

BLENDING FAMILIES & NEW BEGINNINGS

Welcome to the world of human imperfection. The Scriptures, God's marvelous handbook given for the purpose of an abundant life, give three options for frail, fickle humans. The first option is for the **optimum**. The Lord offers to one and all the possibilities of His maximum blessings and presence in their life. He's not saying we won't have problems and trials, but that with each one, **Plan A** assures that if we will walk humbly before our God, listening to His voice, yielding each thought and each decision to Him, He will turn everything that touches our life into blessings. He promises to give us limitless strength and wings of the eagle that take us above the major storms. Not a bad deal, but it has a very high price tag for "prone to wander" humans.

Plan A is not limited to those who walk in perfection (which would be rather

limited indeed!), but is for those who are aiming for God's best at all times! It does not require that we never fail, but that we **purpose** to serve the Lord first and foremost. It necessitates most of all an attitude of heart that is flexible before God, willing to postpone present selfish gratification. Any worldly attachments or desires will need to be kept in check. All idols must be offered up as a willing sacrifice to Him. A slogan of this life style could be, “No idols, no barriers!”

Plan B is where we do our own thing, then run to God to fix up our mess. We could say the train gets derailed, but then with hard work and help, it gets put back on the track and runs like it was designed. Plan B is not the ideal, but it appears to be the best some folks will ever enjoy. The Bible is full of examples of people who opted for Plan B. In fact I must confess, you have done it too (so have I)! God uses what we give Him and works out the best solution with what is available. He is into miracles, but they are limited by our faith and cooperation.

Before you throw this Plan A and Plan B stuff into the fire and yell “Heresy,” please turn to the First book of Samuel. God's children rejected the best plan, God's rule through the Aaronic priesthood (Chapter 8). They wanted to be like the

worldly folks around them, with their very own king. Did God slap them into compliance? No, He gave them the desire of their heart, but He also told Samuel exactly who was to be the king. Verse 20 of chapter 12 speaks loudly to this Plan B concept: *“Do not fear. You have committed all this evil, yet do not turn aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart.”*

Samuel goes on to outline the hazards that will be incurred with accepting other than God's best. There will be suffering and inconveniences, and most of all the nagging awareness that they have purposely settled for less than God's best. Will all things work for their good? Yes and no. As they realign with the Lord and seek His face, their new path can be 100% toward the Lord and He will maximize their “less-than-perfect” course – which is less than His best but better by far than His worst!

King David is a sad reminder of the pain we bring upon ourselves when we set our heart to do our own thing and then return to God to bless it. His insistence upon obeying the spirit of lust with Bathsheba resulted in death and division. Humiliation hounded David. He realigned with the Lord, but the former glory never returned. His walk after his self-centered

failure and restoration was trial infested, but definitely better than that of those who abandon their God all together.

Plan C stinks. This is the “do my own thing with no repentance” attitude. The Scriptures warn that those who harden their hearts will be cut off. These are the ones who decide that they alone will rule their lives. These jokers go from failure and misery to more of the same. Their eternal destiny will be the lake of fire created for the devil and his angels!

What does all this have to do with “*Kids, Meet Your New Daddy*”? I want to talk about some of the problems that will be incurred when there's a divorce and remarriage. A whole set of complications arise when we choose the divorce option. Divorce is Plan B at best and Plan C at the worst. Sometimes there is no choice; however, I maintain that had the parties sought the Lord's perfect will before they married their partner, God would have told them not to go through with it. He knows the end from the beginning. It may sound like another version of I told you so, but the departure from Plan A began with marrying outside of God's perfect will!

Why would a Christian ever do this? Because we are also humans! Cupid hits the heart with his love arrows and the brain ceases to function. The spiritual hearing of

Christians gets fuzzy. They mistake God's permissive Plan B (i.e., such as having a king in Israel) for what is really God's best. As they sit on the river bank of bondage and frustration, they bemoan their plight and would occasionally implicate God in their predicament. “Why didn't you stop me from doing this dumb thing, God?” If we are quiet enough we might hear Him say, “Because you wouldn't listen to Me!”

