

the **+** Helper

Celebrating Marriage

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

- Ephesians 5:22-27



also: **Singleness:** curse or blessing?
what about **Divorce?**
and **Remarriage?**

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Editorial

A quick glance reveals that the focus of this edition is on marriage and related issues. From the outset we want to proclaim that marriage is very close to God's heart and purposes in the world. As soon as He created the first man, God declared that "it is not good for man to be alone" and proceeded to create Eve, the perfect helpmate for Adam. Marriage is found in all cultures, but it is within the context of a Christian marriage that it has the possibility of reaching the beauty God intended, as the love and commitment between husband and wife gives a visible expression to the love between Christ and His Church.

Yet today, marriage is under threat from many directions, with increasing numbers in our society no longer seeing marriage as necessary and redefining what marriage and family look like. As individual Christians and as churches, we need to be unashamed in declaring what God has to say about marriage and seek to do everything to uphold His standards. Above all, we need to model to those around us what marriage can look like when two people come together to "have and to hold from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health until death do us part." This is, of course, only possible by the grace and enabling of the Lord. As we seek to bring our lives under the influence of

His Spirit, we can develop marriages that enrich this world and bring glory to God.

We have tried to cover a range of subjects within this broad topic. It is impossible to deal with everything in such a small publication, but we trust that the articles included will be of interest and encouragement and that each of you will find something that 'hits' on your particular stage of life.

Again, we are very thankful to our contributors – some from outside New Zealand this time – and deeply appreciate the time they have given and their readiness to share their stories and insights. We also want to honour some of the older couples within our congregations, whom God has preserved now for many years. Treasure these couples and gain as much wisdom from them as you can while there is still time. In years to come such longevity in marriage will become increasingly hard to find.

Again my appreciation to the team who has helped put this together.

On behalf of *the Helper Team*,
- Nola Young

Ladies

How do I love thee?

Let me count the . . . years!



I've been struck lately with the quality of a life-long love—not possible without spending years with someone. My husband, Dave, and I have just passed the 38 year mark, and our relationship is so precious and rich! He is the greatest physical gift I'll ever have.

Recently while rummaging through a closet I came across a beautiful silver bowl that my parents received as a wedding present. After about an hour of polishing away the tarnish, it yielded its beauty again. The older it gets and the more it is polished, the prettier it gets. The shine of its patina is gentle, soft and has a kind of depth new silver lacks. Just like that bowl, our marriage relationship has developed a beautiful gentleness, mellowness and sweetness that comes from sharing a life together, of trusting in a kind and merciful God who longs for our lives to shine. Sometimes He has had to rub and polish us hard to remove the tarnish of all varieties of selfishness and too much exposure to the atmosphere of the world. Occasionally, He has used the wise guidance of mature counselors to expose our blind spots. We've benefited from a multitude of gifted authors and speakers who've instructed us in how to "do" marriage. Here are a few of the things we have come to know, and are still trying to practice.

At the top of any list of requirements for a good marriage is the principle of **commitment**. When Dave and I got married, we knew that for each of us divorce was not an option. (As Billy Graham's wife, Ruth, is quoted as having said, "Murder, maybe, but divorce never!") When you are committed to staying together, you must find solutions to your problems. A commitment is more than a contract.

It's a covenant made before God to love one another "till death do us part". It's a decision made at a point in time and going forward that no matter how we may *feel*, we will *choose* to love with God's help. There was a time in the first decade of our marriage when I felt like I'd had enough. Standing in the bedroom one day, ready to bolt, I realized the only place to run to was my parents', 500 miles away, and that the old car wouldn't make it and I had no money, etc. I gave the Lord a suggestion, saying, "Lord, one of us has got to go. And it can't be me because the children need their mommy." Fortunately the Lord didn't take me up on that suggestion. No doubt He'd heard that one before! So, we decided it was time for counseling. A very wise pastor told me that I had no power to change my husband. The only one I could change was me. And no doubt there was plenty of *changing* that needed to take place.

Communication is an absolute essential for any relationship and especially important in marriage. God has designed a system where two very different creatures are to come together as one. Unfortunately, most people don't go into marriage realizing how very different they are – not just personally, but in the way God *created* them to be. Men and women don't think alike, react the same way, process information the same way or have the same inborn needs. Recently our church has been using the DVD series "Love and Respect" by Emerson Eggerichs. He likes to refer to these inborn differences as seeing with either pink or blue eyes—not wrong, just different.

Until a couple understands this, they can spend their whole lives moving through "the crazy cycle", infuriating and misunderstanding each other. Additionally they can fail to show their spouse the kind of love he or she longs for just because of a failure to understand what communicates love to the spouse. Well-known author of helpful books on marriage, Dennis Rainey, calls this their "love language". Dave and I are still learning what kinds of things we can do that really communicate love to the other—and not just what we each *think* communicates love.

Many marriages fail to be great because couples just don't make **companionship** or friendship a priority. Especially through the early years of child rearing and career building, this can be neglected. Hence many couples find themselves "empty nesters" who no longer really know one other. Pursuing common interests and being involved in ministry together greatly binds the two of us together.

(continued from page 3.)

