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From Dr. Fray

Dear Marriage CoMission Family,

Happy New Year! I like the opportunity that the end of the year brings to hit the reset button and take a fresh look at a new year. Over the holidays, Gail and I looked back on the past year while anticipating the coming one. With so much happening in our nation and so much opportunity around us in the Marriage Movement, how will we prioritize our activity in the months ahead? That is the question of the season. Here are some things on my heart and mind that I wanted to share with you as the year kicks off.

While sitting by the fire one evening, journal at hand, I came across this definition of faith: Faith is living "according to the revelation we have received, in the midst of mysteries we can't explain." So I asked myself, "What is the revelation that lights our way?" Here is my go at answering this, what I call the Marriage CoMission "lights":

- Collaboration: There will be no Marriage Movement unless we work together.
 - Corollary - Fellowship and the quality of our relationships trump strategy and action
- Dominion: We require a working culture in which each member is un-encumbered in living out their unique dominion.
 - Corollary 1 - There is no "it" in the Marriage Movement
 - Corollary 2 - There is no Marriage Movement if local ELDERS AND LEADERS do not take responsibility for their community

Convergence: We actively find ways to overlap our efforts and to integrate functions and roles to the extent we have the wisdom to recognize and pursue them.

These three "lights," tested by time, have been dependable navigational aids for the Marriage Movement...perhaps reaching the level of revelation. Inevitably pressure will arise to compromise our "lights" for the sake of obvious immediate gains

(the end justifies the means).

Guard Your Heart

If you know Gary Rosberg then you have heard his challenge, as I have, to "guard your heart", for as the Scripture Gary references says, it "is the wellspring of life" (Proverbs 4:23). What would be some "guard your heart" themes for 2009? Here are my personal answers, perhaps they will speak to you too:

1. I need to guard my heart from allowing the CAUSE of marriage to become bigger than the God of marriage. Whenever I get wrapped up in a great cause it fuels passion. I get pretty passionate recounting the profound cost that the fragmentation of the family is exacting on our communities today and how it dims the picture for our children's future. Unguarded, my heart will allow the cause itself to become my higher power, the energy that gets me out of bed in the morning, defining my IDENTITY and anointing me with a version of relevance, meaning, and position. If the Cause becomes the God that I worship, the light will go out in my corner of the Marriage Movement. If beauty is the language of romance, then God has been wooing me intensely through the beauty of my wife, my family, and the world outside my window. Let this gratitude be the spiritual act of worship that ignites my day with vision and passion and keeps me in an intimate relationship with my Creator.

2. I need to guard my heart from the temptation to make things happen. Movements require aggressive stewardship of all the resources at hand without crossing the line to manipulation and forced action. This brings me back to "managing my sails to catch the wind"... the wind will move the ship, if I will but tend the sails. Forcing action will lead to manipulation and injury to relationships. Here is a scripture that can stand my hair on end ...Isaiah 50:10-11.

3. I need to guard my heart from fear. Shall I downgrade the vision of what we have been given because I can't see how it will come to be? My prayer is, "Father save me from fear and grant me the faith to be steadfast in both the tempest or the dead calm." Clearly, I am not qualified for the role that is assigned to me, nor deserving of the resources that are entrusted to me. Will I have the courage to be a faithful steward and invest freely what has been placed in my hands...or will I bury it in the yard of fear? How about you?

On Convergence

I think we are embarking on the most challenging and exciting year we have had since we launched the Marriage CoMission. Action is breaking out on many fronts and there is more momentum in the movement than we have seen to date. This year Andrea and I will strive to communicate more regularly with you about developments on the national scene and of specific events and opportunities that are happening. We look forward to

hearing from you too (see "Connecting" below to learn how).

May 2009 bring much joy to you and your family.

Blessings,

Jeff (Chair, National Steering Committee)

Flower Fest 2009!

You don't have to spend an arm and a leg to show someone you care.

It's a great deal: \$15 for five tulips in an attractive floral vase with decorative ribbon, a cardholder, and a card for your sweetie, friend, co-worker, or your child's teacher on Valentine's Day.



Flower Fest is one city marriage initiative's way of helping the community celebrate romance and healthy relationships while building awareness of their efforts.

Now in their third year with Flower Fest, [First Things First's](#) community relationships help make the event a huge success. The organization partners with a grocery store chain to get the flowers at wholesale and they even receive free publicity from radio and TV sponsors. In addition to placing a Flower Fest web banner on their homepage, the local news channel produced a 30 second commercial for Flower Fest and aired it for FREE!

The arrangements are available to the public through the organization's website, but most Flower Fest sales are taken by "company reps." Through existing relationships within large companies in the city, First Things First of Chattanooga recruits representatives that take orders within their business for four weeks leading up to Valentine's Day. The company reps are treated to a kick-off luncheon and then supplied with a fresh tulip arrangement every week as a marketing tool. Awards are given for the highest seller each week. The reps have a beautiful, economical arrangement to sell and they get a kick out of supporting a worthy nonprofit.

The volunteers pull it all together: they tie on ribbons, fill vases with water and ice cubes (to keep those tulips from blooming too early!), cut and arrange the flowers, insert cards and cardholders and facilitate pick-ups by company reps and the general public.

This is a wonderful, creative example of how a community marriage initiative can provide value. They are building connections in the community, encouraging healthy relationships, creating awareness of the CMI's brand and educating about the availability of classes and services.

What a fantastic way to celebrate!
We would love to hear what your community is doing around Valentine's Day or your ideas for a cool community event. Help us get a discussion started by visiting the [Marriage CoMission's new Community Mobilization Facebook group!](#)

Upcoming Events

Galatians 6:6 Retreat at WinShape: February 16-18

This retreat is designed for senior pastor couples and is completely gifted to them. We are targeting our Marriage CoMission communities with this opportunity as a way for CMI's to minister to the pastors in their area and build awareness of the power of healthy marriages. For the brochure and more information, please visit www.marriagecomission.com/go/galatians66.

Reconciling Troubled Marriages Certification Training at WinShape: March 11-13

Join Clint & Penny Bragg and Joe & Michelle Williams to learn about helping couples reconcile and getting a ministry started in your church. The only charge is for meals, \$65 per person. For more information, please visit www.marriagecomission.com/go/reconilingtraining.

Connecting

We are looking forward to helping you connect with each other more in 2009! We have organized Facebook groups for each of the sectors and would love for you to help us get them started. Without your participation, these groups won't flourish! The links to each are below.

- [Church Sector](#)
- [Community Mobilization Sector](#)
- [Corporate Sector](#)
- [Marriage Services Sector](#)
- [Media Sector](#)
- [Research Sector](#)

Talk to you soon!

Marriage CoMission