God hates divorce. I'll bet you've heard that Scripture a few times. But, did you know that God is a divorcee? That's right, the God of Jacob divorced Israel (Jeremiah 3:8)! I guess we'd better be more careful as to what we say about divorcees! Why is there such a thing as divorce? Jesus said (Matthew 19:3-5) divorce is not the Father's best, and in fact, it was not a part of His original plan, but He allowed it because of the hardness of man's heart [sounds like my definition of Plan B]. Nobody is perfect, but if both parties will at least try to grow and blend, a bad marriage can usually be saved. If only one of the partners is willing to put forth an effort while the other remains hardhearted, there is no recourse. Jesus said this is why God gave the divorce provision of Deuteronomy chapter 24.

Has man changed since Deuteronomy 24 was written? Are people still hardening

their hearts? Are marriage partners still refusing to yield their self-centered, selfish agendas up to God? Of course. So, divorce is still among us. God still hates it, and He will still divorce those who go whoring after other gods. Adultery and desertion still break the covenant of marriage (see Matthew 5:31,32 and 1 Corinthians 7:15, 27,28). God is desirous of repairing and restoring even if there's been adultery, if both the injured and the wrongdoer seek Him completely (Plan B). **But for the hardened in heart, He has only Plan C to offer!**

Can a divorce result in one person going the Plan C route and the other walking out Plan B? Sure. God's will for us is always individual as well as corporate. Whoever calls on the Name of the Lord will be saved, but realize that only those who call will be saved. A hardhearted mate must pay their own piper. This pamphlet is written only to those who will sign up for Plan B. I hope you will set your sights even higher, to being reinstated into Plan A. It takes some pretty tough farming to dig up the weeds of Plan B, but I believe it's possible for those who put forth lots of faith, love and hard work!

There are many land mines on the battlefield of divorce. If you're to rebuild your life successfully, these must be

properly recognized and dealt with. I'm talking about:

- ✎ pity
- ✎ anger
- ✎ bitterness
- ✎ damaged self image
- ✎ improperly met sexual needs
- ✎ etc.

Each hurt can be healed if we take them to Jesus. He came that you might have an abundant life. This abundant life results from Jesus carrying your hurts away. So, let them go. Forgive your “ex” for their selfishness, etc. Release them to God. Confess any inappropriate responses you may have made, and if called for, make restitution. You are in a new relationship now, but buried resentments from the past can produce a deadly gas that will prejudice your present judgments or inhibit your natural responses. Therefore, it's imperative that you take all the time required to **purge your mind and soul.**

Another danger is survival traits that are left over from your post-divorce era. When one is putting the broken pieces of life back together, they act more protective. This can hinder the rebuilding process with the new mate. Deep relationships only happen when we are vulnerable; yet, this vulnerability is hard to come by when you

are still sensitive from past wounds! Jesus is the only doctor that can supply the necessary healing. Spend enough time with Him for His love to soothe your damaged nerves.

A sign that more healing is required is an over reaction to your new mate's bad traits. The phrase, "Thank you Jesus for _____, just the way they are," may have to be repeated frequently! God will help you rebuild, but not by making your new partner faultless. I think you'll find that God is not so concerned over your new mate's faults as He is with yours.

The adoption of Plan B starts with your personal surrender to the Lord God, totally and completely. This is on your own, regardless of what your spouse does. If your new mate joins you in this, super, if not, too bad! God works with individuals, and the question is, "Will you allow Him to make you all He wants you to be?"

DANGER, THIN ICE!

