



# Christian Report

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## Charting a Course For Christian Marriage

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

Upon hearing the unmistakable low-horsepower whiny growl of the letter carrier's little panel truck trudge by the front of his cozy little cottage, the aging old sailor reached down with his right hand and released his recliner into the sitting position, rose, and sauntered out to the mailbox. The collection of junk mail and catalogues he discovered that day were virtually the same as the day before. There was a clothing catalog that day featuring a young model displaying new fashions of women's bathing suits on the cover. He tucked it solemnly into the crook of his arm and headed back inside. His wife of 39 years, knitting in her own recliner asked if there was anything new in the mail. To which he smiled and remarked, "Just junk mail and the Lands' End swimsuit catalog using another picture of you in a bathing suit on its cover. We really ought to ask them for royalties!" His indulgent and loving seventy something wife just smiled and gave her accustomed reply, "You sweet delusional old man; how I love you!". After depositing the day's mail in the recycle bin, he rejoined her at his recliner with a twinkle in his eye. That is the comfortable banter of a loving Christian marriage enjoying the fruits of the Spirit after four decades of earnest attention to one of God's greatest gifts---a committed, loving, lasting marriage.



That "old sailor" is a retired Navy clinical psychologist and retired licensed marriage and family therapist. He will be quick to add he is a U.S. Naval Academy graduate if you give him half a chance. And that will be followed often by stories of combat service in Vietnam. The "seventy something wife" is, also, a former Navy clinical psychologist and retired licensed psychologist. If pressed she will share her early sacrifices earning her Ph.D. while a single Mom on food stamps. This is the second marriage for both of them and raising their five children in a blended family showed clearly what a "Brady bunch" life was like when you don't have screen writers churning out a happily ending episode every week! But they have seen love prevail

in both their marriage and in their now grown children's families.

Sometimes they saw God's hand and guidance at the time, but most assuredly they have seen it in retrospect. Both are members of Christian Military Fellowship (CMF) and have been professing Christians for most of their lives, but in their youth they were no strangers to the "prodigal experience". Just so glad the Father welcomed them home, and He continues to throw a "great feast" around their hearth. They each enjoyed thirty-five years of clinical work, twenty-two of that in private practice as partners.

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As I shared in an earlier writing, as hard as fellowship can be, we are told in Hebrews 10:25 to not neglect to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encourage one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. The last encouraging reason to come together is *Love*.

Tricky word, that word, love. Maybe we can conclude this series on why to gather together with a search on three ways that the Bible uses the word love. After all, one truth about the English language is that words get blurred or watered down over time. The word “love” is no exception! I mean, come on! Love is love, right? That’s become too common of a phrase. I hear it used to flippantly and meaninglessly these days. I love my parent, my child, my spouse. I love hotdogs, a book, my hobby, and sports. Do you though? Do you have the same feelings for hotdogs and sports as for your child, spouse, or parent? Do you have the same feelings for these different people? Do you express the feelings in all the same ways?

The Bible has three major terms for love. I recently compiled all the Scriptures for each type of love, alongside definitions from trusted resources. If you’d like the lists, I’ll gladly share them with you. Otherwise, I’ll just summarize here.

So Bible love number one was originally pronounced *Agapao*. This form of love is first mentioned in Jn. 13:34-35 when Jesus says, *“I am giving you a new commandment, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all people will know that you are My disciples: if you have love for one another.”* This is best described by definition as a social or moral love. 1 Jn 3:10 is a good reference for defining where we gather the social or moral parameters of this love when it says, *“By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother and sister.”* Our guidelines are the righteousness of God that is found in His word, starting clearly in the law that was given to Moses. When we treat people according the outline that God has

given us then we are loving Him, and we are loving them. *“If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word.”* (Jn. 14:15) We should love everyone this way.

