

Women-2-pray: I am the stepmom, what now?

An estimated one-third of children will live in a stepparent home before the age of 18. About 50% of all people will have a stepparent at some point in their lifetime and about 75% of those who get divorced, will eventually remarry. If it was a case of divorce, we are reminded of what Scripture says about it: that God hates divorce, because of the violence involved. Violence bears long term consequences, after a divorce children may carry scars for a lifetime. If you are saying today: 'I am the stepmom', remember there was a child that was hurt and without being involved in the divorce, also have to say: 'I am the stepchild'.

What can you as a Christian stepmom do for your stepchild? You can pray. You should pray. Here are a few thoughts and guidelines.

1. **Stepfamilies are formed because of loss** and therefore nearly always carry pain, rejection and resentment into the newly formed family. It is of the utmost importance that each family member needs to deal with his/her loss, pain, rejection, bitterness, resentment, etc. Much prayer is needed. When a parent dies or gets divorced, it is likely to cause insecurity and fear in a child's life. Many Christians falsely assume that a stepfamily formed due to the death of a parent is easier on the children than remarriage after a divorce. The pain and loss is the same, however. There is mourning in both cases. Kids who are grieving often display frustration, depression, or rebellion. *Pray for God's grace for stepmoms and to have patience to embrace the children in the throes of their frustration, depression or rebellion. Ask for her to have favour with the children and the ability to ease any anxiety by showing them love and acceptance.*
2. **Children need Dad!** It is wise to encourage your husband to spend time alone with his kids. When Dad remarries, a child may automatically feel scared and unsafe and therefore view the new relationship as a threat and might not want to share him with the new wife. *Pray for stepmoms to initiate and support activities between Dad and his kids and gradually integrate activities that they can take part in together as a stepfamily. Also pray for wisdom for stepfathers to reach out to your children. Ask for wisdom for both parents in cases where there are children from two families in one new home.*
3. **The marriage relationship is important.** About 30% of people remarry within a year after a divorce. If a marriage is to survive, the relationship between husband and wife must be nurtured. *Pray for you as the parents not to neglect one another; to give priority to your marriage, but never at the expense of the children. Ask for wisdom to know how to address difficult situations as a team, so children will not take advantage of situations. Also ask that any division that may come between you as husband and wife as a result of a misunderstanding due to children, be resolved quickly.*
4. **Love unconditionally.** Many stepmoms face step-kids who are difficult, even aggressive. It is important to remember that people who are hurting, hurt others. Remember **Mal.2:16**. Make sure you lay the house rules down, but always exercise discipline with love and compassion. *Pray for stepmoms to have God's grace to learn to love her husband's children even if they do not return that love. Ask that God will grant stepmoms the gift of sacrificial love necessary for any family to survive.*
5. **Be patient.** One of the most common misconceptions about stepfamilies is that everyone will (hopefully) bond quickly and smoothly. The average stepfamily, however, can take up to seven years to integrate. And some never does. Rushing or forcing relationships in a new family will create tension and put unnecessary stress on the marriage. *Pray for stepparents on both sides to be patient and consistently address difficult issues until their families settle in their new environment. Ask for children to adapt quickly and feel safe and secure within their new family and settle in new relationships.*

6. **Mistakes are unavoidable.** The only way to deal with mistakes is to acknowledge them to your spouse and the children that have been hurt in the process. *Pray for every root of bitterness, resentment, pain and rejection to come into the light, and for a way to deal with this in your own life and that of your family and/or your stepchildren. Jesus is the Healer and also heals emotional pain. Pray for each person in the stepfamily to understand God's healing power and the importance of forgiveness (to extend and receive forgiveness). Ask that you as parents, who need to take the lead, will at all times persevere and not give up on any of the children, and to treat all of them equally, with fairness and compassion.*