We are now going to look at some very common pitfalls that arise when a new household is being erected over the ashes of a past catastrophe. Certain problems are so common and obvious that every remarried couple should see them, yet the new "love" produces a cloud of bewitchment that can cancel out common

sense. Is there no hope? Are we not to fall in love? Are humans destined only to failure? Yes we are to fall in love, but the sequence needs to be:

*But seek first His kingdom
and His righteousness, and all
these things will be given to you
as well.*

Matthew 6:33 niv

*Love the Lord your God
with all your heart and with all
your soul and with all your mind
and with all your strength. The
second is this: "Love your
neighbor as yourself." There is
no commandment greater than
these.*

Mark 12:30,31 niv

When we avoid God's order and put our emotions and relationships with other people before Him, we end up in trouble. The problem is, until we realize this, we will continue the: run – trip – run – trip sequence, but to our own pain.

Let me say something very hard right now. Will you still love me? Some people will never learn. God talks about these people in His Word. They get out of one mess and go right into another. I trust you are not one of them, but I have no

delusions of grandeur that everyone reading these simple lines will “smarten up” and fly right.

It's my prayer that you will go for Plan B with the hopes of getting back into Plan A, but I know that only a few will be willing to make such sacrifices. Are you one who has been fooled by the enemy but now are going to pursue God with all your heart? I hope so, but only time will prove your true intentions.

THE SAVIOR COMPLEX

Perhaps the greatest single trap couples fall into with children brought into a new marriage is that of feeling they can and must make up for the failures of the past. This would be great if the new daddy or mommy would make up for past hurts by:

- ✎ listening
- ✎ loving
- ✎ talking
- ✎ praying

What destroys the poor kids is when the great savior appears in the war-torn household with a list of new standards!

Dads are notoriously bad at this. God gave fathers an innate ability to look down the corridors of time and see the future success of children in terms of vocation, marriage, etc. Moms are usually more “present-tense-survival-minded.” A new dad, often without his awareness, is set upon shaping these poor waifs up so that they can make it in the real world. Mom may have spoiled the kids because of her need for their support during the divorce and separation. Moms are usually pushovers. They need warm little bodies near them, so they often step back from the discipline that should have been maintained. The children have been torn apart, and moms, protective in nature, frequently seek to make up for this by coddling. The new dad sees right through this. And what will the great savior do? Right, squeeze this foolishness out of them.

The greatest cry from remarried moms is that the new daddy is too hard on the kids. What can be done about this?

First, there needs to be an acknowledgment by both of you of what's going on. Everybody has been hurt by the divorce, and more pain brought on with harshness will not help. Children do not understand many adult issues that arise in our sophisticated wars. The parents have a

new love in their life, the kids have half of their previous home!

Secondly, parents, realize that people change more readily when they are loved and accepted for who they are! We all need to grow and mature, but it's hard to let go of our present condition unless we feel comfortable with the hand stretched out to us! Kids are natural imitators. Just treat them the way you want them to turn out, and they'll do fine. The opposite of this is sadly true. Treat them with suspicion and unkindness and you are helping to produce a monster! If we project an atmosphere of love and acceptance, they will readjust to their divorce (it's their's too) and grow into loving, productive adults. ***Tenderness with new children will do far more than harshness could ever hope to accomplish.*** **Thirdly**, gobs of wisdom are required. The new stepparent won't stand a snowball's chance in Phoenix, without the grace and wisdom of God. They must seek the mind of God daily and earnestly. *I have received so much help from the Lord while on my knees. He can solve most problems even before they're hatched!*

Fourthly, your agenda must be tossed out the window. What you think, won't make the kids a success. What they

gain from God by submitting their life to Him (for Plan A) is their only hope. And, if you are harsh or unloving or use religion as a club to knock them into compliance with your goals, they'll turn away from their only hope – the living God! Search the Scriptures to find God's agenda for your life, then teach the children how to live this way by your example. Hello? Did you hear that? Your two cents worth of advice will do little in terms of making that sloppy, undisciplined kid that is now in your custody into a success. Only love is guaranteed by God as having the ability of “never failing.” Kids resent the new authority figure that has pushed their “other” parent out of the picture (that’s how their little minds see it); and this resentment prejudices them against the greatest advice! That’s not smart, but observe! That’s just the way it is! Love refrains from offering tidbits of wisdom until the mouth opens on its own.

