

# The Complete Blended Family Toolkit

Congratulations on having the courage to seek out ways to help and improve your blended family! In this toolkit you will find all of the following resources and bonuses:

- 1) 5 Topics for Every Blended Family to Discuss: These are the essential conversations you need to have for a more cooperative and positive blended family.
- 2) 7-Day Blended Family Devotional based on Proverbs: The wisdom of Proverbs has been recognized for thousands of years, so even if you're not a Christian, these principles can help improve your blended family.
- 3) 10 Commandments of Blended Family Life: These are the absolute key parts of having a healthier blended family, and though they can be difficult, they're absolutely worth it.

## Bonus Resources:

- 1) 10 Suggested Patterns of Behavior for Blended Families: These are not 100% must-do principles, but I believe they're also valuable in building a more collaborative blended family.
- 2) Thoughts on Being A Step-parent, From a Step-parent: These are a collection of both encouraging and challenging thoughts, straight from the mouths of those who have lived the difficult life of a stepparent.
- 3) List of further resources to consider: here you'll find books, podcasts, and online resources designed to help your blended family even more. So get started improving your family today!

## 5 Topics for Every Blended Family to Discuss

1. **Scheduling issues:** this includes topics such as
  - a. *holidays* (birthdays, Christmas, Thanksgiving, etc.)
  - b. *school schedules* (regular classtimes and extracurricular activities such as choir, drama, 4-H, etc)
  - c. *sports schedules* (both travel and school sports, games and practices as well as travel)
  - d. *family trips and vacations* (who takes them and when, does it involve an adjustment to the regular schedule, etc)
  - e. *Et Cetera* (health and medical care such as medicine and doctors appointments, work schedules for parents, etc).
  
2. **Personal issues:** Hurts from the past, issues of disrespect, lack of regard for others, and various topics related to each individual all need to be taken into account. They don't all need to be discussed with every individual, but to ignore personal issues is to court disaster. One key to remember here is: DON'T be afraid to get help!
  
3. **Parenting:** Parents and stepparents need to come to some sort of agreement or compromise about topics such as phones, car, clothes, make-up, dating, sports, friends, movies/TV/music, grades, money (and communication about money).

4. **Interfamily:** This includes issues that come up both between homes and inside each home such as:
  - a. sibling rivalries
  - b. jealousy (involving both kids and adults)
  - c. different/conflicting traditions
  - d. favoritism (real or perceived)
  - e. use of each others' belongings (clothes, toys, room, etc)
  - f. medical insurance
  - g. school tuition
  - h. fees for extracurricular activities
  - i. gift-buying (how much you spend, what you buy, etc)
  
5. **Et Cetera:** This catch-all topic includes things such as faith issues, grades, general behavior, buying patterns (clothes, household items, toiletries, etc), school supplies, 'switchover' items vs. permanent items, and anything else that comes up which could cause disagreement.

## 7 Days of Blended Family Wisdom from Proverbs

By Joel W. Hawbaker

### Introduction

The book of Proverbs has provided guidance, wisdom, and inspiration for generations and generations of people all over the world. The words contained in Proverbs have helped shape lives, save marriages, guide personal decisions, and build character. There are large, shaping principles as well as small, very specific tips for practical living. Throughout the book we are reminded of themes such as pursuing wisdom, practicing righteousness, and striving for justice.

These themes and principles are just as applicable to us today as they have ever been, and for those of us in complex blended families, they are even more important. It's difficult to know exactly what it means to "pursue wisdom" in a nuclear family; it's even more complex to know what that means in a family unit that is spread over multiple homes and a variety of parents.

