



Thank you for supporting marriages. Will you help save even more?

Dear Friend:

Merry Christmas from everyone here at Focus on the Family! During this festive season, it's become customary for me to include a short work of fiction in my newsletter. For the past couple of years, we've shared a story of someone impacted by the ministry you provide. This year, I'm delighted to present you with this year's edition, based on one testimony.

Sarah trudged through the blowing snow, tucking a blanket more snugly around her eight-month-old daughter. She barely noticed the glittering evergreen tree towering over the center of her small Midwestern town. All she wanted was to get her daughter home.

Lucy whimpered and Sarah held her closer. The frigid temperatures and swirling snow made the two-block walk from her friend's in-home daycare center to her own little apartment seem endless. After hours of waiting tables in the downtown diner where she worked, Sarah's feet and back ached – and her heart was heavy as she thought about missing her baby's first Christmas the following week. She had begged for the day off, but her boss was unyielding. She would have to work on Christmas if she wanted to keep her job.

Sarah finally made it to the dilapidated residence she called home, unlocking her front door and hurrying inside. Lucy had fallen into an exhausted sleep, so Sarah carried her into the tiny bedroom they shared and gently lowered her into her crib. As she headed to the kitchen to heat up a can of soup, her cell phone dinged. She pulled it out of her purse and scanned the incoming text.

Just checking in once more to see if we can't convince you and our granddaughter to come home in time for Christmas. The cabin is ready and waiting for you.

Sarah shook her head. Her father had asked her to move home several times. The receptionist at the little church he pastored was retiring, and he had offered her the position – even telling her she could bring Lucy to work with her. And, because the church's budget only had room to pay her a modest wage, her parents said they would include room and board. The little guest cabin on their property was hers for the taking.

It was tempting, to be sure. But Sarah wasn't sure she was ready to face her parents again. Not after everything that had happened.

She knew they didn't blame her when her husband of just six months had walked out. She was still attending college at the time, so his meager income was all they'd had to live on. But when they'd discovered Sarah was pregnant, Evan decided marriage and parenting was

(over, please)

more responsibility than he could handle. He disappeared the day after she announced she was expecting. She withdrew from college a couple of months later and began working.

To be fair, her parents had warned her. The first time she brought Evan home from college, they had been polite and friendly – but when she returned to school they had called asking questions. Was he a Christian? Did he treat her well? Was she assured that he possessed godly character and shared her values? Sarah had been defiant. Dismissive. She remembered her parents' shock and dismay when she called to tell them she and Evan had eloped.

Sarah sighed. Her parents had been right about Evan, and her pride was deeply wounded. How could she let them know that she was struggling to make ends meet? That she was ashamed to have ignored their counsel? So she kept up a cheery front when she spoke with them. When they asked to come visit her and meet their infant granddaughter, she resisted, reluctant to reveal her living circumstances.

When Sarah arrived home the following evening, she found a square package on her doorstep bearing her parents' return address. Her eyes unexpectedly filled as she pictured their rambling farmhouse in rural Ohio. Right about now, her father would be sitting in his worn armchair by the blazing fire, leafing through a novel with his faithful Scottish terrier, Walt, snoozing at his feet. Her mother would be bustling in the kitchen, putting the finishing touches on a large, savory meal. Her brothers had probably arrived for Christmas. Jonathan would be visiting from North Carolina with his wife and two young sons. And Charlie, her younger brother, would be home from his freshman year in college.

Home. Sarah's eyes spilled over.

She carried the package to the table and opened it to find a decorative box inside. A note was taped to the lid.

Dear Sarah,

I wanted to give this to you in person, but thought maybe you could use some encouragement right about now. May this gift be a reminder that you are loved more than words could ever express. You always have a home with us.

Love, Dad

Sarah pulled off the lid and found dozens – maybe hundreds – of folded sheets of paper. Puzzled, she lifted one out and opened it. In her father's neat, precise handwriting was a letter he'd written her about ten years ago. It was the occasion of her first school dance, and her father was reflecting on how quickly time was passing. He described her dress, her nervousness as he'd driven her to the school, and her ceaseless chatter when he'd picked her up.

The date on the next letter took her back to first grade, when she'd determined to wash

(next page, please)

the family dog with no help from anyone. Sarah chuckled as her father described the commotion of their dog running through the house covered in suds and dripping wet.

