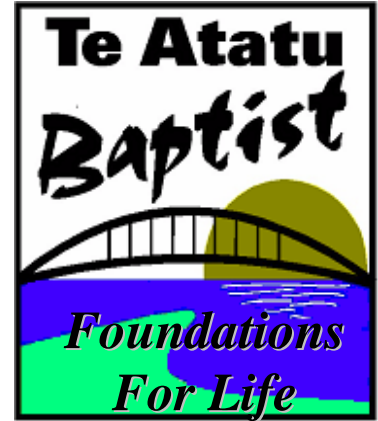


Slide # 1

# Into The Blender!



*8 weeks of practical, down to earth tools and resources for families, step-families, divorce and remarriage!*

## Week Four

The Beauty of Marriage!

[www.TeAtatuBaptist.com](http://www.TeAtatuBaptist.com)

Healthy relationships, marriage and family life – including remarriage, blended families and adoption – are the foundation upon which our world, nation, community and church are built.

Slide # 2 Photo

Therefore you owe it to yourself – to your workmates, family members, children and grandchildren - to make sure you have the most healthy, productive, loving and stable relationships possible!

Your success as a person, as a parent, child or Christian *depends upon the strength* of your relationships.

And the strength of your ability to relate to others, *depends upon the strength* of your character and personality!



And what is amazing about today's workshop, is that just:

- One *small insight*,
- One *spark of hope* or light,
- One *new way* of looking at your situation or
- How you *relate* to others –

- can have the most abundant and amazing affect upon your future success and happiness.

We are going to learn together just a few skills that will keep us healthy and safe within all our relationships.

In fact, I have counted over 70 practical tools and keys to improving your relationships from today's workshop alone!

And having removed the guilt, shame and prejudices that surround divorce and remarriage last week,

...today we need to *begin* by exposing just TWO myths and unrealistic expectations when it comes to relationships,

...especially marriage with biological family, *and* remarriage with blended families.

Slide # 3 Photo and heading

## Myth #1- I'll do it better *this* time around!

Now here's the problem with this mentality, when it applies to *any* relationship – whether friendship, marriage, remarriage or family life.



The mentality behind this statement, is that you are *still* comparing your current relationship with a previous one.

That's simply not fair – as it means you will also be comparing each person (your new spouse?) with your previous one.

By all means, you need to resolve the issues that caused the separation of your last relationship, and *learn* from these things.

But you need to stop comparing what you *have*, with what you *had*.

Slide # 4 Photo and heading

## Myth #2 - 'Blending' is the goal of step families.

Sorry to bust this myth, but it simply isn't true.

The biological bonds that exist within a blended family will always be *stronger* than the integrated 'new' blended ones.



Here's the thing, as a blended family you need *more* maturity and strength than a biological family.

The trouble is that most people within a blended family are still *recovering* from the shock waves of their previous unsuccessful relationship.

So, the goal of every divorced family member is to develop a healthy sense of self identity, boundaries, respect and also healing from the wounds of previous relational breakdown.

Although an enormous challenge, it is *entirely* possible and attainable.

Okay, here's a few things NOT to do within a blended family.

We will use the analogy of cooking to help make sense of them.

Slide # 5 Photo and heading

## Blender:

In a blender, all the ingredients gets mixed at the same rate.

Some well meaning parents expect the same to happen within their family relationships – blended or not.

However, in reality - this is NOT the case – in any relationship setting, blended or not.

Different relationships will grow and develop at different rates to the others.



All relationships have times of ‘ebb and flow’ of highs and lows, especially family relationships.

You need to understand this, accept it, and work with it – not against it.

Slide # 6 Photo and heading

## Food Processor:

These families ‘chop’ apart everybody’s history and past



experiences and attempt to combine them together at a fast speed.

An example is a step parent who expects their step child to call them mummy or daddy.

What they are saying to that child is; 'I've chopped off your real parent, and are now replacing them!'

Again, don't force the issues, relax and allow time to bring healing and integration.

Slide # 7 Photo and heading

**Microwave  
(Possibly the most  
important  
example!)**



These families *refuse* to accept their step-family status, and try to live life as a 'biological' family would.

Although being a product of our post modern world, they still try to live like a *conventional* oven.

**Trouble is, it doesn't work!**

As a mother or father within a step family, the rules for parenting and family living are *different* than it is or was within your first, or biological family.