Prayer and the truths of Scripture, through which the Holy Spirit works in our lives, are the keys to a successful marriage. Recently my husband brought to my attention a particular behavior of mine that was dishonoring to him. I went to a Scripture verse I knew well from Ephesians (but sure wasn't practicing!) and began to read and meditate on it in my daily devotions. Then the Lord would bring it to mind over and over again when I was tempted to fall back into that habitual behavior. In the same way, I have claimed Scripture to pray a needed change in my husband "without a word" to him, especially when he has made a decision I thought was wrong. Staying spiritually fit and spending time regularly with the Lord and in the Word of God does more for your marriage than anything else!

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we must realize that **the main purpose of marriage is to bring glory to God**. Marriage, the most intimate of human relationships, is to be a picture of the relationship between Christ and His Church. Speaking of marriage in Ephesians, Paul writes in 5:32, "This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church". I, by failing to project a proper relationship with my husband, can dishonor Christ by reflecting poorly the type of love He has for us, His Bride. This is to me the greatest motivation to make my marriage work. All my sinful "tarnish" could be fleshing out a "different gospel". Instead, just as the silver bowl is a beautiful reflection of light, I want our marriage to shine forth the "light of the knowledge of the glory of God". Because, the world is watching!

- Betty Matthews

Briarwood Presbyterian Church, Birmingham, Alabama, USA



The Five Essentials

In Choosing a Spouse

The choice of a spouse is certainly not an easy task. Yet, as the most important decision one can make apart from the decision to follow Christ, a Christian must not enter into such a matter lightly or naively. However, after years of researching this topic, we have found no 'biblically prescribed' ways to choose a spouse, other than the injunctions for Christians to marry Christians (1 Corinthians 7:39; 2 Corinthians 6:14).

Still, most people find it useful to have some sort of suggested criteria or method to help them. There has been a great accumulation of information from the social sciences that can be used in the light of Scripture. So, we offer you five essential "S's" in choosing a spouse. We believe that a high degree of connectedness should be sought in all of these dimensions. Without this, couples may find themselves painfully empty and missing out on the experience of marrying their 'soul mate'.

Spiritual Oneness

This is crucial. If you do not share a high degree of spiritual oneness, then bluntly don't get married. You are only asking for trouble in the long term, as this is the foundation for any other area of oneness. One aspect of spiritual oneness is a couple holding theological agreement on most matters. This may not mean that they come from the same church background, but this can be a good start. It does require thinking and talking about some of the finer points of doctrine as well as current issues facing the world and church.

Another important aspect is 'experiential' spirituality – with God and other people. It is possible to believe something doctrinally, but vary greatly in one's spiritual experience, which is often expressed in worship, prayer, fellowship and community life. Some people experience a more subjective spiritual reality that others may not easily understand or even accept as valid. For there to be spiritual oneness, there has to be a commonality in the 'heart' of each partner, doctrinally and experientially.

Shared Values

Most researchers on marriage agree that spouses who hold similar values tend to have higher marital quality and stability. When couples do not share similar values, every

decision can cause conflict. The couple can hardly plan for anything, let alone agree on daily matters such as spending money, parenting children, or even having sex. Values consist of beliefs, preferences, expectations and aspirations. While spiritual oneness can lead to shared beliefs, it does not necessarily lead to similarity of lifestyles, goals, dreams, favourite foods, or dream holidays. Having similarity in these others areas allows a connected and meaningful relationship. This does not mean that there has to be perfect agreement. Some differences can be wonderful and challenging to a person's growth. We just say that in the core values, two people need to be able to stand together.

Solid Selves

It is also important that each individual in a marriage has a solid sense of who they are outside of other people, including their spouses. Each one of us came into the world as an individual and will one day stand before God as an individual. Thus, we have to come to grips with ourselves. As we grasp a more substantial 'sense of self', this actually enables us to live interdependently. We can more easily enter into real intimacy and community with others, as we do not have to hide our insecurity and have something of substance to give to others.

When there is not a firm sense of self, there is the tendency to either emotionally feed upon one another to gain security, or to recoil from or seek to control one another from fear of revealing insecurity or being consumed by the other.

Sound Communication

No marriage, no matter how sound in other areas, can find much peace unless at least some level of understanding is achieved. Poor communication is a breeding ground for mistrust, distancing from one another and ultimately interpersonal conflict. Good communication requires verbal clarity and at times confirmation of what is being communicated. Much of communication is non-verbal, and this needs to be consistent with what is said. Establishing a firm basis for trust is crucial if connecting is to occur. An equal sense of vulnerability between partners is also necessary. Managing conflict is important as conflict can be expected. A couple's maturity is not measured by the absence of overt conflict, but by the couple's ability to manage conflict well when it occurs.

Personality congruence is particularly helpful when it comes to "fine tuning" a couple's ability to communicate. Some degree of similarity in aspects of personality composition such as sense of humour, level of intensity, abstract/concrete processing, intelligence, etc. are extremely helpful in a couple's ability to connect at deeper levels.

Finally, humility and a submissive spirit under God and to one another is a must (see Micah 6:8, Ephesians 5:21, 1 Peter 5:5.) It may take time, patience, and a heart open to God to change, but we have never seen God forsake such a couple who continually depend upon Him. After all, there is no one more invested in seeing your marriage succeed than God Himself!

