

## An Open Letter to Pastors

**As pastor, you are the key to effective marriage and family ministries in your church. Others may attend to details, but only you as pastor can articulate the vision and motivate actions to strengthen marriages and families in your congregation and in your community. We want to inspire and encourage you to take the lead in this vital ministry now.**

**Why marriage and family ministries?** The union of a woman and a man and the birth of children are pivotal events. A stable and happy marriage based on a life-long commitment between a mother and father provides the most effective nurture for children from infancy through adolescence to adulthood. The disruption of a marriage by conflict, divorce, or death affects both immediate and extended family members and results in high costs to society at large. Effective marriage and family ministries support all family members in reaching their full potential and maintaining healthy relationships.

Your church has four major windows of opportunity for marriage and family ministries:

1. **Wedding** – pre and post wedding into the first years of marriage
2. **Birth of a child and infant baptism** – (whether the parents are married or not)
3. **Transitions** – changes in job, school, moving
4. **Crises** – Major conflicts, addictions, job loss, accidents, major health changes or illness

The number of married couples in a typical congregation is approximately 20 to 25 percent of the church membership. For example, there will be about 20 to 30 married couples in a church of 100 members; 200 to 300 married couples in a church of 1,000 members. **If only five or ten percent of these couples become Mentor Couples, your church could provide effective marriage and family ministries for each of the above windows of opportunity.** Mentor Couples demonstrate healthy relationships, bring both female and male perspectives to each family situation, establish safe boundaries among all persons involved, and provide connections between each family and the congregation.

Your congregation has the potential to establish an ongoing group of trained and dedicated marriage and family Mentor Couples, but it takes YOU as pastor to call this ministry into existence. Through your work in pastoral care and counseling, you know when the above windows of opportunity occur in the homes of your congregation, which puts you in the key role of connecting couples and families in need with Mentor Couples. **One simple invitation to your congregation could bring forth several couples for an initial introductory session about marriage and family mentoring.**

Chapter Eight of the *Growing Love in Christian Marriage Pastor's Manual* provides basic information for recruitment, training and on-going support of mentor couples, and on page 84 you will find two resources for mentor couples described. Other information may be found under [Additional Resources](#) on this website. You can bring in other leaders and staff to do the detail work, BUT it takes YOU as pastor to get this ministry going.

Resolve to give a warm and welcoming invitation this week to your congregation to initiate training for marriage and family mentoring. Your church can do it IF you lead the way.