Perhaps the reason why so many blended families do not work - is that the parents have not understood that the way they parent their biological children *must be different* than the way they parent their new step children – oftentimes within the same family situation!

Slide # 8 Photo and heading

## Pressure Cooker

These families try to pressure all the members to integrate into the same rituals, traditions, values and preferences as the dominant parent thinks they should. .

Trouble is, that if pressured too much, the lid blows off!

Be careful of statements like this: ‘I know your stepfather is a little more demanding than I am, but can’t you just try to get along?’

Although well meaning, this child has just been placed under an enormous amount of pressure because of a *need* the mother has, without considering the affect this can have upon the child!



Slide # 9 Photo and heading

## Tossed Salad

Basically this involves parents who ‘change the scenery’ so often that the children do not know where they stand – or live!

It tosses everyone into confusion,



perhaps ‘trying’ a new approach or direction every six months or more.

Everyone within a divorced relationship needs stability.

Stability of relationships, of where they live, where they work, of where they go to church and school.

If you are constantly running, maybe you need to discover what it actually is that you are running from.

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Well, we’ve looked at a few ways NOT to cook a family or step family, and now let’s look at some of the most *productive* ways to do so.

Slide # 10 Photo and hading

Perhaps the best way can be described as a

**CrockPot!**

You know how to cook a meal in a CrockPot?

You start out with really tough and old meat, put it in a pot, add some other ingredients and cook it long and slow on a very low heat.

Each vegetable still retains its own identity



and distinction, while mellowing in with the others, infusing with the flavours and styles of the others.

Here's the thing.

New relationships, especially blended families need lots and lots of time:

Time to adjust to:

- New parenting styles
- New living conditions
- New rules and responsibilities
- Developing trust and dependability
- Develop and new sense of identity

People who rush these things, usually do so because of the pressure to show *everyone else* that they have indeed made the right decision in marrying or remarrying.

But a 'slow cooker' mentality gives everybody the room and time to relax and enjoy the journey.

I have something fun for you to do, to help with your family growth and development – blended or not!

If you have younger children, invite them into the kitchen as you design and develop a recipe for your CrockPot.

Have each person choose a piece of meat or vegetable – or a cooking utensil, explain how it might describe their 'role' within the family, and then share how this object and the process of cooking it, is like your family,

...how each piece remains whole and 'in tact' but blends with the others to form a beautiful meal that you can enjoy together.

If you have other children, be creative, and perhaps embark on a building project like a bird house, or car repairs and share how each piece of equipment or tool might represent someone within the family, and what you hope to achieve.

For the last part of today's workshop, we need to focus upon the most important relationship within any family setting – blended or not!

Slide # 11 Scripture

Matthew 19:4-6

In the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female', and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh' So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.'

The most important relationships within a family setting, is the marriage itself.

Here we have a beautiful story in Genesis of a loving God who provided a partner for man and for woman.

Two people who would complete, compliment and support one another, share together in intimacy, and work side by side in the most important job on earth, raising a family.

Now, instead of turning this into an old fashioned Bible study, I'm going to do what we do at menTors, *our men's morning Bible study*.

**I will actually give you modern day, practical and real examples of the same principles that are found *within* the Bible verses.**

(These are *some* of the references used in my research: Hebrews 13:4. 1 Tim. 4:3. Isa. 54:5. Jer. 3:1-14. Hos. 2:9, 20. Eph. 5:25-27. Ephesians 5:22-28. Peter 3:7. 2 Corinthians 11:2. Ephesians 4:26. Colossians 3:19. Ephesians 4:2-3. Matthew 5:32. 1 Corinthians 7:39. II Corinthians 6:14. Proverbs 5:18-19. Matt. 19:5. 1 Corinthians 6:16. Gen. 4:19; 6:2. Gen. 16:1-4; 22:21-24; 28:8, 9; 29:23-30. Gen. 24:3; 38:6. Ex. 22:16, 17; 1 Sam. 18:23, 25; Ruth 4:10; Hos. 3:2.)

Slide # 12 Scripture

When Debbie and I were married in 1985, we were given a Scripture and a promise from Ecclesiastes 4:9

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no-one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

The pastor went on to describe the marriage relationship like a 'wrestling tag match'.

