

Christadelphian Caring Network Bulletin

Fall 2015



Fall 2015 Training Sessions

September 26	Bullying
October 24	Christian Morality I
November 14	Christian Morality II
December 12	Addictions

For information:

Website – caringnetwork.ca

E-mail – training@caringnetwork.ca

Care Line Activity 2014/2015

Training

Introduction to Mental Health –
January 2014

Accessing Resources in the
Community – February 2014

Depression – March 2014

Asperger's/Autism Spectrum
Disorders – April 2014

Grief – May 2014

Effective Listening Skills I & II –
September and October 2014

Assertive Communication I & II –
November and December 2014

Coping With Stress I & II – January
and March 2015

Seminar

Marriage Enrichment I & II –
April 2015

In November 2014 members of the Caring Network met with the New York City ecclesias (Brooklyn, Manhattan, and South Ozone Park) with a view to setting up a similar network and help line in the northeastern US.

Need someone to talk to? The Christadelphian Care Line is open for calls. Caring, confidential brothers and sisters are ready to listen and help. Our toll-free support line is 866-823-1039.

That We May Be One

Summary of marriage enrichment seminars sponsored by the Caring Network in April 2015, by Brother Robert and and Sister Sharon Prins

1. My Beloved Is Mine and I Am His – Commitment

A good tradesman can weld two pieces of steel together so well, that when they are put under extreme pressure, the bond of welding will be stronger than the original pieces of metal. It is that sort of bond strength God wants us to have in our marriages. God wants us to leave our fathers and mothers and cleave to each other with a marriage bond that will outlast all else. God and Jesus do it for us: "I will never leave you or forsake you." We need to follow that parable through in our marriages. After all, that's what we promised we would do and it is the best way to bring up a godly family.

So how do we do it? Prioritize time for each other with date nights, weekends away, and talk time each day. Ask yourself how you can bless your husband or wife today. Forgive each other. Pray for each other. Be honest. Honour the vows and promises you made. And find people who can help mentor your marriage. Take a double date with them, invite yourselves to lunch and find out what helps them stick like glue.

2. He Made Them Male and Female – Understand Your Differences

Men and women are created very differently. Men tend to think of one thing at a time and to do it well, while women's thoughts interconnect to a degree that may seem confusing to the male mind. Women will talk to solve a problem or to relieve stress, while men will retreat to the Nothing Box or Man Cave. Women want emotional love and men want physical love. Yet God made us male and female so that we can balance and help each other to be complete and to become the people God wants us to be.

You might sometimes find it hard to appreciate the differences between you and your spouse. But by showing appreciation for those differences and praying about them, growth and oneness can begin to develop. Instead of trying to change each other, put your spouse's needs ahead of your own and learn to forgive what you see as offending differences. Study each other. What are the needs of your spouse? How can you enrich their life, to appreciate and support the way God made them?

3. Come My Fair One – Intimacy and Romance

Same face, same routine, day after day, after day, after day. Marriages are much more successful when couples are proactive in putting a little bit extra into the relationship, using some imagination and purposefully trying to draw closer to each other in an intimate relationship. Intimacy in marriage needs to keep growing in four specific areas: physically, spiritually, emotionally, and mentally. Try some of these ideas:

- Smile;
- Give a gift;
- Compliment each other;
- Laugh together;
- Do random acts of kindness;
- Massage;
- Bathe together;
- Dine out;
- Write a love letter; or
- Post sticky notes with romantic thoughts.

Continued on page 2...

One of the most intimate things we can do is make physical love together. Making love is a beautiful God-given gift. Physical intimacy doesn't begin and end in bed. It should be a climax of intimacy in all the other areas, shown in the passion of pure love.

4. Grow Together In Love – Stages of Marriage

Romance is one sort of love: the fireworks, the hot, steamy passion. Becoming best friends is another. God describes marital love like this: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." This sort of love is the Greek *agape*. It is patient, kind, not boastful, not rude, not self-seeking, not easily angered, and so on. (Read 1 Corinthians 13.) God's love is about giving of self to the other person. It is a choice, and not so much a feeling but a way of life. It's a love that never fails. *Agape* is the love that must underpin both friendship and romantic love. All three types of love come to the fore at various stages of marriage, so it is important to nurture them all at all stages.

5. Forgiveness – Make Conflicts Worthwhile

If someone showed you a blank piece of paper with a black spot on it and asked you to describe what you see, you would probably say, "A black dot." You would be right – but all around the black dot is a large piece of white paper. We almost always focus on the one thing that's wrong, but often don't notice what's right, especially in our relationships. Keep perspective. Focus on what is good. You are on the same team. You married because you love each other. Don't let a few black dots come between you.

You may not be able to change the other person, so pray, "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, to change the things I can; and the wisdom to know the difference." Make an effort to listen to and understand each other. Deal with issues rather than dwelling on them. Pray together.

Black dots will happen. There will be conflict and disagreement. Your forgiveness of your spouse is essential – for them and especially for yourself. Forgiveness is choosing not to retaliate, not to dwell on the hurt or injustice. Not forgiving can kill you and your marriage. Forgiveness takes a black spot and wipes it away.

