



Dear Friend,

Greetings from Focus on the Family! It's my hope that these early weeks of 2022 are off to a terrific start for you and your family. While we know that most New Year's resolutions notoriously go by the wayside before we've even turned over the first page of the calendar, let's all make it a year-round priority to nurture strong, thriving relationships with our spouse, children, and other loved ones. I can't think of a resolution more deserving of our wholehearted time, attention, and devotion!

As we usher in the month of February, many of us are preparing to celebrate Valentine's Day with our significant others. This holiday, as you know, pays tribute to romantic love and offers florists, candy makers, jewelers, and greeting card companies a welcome boost in revenue each year. Restaurants are filled to overflowing with couples, red and pink are displayed prominently, and men line up at grocery check-out lines with large bouquets of roses to bring home to their sweethearts.

I hope you and your spouse find some time away from the busyness of family life and kids to spend some quality time with each other. I enjoy Valentine's Day as much as anyone — after all, any opportunity for spouses to demonstrate their love and affection to one another is a good thing, right?

At the same time, I believe the best expression of married love can't be found in a box of chocolates or a glittering ring. Instead, it's found in the young husband who gets up in the middle of the night to rock a crying newborn so his exhausted wife can catch up on some sleep. It's found in the daily choice to overlook small offenses and annoyances and to extend grace and forgiveness. It's found in the aging wife who cares tenderly for her husband's every need as he declines with Alzheimer's. It's found, in a word, in *commitment* — commitment that goes the distance and weathers any storm for the sake of another.

Indeed, Valentine's Day is an observance of *eros*, or romantic love. While every marriage should certainly include eros, I submit to you that we should all aspire to have the kind of marriage that reflects *agape* love above all. Agape, as you're likely aware, is defined as an unconditional, selfless love that is not an outworking of emotion but is rather an expression of unwavering devotion.

In a Desiring God podcast titled, "What is Love?", Pastor John Piper explains the distinction this way:

The word love has so many different references. And it is not a bad thing that it should.

Now what I have found most helpful is to divide love into two categories. I got this first from Jonathan Edwards, but it goes way back before him. He divides love into "love of complacency" and "love of benevolence."

Complacency would be, "I love pizza." In other words, "I find myself pleased by the

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qualities I find in pizza — namely, its taste.” That would be love of complacency. Or you might love a place or a country or lots of things. You could say you love them because they are lovely. They are pleasing to you.

Whereas, the love of benevolence is not based on the loveliness of the object of the love, but rather your good will — benevolence — your good will toward the person or the thing that you are loving. Your aim in that kind of love is to do good, to bring about something beautiful, not respond to beauty.¹

When I consider that this is the way God loves me — and that it’s the way I’m called to love my wife — I’m incredibly convicted. After all, marriage is the union of two imperfect and messy people, so we won’t always find the kind of beauty and desirability in one another that we would hope to see. That doesn’t change our responsibility to our spouse, however.

To the contrary, Ephesians 5:22–33 lays out the ultimate purpose of marriage, which is to serve as a faithful manifestation of Christ’s unbreakable bond with His own Bride, the Church.

With this crucial theological tenet in mind, Focus on the Family is dedicated to helping foster strong, Christ-centered marriages all over the globe. Yes, we want to help couples enjoy the fulfillment and security that come with a happy marriage — and we want children to have the myriad benefits of stable, two-parent homes. Most of all, though, we want this hurting world to see Jesus’ love for His people playing out in Christian marriages everywhere. What a beautiful mission He’s given to husbands and wives as they embody the very Gospel through their marriages!

As you stand with us to save and strengthen marriages, you make possible a multi-pronged approach. Not only do you help us regularly air radio broadcasts related to marriage, but you also support an extensive library of print, audio, video, and online resources addressing various topics centered on marriage. Because of you, we regularly roll out new materials, such as our own Dr. Greg Smalley’s latest curriculum, *Marriage 911*, which is scheduled for release later this year. This volume is based on the counseling principles used in *Hope Restored* marriage intensives — and, in fact, our Vice President of the Focus Marriage Institute, Bob Paul, had a hand in the development of Greg’s new curriculum.

Speaking of *Hope Restored*, did you know that God is using this marriage intensive program in remarkable ways to bring healing to couples in crisis? With your help, there are now three locations around the country — with a fourth in the planning phase. Meanwhile, our staff counselors are available to engage over the phone with people who are facing complex difficulties and situations.

Through all these endeavors, we often hear from those whose marriages have been positively impacted by your support. I love seeing the stories that reach our offices, and I’d like to share just a few of the testimonials we’ve received in recent weeks.

