



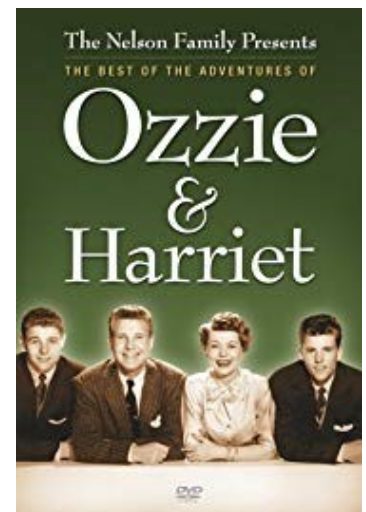
“Nontraditional is the New Traditional” was the title of a recent panel discussion at our May FamilyLife All Staff Meeting . Here are just a few of the statistics shared by the panel:



\* Over 50% of people in the U.S. are single (never married, divorced, widowed, or cohabiting); just under 50% are currently married.

\* The pathway into marriage is now cohabitation: **70% of people live together before a first marriage**. Plus, Scott Stanley & Glenna Rhoades recently estimated that 80% of all people will cohabit with someone at some point in their lifetime, either before or after a marriage (Stanley & Rhoades, Cohabitation is Pervasive, IFS, June 2018).

- \* And, since cohabitation is less stable than marriage, serial cohabitation is on the rise—meaning, children will be at risk for family instability & complex families, all while learning that serial relationships are the norm.
- \* 24% of children today are living in a single parent home.
- \* Less than 8% of families now reflect what used to be called the traditional (Ozzie & Harriet) family consisting of a first marriage in which the husband is the primary breadwinner and the wife primarily attends to child-care and working at home (Walsh, Normal Family Processes, 1993, p. 16). Remember, that number was 8% in 1993; we do not know what the percentage is now (because the study has not been reproduced), but it surely is less than that.
- \* Blended families: over 113 million Americans have a steprelationship of some kind (stepparent, stepsibling, or stepchild) and 175 million of us likely will have one at some point; 40% of families raising children are blended



### 2018 Summit on Stepfamily Ministry All-Access Pass

Do you wish you had been able to make it out to AR for the last Summit? Don't worry, you can still hear from Ron Deal, Laura Petherbridge, Tricia Goyer and more by getting the digital pass!

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families; and 62% of couples (married or cohabiting) under 55 years of age have either a stepparent or stepchild relationship.

The point of this panel was not just to shock us, but to remind us of the challenges of family ministry. And remember, this is nothing new. As Ron Deal says,



“If you stop and you look at the Old Testament families of the Bible, they were stepfamilies ... They were complex families where you had multiple marriages. So it wasn't a marriage and a death and then another marriage, or a divorce and another marriage. It was Jacob getting married four times... Most of the Old Testament families we read about and talk about and have studied are very common and have the same dynamics as modern day stepfamilies. We just never really thought about it. So they've always been a part of God's people. I think that's a really important thing because I encounter a lot of ministry leaders who, one eyebrow goes up when I begin to talk about this. They're like, 'Who, what, why would we even – what's the ministry all about and why do we need to do that?' As if this was a new thing. It's not a new thing.”

We have always believed that FamilyLife has a two-fold mission when it comes to marriage and family: First to hold up the ideal Biblical model but also to meet people where they are at in their current relationships. The gospel never begins by telling people to change their behavior, but rather with a call to a changed heart—the behavior will follow. Consider the woman at the Well in John 4. She was married five times and cohabitating when she met Jesus. Yet, after her encounter with Jesus, she became an ambassador for Him in her hometown! Shame does not change behavior, the gospel does!

In Him,

Eric & Deb

### Tear & Prayer

A banner for FamilyLife featuring a photograph of five people: a man (Eric) and a woman (Deb) standing behind three young women (Charissa, Brenna, and Amanda). The banner includes the FamilyLife logo and contact information for the Riedy family.

**Pray for the Riedy Family**  
Serving in Arkansas with

**FAMILY LIFE**  
Help for today. Hope for tomorrow.

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Deb Eric Charissa Brenna Amanda

**Pray** for Amanda, Eric and I as we head to CO next month for Cru19 Staff Conference—for safety on the road, lots of learning & spiritual growth for all of us, for our other two girls at home working.

**Pray** for my continued recovery from surgery—thankful that damage was repaired but full recovery is still a few weeks away

**Pray** for planning as we look forward to a trip to KY and MI in early September, after both older girls head to College of the Ozarks.

**Praise** for NITOC travels, Amanda's mission trip to Houston, & Charissa's Chicago road trip to adventure. All returned tired but safe & sound!

**Praise** for Eric and I both completing our Institute of Biblical Studies certification last month