



Christian Report

VOLUME 23 ISSUE 11 NOVEMBER 2023

Charting a Course For Christian Marriage

A Seven-part Letter of Encouragement to Christian Military Couples — Letter Three

Last month in Letter Two we discussed a tough topic – the three tickets we believe are essential for a couple to have a chance at a good marriage regardless of their faith profession, but certainly for a Christian marriage. Those included physical and emotional safety, emotional availability without competition with an addiction, and trust that each person feels unique and special without inappropriate involvement with third parties. Each was discussed in detail so if you missed that letter, we really recommend you go back and check that one out. Those are prerequisites for what we have to say going forward.

But first, a pause. We know that those tickets are getting harder and harder to find these days. We live in a time when society is having trouble identifying a common sense of right and wrong – consensus about an ultimate, overarching cultural ethos. For many only political power is important. Others are wrapped up in self-importance. This leaves us fragmented and confused, and efforts at personal virtue are seen as naïve at best or foolhardy at worst.

We do not mean to treat tough subjects like domestic violence, addictions, and infidelity without the seriousness that they deserve. As a couple we have successfully navigated around those shoal waters for four decades, but please do not take our attempt at folksy storytelling as lack of deep concern for those couples still struggling to find safety and total commitment to the marriage. In fact, we highly encourage those readers struggling for those three tickets to keep reading our letters. We are

certain you will find both a sense of hope, a vision for the future you want, and helpful advice that will have applicability in facilitating the attainment of one or more of those tickets. With those points emphasized, we will resume our story.

We hear that unmistakable hum of the letter carrier's little engine put-putting down our street. Leaving his wife in her recliner, out goes our salty old shrink shuffling along with his morning cup of Joe without much hope of anything of value in that old box.



But, wow, Herschel comes trotting back into the house with a broad grin on his face like you would not believe. He got his first Nueske's Premium Meats catalog! The cover is adorned with four luscious, mouthwatering hot dogs! The company is offering sumptuous premium meats for outdoor grilling like applewood

smoked hotdogs, triple-thick butcher cut bacon, and a smoked bratwurst sampler! His mouth is watering as he starts planning his next cookout. Boy, has his mood changed from the sleepyhead that wandered out to the mailbox.

Try to follow us here. It's a bit of a jump. Let's take this relatively cute, but minor transformative moment of daily life and talk about something really important, namely the transformative experience of our Christian faith. This is the first of our five practical areas for implementing the Christian truths about love and commitment.

Becoming more Christlike as a Married Person. One of the ways the Christian marriage is different from non-Christian marriage is that we know that our spouses are loved by God, are His unique and

(Continued on Page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

special child, and that God works through his Spirit to make changes in each of us – to make us more like himself. 2 Corinthians 3:18 holds the truth of this very clearly. In a marriage where both partners are sincere followers of Christ and are experienced as good-hearted people, you have the potential of forging a very close and loving relationship. You know that even if we are not on the “same sheet of music” on a given day, week, month, or even year, we are still in the same “hymnal”!

We think that one way we become more like Christ is by learning to love more completely both God and our spouse. Fortunately, our Father has provided us with a wonderful “training aid” (to use a familiar military teaching term) in learning about that kind of love, namely our spouse.

Although we experience wonderful feelings associated with love, the act of loving is primarily a decision, a commitment, the attitude of forgiveness, a willingness to look for the best in our spouse, and a habit of willing service. One of the things we learned from psychology is that when you make willing sacrifices for the benefit of someone else, your love for them grows. Note the operative word in that is WILLING. If you make sacrifices for someone else’s benefit because you feel coerced and would rather not do it, you are more likely to feel resentment rather than love.

While Christians are in the process of becoming more Christlike, we must declare that it is a messy and challenging effort at best. Yet, we do see those areas of growth where the Holy Spirit is working in each of us to achieve that end. Seeing the Spirit working in your spouse is a beautiful reminder that God truly loves him or her. Your spouse continues to move in the direction of walking in the Spirit and becoming the person God is forming them for His



work. Take comfort in that process and trust Christ’s work in his or her life. That is His work; you are not in charge of your spouse’s spiritual development. Trying to take on that role will only lead to conflict and problems that limit the growth you are seeking.