Slide # 13 Photo

You know what I'm talking about – don't you.

Two teams of wrestlers are fighting each other, and when one of the partners gets tired or hurt, they reach out



and ‘tag’ the hand of the other person, who immediately jumps into the ring and takes over.

This has come to perfectly describe *our marriage relationship* over the decades – on a physical, emotional, spiritual and psychological level.

But notice the scripture?

Slide # 14 Photo



There are more than two partners in the equation.

It talks about a ‘chord of three strands’.

You see, we are not alone.

Just as we told people after our honeymoon, marriage is the *second* best thing we have ever done. (Matt. 6:33)

The first, is surrendering our lives totally, and utterly to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Because believe me, there will be times in your marriage, in your family life, when *both* of you are exhausted and come to the end of your rope.

When *both* of you are tempted to ‘throw in the towel’ and quit the game altogether. (Luke 9:62)

And it is at these times that we have a wonderful opportunity to reach out to the Lord and ‘tag’ His wonderful Hand of provision and strength! (Proverbs 3:5)

In fact, allow me to share a math equation with you today, I call it the Marriage Equation, and it goes like this.

Slide # 15 – Quote below

The strength of your family is dependant upon  
the strength of your relationship with your  
spouse.

The strength of your marriage is dependant upon  
the strength of your relationship with your God.

A three fold cord is not easily broken.

You need God as the Rock in your marriage. (Deut 6:5)

The wonderful thing about two Christians arguing or disagreeing, is that the Lord is also there, bringing harmony, influencing decisions and restoring unity!

You need to read and obey His holy Word in order for there to be harmony, forgiveness and health within both your marriage and family relationships.

The Bible is wise and insightful when it tells us such things as:

- Don't let the sun go down on your anger.
- Love keeps no records of wrong.
- Fathers' do not exasperate your children.

And where ever and when ever God calls you to do something beyond your natural strength and ability,

...it is at those times that He will actually strengthen and equip you to do what is best.

What I'm talking about, is dedication.

Allow me to share a true story with you, that I believe perfectly describes the sort of dedication you will need throughout your lifetime of relationships and marriage.

John Blanchard stood up from the bench, straightened his army uniform, and studied the crowd of people making their way through Grand Central Station. He looked for the girl whose heart he knew, but whose face he didn't, the girl with the rose.

His interest in her had begun thirteen months before in a Florida library. Taking a book off the shelf, he found himself intrigued, not with the words of the book, but with the notes penciled in the margin. The soft handwriting reflected a thoughtful soul and insightful mind. In front of the book, he discovered the previous owner's name, Miss Hollis Maynell.

With time and effort, he located her address. She lived in New York City. He wrote her a letter introducing himself and inviting her to correspond. The next day he was shipped overseas for service in World War II. During the next year and one month the two grew to know each other through the mail. Each letter was a seed falling on a fertile heart. A romance was budding.

Blanchard requested a photograph, but she refused. She felt that if he really cared, it wouldn't matter what she looked like.

When the day finally came for him to return from Europe, they scheduled their first meeting-7:00 P.M. at Grand Central in New York. "You'll recognize me," she wrote, "by the red rose I'll be wearing on my lapel."

So at seven o'clock he was in the station looking for a girl whose heart he loved but whose face he'd never seen.

I'll let Mr. Blanchard tell you what happened.'

A young woman was coming toward me, her figure long and slim. Her blonde hair lay back in curls from her delicate ears; her eyes were as blue as flowers. Her lips and chin had a gentle firmness, and in her pale green suit, she was like springtime come alive. I started toward her, entirely forgetting to notice that she was not wearing a rose. As I moved, a small provocative smile turned her lips. "Going my way, sailor?" she murmured.

Almost uncontrollably I made one step closer to her, and then I saw Hollis Maynell.

She was standing almost directly behind the girl. A woman well past forty, she had graying hair tucked under a worn hat. She was more than plump, her thick-ankled feet thrust into low-heeled shoes. The girl in the green suit was quickly walking away. I felt as though I was split in two. So keen was my desire to follow her, and yet so deep was my longing for the woman whose spirit had truly companioned and upheld mine.

And there she stood. Her pale, plump face was gentle and sensible; her gray eyes had a warm and kindly twinkle. I did not hesitate. My finger gripped the small worn blue leather copy of the book that was to identify me to her. This would not be love, but it would be something precious, something perhaps even better than love, a friendship for which I had been and must ever be grateful.