Focus on the Family has made a big difference in my life. About 30 years ago I was a new

¹ <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/what-is-love>

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Christian and a single mom with two kids. I met a Christian man in church; we dated and were married within the year. One month later I was pregnant (it wasn't planned). Three months into the marriage we were not doing well. My husband left and fell back into his drug use and fell back into addiction. I was devastated! We were both raised in very dysfunctional homes. I was so broken. How could this happen? I had just recently discovered Focus on the Family on the radio. One day while listening to one of your programs about marriage, I realized things could change. We had not been prepared for our marriage – not at all! That day I received hope for my marriage. I also called you and was given a referral to a marriage counselor right in my city. Recently we celebrated 31 years of marriage, and it is a good marriage. I have listened all these years and recommend Focus, your help line, and your resources to many people. Thank you for what you have done and continue to do to help not only my family but countless families out there. God bless your ministry always and forever. —Alicia, California

I was already a wife and a mother by the time I gave my heart to Christ. I came across Focus on the Family early on in my Christian life. I was not raised in church or in a godly home, so in the beginning I used the stories that I heard through the broadcast to see how Christians were to live and deal with the struggles of life — because I had many. This was at a time when my marriage was quite a mess and almost immediately after the birth of our second child, it absolutely fell apart. A wife with a fiery temper and strong will combined with a husband with a drug addiction and infidelity will almost certainly lead to destruction. An affair led to him fathering another child and when all of this came out, it seemed there was nothing left to do but get divorced and carry on in separate directions. Even though I was a Christian, my strong will wanted to get angry with God for allowing this to happen, but I did not understand at that time that He was perfecting us. He was using this trial to break my will and reshape it to His and to eventually use my inward change as an example to my husband. One day when my husband came to visit our children, he decided to attend church with us. He gave his heart to Christ that day and over time I saw a radical change in his life and character. He was healed from his addiction, and I could see the new man he was becoming. We decided to remarry and later I was able to legally adopt the child he had from the affair. Our family is whole now. We are approaching the 10-year anniversary of our second marriage to each other! We serve in our church as youth leaders and Sunday school teachers, and we have been able to love and minister to couples and young adults in our community that need to hear that God can heal broken marriages and addictions. We love teaching that God's grace, love and mercy are everlasting and that He can do what seems impossible. I love Focus on the Family because it keeps me encouraged. The enemy will still attack us and try to use our past to accuse us and remind us of our failures but then I hear another story of redemption and love through the daily broadcast, and I am reminded that Jesus is still Lord and still working in our lives. I thank God for the ministry of Focus on the Family. —Jennifer, Georgia

I can say that we got our miracle [at Hope Restored] and God is faithful. The group setting, the safety created by our counselors, and the tools that were introduced to us opened up our

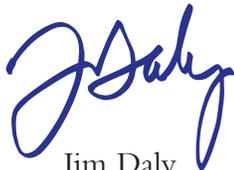
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hearts and minds and connected us to each other's hearts. When we saw each other become vulnerable and open and really feeling heard, it was like seeing each other clearly for the first time in a long time and on a deeper level. God proved almost a year ago that when we put our trust in Him, all things are possible. Now we are leaving here with the tools to overcome the past and anything that comes our way. We leave here in victory. May the Lord continue to bless this place. —anonymous husband

What incredible glimpses into the redemptive, marriage-saving work that's taking place every day through Focus on the Family! When friends like you partner with us through financial investments and prayer support, you play an indispensable role in these efforts. And we would be grateful if you choose to link arms with us again today. God will use your gift today to help save and strengthen marriages. Did you know that it takes just \$30 to help save one marriage when you support efforts like the daily broadcast, marriage podcasts, counseling resources, and *Hope Restored* marriage intensives? We never take your generosity for granted and will do our best to prayerfully use your gracious assistance to save and renew as many marriages as possible. Please consider standing with us for marriages with your generous gift today.

Please keep in mind that we're here to serve you and your loved ones in any way possible as well. If you find yourself struggling in your marriage — or if there's some other family-related issue we can help with — I hope you'll get in touch. Our caring staff are standing by to answer your call; simply dial 1-800-A-FAMILY (232-6459) or send us an email at Help@FocusOnTheFamily.com. You can also visit our website at FocusOnTheFamily.com to see the many articles, broadcasts, FAQs, videos, and other content we have posted there.

May the month ahead bring you and your loved ones an abundance of peace and joy as you look to Christ. Blessings to you!



Jim Daly
President

P.S. Would you consider joining us as we work to nurture marriages, equip parents, defend life, and spread the Gospel around the world? Any donation you share today would be deeply appreciated and will go directly to redeeming couples and saving families.