A large part of my life now is working with other adults who are in blended families, step-families, and coparenting situations. My goal is to help them to live more cooperatively and positively so that they can be the best families possible, regardless of the specifics of their unique situations. All of my work is based on two key principles:

- 1) **Be the adult you want your children to become.** As parents we are called to be examples to our children, and this is especially important in complex home situations.
- 2) **Remember the Golden Rule: treat others as you want to be treated.** This is easy to say and tremendously difficult to do, especially in situations that contain much hurt, pain, bitterness, and other negative emotions. We have to be willing to forgive, and we must be willing to act out of that forgiveness rather than our negative

emotions. Only then can we truly follow Jesus' teaching in Matthew 7:12: "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets." (ESV)

This devotional is written to help encourage and inspire you in your blended family journey, to help you learn more about the importance of wisdom, prudence, patience, gentleness, righteousness, and love in the midst of difficult and complicated situations. My goal is that it will help you and encourage you both now and in the future. May God continue to bless you and your family as you pursue His will in all areas of your life, starting at home.

Walk worthy,

Joel W. Hawbaker

## Day 1

Proverbs 1:1-7

The Beginning of Knowledge

- 1 The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel:
- 2 To know wisdom and instruction,  
to understand words of insight,
- 3 to receive instruction in wise dealing,  
in righteousness, justice, and equity;
- 4 to give prudence to the simple,  
knowledge and discretion to the youth—
- 5 Let the wise hear and increase in learning,  
and the one who understands obtain guidance,
- 6 to understand a proverb and a saying,  
the words of the wise and their riddles.
- 7 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge;  
fools despise wisdom and instruction.

In order to make blended family life work successfully, you'll need every bit of these verses. You'll need wisdom, instruction, insight, righteousness, equity, prudence, knowledge, understanding, and discretion. Most importantly, you'll need "the fear of the Lord," because without it, we're relying on ourselves, and that's never a good idea.

I don't know the specific path you took to becoming part of a blended family. Perhaps you lost a loved one and have remarried, though you still carry the pain and loss from the past. Perhaps you and a previous partner amicably parted ways but are still united through your children. Perhaps you made a mistake that cost you a previous marriage, and you struggle with guilt and shame from the past. Perhaps you were wronged by a former spouse and you're carrying with you the anger and bitterness that comes with feeling betrayed by someone you loved. Perhaps you married someone who has been through one or more of these situations, and

you're just learning about how complex their emotions are due to their experiences in previous relationships.

Whatever your story is, you can be sure of a few things: first, your story is unique. No two blended family stories are exactly the same, nor will yours stay the same: you, your spouse, and the children will continue to grow older, and that changes the equation. Second, your story and past do not have to shape your future. They will influence it, certainly, but they do not have to define it. And finally, you can be sure that God loves you and your family. Regardless of how you got here, what you've done, or what you've been through, Jesus died for you in order to reconcile you to our Father above. No matter what struggles you've faced in your family's past, God's grace is sufficient. So, take heart today, and ask God to give you what you need in order to be the best you can be for your blended family.

Prayer: Our Father, you know my past and my struggles; you know my pain and my heartache; you also know that I want to live for you. Please give me wisdom, instruction, insight, righteousness, equity, prudence, knowledge, understanding, and discretion as I learn how to serve you more through my family. Thank you that your grace is sufficient for me and for us. Please forgive me of my sins and help me to live more for you today than I ever have before. In Jesus' name, amen.

## **Day 2**

Proverbs 2:1-5

The Value of Wisdom

1 My son, if you receive my words  
and treasure up my commandments with you,

2 making your ear attentive to wisdom  
and inclining your heart to understanding;  
3 yes, if you call out for insight  
and raise your voice for understanding,  
4 if you seek it like silver  
and search for it as for hidden treasures,  
5 then you will understand the fear of the Lord  
and find the knowledge of God.

Most Christians are familiar with stories of Solomon's wisdom, including when he decided the best way to determine the true mother of a child was to 'threaten' to cut the child in half. What we may not be as familiar with is that wisdom is also going to be necessary for us to navigate the difficult and sometimes turbulent waters of blended family life. Former spouses, complex adult-child relationships, old hurts...all of these can crop up to cause problems at any moment, and it will take the wisdom of God, even beyond the wisdom of Solomon, for us to live this life well.

In the passage, God is addressing us as sons and reminding us that He is faithful to give us what we need, and not just in a material sense. In a very real way, God is calling us to approach him the way that we want our children to approach us.