I squared my shoulders and saluted and held out the book to the woman, even though while I spoke I felt choked by the bitterness of my disappointment. "I'm Lieutenant John Blanchard, and you must be Miss Maynell. I am so glad you could meet me; may I take you to dinner?"

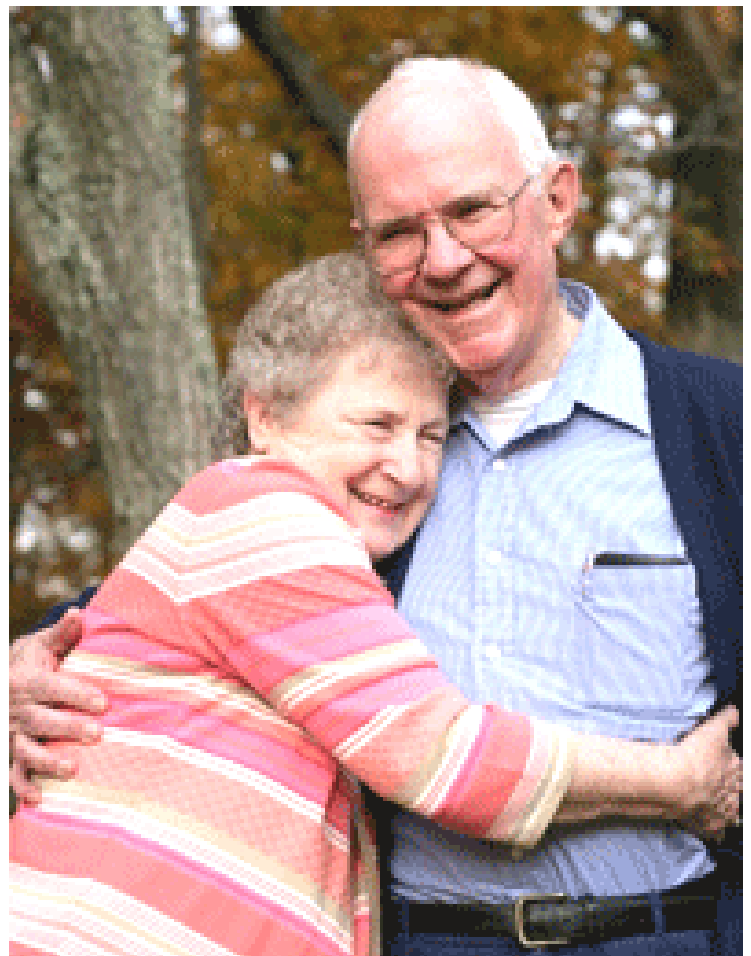
The woman's face broadened into a tolerant smile. "I don't know what this is about, son," she answered, "but the young lady in the green suit who just went by, begged me to wear this rose on my coat. And she said if you were to ask me out to dinner, I should tell you that she is waiting for you in the big restaurant across the street. She said it was some kind of test!"

Slide # 16 Photo

John and Hollis went on to experience over 40 years of marital bliss together before the Lord took them home.

John Blanchard learnt the key to marital harmony and faithfulness – commitment!

And along with *commitment*, you must learn some rules for **Communication** and **Resolving Conflict**.



Communication is like engine oil, if you allow it to run low, you risk seizing your relationships.

It is the *lifeblood* of relationships.

Here's some -

Slide # 17 Photo and heading

## Rules For fair Fighting' and Relationships

- *that Debbie and I  
have practiced all  
our married life.*



- Never insult the other person, either to their face, or behind their back. This included yelling or swearing.
- Never punish the other person by emotional coldness, silent treatment or other forms of blackmail. God has called us to be childlike, not childish!
- Do not let the sun go down on your anger, sort it out before you go to sleep. Don't be like the man who obeyed this verse, and never slept another night for the next four years!
- Love keeps no record of wrongs, and neither should you!
- If you are 'stuck' – get help, professional, godly help!
- The input both partners have to a marriage is not 50% each, it is 100% each!
- Get your own 'stuff' sorted quickly, to stop it infecting the relationship.
- Don't expect your spouse to meet all your needs, they cannot.
- You need friends – godly and wholesome friends. Average woman has 2.5 close friends throughout her lifetime, average man has only 0.5! Do something about it!