If you can guide this new entrustment into the loving hands of God Almighty, you will have done by far the greatest thing anyone can ever do. How do we do this? Not by enforcing harsh rules. Dads can too easily be a drill sergeant or tough coach. There is a place for this – in sports and in the military; neither of which are

known for producing great men and women of God! Dad (or mom, if it applies), soften up. Ease up. The worse thing in the world is not that this rebel in kid's clothing fails to take out the garbage. Bad grades are not the unpardonable sin. Consistency, self-discipline and all the virtues that you desire for this precious child entrusted to your care are a byproduct of the Holy Spirit working inside of them.

We may agree that the only hope for a drug addict or alcoholic is Jesus, but what about the little delinquents running around your house? Isn't their only hope Jesus? Our external restrictions will have a hard time getting at their wills. Their heart must fall in love with the Master, then they will be a success! School grades will always come up for a kid in love with Jesus. Garbage will somehow get out to the curb when love abounds.

GIMME MORE

Jealousy is the single greatest demon all new households will have to fight. There never seems to be enough love to go around. From a human standpoint, we could say that the natural plan, two people getting married and then later having kids, is the best because after a few years the

newness, the impulsive passion of the husband-wife relationship, shifts into a rhythm of its own. Mom and dad have had their time alone and it was good, but they are ready to have kids. The little bundles come along and both parents share the joy of parenting. There should be no jealousy because both are teaming up to raise these “angels on loan.” It doesn't always work this way, but it comes closer to being a reality for first timers who share the genes in the children.

The truth of the matter is that humans can never love enough. It requires another source. Study Ephesians 3:14-19. The abundance of love we need can only come from intimacy with Jesus Christ! God is love and He must be our source for the needy, love-starved children in this new household. If mom draws as much love as she can from the Lord, and dad does the same, then they will not need to draw as much from each other. They both will have more for the kids. And, after a divorce, do they ever need it! Children are bottomless pits for food, clothing, toys **and love!** The greatest thing you can give them is love – dressed up as time, quality time!

Because adults are supposed to be smarter than kids, it would seem logical

that the newlyweds back off from anything that might provoke jealousy from their stepchildren. What goes on behind closed doors is none of their business, after they've gone to bed. What happens around them when they are awake is very important. They will not be impressed if you two adults have to sit goo-gooing over each other, or are always going out and leaving them with a baby-sitter. They will soon tire of you running off and hiding together. These are the things you would have enjoyed if this were your first honeymoon! Well, it's not, and in Plan B we don't have the same fineries as Plan A affords.

If you want to do the best you can right now, then back off! You're the smarter one! You're the one who has more control over emotions and hormones, right? Back off with the public display of affection. That's their mom your slobbering over and pinching! That's their dad you're trying to seduce! (make appropriate comparisons). Back off from having to spend so much time together alone! With this new family, erected on the ashes of past failures, you get the time alone later, after the kids leave home! I sincerely believe that if both parents would **treat the children as though they were the most important** (at least for a

season), the kids could be pulled out of the emotional tailspin that the divorce caused! This calls for some big sacrifice and some tall maturity, but with the help of the Holy Spirit, you can do it!

I still remember when I made some of my frequent trips to the hospital as a boy. My body was always needing to be sewn up or splinted because of my energetic monkeyshines (that's what they were called!). Afterwards, with bandages adorning my sniffling frame, mom would take me across the street from Good Samaritan Hospital in Phoenix and buy me a malt! Oh the pleasures of sweets! How they healed deep within! You probably can't spoil your stepchildren enough. As the sweets made my broken bones not hurt so much, your indulgences (within reason) can help mend their wounded psyches. They have been ripped up, broken to pieces and have probably not even received proper medical (soul) treatment yet!

