

recommended resources

CLOSE CALLS: WHAT ADULTERERS WANT YOU TO KNOW ABOUT PROTECTING YOUR MARRIAGE by Dave Carder

At some point in your marriage you will find yourself attracted to someone other than your spouse. Does that mean your marriage is over, or is it a red flag? Dave would say it's a red flag that inevitably appears in every marriage at some point. He goes on to say that "the more men and women work together, minister together, volunteer together, exercise together, have fun together, the more likely these attractions will surface. They are normal. In and of themselves, they're not wrong. But they can lead an individual into wrong behaviour." Dave has identified three types of relationships that often start innocently but can end in full-blown affairs. A must-have book that provides a practical and eye-opening look at how to recognize the beginning of an affair and prevent it from getting off the ground.

FAITH BEGINS AT HOME by Mark Holmen

Mark will be among many top-notch speakers participating in the *Focus on Parenting Simulcast Conference* on November 14, 2009. Mark has worked with families for over 15 years, serving as youth and family pastor in three congregations. Over the years, he has noticed a significant shift in the centrality of faith in the family's home life. It is no longer the hub of family life but more like another task to be checked off Sunday's to-do list. Mark's book helps families establish their home as the primary place where faith is nurtured and lived out.

For more info go to Faithbeginsathome.com.

These resources can be ordered from our online bookstore at FOCUSONTHEFAMILY.CA/BOOKSTORE.



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coming up next

FOCUS ON PARENTING® SIMULCAST CONFERENCE

Join Focus on the Family Canada, Mark Holmen and other gifted speakers, and thousands of parents all across the country as we look at parenting through the eyes of God. You'll discover the benefits of God's design for your family and learn how to help your children and family thrive.

When: November 14, 2009

Where: Available by simulcast at locations across Canada

Encourage your clients to find a church in their community that is hosting this event and join us! (See website for locations.)

To learn more visit Focusonparenting.com.

* Please note: A listing of conferences and workshops here does not necessarily imply endorsement of the event by either the Clergy Care Network or Focus on the Family Canada. They are listed as a service to CCN counsellors to inform and encourage continued learning.



goodhope

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FOR FOCUS ON THE FAMILY
CANADA'S REFERRAL COUNSELLORS
FALL 2009: Volume 6, Issue 3



MESSAGE FROM MICHELE

it takes teamwork

It's almost been a year since we made our counselling services available to all Canadians. We've made a successful transition, thanks to a terrific team dedicated to providing top-quality service to those who call for help. To cope with this extended service, we've had to re-think and expand the entire counselling and care department. We've created an intake team who field and direct all the initial counselling calls sensitively and expertly, and we are very thankful to have Sylvia Welfing, Kari Siewart and Lindsay Demchuk on this team. We've also expanded our counselling department to keep up with the increased requests for counselling.

We've added two new counsellors, Louise Madill and Jason Krause, who competently and compassionately come alongside our callers.

It's been an exhilarating year and we continue to marvel at the ways in which God meets the needs of His people through gifted men and women like you, our counselling referral network.

You'll notice the format of this issue has been altered significantly so we could offer the following article, *Bridging the Counsellor / Church Divide* by Pete Scazzero, in its entirety. Enjoy!

Blessings,

Michele Langmead
Counsellor Supervisor
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Focus on the Family Canada

GET IN TOUCH

We are always interested in hearing about new resources for counsellors, referrals for potential Clergy Care Network counsellors and ideas for upcoming issues of *goodhope*. Please contact us anytime!

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IN THIS ISSUE

- *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality: Bridging the Counsellor/Church Divide*
- Recommended resources
- Upcoming workshops and professional development

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emotionally healthy spirituality: bridging the counsellor/church divide

BY PETE SCAZZERO

I WAS, BY ALL EXTERNAL MEASURES, a successful senior pastor of a large, numerically growing, multi-ethnic church in Queens, New York. I was also emotionally immature, a “workaholic” for God, and failing at home as a husband and father. Counselling and therapy was for weak, broken people – not me. God had been trying to get my attention for a few years. Finally, He sent an earthquake.

“Pete, I’m leaving the church,” my wife Geri had muttered quietly.

I sat still, too stunned to respond.

“I can’t take any more of this stress – the constant crisis,” she continued.

Geri had been more than patient. I had brought home constant pressure and tension from church, year after year. Now the woman I had promised to love just as Christ loved the Church was exhausted. We had experienced eight unrelenting years of stress.

“I’m not doing it anymore,” she concluded. “This church is no longer life for me. It is death.”

When a church member says, “I’m leaving the church,” most pastors don’t feel very good. But when your wife of nine years says it, your world is turned upside down.

We were in our bedroom. I remember the day well.

“Pete, I love you, but I’m leaving the church,” she summarized very calmly. “I no longer respect your leadership.”

I was visibly shaken, and didn’t know what to say or do. I felt shamed, alone and angry. I tried raising my voice to intimidate her: “That is out of the question,” I bellowed. “All right, so I’ve made a few mistakes.”

But she calmly continued, “It’s not that simple. You don’t have the guts to lead – to confront the people who need to be confronted. You don’t lead. You’re too afraid that people will leave the church. You’re too afraid of what they’ll think about you.”

I was outraged. “I’m getting to it!” I yelled defensively. “I’m working on it.” (For the last two years, I really had been trying, but somehow still wasn’t up to it.)