Late into the night Sarah read letter after letter, reliving her childhood through her father's eyes. She laughed and cried, marveling at her father's genuine affection for her that lay just below the surface of each letter and how he always pointed her to Christ. When her best friend in junior high cruelly betrayed her by spreading a nasty rumor about her, her father wrote about how he had prayed she would learn to forgive and be open to new friendships. When her mother battled breast cancer and Sarah lived every day in fear of losing her, her father's letters unflinchingly proclaimed God's sustaining grace. And when Evan abandoned her, the words her father penned reflected grief over the heartbreak and fear he knew she was experiencing – and yet he wrote about his certainty that God was at work in her life and would not fail to fulfill His purposes for her and Lucy.

At the bottom of the box was one final letter, dated just four days earlier.

Dear Sarah,

Your mom and I just got off the phone with you. It was so good to hear your voice and listen as you told us all about Lucy. How we long to hold that little one.

You always put on a brave face, but I know you. You're struggling. It can't be easy being a young, single mom working long hours to support your daughter. I can only imagine your loneliness and weariness, but God gave you a determined, persevering spirit – He divinely equipped you for this path you're walking now. He chose you specifically to be Lucy's mom. And your mother and I are so proud of you.

If there's only one thing I've been able to communicate in these letters, I hope it's that God has always had His hand on you. His faithfulness is everlasting, and He has seen you through each and every challenge you've ever faced. This is the heritage of faith your mother and I have tried so hard to hand down to you.

I know you want to make it on your own – and I have no doubt you can. But Ecclesiastes tells us there is a time for everything. You have always been strong and fiercely independent, Sarah. Could it be time for you to lean on someone else for a change? To rest and heal? Please come home.

Love, Dad

John climbed the steps to his front porch and stomped snow off his boots. He unclipped Walt's leash, grabbed the package that was propped against the front door, and nudged the dog across the threshold. He was surprised to notice the package was from Sarah. He knew she couldn't afford gifts, so he couldn't imagine what she had sent.

Inside the house, he opened the package. It was a box similar to the one he had sent Sarah. Inside was a single folded letter.

(over, please)

Dear Lucy,

Christmas is just days away, and I'm watching you gaze wide-eyed at the little string of white lights hanging in our living room. I wish I could have given you a big, beautiful tree and a gift or two – but we have all we need. God has given us each other and, more importantly, He has given us His Son. If I can help lead you to Him as my own parents did for me, I will call that my greatest achievement as your mom.

Your grandpa has reminded me that I can have hope for your future. You have a mother who adores you, grandparents who pray for you, and a God who will never leave you or forsake you. He truly does bestow beauty for ashes, Lucy.

Grandpa will hold onto this for me until I can add more letters. But for now, I should pack. It's time for us to go home.

Love, Mommy

In many ways, Sarah's story reminds me exactly why we labor, day in and day out, here at Focus. We want to equip parents to hand down a Christ-centered legacy to their children, who in turn can carry on that legacy in the lives of their own children. We desire to restore and heal couples broken and on the edge of divorce so that their family can thrive. Of course, strong marriages and families are not an end in and of themselves – rather, they point the world to Christ in a way that no other institution can.

This Christmas, we'd like to invite you to help people just like Sarah. Your gift will minister to single mothers in crisis, provide assistance to couples heading for divorce and even allow us to create and provide resources that will enable families to leave a legacy of faith for their children.

I'm delighted to let you know your donation can now be doubled through the GIFT OF FAMILY Matching Opportunity provided by generous friends of the ministry. Every contribution, dollar for dollar, will go to save and strengthen families.

If we can serve you through prayer, a helpful resource, or a phone consultation with one of our licensed staff counselors, please call 1-800-A-FAMILY (232-6459).



Jim Daly
President

P.S. Did you notice the enclosed ALIVE 2020 magnet? Save the date for our national pro-life celebration on May 9, 2020. You'll hear more about this effort in the coming months. For now, please pray and remember that your generous year-end gift by the Dec. 31 deadline will go TWICE AS FAR to GIVE THE GIFT OF FAMILY through the \$5 million Matching Opportunity!

FAMILY FOCUS®

FOR OUR PARTNERS IN FAMILY MINISTRY

DECEMBER 2019



Christmas cookie recipe gives dad a life-changing lesson . . .

If you grew up with a grandmother around, no doubt you remember walking through the door to the sweet, savory smell of hot cookies fresh out of the oven.

Grandmother's homemade cookies and a glass of cold milk could make any day better . . . especially during the Christmas season!

Tim knew it was finally Christmas when his grandmother pulled out one special cookie recipe. But adult life got busy

and Tim hadn't thought much about those cookies for a while . . . until his grandmother passed away.

"I came across my grandmother's Christmas cookie recipe the first Christmas after she had passed away. I started crying as I thought about her," Tim recalls.