Sexual Unity

Last, but certainly not least, is a couple's ability to find sexual unity between them. Regrettably, many Christians fail to understand, let alone openly discuss, this important area of a couple's relationship.

Now you are probably saying, "Wow! How can a couple anticipating marriage know these things without trying all of it out before marriage?" We whole-heartedly believe that couples can gain reasonable and sufficient sexual knowledge of one another without engaging in the slightest of premarital sexual relations (which we believe the Scriptures state to be a sinful activity). With proper sexual education and development along with reasonable, mature discussion of sexuality with any prospective partner, a couple can not only be better prepared to be a husband and wife, but can also be able to assess what type of sexual relationship to expect.

In Conclusion:

You say, "But hold on! You haven't even mentioned love. Isn't being 'in love' important?" Of course it is! (That topic and other important aspects like parental involvement and blessing will have to wait for another time). However, it is first important to lay a good foundation for choosing wisely the person with whom one might 'fall' in love. To do this, as many areas as possible concerning marital life should be thoroughly examined before one embarks into a relationship with a potential spouse.

- Dr. Steve and Rita Williams
Redeemer, Manukau



Steve & Rita have together written the book 'Intimate Odyssey - A journey in discovering your marriage partner' from which this excerpt is based on.

Turning

Sex from a Battleground to a Sanctuary

Read practical ways you can maintain (or restore) the sanctity of marital intimacy and move past impurity, manipulation, hopelessness or shame.

"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and the two will become one flesh. This is a profound mystery – but I am talking about Christ and the church." – Ephesians 5:31-32

After God selected the Jews as His chosen people, delivered them from slavery and gave them His law, He asked them to build a sanctuary where He would live (Exodus 25:8). This traveling tabernacle would be a holy place where God's people could find solace, fellowship and forgiveness. It was an object lesson pointing them to God as their true sanctuary.

But long before a physical sanctuary existed, there was another spiritual sanctuary that God instituted. It was between two people – a man and a woman (Genesis 2:22-25). This covenant was sealed by one, life-giving act – the two becoming one flesh. In this intimate union, one man and one woman enter a covenant relationship where they give their bodies (and hearts) to each other and each other alone. In fact, sexual love in marriage is meant to be a refuge where unity is celebrated and shame scorned – a true sanctuary.

From a Sanctuary to a Battleground

Fast forward to the 20th century. Television and other media advertise the world's false expectations day and night: Extend your pleasure! Enhance your sexuality and/or your body! Perform better, more often and longer. Sometimes, these messages even make their way into the hearts of Christians. *Why should the world have it "better" than me?*

Unfortunately for many of us, this thinking has twisted one of God's greatest gifts to married couples – sexual intimacy – into a bearer of pain. And since sexuality puts us completely naked and without defense before another human being, heartache in that intimate realm can be intense.

For many years, sexual intimacy was a place where Robin and I wrestled with our deepest insecurities. My long-time battles with pornography translated into pressure, manipulation and insistence on more and better sex. "Mark it on your calendar; I need sex every three days!" I told her in a heated moment. But, if Robin responded only out of duty, I felt emotionally robbed.

Likewise, Robin carried deep sexual insecurity and feelings of shame from when she was abused as a child. When I struggled with impurity, she alternated between using sex in an attempt to keep me pure and pulling back completely. She learned to

respond to the physical act of sex, while holding her heart safely at a distance. But, the truth is that Robin and I weren't seeking to hurt each other at all. The real attack was coming directly from Satan, as he sought to steal the sanctuary of our marital intimacy through:

Impurity. What she doesn't know about won't hurt her; I need this thrill to endure the ups and downs of life. If he doesn't meet my emotional needs, I'll get them met elsewhere.

Manipulation. If you don't give what I need, I'll withdraw and show you how much it hurts to be denied.

Hopelessness. I just need to make do, because he/she will never change. He'll never see beyond my body to my heart. She'll never understand my physical desires.

Shame. No one else at church struggles the way we do. They would never understand.

Bringing Back the Sanctuary

"I would hurry to my place of shelter, far from the tempest and storm." – Psalm 55:8

While Satan sought to discourage our hearts by tempting us to think that these storms were so scary that we could never change, God was holding out a place of shelter. That shelter is simply called "us". We needed to learn to make sexual intimacy less about "me" and more about "we".

As we've committed ourselves to growing in intimacy, sex has become a place of shelter, offering a confidence and security to help overcome a multitude of sins and struggles. To do this, we've needed to learn to replace:

- Shame with a clear conscience (Hebrews 10:22)
- Manipulation with cooperation (Matthew 18:19)
- Pressure with mutual desire (Song of Solomon 2:16)
- Impurity with complete openness (Psalm 56:13)

In fact, many of our battles disappeared when I accepted that satisfaction would only come when I surrendered my desires to God. As a result, sex became about our connection, rather than about my own personal satisfaction. As Robin saw my heart change, she began working on her own intimacy issues, giving me back her heart and her body in ways that move me deeply.

Now we're beginning to understand what it means to have a bedroom that is a true sanctuary.

- David Weidner

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Singleness

Curse or Blessing?

Single women, how do you view your singleness? As for me, my opinion has changed over the years. For many years, I was definitely in the “curse” camp, but now (at 53) I am more in the “blessing” group. What changed?