There's a phrase that many of us are familiar with, having heard it from parents, coaches, and teachers growing up, that has to do with working for things we want: "Anything worth having is worth working for." In our complex blended family situations, we need to be pursuing a relationship with God, and that means putting in the work of a relationship. If you look at the actions words in the above passage, you quickly get the sense that this relationship is not just one of intellectual acceptance, but rather it is a relationship of active doing, both physical and cognitive. Verbs such as receive, treasure, incline, call out, seek, and search call us to pursue God and trust in Him to deliver what He has promised, namely Himself.



God doesn't guarantee us treasure; rather, He wants us to treasure up His commandments.

God doesn't guarantee us comfort; rather, He wants us to take comfort in His wisdom, understanding, and insight.

God doesn't promise us riches; rather, he wants us to seek His wisdom as if it were silver and hidden treasures.

And when we do those things, we will "understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God." What better way could there be to help our blended families than to actively pursue the fear, knowledge, and wisdom of God?

Prayer: Almighty God, thank you for reminding us that You have all the wisdom, knowledge, and riches that we need. Help us to pursue you the way we often pursue worldly treasure, and forgive us when we don't. Give us the wisdom we need today to make good decisions for our family, and help us to seek to honor you more fully in our relationships with others. In Jesus' name, amen.

### **Day 3**

Proverbs 3:1-8

Trust In the Lord With All Your Heart

- 1 My son, do not forget my teaching,  
but let your heart keep my commandments,
- 2 for length of days and years of life  
and peace they will add to you.
- 3 Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you;

- bind them around your neck;  
write them on the tablet of your heart.
- 4 So you will find favor and good success  
in the sight of God and man.
- 5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart,  
and do not lean on your own understanding.
- 6 In all your ways acknowledge him,  
and he will make straight your paths.
- 7 Be not wise in your own eyes;  
fear the Lord, and turn away from evil.
- 8 It will be healing to your flesh  
and refreshment to your bones.

Verse 5 is one of the most familiar and quotes verses in the entire Bible, reminding us how we need to trust not in ourselves but in our God and in His understanding. That was true for us when we were young and when we were single. How much more true is it now that we're older and part of a complex family system? We may not often think of ourselves as "wise in our own eyes," but we often act that way, to our detriment.

This passage hits on major themes for all of us in blended families, such as love, faithfulness, life, and wisdom. All of these begin with what we read yesterday about knowing God and following his word.

In a blended family, we are often in need of refreshment and replenishment of our spirit. Past hurts, bitterness, anger, resentment, and present frustration often sap us of energy and happiness. We get angry at our ex, or we get irritable with our children, or we're frustrated at the complexities and inconvenience of the schedule; perhaps we're just frustrated with where we are in life in general.

It's incumbent upon parents to remember to seek God in the midst of these types of frustrations. Verse 5 is one of the most quoted verses of the Bible,

and it is a reminder to all of us that we need God more than we realize. However, if we read all the way through verse 8, we see that this is not just about needing God. Rather, it's about the fact that when we acknowledge our need for him, and when we pursue Him, He will grant us the healing and refreshment that we need.

To “fear the Lord, and turn away from evil” is a succinct description of the life we are called to lead. And when we do this, God’s word says that He will heal and refresh us. Does that mean we won’t ever get sick if we read our Bible every day? Of course not. But it does mean that when we are consistently pursuing God, the frailties of our flesh and the frustrations of our spirit won’t be so overwhelming.

When we rely on God to guide us in our decision making and to give us wisdom to navigate the complexities of multiple households and varying agendas, He promises to give us the peace we need. When we gather together at church, with our friends, and with our family, we have opportunities to share that peace with them as well.