In that moment, Tim also remembered a *Focus on the Family*® magazine article that hit home.

"In the article, the author remembered finding a simple handwritten note from

a loved one who had passed away. She recounted how much seeing that handwritten note meant to her," Tim says. "It struck me as I found that recipe. That article helped me to see the value of written communication in a way that I had previously not. So, I began writing letters to loved ones. When each of our three children was born, I purchased a box for each child. I started writing letters to each of them. I write about lessons learned the hard way; I tell them about how much

CHRISTMAS COOKIE RECIPE ▶
continued on page 2

INSIDE
THIS ISSUE

Daly Focus
by Jim Daly

He Said, She Said:
Keep it simple

Announcing
ALIVE 2020!

Broadcast
Schedule





Daily Focus

By Jim Daly, President

Sharing the best gift . . . with hurting couples.

“Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!”

(2 Corinthians 9:15 ESV)

Considering God’s incredible gift at Christmas always leaves me humbled and grateful. It’s hard to comprehend the kind of love he showed when he sent his very own son to be our Savior.

I’m also reminded of the incredible honor we have as believers to share that gift with others. There is no greater blessing we can give someone than to let them know about their loving Savior and the joy, peace and contentment only he can offer.

That message is particularly important for hurting couples during the Christmas season. This season is meant for families and husbands and wives on the verge of splitting their families apart can feel pretty hopeless. Your generous support allows us to offer the healing message of hope that Christ offers.

Your compassionate gift will share the GIFT OF FAMILY for them by supporting articles, podcasts, the daily broadcast, counseling resources and *Hope Restored* marriage intensives.

Thank you for pointing to God’s “inexpressible gift” for couples on the verge of divorce when you share the GIFT OF FAMILY!

Jim

Christmas cookie recipe *Continued from page 1*

God loves them and how proud we parents are of them.”

Tim hopes the letters will be a lasting gift that his children will treasure just as he treasures his grandmother’s recipe. This legacy is just one example of how the resources you provide impact families.

Your generous support today will GIVE THE GIFT OF FAMILY by strengthening families like Tim’s through our daily broadcasts, magazine articles, counseling resources and programs.

“I am a better husband, a better father and a better pastor because of how God used and is using the ministry to speak to my life,” Tim writes. “I’m so thankful for the ministry of Focus on the Family—from listening to daily podcasts to listening to the *Adventures in Odyssey* program over the years. I appreciate the trustworthiness and biblical foundation of the resources that Focus on the Family provides.”

Your support not only strengthens families, but also *saves* many. The Christmas season can be a painful time for some. Divorce has ripped many families apart. Others are dealing with crisis, while many children waiting in foster care wonder if they will have a family to share Christmas with at all.

You can offer them Christ’s hope this Christmas season by sharing the GIFT OF FAMILY. Your generous year-end gift will offer the resources struggling families desperately need.

And now, through our GIFT OF FAMILY MATCHING OPPORTUNITY, your immediate gift will go twice as far to help save and strengthen families!

Double your dollars today to share the GIFT OF FAMILY and save marriages, rescue babies from abortion, encourage families in crisis, and equip parents to raise godly children. ■

He Said, She Said On *Cutting Down on Holiday Stress*

Keep it simple

With Dr. Greg and Erin Smalley

Dr. Greg and Erin Smalley share how you and your spouse can keep the stress levels down this Christmas.



GREG: Nothing tests a marriage quite like the most wonderful time of the year. From financial stress to quarrels over scheduling conflicts to busyness that crowds out couple time—the holidays can be rough on a couple. That’s why Erin and I do our best to keep it simple. We’d like to share a few ways to do that.

ERIN: Keeping it simple financially is important. You don’t want to get pressured into debt and stretch your family’s budget too thin. One way to avoid over-spending is to sit down at the very beginning of the holidays and map out a budget for gifts, family trips and unexpected parties and gatherings. Try to stick to the budget as much as possible and don’t let yourself get sucked into a spending competition with other families!

GREG: I’ll address the extended family pressure. This can be a big point of contention, especially for newlyweds or new parents. Come up with a plan to give each extended family a little time in a way that fits in with YOUR schedule and that is best for YOUR family. Gently but firmly let extended family members know what your expectations are for the holiday season.

ERIN: And finally, don’t forget to make time for each other. One way you can do that is to incorporate “couple moments” into the holidays. Take advantage of what is happening already. For example, make a date out of Christmas shopping. Do some baking and cooking at home together. As you shop or run errands, make it fun. Listen to Christmas music together or grab a quick cup of coffee.