Put off as much discipline as possible for at least a year. Just living in the home with two loving, supporting adults will probably be all they need, and harsh pressure to shape up surely won't help! Go places together. Do lots of fun things. Be a joy to be around. I've heard many people talk about their fondest memories of

childhood, and they usually were the times that didn't require spending much money. Please seek to instill hope in them that this new relationship will be for their benefit.

Can you imagine how some children must feel when they are treated like necessary but unwelcome baggage? When you come home from work, talk to them first, with real interest. Talk about their day, and their needs. Give the wife a little peck on the lips, maybe a brief hug, and store your hormones up for what is to take place later behind closed doors when the kids are peacefully asleep! Do impulsive things. **Be fun.** Make them think that there is hope, that someone really thinks they are neat inside. Be their friend. Back off from squeezing them into any new molds, rather set about to see what's inside of them – to discover the wonderful human being God created them to be!

Don't be afraid if your stepchildren compare you with their “real” father or mother. Agree with them on how special their parents are and how you know you never will be able to take their place, nor do you want to. Tell them that you know you can never be their “real” dad or mom, but you want to always be their friend.

Natural parents have blood ties that give them strange benefits. They can be

creeps and the children will still seek their approval – even through adulthood! Stepparents have no such luxuries. You're on thin ice. I know the macho, self-centered person will say they do not care, “take me or leave me.” But that is the song sung by those on the downward path of Plan C. You'd better care. This child's blood is on your hands. How you treat them is of great concern to God. If you warp them or turn them off from seeking the Lord, you're in big trouble. I believe God is concerned about your future and your happiness, but not at the expense of these little ones. Jesus got snippy with the smug adults that treated children as subhuman.

“Won't this make them into spoiled brats?” Reread the list of things love does (1 Corinthians 13). Love doesn't produce brats! Sloppy indulgence (to get them off my back) produces spoiled brats; quality time produces loving people. Harsh regimentation to make them perfect produces angry monsters!

What do you want? Plan B is not a piece of cake, sweetie. If you're going to be a wimp about this, you'd better turn to Plan C and be done with it! But wait, take your needs to Jesus. Take your hot pants to Jesus (let Him cool your jets – you know what I mean!). Get your eyes off of

what you deserve. You'll find all the love you'll ever be able to enjoy as a result of loving your step- children!

Just a word about the son/step-dad problem. If the boy is very old when a new man enters his domain, he will be jealous, and even hostile. An ignorant step-father will respond in kind and soon a war will ensue. Poor mom gets torn between the two, like the picture on the back of Levies. Again, dad, you're older and wiser. Do what is necessary to prevent the sense of competition. See through his immature eyes. He's only trying to protect his mother.

TOUCH NOT!

The saddest part of divorce and remarriage is what has happened to untold millions of naive young ladies by their stepfathers. Dad hasn't grown up with this young lady with budding blossoms on her chest. Her experimentation with actions around the opposite sex can be nitroglycerin. The step-father who is ignorant of the sexual connotations and is ignorant of Satan's devices will mistake little missy's attitude and actions. She may flirt in innocence and it can be perceived as though she desires inappropriate contact. He may be directed by the

deceiver or his all too powerful gonads to approach this flower and steal her pollen. May God have mercy on the souls of the deceived who have violated their daughters – and more mercy on the helpless victims!

I know you know this, but I must say it anyway. The children are not for you to touch sexually! I actually heard of one case where the step-dad said he was just checking out the girl's breast development! Can you believe it? What, did he think he was a doctor? That's perversion!

Moms, please seek to instill proper modesty and wisdom in your daughters. Teach them, without filling them with fear, of the differences between men's arousal and that of a woman. This is a sticky subject, but an ounce of prevention can be worth a pound of cure. Lust is a perversion and twist of the real thing. The only sure fire protection against the perverted is an abundance of the real.