We have not always experienced this as a “lock step” process. As men and women often of slightly

different ages and usually employed differently and from different backgrounds, possibly cultures, too, husbands and wives will often have different spiritual journeys with many varied growth points. In our example, for about three years of our marriage, we did not attend church together. Frankly, Herschel

had more work to do to recapture his Christian testimony after initial exposure to the social sciences. Anne’s faithfulness to her faith and the love and patience she brought to the marriage were major factors in reopening spiritual doors Herschel had temporarily closed.

Even though we have attended church together over the last thirty years, we have each had different spiritual crises and growth moments that the other was helpful in resolving. We have been involved with four different denominations in our forty-year journey together. Each of those transitions we had to negotiate together as the Lord moved in our lives. We were able to honor the time and effort it took one another to work out his or her journey with our Lord.

We have learned that we experience our spirituality differently, Anne relishes her music. For her hymns are actually raised to the level of prayers. Herschel is more at home preparing a lesson or writing a paper. He is more academically inclined in his spiritual life, needing to study topics carefully. It’s probably the classic right brain, left brain division.

(Continued on page 4)

Have you ever wished you could have a second chance in life? Have you ever done something that you deeply regretted the moment you did it? We have all made mistakes. We have all done things that we know are wrong. But I have good news for you: God gives second chances . . . and third ones . . . and fourth ones . . . and fifth ones.

Jonah was a man who was given a second chance in life. He was given a job to do, but he basically refused. He was told to go and preach to some people known as the Ninevites, and he said no. Then he boarded a boat going in the opposite direction.

But Jonah found out that it's impossible to run from God. A great storm came, and he told the terrified crew that if they threw him overboard, the storm would stop. So over the side he went.

The Bible says that "a great fish" swallowed Jonah. This may have been a fish or a whale. In the original language, the term is *sea creature*. It might be something that exists today or something that no longer exists. Whatever it was, it swallowed Jonah. Then, in the fish's stomach, Jonah prayed to God—after he already had been there for three days and nights. Talk about stubborn. I can imagine him wrapped in seaweed, saying, "I'm not praying. I'm not budging." But finally Jonah cried out to God for help.

God directed the fish to the shore of Nineveh, where it opened its mouth and vomited up Jonah. Can you imagine sitting on the beach in Nineveh, catching some rays, and you suddenly see something just off the shoreline. You say to your friend, "Wow. What is that? A boat coming in? Whoa! That looks like a fish. It's opening its mouth. . . Oh no! Sick!"

Out jumps Jonah, who warned the Ninevites of the coming judgment. God loved Nineveh, even though the

people were sinful. And amazingly, the Ninevites repented after Jonah preached to them.

Some 600,000 people turned to God, and He spared them. He didn't judge them; He gave them a second chance. And He gave Jonah a second chance as well.

God accomplished His purposes through a storm and a large fish. Sometimes it takes something radical to get our attention. We think we're indestructible, "Oh, that won't happen to me. That may happen to other people, but never to me." Then something takes place in our lives that's a wake-up call.

Have you had a wake-up call in life recently? Maybe it was a close brush with death. Maybe someone close to you suddenly died, or something happened that caused you to start thinking about the big issues of life.

Maybe you've run from God your entire life. Maybe you were raised in a Christian home and thought, "This is a complete drag. I don't want to live as a Christian, go to church, or live by what the Bible says. I want to go out and have fun—to do what I want to do."

Let me ask you a question: How is that working out for you? After you've been out there for a while and have tasted some of the things this culture and this world have to offer, it's pretty easy to burn out and see the emptiness of it all. Have you come to that point in your life?

Do you need a second chance in life? God can forgive you, wipe your slate clean and give you a fresh start in life. No matter what you've done wrong in your life, no matter what sins you've committed, God can and will forgive you if you will turn to Him.

Adapted from the article It's Not Too Late by Greg Laurie in Outreach Magazine. © Outreach Inc. All rights reserved. Used by permission.



Are You Interested in Becoming a Local Leader?