One particular watershed moment dramatically affected my thinking. Still viewing singleness as a curse, as I approached 40 I became more and more depressed over the fact that I would never have a family of my own. It was a time of mourning the death of a lifelong dream. The following illustration, shared by a pastor, transformed my thinking and eventually my feelings.

Life is like planning a trip to England. You eagerly anticipate the big event, planning each detail, shopping for all the right clothes, packing, etc. You barely sleep the night before you leave, so great is your excitement. When your plane finally lands, your heart drops. You are not in London, but Paris. What went wrong? The immediate response is shock, “This cannot be happening!” Then anger, “Why is this happening to me?” Now, Paris is not a bad place, but it is not London - where you wanted to be. You have a choice - you can be miserable in Paris, pining away for London, or enjoy Paris. After all, many people would actually like to be in Paris.

Singleness is my Paris. It is not an unpleasant place; it is not Sudan (and I have had Sudan-moments). In fact, there are many advantages to being single. I do not have to worry about cooking supper for anyone and do not have to cut up anybody’s meat. I sleep uninterrupted every night and take holidays whenever and wherever I choose. The list goes on and on. Singleness provides many freedoms.

God has a reason for placing me in “Paris.” It is there where I have to depend on the Guide; I am not in control. My relationship with my heavenly Father is so much richer and deeper. I have opportunities to pour into other people because I do not have the responsibilities of an immediate family. I have become a grandmother to the children of my young-mom friends, spoiling them rotten. For me, the key to enjoying singleness is in the verse:

“Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 5:18). I could choose to dwell on the negatives, but instead I count my blessings, knowing this is God’s will for me. “In Christ Jesus” refers to my relationship with Him. He is my Husband, the one who chose me before the creation of the world (Ephesians 1:4) and loves me with an everlasting love (Romans 8:38-39). He is in control of everything that concerns me, to the point of knowing the number of hairs on my head (Matthew 10:30). Most importantly, He orchestrates all things to work together for good (Romans 8:28). What is “good”? We find the answer in the very next verse (Romans 8:29)—it is becoming conformed to His likeness. It does not get any better than that!

I would encourage you who are single not to waste your singleness. God has placed you right where you are for a reason. Pray for guidance on how best to serve others. Personally, I have been blessed beyond measure as He has placed me in various ministry opportunities, developing lifelong friendships, which I would not trade for anything. I am not saying you have to give up on the dream of marriage, but it should not be your goal in life. Yes, pray for a mate. Make yourself available. Prepare yourself to be a good wife or husband. But, in all of this trust God with His plan.

- Denise Hamilton

Briarwood Presbyterian Church, Birmingham, Alabama, USA



Denise with her ‘adopted’ grandchildren

Being single is better... for the simple reason that I wouldn't want to change no diapers. Of course, if I did get married, I'd figure something out. I'd just phone my mother and have her come over for some coffee and diaper changing. - Kirsten, age 10

A Red Light

When Disability Strikes

It had been a beautiful autumn day on the North Shore of Sydney, and my husband and I were driving my daughter and her new husband back to their hotel. In the middle of a lively conversation, Mark drove through a red light. He didn't notice, although his quivering passengers did! I calmly mentioned what had happened, and then I quietly told him each time we were approaching a traffic light. After the tenth time of saying, "Mark, there is a light up ahead", my son-in-law Brian leaned forward and said, "Mark, if that was Angela and me in the front we would be having a blazing row by now." Mark smiled and replied, "Oh, Brian, I was beaten into submission years ago."

When they hear this story, many people think I did not behave as a 'submissive' Christian wife. The way Mark jokingly used the word 'submission' is close to what many people think the word means: to have someone else's will forced on you. Yet even those closest to us may not understand when a wife is truly being a helpmate.

A year earlier, Mark – a tall, strong grazer and army reserve officer – had been diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis (M.S.). M.S. can compromise cognitive functions, and the conversation going on around Mark was too distracting when he needed to concentrate on the job at hand. Mark actually appreciated me quickly assessing the situation and helping him to pay attention, and that is why he didn't make a big deal about it.

Dry Seasons

In 1983, Mark resigned from the Regular Army and we bought a small cattle property 6 hours west of Brisbane. At this time, our oldest daughter Angela was at boarding school, Katie was 3 and our youngest, Becky, was 2 months old.

If pressed, Mark and I would have said we were Christians. We lived what we considered to be moral lives. We never went to church, but we both had been baptized as children and we lived in a 'Christian' country.

However, we knew nothing about country life or cattle husbandry. That year southern Queensland was in the grips of a severe drought and there were many reports of farmer suicides. Yet our neighbours were unstinting in their help and advice. Then one Sunday afternoon we were invited to the neighbours' home for a church meeting. We didn't especially want to go, but because they had been so generous with their time we felt obliged. It was at one of these meetings that we learned that Christianity was about knowing Jesus Christ personally as

our Saviour. Here, despite the desperately hard financial times, we saw people encouraging one another to cope in the Lord and – despite their own very real problems – showing concern for us. We sat up, took stock and shortly after that meeting we put our trust in the Lord Jesus.