Dads, your stepdaughter needs to have a healthy respect for men (we both know what's out there!). But they also need to feel that they are desirable to the opposite sex. There's nothing wrong with putting your arm around her or holding her hand, but that's it. No lap sitting after the blossoms start emerging! No thigh

touching, etc. Have I said enough? Tell them how pretty they are, and how lucky the perfect husband is going to be, the one God is preparing for them even now.

Mom should do the sex talk, but you can teach them much about proper limits of modesty and public affection, both by how you treat them and their mother, in their presence. And, please, don't walk around the house in your boxer shorts! The Bible makes a big thing about modesty. I believe this is for a reason. We are living in a Sodom and Gomorrah society that is absolutely crazy with sex! Do what you can to bring this into a biblical perspective for the children. Talk to them about morals and live up to your talk. Limit what you watch, read and do as an example. TV is responsible for being a carrier of the demon of lust; don't ignore this. I'm not saying throw out the TV, but use it as a teaching tool and limit it. What you say and do will have far more weight in influencing their future than artificial shows on the screen, if they know you love them, and if they deeply love and respect you.

Men, can I have a confidential word with you about this area? Past practices you may have indulged in could have opened the door for spirits of lust. They will attempt to overpower you and when

you're least able to resist, will seek to push you into doing something that will scar many lives. If you feel there is something inside you that should not be there, please run (don't walk) to a Christian counselor or Pastor. Preferably one who believes in the New Testament ministry of deliverance.

CONCLUSION

Well, what will it be? Plan A, B, or C? You will probably have an opportunity to demonstrate your sincerity, even as we talk! For those of you that have already done a Hitler routine, there's no time like the present for change. Don't try to convince the children of your new plan with your mouth, but by your actions! If the jealousy tug-o-war is going on full scale, let go of the rope! Get on their side!

So what if you've made mistakes, how much longer will you turn from Plan B? Plan C stinks! Repent before God, and yield your life up to Him completely. Throw out all the selfishness and drink in His love! Get started. Don't wait until next Monday.

Divorce and remarriage does not predestine you to a second class life, unless you choose it. I'm not advocating divorce, nor do I condone it unless it is for

one of the two Scriptural reasons cited earlier, or some extreme and extenuating circumstance. But, having said that, divorce is not the unpardonable sin. It is the derailment of a train. I believe trains can be put back on the tracks. I also believe divorcees can rebuild their lives. You may be too selfish or too lazy to do what's required to enjoy the benefits of Plan B, but you can if you will pay the price. So what are you waiting on? Get going! Remember, God is a divorcee!

THIS IS ONLY FOR STEP-DADS THAT HAVE MESSED UP BIG TIME: If there has been a violation of a youngster's body, then please get serious about setting things right. You need counseling immediately. Some of the worst scars that young ladies have from these events are that they feel it was their fault dad violated them, and they feel betrayed if they tell mom and she doesn't believe them. Humble repentance can start a healing. What you did was awful, but it was not the unpardonable sin, unless you refuse to make it right. With mom at your side, go to them and with tears, repent on your knees. Ask them to forgive you, and by no means make excuses for yourself. Let them know they are not the bad person nor are they gross. Take all the blame from them. Don't

pressure them to forgive you. Explain that you know how hard it will be for them to forgive what you did, and that when they can, you would love to hear it from their lips. Avoid the sin of Amnon (2 Samuel 13). He committed incest and then he turned against his sister. His sin was grave, but his treatment after he violated her was unpardonable. If you sinned against her, don't treat her as though she had leprosy. When it is appropriate, put your arm around her and tell her of your love. Running the other way says that she caught a disease. You're the nut who needs adjusting, not her. It may be embarrassing and frightening, but when it's the proper time (let your wife be the judge), show her the proper kind of affection. And, please seek professional help for the three of you.

Please send your comments and
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