Prayer: Father, thank you for reminding us of our need for you, and help us to acknowledge that need for you in every area of our lives. Give us the wisdom we need to make good decisions, and please forgive us when we rely on our own understanding. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## **Day 4**

Proverbs 4:1-9

A Father’s Wise Instruction

1 Hear, O sons, a father's instruction,

and be attentive, that you may gain insight,  
2 for I give you good precepts;  
do not forsake my teaching.  
3 When I was a son with my father,  
tender, the only one in the sight of my mother,  
4 he taught me and said to me,  
“Let your heart hold fast my words;  
keep my commandments, and live.  
5 Get wisdom; get insight;  
do not forget, and do not turn away from the words of my mouth.  
6 Do not forsake her, and she will keep you;  
love her, and she will guard you.  
7 The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom,  
and whatever you get, get insight.  
8 Prize her highly, and she will exalt you;  
she will honor you if you embrace her.  
9 She will place on your head a graceful garland;  
she will bestow on you a beautiful crown.”

This passage reminds us that God wants and desires to grant us wisdom and insight, just as we want to provide that for our children. He is faithful to His word, and our task is to be obedient to it as we set an example for our blended families.

When our children were young, we often had to remind them of the same things over and over: “Wash your hands after you use the bathroom,” or “Put your toys away after you’re done with them” or “Be nice to your sister!” Here, God is reminding us to pursue wisdom yet again, just as we had to remind our children over and over about how we wanted them to behave. He tells us to hear, to be attentive, to hold fast, to keep, to get wisdom, and not to forsake her. He is reminding us because we so quickly forget, and he is reminding us so that we will remember. And as a bonus, in the last two verses here, He tells us the benefits of pursuing and holding fast to

wisdom: we are told that wisdom will “exalt you”, she will “honor you”, she will give us “a graceful garland” and “a beautiful crown.”

What does it look like for blended families to have “a graceful garland” or “a beautiful crown”? Truthfully, I have no idea! But I do know that if it’s from God, it’s going to be better than any alternative, and I also know that it’s worth pursuing.

God delights to give us wisdom, and He commands us to hold fast to it. But this is not just an instruction for its own sake; rather, it is an instruction for our own good. When we do this, God will reward us, just as we rewarded our children when they followed instructions. In the difficulties of blended family life, we need all the wisdom of God to make good decisions, and then we can enjoy the rewards of peace and joy even if the day-to-day is still difficult and complicated.

Prayer: God, thank you for being a God who loves us enough to tell us how you want us to live and then rewards us for doing so. Help us to pursue wisdom through your word consistently and continually, and let us use that wisdom for furthering your kingdom, beginning in our own homes. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## **Day 5**

Proverbs 5:1-6

Warning Against Adultery

- 1 My son, be attentive to my wisdom;  
incline your ear to my understanding,
- 2 that you may keep discretion,

and your lips may guard knowledge.  
3 For the lips of a forbidden woman drip honey,  
and her speech is smoother than oil,  
4 but in the end she is bitter as wormwood,  
sharp as a two-edged sword.  
5 Her feet go down to death;  
her steps follow the path to Sheol;  
6 she does not ponder the path of life;  
her ways wander, and she does not know it.

My favorite author is J.R.R. Tolkien, the writer of *The Lord of the Rings*, and in that book, there is a passage that my family quotes often: “The burned hand teaches best; after that, advice about fire goes to the heart.” It reveals that, as sinful humans, we often have to experience painful consequences for ourselves before we are willing to listen to the wisdom and teachings of others.

In Proverbs 5, we really start to understand how hard-headed we must be, because here God reminds us again (again!) to listen to wisdom, and then he gives us a specific warning about temptation and the deadly results of sin.

There are many blended families that are the result of at least one divorced person getting remarried, and many of those divorces are due to infidelity on the part of one or both partners in a previous marriage. Thus, many individuals know all too well the truth of this proverb and the painful, life-changing consequences of marital unfaithfulness.

In our day, when instant access to anyone in the world is available, and temptation is more present than ever before, a wise blended family spouse will beware temptation and take necessary steps to minimize and avoid it. If you have experienced unfaithfulness, you know the depth of the pain and bitterness it causes. If you have been guilty of it, you may still struggle with

the feelings of shame associated with your past. In all of these situations, there is good news: God's grace is big enough to overcome both your pain and your shame!