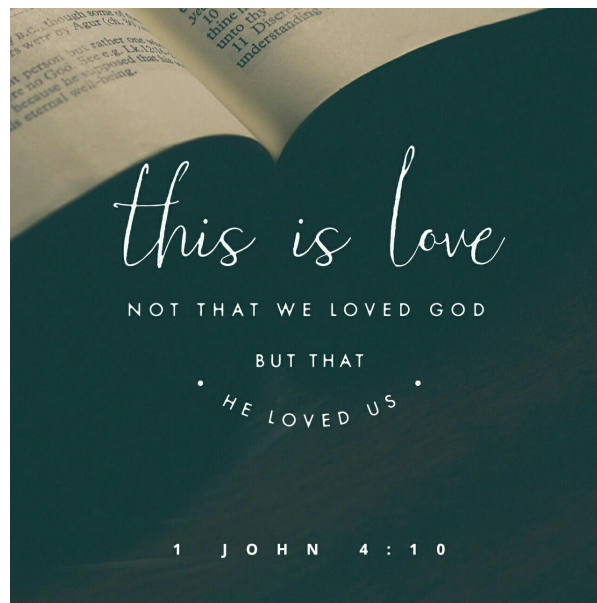
The next love in the Bible was originally pronounced *Agape*. Agape is defined as: to provide help and relief to the poor or needy. It’s summed up in Philippians 2:3-4 *“Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vain glory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves, each looking out not for his own interests, but [also] everyone for those of others.”* This love includes meeting people’s physical needs; *“We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers and sisters. But whoever has worldly goods and sees his brother or sister in need, and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God remain in him? Little children, let’s not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.”* (1 Jn. 3:16-18) By the way, when the Bible says ‘God is love’, this is that love. The love that meets the needs of people. He does so both physically and spiritually. The love Jesus exemplified was

agape love of the spiritual provision of our salvation.

Lastly is *phileo*. Phileo means brotherly love. I cannot list here every action of phileo, because it’s far too extensive. But, I was surprised at how specific it is on how we are to love our Christian brothers and sisters differently than everyone else. It includes exercising our gifts in the Body of Christ and more. To see it fully, I invite you to read Romans 12:10-21, or I’ll gladly share a list with you if you’d look.

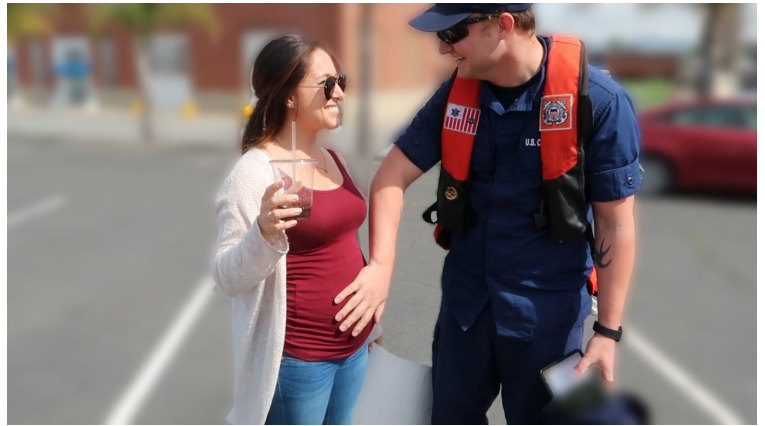
Love is a topic that cannot be exhausted. After all, if one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. (1 Cor. 12:26)

*Mary Heller is a Navy Veteran, wife of a retired US Navy Sailor, and a mother of four, the youngest two whom she continues to homeschool through their now-high school years. Mary has long been active in ministry and is past-president of the Ft. Meade, Maryland, Chapter of PWOC and has also served other capacities, most often Vice President of Spiritual Life. Her passion is studying and teaching God's word. Mary currently serves as Vice Chair of the CMF Board of Directors.*





The President of CMF, Kathleen Orr, asked them to write a paper on “Christian Marriage”. They did that, but it turned into a 7,700 word paper, so in collaboration with Kathleen, they decided to break it up for monthly posting to CMF readers. Think of it as sort of a serial letter, a personal one from to the CMF readership. This is the beginning of it. Here is what you can look forward to. First, there will be a discussion of the three “tickets” or prerequisites, so to speak, for even a *chance* at a good marriage regardless of one’s familiarity with Christian teaching. That will include safety, emotional availability, and trust. Following a description and discussion of those “tickets”, we will then discuss five areas that comprise the essence of Christian marriage.