# Emotional tanks

All of your resources are limited, including your time, money and energy.

If your 'money tank' is low, i.e. your bank account, you make steps to fill it up.

Slide # 18

If your energy tank is low, you go to sleep and fill it up.



What about your emotional or love tanks – how do you fill them up if they are low?

Debbie and I have things we do together, and things we do apart.

Every Thursday we have a 'lunch date' at a local food court. Doesn't cost a lot, but the pay offs are enormous!

We have begun taking Latin and Ball Room lessons on a Tuesday night.

But we also have areas of interest and hobbies that do *not* involve the other person as well.

You need to work out how to best fill the Relational Tanks within your marriage and family, and start filling them immediately.

Think of it as deposits and withdrawals into your relational bank account.

Family Counselors and Therapists have worked out the balance needed to maintain healthy relationships.

It is an equation of 5 deposits to every 1 withdrawal.

That means, for every negative experience or emotion, you need to replace it with 5 positive investments.

Here's the thing.

The health of your marriage is directly dependant upon YOUR input into it! (Remember it's 100%!)

Even if your spouse does not make an iota of effort, by investing into their emotional love bank, you can turn your marriage around within a very short period of time!

Slide # 19 Photo



Here's some investment advice (deposits) to enrich your marriage account.

- An act of kindness, politeness or basic consideration of the other's needs.
- An act of sacrifice, doing something on behalf of the other, putting the other first.
- Considerate conversation, where you talk in ways that builds up the

other person, and listen to their wants, needs and desires.

- Romantic expressions of affection – holding hands, a dinner date, note of appreciation, flowers or tools!
- A deed of friendship – thoughtfulness, loyalty to your spouse before others, compliments, sharing feelings emotions or frustrations, support in their time of need, showing honor towards your spouse.

Here's the amazing thing: It doesn't matter where your marriage or relationship is at, at the moment.

It *can* be better, it can be *better* than better, it can be fantastic!

And you have the power and the tools to make it so!

The things you have allowed to create a wedge between you, the things you dislike or find annoying –

...with understanding and love - they can actually be turned around and made into an opportunity to enrich your marriage and make it better!

I have one practical task for everyone of us to complete today.

For all of us, there is probably at least one person or relationship with whom we are struggling.

It might be a friend, family member, or even our spouse.

Let's apply the Bible directly to that situation.

Slide # 20 Scripture

Turn with me to Philippians 4:8

Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

I want you to think of just five things that describe the person with whom you are struggling, under the following headings:

- 1. True (honest or loyal) .....
- 2. Lovely .....
- 3. Admirable .....
- 4. Excellent .....
- 5. Praiseworthy .....

Don't give up!

Go for it – it IS worth it!

God's ways really are best!

# Questions for Discussion.

## PRIORITY ONE CASE STUDY

*Directions:* Work through the following case study alone and then with your partner or small group. Share your responses and examine which aspects apply to you.

Read the statement and explore the questions. Record your answers in a journal or notebook.

The following statement was made by a man to his wife shortly after they were married. He brought two children to the marriage, while she had none: "Don't ever come between me and my children. They can't get another father, but you can always get another husband."

1. This statement communicates his priorities loud and clear. What are they?

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2. How do you think she might feel in response to his statement?  
How might it lead her to walk on eggshells and doubt his  
commitment to her?

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3. How do you suppose this would affect the relationship between the  
stepmother and children?

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4. What fears are embedded in the man's statement, especially  
related to his children?

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5. Even though stepfamily marriages start with a stronger bond between parents and children, the couple's bond must be given priority. While this sometimes generates insecurity and anger within the children, it eventually provides the stability the family must have to survive. What makes this statement difficult to accept?

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6. What challenges have you faced in trying to make the previous statement a reality in your stepfamily?

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**FOR ALL COUPLES**

1. Discuss your personal relationship with God and your ideas of what a faithful life would look like. In what ways do you need to grow spiritually?

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2. How will your marriage be God-directed? What is your desire for spiritual intimacy?

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3. What concerns do you have regarding your partner's commitment to Christ?

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4. What fears do you have for your children, and how do you most naturally protect them?

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5. What are six positive qualities you see in the one person on this earth, whom you are struggling with on a relational level.

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