

recommended resources

SACRED MARRIAGE by Gary Thomas

This book may profoundly change you, and your marriage. Whether it is delightful or difficult, your marriage can become a doorway to a closer walk with God, and to a spiritual integrity that, like salt, seasons the world around you with the savour of Christ.

ESSENTIALS OF MARRIAGE: HIGHER LOVE GROUP KIT*

In *Essentials of Marriage: Higher Love*, you'll see your partnership from God's perspective. What is His plan – and your purpose? Gary Thomas, Dr. Del Tackett, Stormie Omartian and others reveal how praying and serving together, listening to your mate's emotions and dropping mistaken beliefs can bring you closer.

ESSENTIALS OF MARRIAGE: WHO DID YOU REALLY MARRY? GROUP KIT*

Essentials of Marriage: Who Did You Really Marry? shows how even opposites can get along, communicate and resolve disagreements. With insights from Gary Chapman, Les and Leslie Parrott and John Trent, you and your spouse or group will discover how two very different people can “become one” as God intended.

ESSENTIALS OF MARRIAGE: HANDLE WITH CARE GROUP KIT*

In *Essentials of Marriage: Handle with Care*, experts like Gary and Barb Rosberg, Kay Arthur and Dave Ramsey present hard-hitting strategies to deal with the biggest marriage busters, including anger, depression and financial troubles.

*Group kits include six sessions on a DVD, plus a leader's and participant's guide.

Be the first counsellor to write us at counselling@fotf.ca telling us what you think the three basic essentials are to building a godly marriage and why, and we'll send you, for free, all three of the above-mentioned group kits in the *Essentials of Marriage* series!



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coming up next

FAITH AT HOME MINISTRY TRAINING CONFERENCE

Focus on the Family Canada and The Leadership Centre Willow Creek Canada will bring a one-day conference called *Faith at Home* to cities across Canada in March 2010. The conference features Mark Holmen, an author and the senior pastor of Ventura Missionary Church in Ventura, California.

For information visit Faithathome.ca.

FOCUS ON MARRIAGE SIMULCAST CONFERENCE

Join thousands of couples all across the country this February as we celebrate God's design for commitment. At *Focus on Marriage*, you'll receive encouragement from leading marriage coaches such as Gary Thomas, Kirk Cameron, Dr. Les and Leslie Parrott, Francis Chan and Dr. Gary Chapman.

To find a host church and more information go to Ccn.tv/focusonmarriage.

CANADIAN COUNSELLING AND PSYCHOTHERAPY ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association, in partnership with the PEI Counselling Association, presents the CCPA 2010 conference *Counselling: What's on the Horizon?* The conference will be held May 11-14, 2010, in Charlottetown, PEI.

For more information visit Ccpa-accp.ca/conference_2010.

* 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.

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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CONTACT US!

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goodhope

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FOR FOCUS ON THE FAMILY
CANADA'S REFERRAL COUNSELLORS
WINTER 2010: Volume 7, Issue 1



WITH 2009 NOW just a memory, I find myself reflecting on the past year – on unexpected surprises and blessings, on some challenges overcome and some not. Yet I'm keenly aware that undergirding everything is the constancy of Jesus' love, which fills me with hope. On behalf of the Counselling and Care Department, I extend a heartfelt prayer that you and yours will be steeped in Christ's love and encouraged by hope for a year filled with the things that really matter.

I'd also like to take a moment to acknowledge your faithfulness to the ministry of counselling that God has called and equipped you for. We are grateful that you are part of our team of referral counsellors!

In this winter edition of *goodhope*, we turn our attention to marriage. Few things in life are better than a good marriage, and few things are worse than a bad one. Good marriages can be easy-going, fun, safe; bad marriages are not so easy-going, fun or safe. Every day we hear from people whose marriages have seemingly deteriorated beyond repair. Some must leave an abusive marriage in order to protect themselves and their children. Some will refuse to change, give up and seek a divorce. Others, coming to the end of their

ability to “make it work,” surrender to God, seek help, own their “stuff,” work hard, learn to listen, stop blaming and allow God to transform them and their marriages from the inside out.

As counsellors, we hear more than most about marriages filled with despair, anger, betrayal and even hatred. Learning to grow up is hard and nowhere is my immaturity and selfishness more evident than in my marriage. The question is, do I choose to submit to God and His commitment to my character development or not? Sounds good in theory, but it's not so easy in practice. The point is, we all need help and support at some time during our marriage.

At Focus on the Family Canada, we offer couples encouragement and support through counselling and referrals, resources, books, seminars and prayer. Read on for a sneak peek at some of the ways we plan to help marriages and families in the coming months!

