

"I am a step dad. I love my wife's children so much, and I want to spiritually lead them, but I am scared to death to cross their boundaries. I am scared to death that one day they are going to yell at me 'You're not my Dad!' What do I do?"

1) Let your stepkids set the boundaries. Don't do it for them:

The stepkids have not told you to back off, you are just afraid they will. This is common for many new step parents. It's not so much that the kids are asking for space but the step parent is afraid of rejection.

So if the kids ask for space in a healthy way, then for a period of time it's appropriate to give them time to get used to having a new parent in their life.

But if they don't ask you to back off, then don't back off. You have a passionate desire to love and lead these kids. Your wife wants you to do this. Your stepkids are not stopping you from doing it. SO DO IT! Go give those kids the love and leadership they deserve.

2) They will most likely yell at you!

I don't know too many parents or step parents that escape getting yelled at by their kids. The reality is that when a kid yells at a parental figure they are in essence saying,

"I am hurt or afraid and I need to spew my anger and fear at someone. I don't trust anyone else to take the ugliest parts of me and still love me, but I believe you will."

So in a very weird way, when they yell at you they are giving you the compliment of making you their safe place.

I'm not condoning kids yelling at parents, but it is important to see every side of what is going on when it happens.

I hate to tell you this, but they probably will yell at you and say 'You're not my Dad'. So instead of being afraid of that, be ready to respond to that by saying, 'I'm not your biological Dad but I love you and I'm not going anywhere.' God will give you grace in the moment and the investments made in your relationship prior to that moment will help you survive it.

If your number one concern is spiritually leading your step kids, you're your stepkids are pretty lucky to have a man like you in their life!

