to have inherent resistance until their bond and trust are fully formed.

A Way forward to Peace and Freedom

It can be surprising to see the impact that understanding and applying this principle of remarried parenting can have on the chaos of blending a new stepfamily. Parents, especially Christian parents, often feel guilty about their blended families. Giving traditionally minded families the insight and permission to do things differently can bring a whole new level of peace and freedom in their family dynamic. Recognizing, expressing, and normalizing the uniqueness and the sacredness of complex families can lift burdens and open new connections in both your church and your community. A little emotional/relational discipleship can help open doors to deeper spiritual development for couples and families.

As adult children of divorce, single parents, and stepparents, Tammy and Jay Daughtry have an immense passion for children and parents impacted by divorce and remarriage. Tammy founded Co-Parenting International (2003), an organization aimed at helping divorced/divided parents raise healthy kids in complex families. Together they opened The Center for Modern Family Dynamics (2014) to provide counseling, relationship coaching, and support for individuals, couples, families, and leaders.

www.CoParentingInternational

www.ModernFamilyDynamics.com