Blessings,

Michele Langmead
Counsellor Supervisor
Counselling and Care Ministries
Focus on the Family Canada



CLERGY CARE NETWORK UPDATE

what's up with us

IN THE PAST, faith was a central part of the family's home life, passed on from generation to generation. Going to church was just one aspect of growing in faith. Today, however, the reality for many families is that faith is no more than a one-hour, drop-in experience at church. What does this mean for the faith of our children? How does a family put Christ at the centre of their busy lives? Mark Holmen knows that establishing the strong, healthy, joy-filled family that God intends begins with parents establishing their homes as the primary place where faith is nurtured. Mark is so passionate about this, he has written a

book called *Faith Begins at Home* and is also presenting a Focus-sponsored one-day conference called *Faith at Home*. Why not join us this March as we explore together how to live out our faith at home more purposefully?

May our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who loved us and by His grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.

2 Thessalonians 2: 16-17



BY WENDY KITTLITZ

a great investment for the new year

MY HUSBAND AND I attended one of the *Focus on Parenting*® simulcasts in November and I would love to tell you a bit about this event. We had debated whether to go, since a whole Saturday away from our children is a big sacrifice for working parents, but it was well worth it.

The speakers were tremendous. Mark Holmen challenged us as parents about our call to be the primary nurturers of our children's faith. Larry Fowler spoke about raising a modern-day Joseph – a young person who can stand for God against an alien culture. Elisa Morgan

entertained with her presentation encouraging parents to do what we can. The always-funny Kevin Lemman brought an outstanding message from his new book *Have a New Kid by Friday*. And a panel of media experts, including *VeggieTales*® founder Phil Vischer, shared how families can navigate the challenges of media.

The day was packed with great information and tremendous inspiration, and ended with a call to action. It was practical, encouraging and challenging. Time well spent, in our estimation. Our family will forever benefit from the hours we invested in this.

It is wonderful that host churches open their doors to enable people to take advantage of such a tremendous learning opportunity at a very affordable rate. There are a lot of events out there that support people in their marriages or parenting challenges, but I doubt you will find many as accessible, affordable and practical as these Focus events.

The next Focus-sponsored event is *Focus on Marriage*®, coming via simulcast to a community (hopefully) near you on February 27, 2010. Speakers for this workshop include Gary Thomas (*Sacred Marriage*), Stephen Kendrick (*The Love Dare*), Francis Chan (*Crazy Love*) and Les and Leslie Parrott. Please consider attending and/or inviting those you work with. It will be an excellent time investment. You'll find more information at Ccn.tv/focusonmarriage.



HAVE YOU EVER MET a shell-shocked newlywed (or *not* so newlywed)?

Having bought into the world's lie that marriage is primarily about being happy, they panic at the reality of their own relationship, which is bending under the stress of sickness, disappointment, sin and physical exhaustion.

In time, they come to resent their marriage because it falls so far short of expectations.

What surprises me so much is that such couples rarely think to question their expectations; these idealized notions are sacrosanct and confirmed whenever the person holding them watches a romantic comedy, listens to popular music, or picks up the latest best-selling novel from Chapters. Instead, dissatisfied spouses usually assume that the person they married is the problem; if only they had chosen someone else, then they'd finally have the marriage of their dreams.

When we turn marriage into an idol of happiness, how we despise those who disappoint us! But what if we ask a different question, based on Biblical priorities and principles? What if we consider the question, "What if God designed marriage to make us holy more than to make us happy?" This question alone has caused thousands of couples to reconsider their expectations and start asking questions that

lead to health and intimacy, instead of despair and accusation: "How is God shaping my soul while teaching me to love my spouse?" "How does marriage confront my selfishness, and so help me grow in the character of Christ, the Servant of all?" "How does marriage teach me to listen, instead of shout, and be gentle, instead of harsh, when my spouse lets me down?"

what if God designed marriage to make us holy more than to make us happy?

Quite frankly, the world has lied to us: marriage *will* collapse under our expectations if we subject it to the unrealistic notions of the world's idolatrous dreams. But if we see marriage as a process of growing in intimacy and character, then the very things that most frustrate us about marriage and family life can become stepping stones to intimacy and maturity.

Instead of asking whether your current marriage is making you happy, start asking how it is making you holy – and then thank God for the gift that this journey represents.

Gary Thomas is a writer and the founder and director of the Center for Evangelical Spirituality, a writing and speaking ministry that integrates Scripture, church history and the Christian classics.



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