6. Breathe New Life Into Your Marriage – The Spirit of Encouragement

We love because God first loved us. You cannot give a love to your spouse that you yourself have not received from God. When things get tough, have faith in God and He will help hold it all together. Couples who have a committed Christian faith enjoy significantly lower divorce rates than couples with no faith. Some of the things that make a difference are praying together and for each other, reading the Bible regularly together, meeting together with other believers regularly, and asking, How can I bless my spouse today?

Encourage each other. Read the Song of Solomon and be inspired by the way the lovers praised each other, then do it at home (although you may want to change some of the analogies). Make your husband or wife feel needed, loved, believed in, and motivated by your words. Make it your aim to help them to become the whole person God made them to be.

Love in marriage is like an ice cream sundae.

God is the bowl that holds it all together. Agape is the ice cream. The chocolate sauce is the friendship, and romance is the whipped cream and cherry on the top. We need them all or the sundae – and the marriage – will not be complete.



Recommended Marriage Enrichment Resources

Marriage Moments online with Robert and Sharon Prins. Subscribe by email (marriage@thinkythings.com) or at www.thinkythings.com. On Facebook: www.facebook.com/pages/Marriage-Moments

Books by Christadelphians for Christadelphians

That we may be one by Robert and Sharon Prins. Practical and scriptural ways to develop spiritual, emotional, mental and physical oneness in marriage. Order from the Detroit Christadelphian Book Supply (www.christadelphianbooks.com).

Bible Guidelines for a Happy Marriage by John C. Bilello. Sound, proactive, biblical advice on how to build and maintain a happy marriage through all stages of life. Order from the Christadelphian Tidings (www.tidings.org).

Other: Books, DVD

His Needs, Her Needs: Building an affair proof marriage by Willard Harley. Differences between men's and women's needs, and how each spouse can reach out and meet these needs.

Men Are Like Waffles, Women Are Like Spaghetti by Bill and Pam Farrel. The sexes have different thought processes. Men think in boxes, while women have inter-connecting thoughts.

Love and Respect: The Love She Most Desires; The Respect He Desperately Needs by Emmerson Eggerichs. How women and men have different driving needs. Based around Ephesians 5:33.

Rekindling the Romance by Dennis and Barbara Rainey. Ways to relight the flame of romance, and to inspire each spouse to learn how to put each other first.

Intended for Pleasure: Sex Technique and Sexual Fulfillment in Christian Marriage by Ed Wheat. The sexual union of a husband and wife from a Christian medical doctor's point of view.

Fireproof: Never leave your partner behind (DVD), Provident Music Distribution. A firefighter with a crumbling marriage takes on a 40-day challenge to show his wife unconditional love.

52 Ways to Wow your Husband: How to Put a Smile on His Face by Pam Farrel. How to show your husband 'I Love You'.

Insights for married couples, or those wishing to support a couple or family who is struggling

Love, Compassion and Empathy

And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. (1 John 3:23)

Based on this verse, my focus as a professional counsellor is on developing love, and two other qualities encapsulated in love: compassion and empathy.

After getting past the initial symptoms of arguing about things like finances and the day-to-day tasks needed to run a household, the 'problem' generally boils down to issues related to love and the relationship itself: for example, deficits in areas like respect, honesty, openness and having an emotional connection of empathy and understanding.

These are the building blocks of everything. God is love and if you are fortunate enough to have a family of your own, you have a wonderful opportunity to exhibit love to each other to the best of your ability and to stretch that ability further and further each day.

In the book *Born for Love*, Bruce Perry offers this explanation:

There's been a recent explosion of scientific research on the subject, and incredible set of findings that show how empathy and the caring it enables are an essential part of human health ... Empathy remains both intensely important and widely misunderstood ... And, as technology propels change at increasing speed, understanding the basis of these connections becomes ever more critical.

"Recent explosions of scientific research" quite often are what God has been saying through His Word for two thousand years: basically, people need people. Moreover, people need people to demonstrate love, physically, emotionally and spiritually.

Compassion and empathy in humans are learned. We are not born with them. They are thought to stem significantly from our very early relationships, particularly from birth to age three.

If you received compassion as a child, there's a good chance you will be compassionate. If you had adults around who could attune to you and show empathy, you will likely show empathy to others. But if that was not the case, can these important values be attained later in life? Fortunately, yes they can.

Neuroplasticity is a term in my field of work. It simply means that the brain can change. The old adage "you can't teach an old dog new tricks" is not true. We can learn to be different and the Bible is clear that this is what we are supposed to do. Again, something that "recent research" agrees with.

How can you change? Quite simply, you must practice. Whenever you think a thought, a biochemical signal travels between neurons through pathways in your brain, called synapses, either creating new ones, or making old ones stronger. Aim to strengthen the pathways that move you towards loving people

better, loving your spouse better, loving your children better, loving God better.

If you have thoughts linked to negative emotions that undermine your capacity for contentment in your relationship, do less of that kind of thinking. If you have thoughts linked to more positive emotions and enhance your sense of contentment in your relationship, do more of that kind of thinking. Certainly, for some, that is much easier said than done. Still, the strategy is to change your mind by changing your thoughts.