The truth is, we're all guilty of unfaithfulness in some way: unfaithfulness to God and unfaithfulness to our spouse (in our mind, if not in our actions). This passage, then, is a warning against adultery specifically, but it is also a general warning about the dangers of turning away from God and being unfaithful to His word. As C.S. Lewis writes in *The Great Divorce*, "There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, 'Thy will be done,' and those to whom God says, in the end, 'Thy will be done.'" Let us commit today to being faithful to God, to saying, "Thy will be done," rather than insisting on our own way.

Prayer:

Our Father, help us to be faithful to you and to our spouse in thought, word, and deed. Give us the wisdom to know when we need to flee from temptation, and give us the strength to do so, especially when the temptation seems so innocent. Help us to truthfully desire to say, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done," and help us to mean it. In Jesus' name, amen.

## **Day 6**

Proverbs 6:1-5

Practical Warnings

- 1 My son, if you have put up security for your neighbor,  
have given your pledge for a stranger,
- 2 if you are snared in the words of your mouth,

caught in the words of your mouth,  
3 then do this, my son, and save yourself,  
for you have come into the hand of your neighbor:  
go, hasten, and plead urgently with your neighbor.  
4 Give your eyes no sleep  
and your eyelids no slumber;  
5 save yourself like a gazelle from the hand of the hunter,  
like a bird from the hand of the fowler.

Have you ever experienced the joy of being reunited with someone or something that you'd thought was lost? A friend you haven't seen in a long time, or a beloved family heirloom that was revealed when cleaning out the attic? Or perhaps you know the thrill of coming across an old love letter from your spouse, or an encouraging note from a parent that has passed away. These are a glimpse or shadow of what the Bible calls reconciliation, the putting right of things that have gone wrong in the world.

In these verses, we are instructed to carry out the Christian task of reconciliation, especially when we are the party that has wronged another. In our blended families, the task of reconciliation is on-going and never-ending, both within our own home and between homes. Relationships are always complex and changing, and we need to be sensitive to those dynamics in the midst of our day-to-day lives.

Without God's help, it will be impossible for us to solve all of the frustrations from past relationships, and we certainly won't be able to solve them all at one time. Pain from divorce, bitterness of parenting disagreements, anger at an ex, confusion about child-rearing across multiple homes; all of these crop up at unexpected moments. When they do, we need to revisit these verses and be reminded that one of the tasks of the Christian is to seek to heal broken and difficult relationships, as far as that is within our power.



Reconciliation doesn't necessarily mean getting back together with your ex, but it does mean learning to co-parent with them in a way that reflects the Gospel. It means being encouraging about them to your children. It means being willing to admit when we do things wrong, even when we're the only ones admitting any wrongdoing. God has called us to honor Him and to follow the teachings in His word, regardless of what anyone else is doing. This is difficult, but it is ultimately the right thing to do, and when we do it, everyone will be better off in the long run.

Doing our part in reconciliation allows us to begin the difficult work of forgiveness, which frees us from bitterness and pain and regret. It also sets a powerful example for our children. When they see the adults in their lives working together for their good, they see that they are loved by their earthly parents as well as by our Heavenly Father.

Prayer: Father God, thank you that you sent Jesus so that we could be reconciled to you, and thank you for calling us to also participate in the work of reconciliation here on earth. Give us wisdom to know how to go about it, and give us the strength to do the difficult work necessary. Please forgive us when we fail, and help us to become more like you each day. In Jesus' name, amen.

## **Day 7**

Proverbs 7:1-5

Warning Against the Adulteress

1 My son, keep my words

and treasure up my commandments with you;

2 keep my commandments and live;

keep my teaching as the apple of your eye;  
3 bind them on your fingers;  
write them on the tablet of your heart.  
4 Say to wisdom, "You are my sister,"  
and call insight your intimate friend,  
5 to keep you from the forbidden woman,  
from the adulteress with her smooth words.