A Difficult Passage

Our new Christian brothers and sisters encouraged us to read our Bibles. I can still remember coming across some of Paul's instructions about the behaviour of women and thinking, "Where is he coming from?" Mark and I realised that if the Bible was only a man-made book, then there was no reason for us to agree with it. But if the Bible was truly the Word of God then to reject those 'difficult' passages was to reject God's authority.

Romans 12:1-2 makes it clear that as new creatures in Christ we have to be transformed in our worldview. I went to high school and university in the heady 60's when feminism, free love and hatred of authority were on the rise. I realized that if I was going to follow the Lord, rather than having a knee-jerk reaction to the words "Wives, submit to your husbands" (Ephesians 5:22), I needed to understand this in the greater context of Paul's teaching of how marriage should reflect the beautiful relationship of Christ and his bride. I also needed the even bigger context of the whole of the Scriptures and to understand God's intent in creation and marriage.

Instead of trying to make limits for submission, I needed to ask, "What am I submitting to?" The pivotal verse for me was Ephesians 4:22-24: "*You were taught with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds, and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness*". Submission wasn't a list of dos and don'ts – it was a heart surrendering its own desires to the Lord Jesus Christ and to his will for my marriage. As a wife it was calling me to a role of a helpmate and also to one of respect for the position of responsibility and headship that the Lord has laid on my husband.

A New Context

Books about Christian marriages, often assume certain things. One of these is that husband and wife will both be physically able to carry out their traditional roles, as well as their biblical ones.

Since 2003, Mark has been unable to stand or walk. We

have sold our cattle property and now live closer to town and hospitals. All transfers are done by electric hoist. He has limited movement on the left side of his body. So, essentially, feeding and hygiene must be done for him. He can no longer read a book or operate a computer. He gets tired easily and has trouble projecting his voice. Our roles have not been reversed but because of his increased dependency on me for his care how we honour God's design in our marriage has changed dramatically.

A few years ago Mark was being interviewed by a Blue Care Nurse, Brett. Brett asked Mark what his life values were. Mark replied:

"Before I got sick I had 5 values to guide me:

1. To be a faithful follower of Christ
2. To be a good husband to Mary and father to my 3 girls
3. To be a good provider for my family
4. To be a good officer in the Army Reserve
5. To be a hard working farmer/grazier

Since getting M.S. the last four have been severely affected to one degree or another. But my walk with the Lord Jesus Christ is what sustains me daily and the only permanent, unchanging value."

To show honour and respect to my husband in such changed circumstances I have to remember what was important to him. He had wanted to be seen as an officer and gentleman with poise and confidence, so I try to preserve his dignity. When he wants to enter into a conversation I help to get people's attention. At meals, I include a complete place setting even though I will be cutting up his food and probably feeding him. If it is a special occasion I will use a nice wine glass and not a practical plastic mug.

Mark now leaves all the day to day decisions to me, but I am careful to keep him informed, and when tradesmen or other visitors arrive, I take them straight into Mark's bedroom to be introduced.

We have a 'revolving door' in our home, and the many visitors are wonderful for Mark, especially a rare male visitor who visits every Thursday – a friend from our days out at Jackson. I try to anticipate Mark's ups and downs and avoid embarrassing him in front of company. If he needs to blow his nose I excuse ourselves and turn him around or take him to another room. We keep his catheter bag discreetly covered to maintain his dignity. At meals, I ask Mark whether he wants me to tuck a bib or tea towel into his collar.

I am not perfect and sometimes I get impatient and resent interruptions. That is when I have to remind myself that as I care for my husband, I am serving the Lord.

Spiritual life

Although it may appear so, I have not become the spiritual leader in our marriage – rather, Mark has delegated much of this role to me.

When Mark studied for the ministry, he disciplined himself in reading through the Bible every year. That fell away for a few years until he said he missed being able to do that. Now we follow the reading plan in Don Carson's *For the Love of God*. I read four chapters of the Bible out loud to Mark each morning and we start and end each day with a prayer from *The Valley of Vision* by Arthur Bennett.

Whenever Christian friends visit we share scripture, and the minister from the local Baptist church brings the Lord's Table monthly. During the day we read from other books – right now we are reading a new biography of John Stott.

How can you support Christian women in similar situations?

If you know Christian women in similar situations:

- Please don't be quick to judge how a wife relates to her husband until you know the whole story.
- Offer to sit with the husband so that she can go to church occasionally.
- Visit regularly and bring a scripture or a lesson from the Lord to share in sweet fellowship.
- Pray that they will know God's sustaining grace daily.

