



Dear Friend:

Greetings to you from Focus on the Family! I hope you and your loved ones are enjoying these first weeks of the new year. Those of you in colder climates are, no doubt, rooting for an early spring!

As we head into the month of February, many of us are making plans for Valentine's Day getaways or shopping around for the perfect gift for our significant other. For too many people, however, Valentine's Day can be a painful reminder of struggling relationships or even marriages in crisis. Hurting husbands and wives contact our team on a daily basis, crying out for help as they navigate typical, day-to-day challenges or even more serious issues such as infidelity, addictions, abandonment, or abuse. These heart-wrenching problems and destructive behaviors bring many marriages to the brink of divorce – even when one or both spouses may desperately desire to save their marriage.

Here at Focus, we affirm that God designed marriage to be a lifelong, committed, and loving union between a man and a woman – and while we believe Scripture teaches that the Lord permits divorce in certain cases, we also know that we serve a redemptive God for whom “all things are possible” (Matthew 19:26). To be sure, we have seen Christ breathe new life and hope into marriages that seemed to be on their last gasp, and these transformed relationships testify mightily to the marriage-restoring power of genuine repentance and forgiveness.

One of our ministry's founding principles is “The Permanence of Marriage.” In our endeavors to uphold this irreplaceable pillar in the culture, we describe marriage as “a sacred covenant designed by God to model the love of Christ for His people and to serve both the public and private good as the basic building block of human civilization. Marriage is intended by God to be a thriving, lifelong relationship between a man and a woman enduring through trials, sickness, financial crises and emotional stresses. Therefore, Christians are called to defend and protect God's design for marriage and to minister in Christ's name to those who suffer the consequences of its brokenness.”

Because we believe God places such a high value on marriage, we are passionately committed to helping save and strengthen as many marriages as possible. With that aim in mind, we make available a wide range of marriage-building resources – and our radio broadcast regularly features programs geared toward providing husbands and wives with practical, biblically grounded advice and tips for fostering thriving relationships with one another. Additionally, our team of skilled, licensed counselors takes thousands of calls a year from those seeking assistance with various marital difficulties and issues. As a matter of fact, we estimate that at least 808,000 couples have built stronger and more satisfying marriages in the past year alone with the help of Focus on the Family resources!

Meanwhile, our surveys indicate that we've had the privilege of strengthening 129,000 singles in their walk with God, helping them understand the importance and purpose of God's design for marriage. What's more, we've assisted over 144,000 married couples as they've worked to resolve a major

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marital crisis at some point during the past 12 months.

Even as we rejoice in these encouraging statistics, we recognize that all too many marriages remain in dire straits – to the point that they need more extensive help if they're to weather the storms facing them. In an effort to provide an "emergency room," of sorts, for those whose marriages are in crisis, we established our *Hope Restored* marriage intensive program in order to come alongside those who are facing significant marital distress.

I'm grateful to report that God has used this facet of our work in tremendous ways. Here's what one couple wrote in their room journal following their own *Hope Restored* intensive experience:

*For seven years our home has felt like World War III. We came to Focus broken, nervous, and skeptical. On the first night we walked into the room very unsure. We then noticed a journal sitting on the table. We decided to pick it up and read a couple of pages. We laughed at the notes other couples had left behind and said, "This will never be us. There is no way our marriage will change in four days." I remember the staff saying, "You won't want to leave." I thought to myself, "Yeah, right," and rolled my eyes. This past week has been a truly amazing journey and emotional roller coaster ride. God really opened our eyes. We learned how truly important it is to take care of our hearts and to care for our spouse's feelings. We truly opened up to each other and put in the work, and our marriage has transformed in the past four days. The closeness we feel with each other after this, we have never felt with each other before. I can't even begin to brag on how amazing the staff here is. I told my husband it's like every single person that works at Focus puts so much love and care into their job. God is truly in control and working at Focus. I would recommend this place to any married couple, healthy or unhealthy. By the way, the couples we had in our group were like family at the end. I will cherish this memory forever! Be still and know He is God! Come with an open heart! I'm rooting for you, whoever you guys are.*

*Praying for the next couple in room 12,  
Kiera and Daniel*

What a beautiful testimony of God's healing! It is a sacred privilege to learn about couples like Kiera and Daniel whose hearts and lives are being touched and changed through our gifted and compassionate counselors. To date, we've served over 7,000 couples across our three locations in Branson, Missouri; Greenville, Michigan; and Rome, Georgia. And given the ongoing demand for our intensives, we're expanding our offerings at our Georgia facility. By adding several therapists to that team, we'll now be able to serve even more couples in need. We're also in the process of training additional counselors for our Michigan campus as well.