The beautiful thing about developing the part of the brain that deals with compassion is that it helps you manage other parts of the brain where strong emotions come from. It helps you control your anger and manage your fears. At the same time it also gives you the capacity to provide emotional support to others.

The Word of God says: "There is no fear in love." This is very literally true. When your empathy for someone else is in full gear, you throw out any fears that might be coming up from the lower region of the brain. I believe this empathic, compassionate response enabled Christ to endure the cross and the torture leading up to it. His thoughts were fully on others and on God. He was able to develop his own mind in such a way that it was wired to love to the full degree of 1 Corinthians 13 – patient, kind, humble, keeping no record of wrongs, rejoicing in truth, always protecting, trusting, hoping and persevering.

So, let us love one another, but if you struggle to do so to the degree that you would like, you are not alone. I would encourage you to seek support. A professional counsellor in your community may be able to help you.

Brother Mark Hill, M. Couns.
Counsellor/Psychotherapist
mattersofhopecounselling@gmail.com

NEXT PAGE - The job of downsizing is not for the fainthearted: it requires energy, physical strength, organization, and respect for a lifetime of memories.



BEFORE

When it's time to move on

Myra and I sat together on a couch in her living room. Myra was 89 years old and, after having a bad fall in her house, had come to the decision that she would be safer in a retirement home. Usually the children take on the job of moving mom or dad, but Myra had never married. Having lived in her house for over fifty years, she had accumulated a lot of stuff and clearly had to make some decisions: Keep? Donate? Trash? I had just told her she could only take three Royal Doulton figurines from the large collection on display in her curio cabinet and that I would find a special place for them in her suite. She looked at me. "But I love them all!" I explained that she had to carefully decide which ones she loved the best, and that I would find a good home for all the rest.

Every day, seniors are faced with the reality that they must move from the home they may have lived in for many years. Their generation was in the habit of accumulating. They may have kept collections (mementos, figurines, teacups and saucers). Those who grew up in the depression may believe that you don't throw anything out.

Unfortunately, if you don't throw anything out and it comes time to move, you have a big job ahead of you. It can be costly too, as you now have to hire a removal service to help you take things away. Some of my resources include: auctioneer, appraiser, scrap metal guy, on line auction company, junk removal company, bin delivery people, realtors, cleaners and movers.

When the time comes to help mom and dad transition from a large home to a smaller one, the task of de-cluttering and downsizing often falls on adult children. Aging parents may be frail, or have had a fall or early dementia. They may be suffering a great deal of loss: a loved one, driving privileges, hearing, sight. On top of which they must say goodbye to their home of forty or fifty years. Any move is stressful; but for many seniors, change can be especially confusing and overwhelming. The questions are big ones: Where will I live? What will we do with everything we have to get rid of? Who can help me if family can't?

Myra was fortunate that she was ready to disconnect herself from her stuff, and made these decisions while she was in control. Accepting the change that had to be made and that she could not do it all herself, she hired my company to organize her move.

Sister Ingrid Davis

Ingrid@smoothtransitionsyork.ca
www.smoothtransitionsyork.ca

See the *National Association of Senior Move Managers* website to find a similar service in your community (nasmm.org).



AFTER

TIPS FOR A SMOOTH TRANSITION

- De-clutter every year. Thoroughly.
- Throughout your life, don't get too attached to stuff. Enjoy and love your items that have an emotional significance. Everything you have is from God, on loan; when you go, it is to be passed on for others to enjoy.
- Move while you are in control.
- Give with a warm hand: make your things a gift to others while you are still around to see the joy it brings them (and you).

Think of this process in terms of how you should live your life. Simple, uncluttered. Not tied to possessions. Wanting what you have. Grateful for everything.

Find the best possible support for yourself and your loved one.

Community Health Care Services

Community health care services are available in all communities across Canada. Each region has an agency that will help you obtain services such as nursing, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, nutritional support, and help from a personal care worker. These agencies also offer assistance to make a referral to a nursing home. The regulations for these services are administered by the provincial government and may vary from region to region. Your doctor's office can give you the phone number for your region. Anyone is allowed to phone the local agency and make a referral with the consent of the person needing help or the person with power of attorney for personal care.

To receive service or go into a nursing home you or your loved one must qualify by requiring assistance with personal care (such as walking, bathing, balance, dressing, or memory/mental function). When a referral is made, a case manager will do an assessment to sort out the most appropriate service to meet your needs, or assist you with a referral to a nursing home that you chose. You may be expected to visit some nursing homes in your area to choose one that best suits your needs.

The case manager may also suggest some services that charge a fee, such as adult day programs, Meals on Wheels, volunteer drivers, house cleaning, shopping, foot care, or a hair dresser. A little extra support in the home or in a day care program can lighten the load carried by the family or caregiver. Another avenue to explore may be ecclesial members willing to assist as a volunteer or as a paid helper on a regular basis.

With the necessary services in place, you can control your stress level and have the energy to continue your labour of love.

Sister Bessie Simpson
RN BScN, former Home Care Manager
bessie.simpson@bell.net