

“...encourage
one another
daily...”
(Hebrews 3:13)

The Caregiver



Fall 2008 | Classis Quinte Fellowship Ministry

Marriage and Family Ministry

“The Caregiver” is a quarterly newsletter published by the Fellowship Ministry of Classis Quinte, a district of the Christian Reformed Church of North America. The purpose of this newsletter is to be more intentional in striving to improve the well-being of marriage and family life within as well as beyond our denomination.

The Fellowship Ministry also encourages each of our churches to organize a local Marriage and Family Ministry to focus on the health of marriage and family life. The FM will gladly assist you in forming such a crucial ministry in your congregation and in providing helpful suggestions.

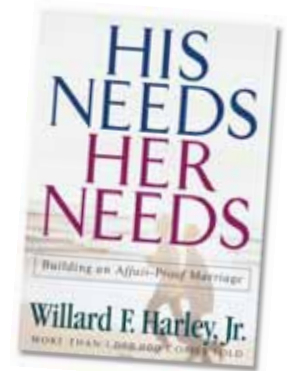
We hope that each of you who reads this newsletter will join us in becoming more intentional in striving for relational healing. The church as well as our society is very much in need of such healing.

Please share this newsletter with family members and friends, for we all need to acquire greater insight into forming stronger, healthier family relationships, so that our homes, our churches, and our workplaces are blessed.

You must take full responsibility for the use of information in this newsletter and in any book mentioned herein.

Failure to Care; Failure to Protect

In our May newsletter we mentioned the Willard F. Harley book called *His Needs Her Needs*, which aims to put “sizzle” in marriage and to prevent the disaster of divorce. (More than 1,000,000 copies of his book have been sold.) As a therapist Harley gradually discovered what made marriages work instead of focusing on what made them fail. His book gives specific ideas to help couples “be in love again” after finding each other irritating or even “repulsive.” he shows tired couples “how to fall in love and stay in love with each other.”



Dr. Harley writes, “Marital conflict is created one of two ways: (1) Couples *fail to make* each other *happy*, or (2) couples make each other *unhappy*. In the first case, couples are frustrated because their needs are not being met. In the second case, they’re deliberately hurting each other. I call the first cause of conflict failure to care [failure to meet each other’s most important emotional needs] and the second, *failure to protect* [failure to stop unmet needs from generating thoughtless and inconsiderate actions, often unintentionally].”

Are you trapped in one of these two dilemmas? Wouldn’t you want to find out how Harley can encourage you to resolve these? Even if your marriage looks hopeless, it can be restored again! (Also read about my brother’s wrenching experience somewhere in this issue.)

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Marriage Remodeling

“Your house is a bit like your marriage: Every marriage needs a periodic repair and remodel. Even the best marriages, like the best houses, need some work every once in a while. The sad thing is that most couples take better care of their house than their marriages.”

Dr. Steve Stephens

Blueprints for a Solid Marriage

How well do you maintain your marriage? Usually there are plenty of minor marital repairs to be looked after. At times you need to do major remodeling. Do you take time and effort to enhance your marriage? Do you know what needs changing? Do you have an idea as to how the repairs should be made?

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What Basic Information Do Couples Need about Each Other?

Whether you are dating or are married, you need to know some solid facts about each other in order to build a sound foundation for your relationship. It is important to know the joys and sorrows, the exhilaration and pain, the trials and errors that each of you have experienced.

Here below are some of the questions to which both of you must know clear answers, either with respect to your present or future marriage (for those not yet married). The answers will help you gain greater understanding and should encourage you to find appropriate ways to mesh your ideas, thoughts, dreams, and expectations as you seek to work as a committed team.

1. What personality traits do you appreciate or dislike in yourself or others?
2. How were you raised and what influence did this have on your upbringing?
3. How do you handle money and your desire for possessions?
4. To what extent should in-laws involve themselves in your marriage?
5. What sexual expectations do you have?
6. How did your family members deal with conflict?
7. What is your faith all about and how do you relate to God?
8. What goals have you set for your marriage and yourself?
9. How should each of us divide our domestic roles?
10. What major medical problems have there been in your family?
11. What positive or negative patterns of behaviour regulated your family life?
12. What irritating habits do you have?

Discussing these questions together will help you understand each other better. Try to do so without becoming irritated. Perhaps you will feel some discomfort, but don't give up trying to understand yourself and your partner.

Signs of a Marriage in Trouble

1. Constant criticism (expressing negative words about spouse's character)
2. Frequent contempt (sarcasm, name-calling, eye-rolling, sneering)
3. Defensiveness (actually a way of blaming)
4. Stonewalling (being impassive, tuning out)

– John M. Gottman and Nan Silver *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*

You cannot change your boyfriend/girlfriend or spouse, but you can influence him or her by taking a good look at your own behaviour. Do you criticize? Are you somehow showing contempt? How defensive are you? Do you ignore your partner? Seeking change in yourself will gradually effect your partner, even though such change may take time. Be patient.

It is quite easy to blame the other person for the flaws in your relationship. It is much more difficult to take a frank look at your own shortcomings and yet these are the ones you can control.