That means, of course, that the Lord is positioning us to facilitate even more inspiring testimonies like Kiera and Daniel's, and like the one below:

*To those who follow – this place is where hope can be found! My husband and I were in a terrible cycle for years. He was done with our marriage and ready to leave. We weren't even*

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*speaking anymore. Coming here was a last-ditch effort to save our 32-year relationship. The only reason he agreed to come at all is because you have to be open to a miracle. I was very anxious walking through the door Sunday night, and had a panic attack on the flight here. Needless to say, God's grace poured out, and by Thursday morning we were equipped with the tools and knowledge to get back on the right track. God has perfect timing! We are definitely not out of the dark woods yet, but we both have hope that we can make things work. Do not give up and do not be discouraged. My advice is to participate fully and drink in every aspect of the process presented. You've come this far and everyone here understands your pain. God is here! This is a safe place! The counselors and staff are anointed and are exactly where they are supposed to be...here to help and lead you back to your spouse.*

What an incredible glimpse into the kind of life-changing, transformative ministry that is taking place at our retreat facilities! We continually hear from couples who share that their marriage was hanging on by the flimsiest of threads – and yet the insights and tools they gained at their respective intensives provided the turning point they needed to guide them back from the near dissolution of their marriages. When I think of all the families and children that are being impacted in such a vital, lasting way through this aspect of our efforts, I'm tremendously grateful to the Lord – *and* to friends like you – for sustaining this important work.

We cannot maintain all these efforts and reach even more hurting couples and families without your giving. It takes \$30 to help save or strengthen one marriage. As a nonprofit organization, we rely on the donations and generosity of friends just like you. So please respond right away.

Your most generous gift today could mean the difference between redemption and healing or divorce papers for a couple in crisis. Will you allow God to use you to save marriages and restore families through the efforts and resources of Focus on the Family?

In addition to our existing retreat centers in Missouri, Georgia, and Michigan, we're in the planning stages of opening a fourth site in Southern California. The real estate market in that part of the country is challenging, to say the least, but we believe God will open the door for the right location in His timing. As we seek a suitable property in Southern California, your prayers for God's wisdom, direction, and provision would mean a great deal.

Meanwhile, we are as dedicated as ever to moving forward with our various other initiatives and resources designed specifically to foster flourishing marriages. From online content to print materials to free consultations and much more, Focus on the Family strives to point couples toward tangible, biblically based support as they prioritize their marriages.

Marriage serves as a reflection of the unbreakable bond between Christ and His bride, the Church. Thriving marriages in which sacrificial and unconditional love is on full display point the world toward the ultimate and everlasting love story – the love story that was written before the dawn of time and came to fruition in the life, death, and resurrection of our Savior.

That's why we're tirelessly dedicated to coming alongside couples – so that they can experience and

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showcase the kind of union that we now “know in part,” but one day will “know fully, even as [we] have been fully known” (1 Corinthians 13:12).

Remember, God will use your gift today to reap eternal dividends that simply cannot be measured. Please give today to help husbands and wives experience all that God intended for marriage. All of our efforts rely on the generosity of friends like you who see fit to link arms with us. May our Heavenly Father’s abundant blessings be with you and your loved ones throughout the days and weeks ahead!



Jim Daly  
President

P.S. Remember that we’re here to help *your* family in any way we’re able, too. If we can provide you with an encouraging resource, a free consultation with a Christian counselor, or prayer, simply give us a call at 1-800-A-FAMILY (232-6459). And I pray you are able to help us in providing these critical resources for couples in crisis by giving generously today. Thank you!