



Marriage CoMission NEWSLETTER



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Awakening America

The Marriage CoMission Church Sector has a major effort underway to position marriage and family issues within the faith community as key elements of a much-needed Christ Awakening in America. During the last week of April, national leaders of prayer and revival movements will gather in Lexington, KY, the site of the Second Great Awakening, to envision, strategize and pray. Focus will be given to the Marriage CoMission work, Community Marriage Initiatives, Community Marriage Policies and other strategies as keys to reclaiming commitment to marriage and family as God intended.

At county courthouses all across America on September 11, many will gather at noon to pray for marriages, families and other issues of spiritual awakening. This effort will provide great prayer support to the Marriage CoMission work.

Free Fireproof Institute at Smart Marriages

The Fireproof movie phenomenon has created a wave of enthusiasm for stronger marriages in communities and churches across America. Churches feel optimistic that couples in their congregation can experience renewed hope for their relationship. The Fireproof Institute is specifically designed to help churches launch and sustain powerful marriage and family strengthening programs. You will learn how to help hurting couples once the movie is over and the lights come on and they must face the realities in their own marriages. Come learn about:

- A variety of marriage education programs that are effective, affordable, and easy to teach
- How to recruit and train mentor couples to teach the courses to couples in every life stage
- A roadmap for success - including Dos and Don'ts

For more information, please see the Fireproof Institute Flyer [here](#).

Community Marriage Initiative Training

The Marriage CoMission Community Mobilization Team recently held an intensive training for leaders of Community Marriage Initiatives from across the country at WinShape Retreat in Rome, GA. The training team, which includes Julie Baumgardner, Richard Alberston, Jason Krafsky, John Jauregui and Randy Hicks, demonstrate collaboration in action as they share their expertise, materials and lessons-learned from the field. Each trainer brings a unique perspective on community engagement techniques, especially how each has been successful in involving community leaders and elders in strengthening marriage and family. The team guided participants in exploring potential partnerships and creating win-win relationships which are essential to an initiative's sustainability.

Although the training is compared to "drinking from a firehose," CMI leaders get re-energized by being with others who are wrestling with the same issues and opportunities. Processing the wealth of information together also helps solidify the concepts - participants say that one of the most valuable parts of the event is networking with other leaders. The core team also discussed best practices and fresh ideas in areas such as board formation and governance, fundraising, catalytic events, stakeholder engagement, and creative use of technology.

Several of the sessions were recorded and will be available on the social networking site for CMI, [First Things First University](#). This essential tool is positioned to help initiatives all over the country collaborate on best practices.

All Roads Lead to Marriage

by Jeff Fray

Revitalizing marriage and family in America requires convergence and collaboration from a wide range of stakeholders. There are several other family-focused movements that contribute to this revitalization. The Fatherhood Movement is vocal about the centrality of marriage in engaging fathers. The Abstinence Movement seeks the recovery of healthy sexuality as foundational to prepare young people for healthy, life-long marriage. The Life Movement is focused on the formation of family through marriage as key to decreasing abortion. The City Transformation Movement is identifying marriage and family as a central strategy to its ultimate mission. The Revival Movement in the church sees healthy marriage and relationships as the essential horizontal expression of revival.

If this were ancient Rome we might say, "All roads lead to marriage." I got a lesson in this early on in the Marriage CoMission work from Dr. Wade Horn, who was Assistant Secretary at ACF (Administration of Children and Family, Department of Health and Human Services) at the time. A small group of Marriage Movement leaders had gathered at ACF to get acquainted with Dr. Horn and to learn more about what our government was doing about marriage. To our surprise Dr. Horn

gathered the heads of each division in a large boardroom and had each of them tell us what their division was doing about marriage. He modeled to us this reality: we all have a stake in healthy marriages, regardless of our particular discipline or area of work. So we heard what the Office of Refugee Resettlement was doing to incorporate a healthy marriage strategy into their overall effort (along with the Office of Family Assistance, the Children's Bureau, the Office of Child Support Enforcement, etc.). In this way Dr. Horn sought to engage all of ACF in the strategy to revitalize marriage in America.

Here's what I learned: in the Marriage Movement we need to reach out and help other groups and disciplines find ways they can incorporate a healthy marriage strategy and message into their work. As Movement leaders, I would encourage all of us to stay alert for natural alliances with people, initiatives, and organizations that can incorporate the healthy marriage message into their area of work. In the end, if we all do our part, big or small, we will enjoy an era of revitalized, life-giving, healthy families.

Devotional Thought

by Jeff Fray

Recently Gail and I went sailing with friends and got some much needed getaway time. I love the pre-dawn time on the water. This one particular morning the air was cool, the water in our protected anchorage was glassy-still, and the beach on the shore appeared as a light patch against the dark island of St. Johns rising up in front of us. Add to that some freshly pressed Starbucks Kenya AAA coffee and my spirit wanted to jump right out of me through the smile plastered on my face. Joy.

There really is nothing like raw beauty to awaken the soul to joy.

Into this morning beauty a verse began to circulate in my mind, "For the joy that was before Him, Jesus endured the cross, and despised its shame." Joy was the fuel that Jesus drew on to have the strength to endure His cross. With the eyes of faith, Jesus could see past the circumstances and see the end result of the cross - you and I restored as the sons and daughters of God. Joy rises in us not because all IS well, but because through faith we know all WILL be well. In that early morning surge of joy at anchor off of St. Johns, the beauty of the moment pushed the worries of everyday life aside, and I received that soul-nurturing flush of fresh joy.

So joy is the fuel for endurance, and endurance is something we are called to a lot these days.

As the sailing trip came to an end, Gail and I took away a keen sense of the importance of our daily pursuit of joy. Our world is layered with problems, issues, and concerns and every

day there are opportunities to feel discouraged by the voices that mock, belittle or otherwise seek to discourage and erode our courage and confidence. Jesus knew how to "despise" or silence the voices of shame.

Endurance requires that we reject the voices of shame. Mounting a good defense against shame means that we actively take thoughts captive and bring them to the light. Truth about our weaknesses and needed course corrections received in love lead to life and joy. Shame guts us of our courage and raises fear up above faith. So these are our "bookends" for endurance: the pursuit of joy and the rejection of shame. In the end I hope I will hear these words: "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Upcoming Events

Corporate Working Group Conference Call

May 18, 1-2pm EASTERN

Agenda and Call-In Information Forthcoming

Fireproof Institute at Smart Marriages

July 8 and July 12 (Smart Marriages Conference, July 6-12)

[Please see the flyer here.](#)

AMFM Marriage & Family Ministry Training Conference

Phoenix, AZ: August 3-7, 2009

www.amfmconference.com

Business as Unusual Conference

WinShape Retreat, Rome, GA: August 16-18

[Please see the flyer here.](#)

Awakening America Community Prayer Event

Nationwide: September 11

www.awakeningamerica.us

National Summit on Marriage, Parenting and Family at Hampton University

Hampton, VA: September 29-30, 2009

(More information coming soon.)

If you have any questions or needs, please contact Andrea Lee at andrea@marriagecomission.com or 404-775-8808.

Thanks,
Marriage CoMission