FOCUS ON THE FAMILY® BROADCAST

The broadcast schedule is subject to change. Listen to the Focus on the Family® Broadcast on your local radio station, your mobile device or online. If you've missed one of these broadcasts, listen online at FocusOnTheFamily.com/Broadcast.

Broadcasts are brought to you by our partners — you!

DATE	TITLE	GUEST
12/2	Seeing the Value of Every Person	Ms. Emily Colson
12/3-12/4	Growing Your Marriage in Times of Stress I & II	Mr. Milan and Mrs. Kay Yerkovich
12/5-12/6	Helping Your Daughter Become a Confident Woman I & II	Dr. Meg Meeker
12/9-12/10	Motivating Kids to Reflect the Character of God I & II	Dr. Kathy Koch
12/11-12/12	Discovering God's Freedom from Pornography I & II	Mr. Nick and Mrs. Michelle Stumbo
12/13	Unwrapping the Real Christmas	Rev. Canon J. John
12/16	Enjoying Marriage at Any Age	Pastor Ted Cunningham
12/17-12/18	Sharing the Gospel Through Hospitality I & II	Mrs. Rosaria Champagne Butterfield
12/19-12/20	Raising Boys to be Godly Young Men I & II	Dr. Meg Meeker
12/23	Trusting God with Your Adult Child	Mrs. Jodie Berndt
12/24-12/25	Memories of Christmas I & II	Call-in
12/26	How to Raise Strong Believers	Mrs. Natasha Crain
12/27	Making Daily Choices to Love Your Spouse	Mr. Ron and Mrs. Deb DeArmond
12/30-12/31	Finding Your Path in Life I & II	Mrs. Cynthia Tobias

* The broadcast schedule is subject to change.

DATE	TITLE	GUEST
1/1	Harnessing the Power of Word Pictures	Dr. Greg Smalley and Dr. John Trent
1/2	Remaining Calm in the Chaos of Life	Mrs. Nicole Johnson
1/3	Honoring Preborn Life in 2020	Mrs. Jeanne Mancini
1/6	Empowering Women to Take Control of Their Finances	Mrs. Deborah Pegues
1/7-1/8	My Journey to Salvation I & II	Mr. Adolph Coors IV
1/9-1/10	Being a "Yes" Parent in a World of No's I & II	Mr. Mark and Mrs. Jan Foreman
1/13	Answering Your Kid's Tough Faith Questions	Mrs. Natasha Crain
1/14-1/15	Finding Strength in the Midst of Disappointment I & II	Mrs. Lysa TerKeurst
1/16	Restoring Godly Values to America	Mr. Tim Goeglein
1/17	A Lighthearted Look at Wedded Bliss	Mr. John Branyan
1/20-1/21	Reaching Across Cultural Divides I & II	Dr. David Ireland
1/22-1/23	A Former Abortionist's Journey to Becoming Pro-Life I & II	Dr. Anthony and Mrs. Cecelia Levatino
1/24	Reaching Women in Crisis	Mrs. Greta Henry and Miss Rain Pierce
1/27	Homemade Meals for Busy Families	Mrs. Mary Beth Lagerborg
1/28	Cherishing the Differences in Your Spouse	Dr. Greg and Mrs. Erin Smalley
1/29	Honoring the Preborn: Cerian's Story	Mrs. Sarah Williams
1/30-1/31	Being a Good Steward of God's Blessings I & II	Dr. Tony Evans

Feature Guest:

Morgan Weistling

Award-winning artist Morgan Weistling created a one-of-a-kind painting to illustrate the power of Sharing the Light in the darkness. You can get your special edition giclée print, hand signed by the artist, with your ministry gift of \$150 or more today. Thank you!



Use the enclosed response card to mark your gift and print request or go to FocusOnTheFamily.com/Art19.

You Tube

Check out our YouTube channel

FocusOnTheFamily.com/YouTube

LIFE UPDATE

Announcing Alive 2020!

The LIFE UPDATE column features testimonies and the latest news on how your support is rescuing babies from abortion and saving moms from the pain and regret of abortion.

God has been at work saving lives and we have an exciting announcement . . .

Focus on the Family is proud to announce ALIVE 2020 – a nationwide pro-life celebration on May 9, 2020 – the day before Mother's Day!

Last year, over 20,000 people filled Times Square for ALIVE FROM NEW YORK—a celebration of the sanctity of human life that culminated with a live ultrasound of a third-trimester baby broadcast on massive screens in the middle of New York City. This year, we'll be "Alive" from **Southern California, Dallas, Chicago, Atlanta and South Florida** with live music, amazing speakers, and a live ultrasound of a baby!