These five topics are intended to implement the Christian truths about love and commitment: (1) becoming more Christlike as a married person, (2) resolving the fundamental balance of power in the marriage, (3) risking emotional vulnerability, (4) resolving daily conflicts, and (5) enjoying the romance and passion of marriage.

That is the big picture; now, let’s get personal and drop the academic tone and make this a true letter to you the reader. Since this letter is intended for Christians, especially military families, we will focus on what we can teach and explain related to that community---our community. We want to make this letter personal. Importantly, we have *not* set out to make a comprehensive list of books, podcasts, or other Christian resources on the topic of the Christian Marriage. That said, we will mention that we have used Peter and Geri Scazzero’s Emotionally Healthy Relationships curriculum in our Sunday school lessons in the past. Pastor Scazzero and his wife’s curriculum reflects a comprehensive and spirit filled integration of good Christian teaching and some of the better insights offered by the social sciences. Likewise, C.S. Lewis’s Mere Christianity and his The Four Loves are both seminal works related to our topic. The YouTube channel CSLewisDoodle provides entertaining and easy and brief visual access to Lewis’ writings on a variety of topics related to love and marriage. Some of the offerings are even in his own voice.

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## Are You Interested in Becoming a Local Leader?

**C**hristian 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](mailto:leader@cmfhq.org).

*We’re praying for you!*

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As Christians we believe that marriage is one of God's greatest gifts to us; it is also a training ground where we can learn more fully about commitments, sacrifices and how to love. We get a small taste of the oneness of God as we become one with our spouse, we get an inkling of the power of creation in the creation of our families and the production of children.

We are endeavoring to share what we have learned in our own lives and in our professional work. As in all such matters we ask the Holy Spirit to guide our thinking and our writing. Where His influence seems to shine through, take that and use it as you choose. When He does not seem to inhabit our writing on a topic, and it is just our human effort, feel free to judge accordingly and, if desired, leave it and go on. We do ask that you not let one concern with our message limit you from considering other ideas that may have merit and offer help and hope. We will offer scripture where it illustrates the deeper truth behind an idea, but we will not start from specific scriptural guidance. The references to Christian marriage in scripture are clear and easily available. We trust you and your Chaplain or pastor to be the best resource for sorting out their implications for you and your family. We, instead, in forthcoming segments, will focus on those "tickets" to which we alluded and then, the five practical areas mentioned above.

Each month that old sailor will take a trip to the mailbox and see what random piece of mail seems to prompt the discussion we plan. But, for now, our recliners are calling to us. See you next month.

*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.*

## Is Your Light Shining Bright?

***You, LORD, keep my lamp burning; my God turns my darkness into light. Psalm 18:28***

Many who grew up in Sunday school may remember the children's song "This little light of mine" which basically taught young children to not be ashamed of Jesus.



If you are a believer you are to be like a city set on a hill that can not be hidden. For instance, think of a medi-

eval castle or Manhattan at night — Be that bright, Times Square and all! You are not to be ashamed and choose to be one way with one group of people and totally different with others.

How is your light? Do people know you are different? Can they tell you are a believer or do you compromise your walk or try to snuff out your light sometimes? Never be ashamed but brightly shine God's love to everyone you encounter. It is going to be a bright, bright, sun shiny day!

**PRAYER: I want to say I am sorry if I have ever tried to dim my light depending on where I am. Once a person accepts Christ the job for them just begins and that is to shine for Jesus' to try to win others into the kingdom. Help me do kingdom work wherever I go. In Jesus' name. Amen.**

*Becky Jewett Miller is an Army veteran, military retiree wife, prayer leader, and a long-time CMF member and contributor. She is author of God's Lemonade Stand, available free from CMF.*

### 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 members of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability and Christian Service Charities in order to maintain the highest standards of excellence and accountability.