Why Guys Have Trouble with Conversation

Men tend to use “fact-giving or take-charge tools” in communication, so in the workplace men’s talk is generally “succinct and efficient.” However, in relationships successful communication needs more careful words and thoughtful explanations. Do you know what women sometimes think about a man’s way of communicating? Read the following remarks:

“He doesn’t want to share his heart with me.”

“He tells me things that sound like a news report rather than loving thoughts.”

“I feel like his boss, like he’s checking in with me rather than sharing with me.”

“He doesn’t have time for me,”

“He’s become shallow and uninteresting, given only to factual answers.”

- Gary, Greg, and Michael Smalley *Men’s Relational Toolbox*

Guys, how does your girlfriend or wife hear your words? Remember that women do not process words in the same way as men. How aware are you concerning the way you listen and talk? Are you really trying to understand her? Do you take time to listen or are you eager to give her your solutions? How can you become a better lover?

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My Brother’s Devastating Lesson

My brother was married for about twelve years when his wife got tired of him. Although he was a caring and loyal person, he just had never understood how much a woman values empathic expressions from the heart and tender words instead of constant rational talk or quick solutions. When his wife finally met a man who gave her a sympathetic ear, she moved in with him.

For two and a half years my brother lived alone, devastated, trying to figure out what he had done wrong. He was intrigued by books on relationships and went to see a counsellor to make sense of his broken marriage. Meanwhile, his wife became less enchanted with her new mate and began to realize that she had been much better off with her husband, so she asked him to take her back. At first my brother had to deal with his anger for having been abandoned by his wife. Gradually, he sought a sign from God whether or not he should take her back. After some time his anger subsided and his willingness to take her back and to make a new beginning became stronger.

Now he and his wife have been living together again for more than five years and are building a stronger marriage. Both have learned to understand themselves and to appreciate each other more.

Often separation does not end in reconciliation, especially not when unfaithfulness tears a marriage apart. All of us as husbands and wives must learn that we are imperfect beings and that we usually know very little about what makes marriage really work.

Therefore, we ought to put greater effort into understanding our own and each other’s needs and into realizing how to deal with our many differences.



“Become aware of each other’s emotional needs and learn to meet them.”

– Willard F. Harley, Jr. *His Needs Her Needs*

First Love

“Remember when you first fell in love, how close the two of you were? Then a few years passed and little issues, things you thought would get better with time, have developed into major problems. Like many couples who want to honor their wedding vows, divorce isn’t an option. Yet you feel as if you are stuck in a miserable marriage with no hope of improvement.”

– from the back cover of Gary Chapman’s book *Loving Solutions*

In this encouraging book Gary provides us with specific steps that we can take to change the emotional climate between us as boyfriend and girlfriend or as husband and wife, giving us six truths that may help us move toward healing, hope, and renewal in our courtship or marriage.

How Do I Understand My Spouse’s Behaviour?

We do not always understand what motivates someone’s behaviour. In fact, we often do not understand our own inner motivation for acting in certain ways. All of our behaviour flows from internal desires or needs or drives or fears or our past habitual responses that we do not fully comprehend at a conscious level. Thus, it is even more difficult to understand the behaviour of our boyfriend/girlfriend or spouse.

In his book *Loving Solutions*, marriage counsellor Gary Chapman suggests that some of our basic non-physical needs are:

1. the need for love (desire to love and be loved)
2. the need for freedom (desire to order our life and not to be controlled)
3. the need for significance (desire to make an impact on the world)
4. the need for recreation (desire for relaxation and enjoyment)
5. the need for peace with God (desire to satisfy our spiritual hunger)

How well do you understand your own needs? Are you struggling with the need for significance? Do you not experience peace with God? Do you feel controlled by others? Can you discuss these needs with someone who will listen and who may give you helpful feedback? In this issue you’ll find ads by a Christian counsellors in this region. Perhaps it’ll be useful to talk with one of them. You’ll need to find out for yourself which of these counsellors – if any – is most suitable for your needs.

“People who stay married live four years longer than people who don’t”

– John M. Gottman and Nan Silver *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*

<h3>Christian Counselling Services</h3> <p><i>Helping Couples, Individuals, and Families</i></p>	Dr. Rob Elkington, DMin, PhD (Cand)
	Val Foster, MDiv., RMFT
	905-668-2508 95 Taunton Rd. E. Whitby

Marriage Encounter weekends are valuable for couples to restore their communication, rekindle their romance, and renew their commitment to each other. If you are interested in these, contact **Chris and Cindy Otten (519-393-5163)** about weekends scheduled for November 2008 in Peterborough and February 2009 in Niagara Falls.

How you can reach us

Please contact us at Classis Quinte Fellowship Ministry and provide us with your suggestions or questions. Do you need to find a Christian counsellor? Consult our ads or send us a message at wybe@eagle.ca or phone us at 905-372-1551. All requests and/or concerns will be dealt with in strict confidence.

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.”

1 Corinthians 13:4 (NIV)