- Mary Jennings
Queensland, Australia



Celebrating Marriages - Golden



Dave & Hawea Carter with their children, married 52 years. (Gisborne)



Andrew & Betty Winning - married 5th March 1949 in Glasgow. Now married for 62 years! (Gisborne)



John & Eleanor Hammerich (Christchurch)



George & Mary McKenzie, married 28th November 1950 at St Stephen's Presbyterian, Dunedin. Married for just over 60 years. (Covenant)



Ian & Lynley Clarke celebrated their golden wedding anniversary (50 years) in February 2011. (Christchurch)



Ross & Lorraine Thompson - married 10th February 1961 - 50 years. (Waihola)



Don & Fernah Agnew married 49 years. (Dunedin)



David & Jessie Fraser married 51 years. (Dunedin)



John & Elaine Linkhorn - married 25th February 1961 at St Aidans Anglican Church, Remuera. Married for 50 years. (Covenant)



Gibson & Nola Kenning - married 30th March 1946 at Nelson Baptist Church. Married now for 65 years! (Covenant)



Ernie & Lil Hight - married 7th February 1953 at St Andrew's Havelock Street, Ashburton. Now married for 58 years. (Ashburton)



Roland & Carola Green - married 15th January 1966 at St Martin's Church, Canterbury, UK. Now married for 45 years. (Ashburton)



George and Florence Wallace - married 14th November 1953. Married 57 years. (East Gore)



Murray & Janis Smith - married 26th September 1964 at Church Street Chapel, Timaru. Married 46 years. (Ashburton)



Roland & Margaret Johnson - married 13th April 1963 at St Andrew's Havelock St, Ashburton. Married 48 years. (Fairlie)

Round Two...



It is difficult to generalise about remarriage because there are so many varieties: remarriage after divorce versus after bereavement; remarriage with children versus without; children still at home versus children living independently; young children versus teenagers. This article is written from our particular experience. We will attempt to set the context of that experience, and please take that into consideration when thinking about the application of our experience to other situations.

Jan had been bereaved for eight years when we married; Noel for three. Thus there was no divorced partner with a legitimate interest in the children. Indeed the wider families of the deceased partners have been very good in welcoming the new family arrangement.

Jan had five children, one of whom was killed in the accident which killed Jan's husband, leaving two girls and two boys. Noel had three children, a girl and two boys. In each case the girls were the older. Jan's oldest has never lived with us. Her second oldest remained for a time in Melbourne to complete her education, but subsequently joined us. Thus we brought together five, later six children, aged between 9 and 19.

Jan and her family moved to Sydney into Noel's original house, which we extended. Noel continued his university teaching, plus the work of preaching for and helping a small congregation, which he had been asked to undertake shortly before our marriage. Shortly after we married, a threat arose to Christian schooling in New South Wales and Noel ended up as the Christian School voice on a state government committee examining the whole school system and rewriting the education act. Jan had reason to ask herself why she had left single parenting four children to take on single parenting seven children. We simply attempted too much.

We had very similar beliefs and values; very similar theoretical approaches to child raising, church and many other things. We had had happy and blessed first marriages. We saw ourselves as much more experienced than when we first married. Our children raised no great concerns at the prospect. What could go wrong in a second marriage? How naive we were!

In a normal first marriage two personalities and two approaches to the practicalities of life come together. Hopefully there is time to adjust those to a common style before children arrive or while they are small. Out of that develops a family style. These family styles are not necessarily good or bad, though all could be improved. The crucial thing is that they differ from family to family, even when the beliefs and values are supposedly the same. For children, loss of a parent, means needing to place greater reliance for security and love on the remaining parent and the home style.

Remarriage means bringing together two styles that differ and the attempt to negotiate the differences while the children look on and exert strong pressure for the style in which they feel secure. That is then complicated by fears in the children that the parent, who is so important for their security, may be diverted from them to the step-parent or step-siblings. In this confused jumble sin very easily manifests itself in parents and children. None of us are at our best under pressure and this is a very pressured situation. A child living away from home may be grieved but is not exposed to the daily pressure. A married child, hopefully, has the security of the love of a partner. Children in the home experience greater pressures and put greater pressure on parents. In our case this was complicated by the various combinations of children, with the children closest in age being very different in gifts and temperament.

Various well-meaning Christians tried to help. Some did, and some made the problems greater simply because they had no comprehension of the dynamics that were going on and felt compassion for a particular injured party. People with experience themselves with messy families came to different solutions because they tried to apply what had worked for them in a particular situation.

We understand why conflict over the children is rated as the main reason for the breakdown of second marriages. We can honestly say that without the conviction from God's Word that marriage is permanent our marriage might not have lasted. Our task of trying to bring people together is still with us. We are sure that there are lessons to be learned out of our mistakes. The problem is trying to avoid compounding other people's difficulties by assuming our unique case has universal relevance. If you, in a second

marriage, have not experienced our problems thank God, and do not assume we are the norm. Nevertheless we do know of situations with similar dynamics and problems.

It is probably best not to move into the home of one of the original families. As far as possible, place the children on an equal footing.

It is good not to think you can carry on your busy life as usual after remarriage or even to think you can resume the things you gave up as a single parent. Even as we give this advice we wonder how we could have followed it, given the needs of the kingdom of God. There are some very hard choices demanded.

Realize that your step-children, however positive they may have seemed before marriage, may become quite negative to you in the actual situation. Forget how unappreciated you may feel; can you commit yourself to being loving towards them and acting for their good when they are negative to you and your children? Can you continue to love your spouse when your children tell you, and you may also feel that your spouse is biased against your children? These are situations which sorely test our Christian love and Christian wisdom.

If you are an outsider trying to “help”, do not accept just one side of the story or judge the situation from the dynamics of a first marriage. Children are a crucial part of the situation and they may be reluctant or unable to say what they feel and experience. People can appear exemplary outside the home, whilst very different under the pressure within. There is often complexity to problems encountered, requiring more than simple or “one-hit” solutions. It is probably more helpful to encourage people to be loving and kind to each other, rather than as an outsider trying to untie the hundred knots which the family has created.