How frustrated might we be with someone if we had to remind them about the same issue six times in seven days? Or perhaps we're not frustrated; we're just not sure that they get it. Six out of the first seven Proverbs began with an instruction or reminder to keep commandments and pursue wisdom. God must really want us to get it!

Two of the last three days have also included a warning about the dangers of temptation, specifically the dangers of the adulteress. God doesn't deal in accidents or coincidences, so if the Bible repeats something, let us have enough wisdom to pay close attention.

Every blended family is borne from some type of pain: pain of loss, pain of betrayal, pain from indifference, pain of suffering, and the list could go on. Many have personal experience with the consequences of giving in to temptations: end of a marriage, reduced time with children, expenses of divorce and moving, and many more. God repeats his command to us to pursue wisdom *as a way of* avoiding temptation as well. Unlike some of the ancient Greeks, we are not called to pursue wisdom for its own sake, though there may be some value in that.

We are called to pursue wisdom for many reasons, one of which is to help us avoid temptation, often by literally fleeing from it or separating ourselves from it. If I'm tempted to gluttony, then hanging out at an all-you-can-eat buffet is not my smartest move. Sure, my willpower may allow me to resist for the length of a meal, or even a couple. But eventually, I'm likely to break

and give in. The same is true with any temptation: continual exposure to it increases the chances that we will succumb.

As we reach the end of this week of devotionals, let's review what God has shown us:

- The value and importance of pursuing Godly wisdom
- The necessity and action of prayer in acquiring wisdom by asking God for it
- The dangers of temptation and the pursuit of wisdom as an aid in resisting and fleeing it

As a schoolteacher, I often ask students questions such as, "Ok, so what does this teach us?" or "What have we learned from this?" So, I would ask you, my friends, the same questions. What have you learned, and how can you apply it this week in your blended family?

Prayer: Father God, increase our faith and our desire to grow more like you. Help us to love your wisdom and mercy, and give us the strength to show that to others, even and especially when it's difficult. Please forgive us of our sins, and help us to turn away from them. Continue to teach us your wisdom and cause us to love your wisdom more than our own. Finally, Lord, please bless us as we seek to honor you in our families. In Jesus' name, amen.

## The Ten Commandments of Blended Family Life

- I. **Communicate well:** Over-communicate with all adults involved: choose a format/technology that works, and **use it**. When in doubt, communicate about it.
- II. **Always show respect:** Be respectful, calm, and patient with everyone involved, even if you're the only one doing it ("A soft answer turns away wrath")
- III. **Use discernment:** Pick your battles very carefully: differentiate between personal dislikes and 'red flag' issues when discussing disagreements between households
- IV. **Give way graciously:** Be willing to graciously give way on minor issues. You won't get your way all the time anyway, so when you don't, be nice about it (instead of being snarky or rude). Yes, this comes with risk, but it's still the right way to do it.
- V. **Choose to believe the best:** Always choose to believe the best about the other household, and be sure to celebrate and acknowledge it when you see it.
- VI. **Express genuine gratitude:** As often as possible, whenever a joint agreement is reached or whenever cooperation occurs, acknowledge it and celebrate it. This lays a foundation for more cooperation in the future.
- VII. **Model maturity and wisdom:** Remember every day that you are the adult, and your task is to model maturity and wisdom for your children. Your task is **NOT** to 'win', get revenge, or even get your own way.

- VIII. **Ask for help:** Don't be afraid to ask for 3rd-party help from a counselor, pastor, neutral friend, or someone else that all parties are comfortable with. (U2: "Sometimes you can't make it on your own...")
- IX. **Use discretion:** Work through your personal issues on your time, **NOT** in front of or by involving the children. They are not your therapist, and they also don't need to be. Only ever speak well of the other adults in front of your kids ("If you don't have anything nice to say, don't say anything at all.")
- X. **Be consistent:** Be as consistent as possible at both (or all) houses in all areas of life. Even if the specifics aren't the same, the principles/values can be (honesty, integrity, hard work, etc.). Also remember that total consistency is impossible, even in traditional families and households.