You can register now to join us at one of these locations by going to FocusOnTheFamily.com/ALIVE

Here's just one example of the lives you are saving . . .

"I was 19, working a difficult job and started to realize that physical changes were happening to me. I found a free pregnancy clinic. They gave me a pregnancy test. It was positive. I began to tear up with fear. I wanted to see how far along I was so they performed an ultrasound on me. When the nurse zoomed in on the baby, I saw this pulse. The nurse didn't have to even tell me. I knew. It was her heartbeat. That's when my life changed and I became a new person instantly. It was love at first sight!"

Thank you for empowering moms to choose life! Continue to impact lives by using the enclosed ALIVE 2020 magnet as a reminder to pray for this life-saving event.

Parenting Corner with Danny Huerta



Remind your children of the reason for the season.

Danny Huerta is Focus on the Family's vice president of the Parenting and Youth department

Are you looking for ideas to help keep your children focused on the reason for the Christmas season? Here are activities that parents have done to help their families celebrate the birth of our Savior or draw closer together as a family:

- **Have family members select a Scripture that meant something to them during the year.** On Christmas morning, take turns reading the chosen verse or passage and sharing why it was important.
- **Choose families to be a "secret Santa."** Anonymously leave a little gift and note on someone's doorstep each of the 12 nights leading up to Christmas.
- **Set up a Nativity scene on Dec. 1.** Then hide baby Jesus and let your children find the figurine. As Christmas approaches, hide the figurine in progressively closer locations. This simple game keeps Jesus in the forefront of children's minds.
- **Use an Advent Jesse tree and companion devotionals to help children prepare their hearts for the true meaning of the season.** These small evergreen trees are decorated with ornaments that symbolize stories from the Bible. Look online for a detailed description of ornaments that are often used and the Bible readings.
- **Watch a Christmas play.** Whether it's the Nativity story or an allegory such as "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe," a stage performance brings a story to life like no movie can. If no live play is available, perform one, such as a rendition of Christ's birth as told in Luke 2.
- **Spread Jesus' love by helping others** and by lifting the spirits of those who might not see a reason to celebrate. Together as a family, visit a nursing home, serve meals at a mission or church, or pack and deliver Christmas baskets for food pantries. ■

DOUBLE YOUR DOLLARS to Share the *Gift of Family* with couples in crisis!

You can offer the hope of Christmas with couples who are struggling by sharing the *Gift of Family* through your support of Focus on the Family. And now, your support will go TWICE AS FAR!

You can DOUBLE YOUR DOLLARS to help twice as many marriages in crisis through a MATCHING OPPORTUNITY provided by generous friends of the ministry.

Your gift between now and December 31 will be matched—dollar for dollar—up to \$5 million to offer couples healing and restoration!

When you give to support our broadcasts

Give the Gift
of
Family

and programs, online and print articles, counseling resources and efforts like our *Hope Restored*® marriage intensives, you are sharing the *Gift of Family*. God can use your gift to save marriages and heal families.

And now, with your ministry gift of \$150 or more, you'll get a hand-signed copy of award-winning artist Morgan Weistling's *Sharing the Light* special edition giclée print.

As God leads you, please use the enclosed reply form and envelope to return your generous gift. Remember, every dollar will be doubled up to \$5 million through our Matching opportunity! ■

Friends of
FOCUS ON THE FAMILY

Share the Gift of Family each and every month!

When you join our *Friends of Focus on the Family* program as a loyal monthly supporter, you'll help provide resources that save and strengthen families all year long.

As a *Friends of Focus on the Family* member, you'll receive monthly updates that report on how you are helping us make an eternal impact with practical results for families, as well as special offers and resources. Call 888-862-6767 today.

To learn more go to
FocusOnTheFamily.com/Pledge

Consider Planned Giving for Year End Benefits

Planned Giving is a great way to support the ministry while being smart with the resources God has given you. Here are some options:

IRA – If 70 ½ or older and required to take a minimum distribution from your traditional IRA, give to Focus on the Family through your IRA to reduce your taxable income and repurpose tax dollars to ministry.

Noncash – When you share appreciated assets—stocks and mutual funds—you avoid capital gains tax and get bigger deductions while supporting ministry.

Donor Advised Funds – Receive an immediate tax deduction, automate giving to multiple charities, grow fund by investing and more.

For more information, call 800-782-8227 or email FocusPlannedGiving@fottf.org



Focus on the Family
8605 Explorer Drive
Colorado Springs, CO 80920
FocusOnTheFamily.com
800-A-FAMILY (232-6459)
Help@FocusOnTheFamily.com