



Abundant Living Ministries

Encouraging Christian Living since 1978

September 2019

I googled, “United States’ most-pressing social ill.” Clicking on the first response that seemed to answer my query, I read, “*America faces many urgent challenges. Crime. Poverty. Education. And many others. Each is important. But many leading scholars now conclude that our nation’s single most important problem is the weakening of marriage.*”

It seems that, in our culture, marriage has dropped in importance, Divorce is quite common. So, I was actually surprised to see ***weakening of marriage*** mentioned as our ***single most important problem***. I should mention that I know nothing about the organization which published this article on *most serious social problems*. And, in reading briefly about the nonprofit organization, I did not detect religious or Christian association. In any case, it provides an easy transition to the concern I want to mention in this letter.

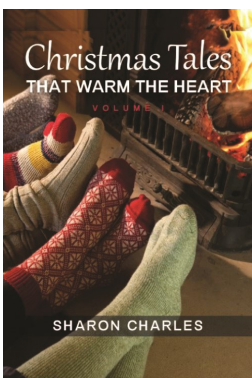
My concern? That we Christian parents are perhaps not doing a very good job of teaching our young children about marriage. In many cases, children are not learning what **GOD** says about marriage but, instead, they are left to learn about marriage simply by observing the marriages around them... many of which are very poor models of intimate, meaningful, Godly marriage.

We parents recognize that our children’s early years are crucial for learning, development, assimilation of values, and growth in understanding. We help them form good character traits such as honesty and kindness. In fact, search on the internet and you will quickly find hundreds of children’s books on such topics. And, of course, there are also a zillion (okay, I’m exaggerating) YouTube clips and videos on character development.

I went back to the computer and searched for, “Christian children’s books on marriage.” Result? I was directed to *Amazon* where they had listed... are you ready? **ONE!** Yes, that’s right... **ONE** book title popped up, followed immediately with suggestions that “people who searched for this book have typically looked also at the following books...” most of which had to do with teaching children about sex, and good touch/bad touch.

By the way, the one book listed on Amazon is titled, *A Child’s First Book About Marriage: God’s Way is Always Best*, by Jani Ortlund.

I would not have guessed that this is a practically-untouched subject among children’s books. Not that books resolve all issues, but I imagine the lack of such children’s books suggests a much-broader lack of instruction. And it concerns me! So much so, that I asked Sharon to consider writing a children’s book on this subject.



I want to encourage... no, more than that, I want to *exhort* us all to look for opportunities to talk of God’s wonderful design of marriage to our children, our grandchildren, our great-grand... you get the idea!

God’s design is BEST!

John (for Sharon and the rest at ALM)

P.S. Years ago, Sharon started a tradition of writing an annual Christmas story for our children. We then began including her story in our ALM December newsletter. Appreciative readers have been encouraging her to publish these Christmas tales. Yay! The book is almost ready for the print shop. *Please see the exciting notice on the back page of this mailing!*



A MODEL Marriage

Question:

I want my children to grow up with a healthy view of marriage. So many of their friends come from broken or troubled families. I am concerned that they may think conflict and broken relationships are just a normal part of marriage. Any thoughts?

Response:

Unfortunately, millions of children are growing up without a clue as to what a good marriage looks like. Without a model, the stage is set for them to experience the same failure they observed in their parents' or friends' marriages. Consider some of the following simple ideas for developing a marital bond that will serve as a great model for your children.

Mend your fences!

Husbands and wives who learn to get along peaceably, provide a tremendously-valuable life lesson for their children. These couples do not blow up or clam up when disagreements arise. They speak calmly and respectfully. They practice instant forgiveness when their spouse disappoints them. They address issues objectively, not defensively.

Jesus told us, *Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you (Luke 6:27, 28)*. A spouse is supposed to be a friend, not an enemy, but some days

he/she can act like an adversary. At such times, Jesus instructs us to work to restore closeness.

Children who observe Dad and Mom getting along as best friends, in spite of different opinions, are much more apt to develop good communication skills themselves.

Opt for kindness!

We live in an increasingly self-centered culture. Children regularly receive the message, "You have a *right* to have whatever you want... to be treated the way you want. You and *your* feelings are more important than the feelings of others!"

The Bible teaches the exact opposite. *Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves (Romans 12:10). Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others (Philippians 2:3, 4)*.

Kindness in marriage often means, very simply, looking for ways to be nice to your spouse. Dating couples seem to have little difficulty doing this. Once married, sweethearts often begin to take each other for granted. But, remember... kindness is always a good choice. Children who see Dad and Mom doing acts of kindness for each other are observing a model that will benefit them in their own future marriage.

Defend the union!

Marriage is not a contract. It is *a covenant* witnessed by God. Hebrews 13:4 states, *Let marriage be held in honor above all.* In a healthy Christian marriage, husbands and wives place the highest priority on the covenant they made with each other, before God. This means that, when difficulties arise, they don't destroy each other with harsh, destructive words, threatening separation or divorce.

Like a general who establishes secure perimeters for his troops, husbands and wives protect their marriage with wise safeguards. They are careful to not spend alone-time with, or send provocative messages to, individuals outside their marriage. The spouse who falls for someone else sends a hurtful message to the child. Since the child is the product of both parents, the rejection of a partner is tantamount to rejecting the child.

One of the best ways to protect the child from future marital unfaithfulness is to provide a solid example of committed married love.

Enjoy your distinctions!