If you are caught in such a situation, or any other of the complex situations of marriage and family, remember: *Through many dangers, toils and snares I have already come; His grace has brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.*

There are many helpful books on marriage; few on remarriage. We have found useful from a Christian approach Helen Hunter, *Remarriage in Midlife*, (Grand Rapids, Baker, 1991) and, not Christian in focus but practical, Margaret Newman, *Stepfamily Realities*, (Sydney, Doubleday, 1992).

- Noel and Jan Weeks
Sydney, Australia

Booklist

Womanhood (Single & Married)

Mary Kassian	Girls Gone Wise in a World Gone Wild
Carolyn McCulley	Radical Womanhood
Nancy Leigh de Moss	Voices of the True Woman Movement
Nancy Leigh de Moss	Lies Women Believe & the Truth that sets them Free Lies Young Women Believe
Lydia Brownback	Fine China is for Single Women Too Preparation for Marriage
Joshua Harris	Boy Meets Girl
Douglas Wilson	Her Hand in Marriage Resources for Changing Lives Booklets
David Powlison & John Yenchko	Pre-Engagement
William Smith Paul Tripp	Should we Get Married? Marriage

Marriage

Bryan Chappell	Each for the Other
Dr Emerson Eggerichs	Love and Respect
Garry Ricucci	Love That Lasts
Dan Allender & Tremper Longman	Intimate Allies
David Harvey	When Sinners Say I Do
Robert Lewis & William Hendricks	Rocking the Roles
Martha Peace & John Crotts	Tying the Knot Tighter
Paul Tripp	What did You Expect?

Sexual Relationship

Linda Dillow & Lorraine Pintus	Intimate Issues
Dr Juli Slattery	No More Headaches
John Piper/ Justin Taylor	Sex & the Supremacy of God

Women's Role in Marriage

Linda Dillow	What's it like to be Married to Me? Creative Counterpart
Elyse Fitzpatrick	Helper by Design
Carolyn Mahaney	Feminine Appeal
Martha Peace	The Excellent Wife
Nancy Wilson	The Fruit of Her Hands

Thinking About Divorce?

Many married couples, at some point in their relationship, contemplate the idea of walking away rather than trying to stay and sort things out. Sadly today, divorce does not only happen to those with no Christian commitment. Rather, divorce has become widespread within the Christian community. We asked Peter Reynolds, who teaches Pastoral Counseling at Grace Theological College, and who, along with his wife Margaret, is involved in marriage counseling, to share some of his wisdom.



Marriage is a covenant, grounded on a pledge or promise to live with, serve and love until death separates. No other relationship in human experience is based on such a promise. This is what binds the couple together in times of conflict and lost love, in times of hardship and grief.

Couples do not start out their marriage with the expectation that it will die. However, since the Fall it has not been easy for two sinful people to remain together in a marriage. Biblically, the marriage bond can be broken by sexual infidelity and by abandonment (Matt. 19; 1 Cor. 7). Both these actions sever the marriage covenant, since both strike at the very heart of the commitment to be life-long, sexually exclusive and growing in love and intimacy. Are there other actions that break or deny the marriage covenant, like spousal abuse for instance? Yes. Are these grounds for a biblical divorce? Sometimes they are, but not necessarily. The church's pastoral leadership should judge each situation on a case-by-case basis, seeking at all times to move the couple away from the divorce option towards repentance and reconciliation.

But what about those cases where love seems to have died, where there is no longer an interest in the other and a tired friendship has replaced what began as an exciting relationship full of promise? This is a marriage that needs

help. Without help this couple's relationship will continue to nose-dive until it crashes in the divorce courts.

The slow dying of a marriage relationship comes from seeds sown at the very beginning of the marriage. We all begin marriage with an expectation of getting our needs met. This is the cry of our fallen hearts. The unspoken vow the bride and groom say to each other is something like this; "I am giving you the opportunity to spend the rest of your life meeting my needs". A successful or godly marriage occurs where the husband and wife have recognised this unspoken vow, repented of it, sought their spouse's forgiveness and have changed through gospel power to become a spouse committed to meeting the needs of the other. This is a life-long process. And your marriage will experience rough patches, as the Lord uses the relationship to sanctify you, preparing you to be his bride in heaven.

But don't both spouses need be willing to change if the marriage is to survive and grow? No, not necessarily. Jesus does not say to us, "I am willing to love and serve you only if you are willing to love and serve me in return". Rather, while we were still unrepentant sinners Christ died for us! Jesus Christ calls us to love our spouse in the same way that he loves us.

But you say that's hard, that's unreasonable and it isn't fair! You may well be right. But, as you open your heart to the love Christ lavishes undeservingly upon you and receive that love with repentant faith and thankfulness, then your heart is flooded Christ's love. You can now lavish that love upon your spouse who has not deserved or earned it. Now, while nothing has changed in the marriage, your heart will have changed. Nothing can be the same again for you or for your marriage.