## **BONUS RESOURCES**

### **Ten Suggested Patterns of Behavior for Blended Families**

1. Speak well of the other adults involved as often as possible, and keep open lines of communication for kids at each house.
2. When in doubt, consider defaulting to the stricter view in contentious situations.
3. Seek out areas of agreement (even very minor ones) and cultivate and celebrate them.
4. Look for opportunities to work together in front of the kids.
5. Be honest about areas of disagreement (and remember to be respectful and use discretion).
6. Be alert to attempts by them to play parents/households off of each other. Yes, even your kids may try this!
7. Approach difficult situations with grace, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (the same way you want your children to respond in difficult situations).
8. Try not to take things personally, even in the face of evidence that it IS personal.
9. Pray with your kids specifically for the members of the other household.
10. Help kids with holiday/birthday cards/gifts for the adults in the other household.

## Thoughts on Being a Stepparent, from a Stepparent

Though I've been part of a blended family for most of my life, I'm not a stepparent. However, in preparing this material, I have spoken with many of them, including my wife, who is an amazing stepmother to our two daughters. Here are some of the thoughts that stepparents have shared with me. I hope you find them to be helpful as you continue your blended family journey!

1. Stepparents are often given all of the same responsibilities (bills, errands, taking care of sick children, helping monitor homework, etc, etc, etc) of a biological parent, without the title, without the guarantee of the positives of parenting (respect, love, even kindness), and without the authority.
2. From society, there is often a lack of sympathy and understanding for the stepparents. From those who haven't experienced it, there is even a lack of recognition of the difficulties of stepparenting. Just think of the way stepparents have been portrayed in literature and movies (e.g., How many kids grew up watching *Cinderella*?).
3. There is much less information and resources available on how to be a stepparent. There is less literature written by and for stepparents about stepparenting.
4. Positive: stepparents get to 'choose' their kids in much the same way they chose their spouse. They get to choose to love them everyday because they want to, because they can, not out of any obligation.
5. Best compliment I've ever heard for a stepparent: "We know you're not going to be an evil stepmom."
6. Most unintentionally frustrating thing to say to a stepparent: "It's different when they're your own kids."

## **Further Resources to Consider:**

1. Ron Deal has been the go-to for most Christian blended family work here in the United States for over a decade. I strongly recommend you check out his material. His work includes the following books and website:
  - a. *The Smart Stepfamily (book)* - My wife and I read this book before we married (our pastor gave it to us), and it was eye-opening, insightful, encouraging, and extremely helpful to our entire family.
  - b. *The Smart Step Dad (book)*
  - c. *The Smart Step Mom (book)*
  - d. *The Smart Stepfamily Marriage (book)*
  - e. <http://familylifeblended.com/> (Ron Deal's website for his blended family ministry)
2. <https://biblicalparenting.coach/> (Dr. Scott Turansky, info about parenting from a Biblical perspective, with videos, articles, blog posts, etc.)
3. <http://www.stepfamilies.info/> (National Stepfamily Resource Center)
4. <https://www.handinhandparenting.org/article/step-parenting-blended-families/>
5. *Living In A Stepfamily Without Getting Stepped On* by Dr. Kevin Leman
6. <http://stepdadding.com/> (blogs, videos, articles, etc, about stepfamily life)
7. This Big House (Blended Family youtube channel with my friends Jay and Esther Hutchison): <https://www.youtube.com/user/hutchdawg85>
8. Better Than Blended (Blended Family help and resources): <https://betterthanblended.com/>
9. Feedspot list of Top 75 Blended Family Blogs: [https://blog.feedspot.com/blended\\_family\\_blogs/](https://blog.feedspot.com/blended_family_blogs/)
10. <https://reallifeleading.com/blended-families> (this is one of my websites, and it is featured on the Feedspot list at #35)
11. Victor Lee, Counseling Pastor, First Baptist Concord <https://fbconcord.org/>
12. Sarah Pendleton, Counselor and Founder, Journey Clinical Services (Birmingham, AL) <https://www.journeyclinicalservices.com/>