Christian Military Fellowship exists to help you fulfill your calling in Christ to share the hope that is in you with those with whom you interact as part of your daily life.

Briefly, CMF Local Leaders will start, and sustain a CMF fellowship made up of members of the military community in their area. While CMF is an "all ranks" ministry, our area of focus is on enlisted personnel. Local leaders institute and lead the military community in Bible study, prayer, and fellowship,

keeping in communication with participants. They should also seek to build relationships with the chaplains and the chaplain team.

Toward that end we encourage you to study and complete the CMF briefing material:

Orientation (Brief #1) that shares an overview of the CMF ministry.

Developing a Local Ministry (Brief #2) that shares the Biblical foundation

for and delineates the logical steps in beginning your local ministry.

Pray and Plan (Brief #3) that shares the most important activity of all! Asking Jesus what He would have you to do and then being obedient to follow His leading in your local ministry. If you choose to begin this process, please reach out to us at: leader@cmfhq.org.

We're praying for you!

(Continued from page 2)

Here is an interesting observation. Herschel's recliner sits on the left and Anne's is on the right. We got our family room furniture pegged correctly didn't we? Speaking of those recliners, we hear them calling for us, so we'll trundle back to them. There is some grilling to plan! Where did Herschel put that meat catalogue?



But before we go, we encourage our readers to honor the work the Lord is doing in your spouse as He makes him or her more Christ like each day; give them the support and time to sort out complicated stuff when it crops up. It will!

See you next month when we continue to move forward through our other topics: resolving the fundamental balance of power in marriage, risking emotional vulnerability, resolving daily conflicts, and enjoying the romance and passion of marriage.

Dr. Herschel Hughes, Jr., CDR, MSC, USNR (Ret.) and Dr. Anne S. Hughes, LCDR, USNR (Ret.) are CMF Local Reps who are engaged in CMF's Marriage & Family and Combat Trauma Ministries. During different seasons of the year, they are able to adopt a vagabond lifestyle with their RV and enjoy traveling to different military ministry posts while continuing their own Bible teaching and ministry via video conference.

VETERANS' MINISTRY MOVING!

Carol Simning, our Texas Vets ministry leader, is relocating to Thief River Falls, Minnesota where she has already begun working with some of the many veterans organizations in the region. While Carol was sad to say goodbye to the chaplains, active-duty troops, and veterans she served at Ft. Cavazos (formerly Ft. Hood) in Texas, she felt the pull to return to her home town to serve and assist veterans living there. Being long-acquainted with the region, Carol has already reached out to vets at the VFW and American Legion Posts as well as arranged for ministry visits to veterans in nursing homes and convalescent centers. Carol's spiritual gifts include teaching and helps, and we are happy that she has undertaken to serve this much-neglected area with her passion to encourage those in Christ and lead those who have not yet bent their knee to Jesus into a saving relationship with Him. Please pray for Carol as you continue to support her.

FT. CAVAZOS MINISTRY

Ministry at Ft. Cavazos is ongoing and will continue without interruption thanks to CMF volunteers already active at the base. We will provide a full report of ministry at this base in an upcoming Christian Report.

FUELING THE MISSION

Looking to maximize your giving through the transfer of stocks or securities? We have made the process easy: Simply navigate to <https://donate.overflow.co/cmfhq/stock> or call our office at (800) 798-7875.

CHRISTIAN MILITARY FELLOWSHIP

An Indigenous Ministry • Discipleship • Prayer • Community • Support
Encouraging Men and Women in the United States Armed Forces, and their families, to love and serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are pleased to announce that MinistryWatch has listed CMF as one of their "Shining Light" Ministries. To become a MinistryWatch "Shining Light," a ministry must have earned a 5-star rating on MinistryWatch's 5-star financial efficiency scale. Further, those ministries on this list have a Transparency Grade of "A." That's MinistryWatch's highest transparency grade. Out of 700 ministries, only 13 meet these strict criteria.

<https://ministrywatch.com/ministrywatches-annual-list-of-shining-light-ministries/>

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We are accredited members of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability and Community Health Charities in order to maintain the highest standards of excellence and accountability.