When God made human beings, He created male and female. Men and women are different physically and also emotionally. Husbands and wives have gender differences, personality differences, family-history differences, cultural differences, talent/interest differences, etc.

God didn't put two so-different people together to frustrate them, but rather to complete them. Marriage is a tremendous opportunity for both spouses to learn from, and benefit from, the uniqueness of the other. Yet so many couples miss out because they are resenting each other's distinctiveness and trying desperately to change the other into their own image.

Blessed is the child who sees both parents enjoying the other's traits... where both parents express joy and appreciation for their spouse's diversities... yes, for their *dissimilarities!*



Live your love

Children learn about love primarily from what they observe in the people closest to them, namely Dad and Mom. A husband and wife have daily opportunities to show children what love is all about, through their speech and actions. Try some of these ideas:

- ◆ Show frequent, wholesome affection to your spouse.
- ◆ Regularly express gratitude to your spouse for daily tasks they perform.
- ◆ Go out on dates together.
- ◆ Defend your spouse in front of the children.
- ◆ Apologize when you are wrong and quickly forgive when your spouse wrongs you.
- ◆ Practice good manners in your daily routines.
- ◆ Pray with, and for, your spouse.
- ◆ Tell your children how thankful you are for your spouse.
- ◆ Talk to your children often about the blessings of a Godly marriage.

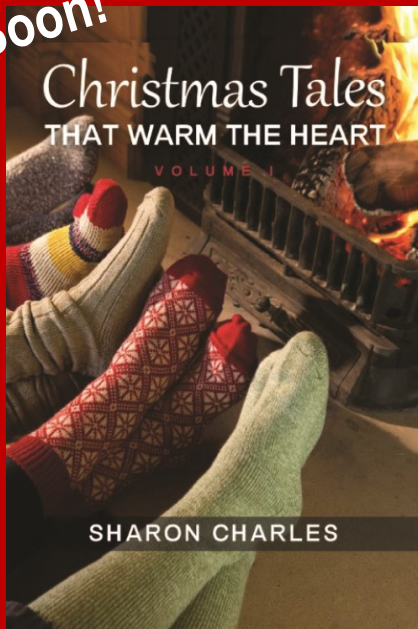
A healthy marriage creates such a beautiful and valuable picture for the children. As husbands and wives, seek to keep in mind that, every day, your children are watching, observing, and learning.

Your consistent, loving example will become an excellent model for your children to copy and, in turn, pass along to the next generation!



Sharon Charles

Coming
Soon!



Christmas Tales that Warm the Heart

Everyone loves a good story...especially at Christmas!
And especially when that story touches the heart!

In this collection of Yuletide Tales,
imagination is charmed and faith strengthened.
Young and old will revisit Jesus' birth and its timeless lessons
along with Yumi, Annie and Charlie, whiskered Walt,
and many other fascinating characters!

So, gather by the hearth with friends and family,
or curl up alone in your favorite chair.
Let Christmas Tales warm your heart
and enrich your holiday traditions!

CAN BE PRE-ORDERED AT THE ALM OFFICE

paperback - to be shipped mid-November
\$11.00 (plus shipping & handling)

WILL BE AVAILABLE ON AMAZON (mid-November)
\$12.99 paperback / \$9.99 e-Book (Kindle)

Heaven on Earth Family Style

After 10 years out of print,
this third edition has been recently released.
Paperback and e-book versions can be purchased on Amazon
or directly from our ALM office.

The life story of Norman and Betty Charles has been a great encouragement
to many! Read how they encountered Jesus in a powerful way,
regaining health and wholeness, and beginning an incredible adventure of faith!

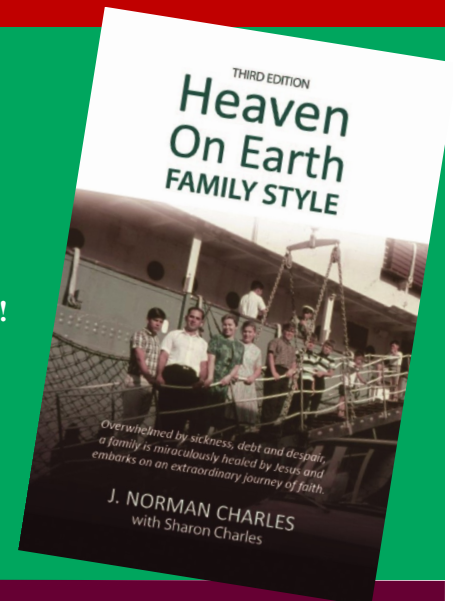
Available
Now!

AVAILABLE ON AMAZON:

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\$9.99 e-Book (Kindle)

ALSO AVAILABLE AT THE ALM OFFICE:

\$11.00 (plus shipping & handling)



Lay Christian Counselor Training

For those who wish to be more effective people-helpers.

6 Monday evenings:
Oct 7-Nov 11, 2019 7:00-9:00 PM
\$120 per person or \$150 per couple
(cost includes textbooks)

THERE'S STILL TIME TO REGISTER!
Deadline is September 20th

Call the ALM office or email Chris at
info@AbundantLivingMinistries.org

Open Arms

Childbirth Class

Five Consecutive Thursdays

October 3 - 31, 2019, 7:00 pm

Covering the important information offered in a hospital course, *Open Arms* adds a distinctively-Christian perspective. You will enjoy meeting other expectant couples as you gain practical help in preparing for a great labor and delivery. There is no cost for this course.

Register by contacting the ALM office.

Contact Information

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