“Good for you, but I can’t wait any more,” she replied.

There was a long pause of silence. Then she uttered the words that changed the power balance in our marriage permanently: “Pete, I quit.”

She was calm and resolute in her decision. I was enraged. A good Christian wife, married to a Christian (and a pastor I may add), does not do this.

I understood at that moment why a husband could fly into a rage and kill the wife he loves. This led me, finally, to a Christian counsellor’s office. My initial hope was that he would straighten Geri out. I was dead wrong. What actually happened was that my life, marriage, and leadership were radically transformed by Jesus Christ! (You’ll find a brief video on our journey at Emotionallyhealthy.org.)

It soon became apparent why so many Christians, like me, make such lousy human beings. Entire areas of my life were untouched by the Lord Jesus by my first seventeen years as a devoted follower of Him – e.g. the inability and withheld permission to feel deeply, the lack of skills to process anger and conflict maturely, the inability to process

loss in a way that enlarges the soul, or to speak honestly, clearly and respectfully, and ignorance of the enormous power of our family of origin to impact our present.

I finally admitted that *emotional health and spiritual maturity are inseparable. Biblically, it is not possible for a Christian to be spiritually mature while remaining emotionally immature.*

It is now sixteen years later. Thanks to the gift of God that came through Christian counsellors like you, I continue my work as a pastor in New York. Moreover, I continue to experience the best years of my life as a human being, a Christian, a husband, a father and a leader in God’s church.

As a result, I have invested years sorting out the role of professional counselling as part of the larger mentoring and discipleship process. Emotional health is now central to our leadership development, staff and elders, small groups, and building of a mature community that models a different kind of life in the new family of Jesus.

Although churches are generally open to Christian counselling, it continues to be separated and compartmentalized from the whole of Christian formation/discipleship. In other words: “You (counsellors) do your thing and we (the Church) will do ours.” My passion is that we build a powerful bridge between the two.

The Church needs well-trained Christian counsellors. You have a unique, prophetic contribution to what God is seeking to do in the Church around the world today. The following are a few practical suggestions that I trust will help you bridge this divide and more effectively impact your ministry:

1. Be Patient. Many of us are defensive and afraid of where you might take us with all this talk of emotions and our interior lives. You are asking us to open up and expand into unknown territory. Like most seminary and Bible school graduates, my discipleship/spiritual paradigm was very narrow. My Christian training taught me that if I were faithful to spiritual disciplines (e.g. prayer, the Word, fellowship, confession, solitude, giving etc.) and obey Jesus, I would be fine. Yet I was in pain, struggling internally and in my marriage.

The notion that spiritual maturity can be achieved apart from integration of emotional aspects of who we are goes back to Neo-Platonism, Gnosticism and Augustine. Offer to serve, teach classes or seminars and lead small groups. These provide wonderful opportunities to expose a congregation to the riches of what God has given you. God took someone like me, who was opposed to Christian counselling, and turned me into one of her greatest advocates. God will honour your patient love and service to your church’s leadership.

2. Develop a Well-Balanced Biblical Framework. I needed a Biblical theology and language to frame what I was experiencing as I was learning about my interior as a Christian counsellor took me to new frontiers in my soul. A theology for breaking the power of the past, for brokenness

and vulnerability, grief and loss, limits and emotions, for example, will go a long way to help people drop their defences. More importantly, it grounds your work as you continue to grow as a counsellor.

Absorb books and authors that do this kind of integrative work. I recommend counsellors use the language of discipleship and spiritual formation in their work with clients to enable a more seamless relationship with the Church. Remember, your calling, like mine, is to make disciples and help Christ be formed in people (Galatians 4:19).

3. Embrace Your Gift and Your Limits. I see myself as a pastor as a “family doctor” engaged in spiritual formation with our people. That is a particular role, with unique authority, before God and our people. I distinguish professional counsellors and therapists as specialists (akin to heart or kidney doctors) to whom I refer people who are beyond my training and expertise to serve.

God has led you to specialize your training in a specific way that enables you take people into deep, ongoing transformation in their following of Christ that I can never do in a sermon or class. Your relationship with clients has distinct boundaries that enable you to explore unique, hidden areas of their lives over a sustained period of time.

4. Seek the Love of Christ Above All Else. Our churches have people who are emotionally healthy but do not have a walk with Christ. At the same time, we have people deeply committed to spiritual disciplines, to Scripture and the Church, yet remain emotionally unaware and socially maladjusted. Both emotional health and spiritual disciplines, when engaged in separately, are powerful. Together, they unleash a spiritual revolution, transforming the hidden places deep beneath the surface of our lives.

Nurture and monitor your own emotional/spiritual growth. We preach, teach and counsel out of who we are and what we have internalized. We cannot give what we do not possess. That applies to both church leaders and Christian counsellors.

Pastors and leaders in North America, as well as from Mongolia, Cuba, Russia, Latin America, Indonesia, Korea and Africa, sense something is desperately wrong in our churches. They recognize the gap between emotional health and spirituality damages our ability to fulfill our mission for Christ. You can make an invaluable contribution, for such as time as this, if you, too, would help build a bridge from our inadequate spiritual paradigms to one that includes emotional health.

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Pete Scazzero is senior pastor of New Life Fellowship Church in Queens, NY, and the author of *The Emotionally Healthy Church* (Zondervan, 2003) and *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality* (Nelson, 2006). For more information and resources, go to Emotionallyhealthy.org.