Here are some suggestions on how this renewed heart might be displayed in the marriage. How do you farewell your spouse in the morning and greet your spouse in the evening? Do you do this a flatmate or as lover? How do you ask for something at the meal table? Do you ask with respect, tenderness and genuine gratitude? At breakfast time do you ask your

"The slow dying of a marriage relationship comes from seeds sown at the very beginning of the marriage."

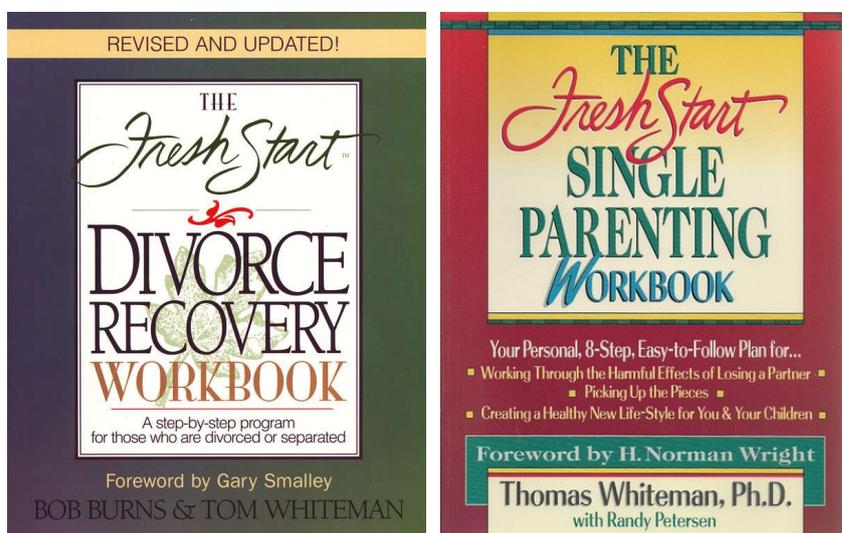
spouse about their expectations for their day? Is there anything coming up that they are excited or anxious about? Promise to pray for them. At the end of the day, ask them about these specific items and encourage them to talk about them. At least once every day speak a word of affection and appreciation to your spouse. At least once every day touch or kiss your spouse. And how do you say goodnight to your spouse, as a lover or as a flatmate?

These ways, and others like them, will communicate to your spouse your commitment to love and cherish them; to build intimacy and closeness in a marriage in danger of being overtaken by a graceless forbearance. Your spouse may not change, but you will have changed. You are on your way to richly loving your spouse as God loves you in Christ. And you will be blessed as you love.

If you find yourself thinking about divorce as your only way out of a loveless or failing marriage then talk to others. Find trustworthy, mature Christians you can talk to about your marriage. If you keep these thoughts about divorce private they will fester and grow. Bring them out into the light of disclosure with people who can help you to a better place.

Marriage is a difficult relationship to maintain and grow. We need each other's help and support in this venture. When marriages fail the effects for many are deep and life-long. Let us be willing to seek help for this most important of relationships, since most divorces are unnecessary.

- Peter Reynolds
Covenant, Manurewa



The Fresh Start Divorce Recovery Workbook by Bob Burns & Tom Whiteman

The Fresh Start Single Parenting Workbook by Thomas Whiteman

For anyone going through a separation or divorce, these two companion books are an excellent resource that bring a biblical perspective to the topic and provide very practical suggestions on how to navigate your way through what is usually a very difficult process.

The Divorce Recovery Workbook is a step-by-step programme for those who are separated or divorced and discusses the typical stages of divorce on a physical, emotional and spiritual level. The workbook has questions that help the reader assess what stage they are at in the process. It has helpful chapters covering the biblical perspective on marriage and divorce as well as the separation/reconciliation struggle.

The Single Parenting Workbook addresses the day-to-day struggles of being a single parent. It covers working

Book Reviews

through the harmful effects of losing a partner, picking up the pieces, and creating a new lifestyle for you and your children.

I spoke with Denise Harris, from Covenant Presbyterian Church, who found these books an invaluable resource when they were given to her in the early stages of separation from her husband:

"These books encouraged me to recognise that the painful breakdown of a marriage is followed by a grieving process that takes time and moves through many stages. The practical questions in each chapter helped me work through the many issues involved including seeking forgiveness for any sin on my part that may have contributed to the marriage breakdown. As a solo parent with a one-year-old child, I found the single parent workbook helped me to think through how I could encourage my son to have a healthy relationship with his father. I learnt the importance of not being critical and negative about his father and that a child has the right to love his father."

These books would be a good resource to have available in church libraries and for pastors and elders as they walk alongside those experiencing the painful process of marriage breakdown.

- Reviewed by Anne Camp
Covenant, Manurewa

Summer Beach Project



I recently arrived home after spending an entire month in Coolum, the largest beach side resort on the Sunshine Coast. However, this wasn't a simple holiday for me and the nine other New Zealanders I traveled with. We attended, along with about thirty Australians, a month long discipleship camp run by Uni-Impact Australia.

Summer Beach Project was set up with a vision to build Christ-centered labourers at University for the Kingdom and glory of God. It does this by *engaging* students with the gospel and with the vision of living the Great Commandment and Great Commission, *establishing* students in their understanding of the faith and in the basics of the Christian life and by *equipping* students to follow Christ in all aspects of their lives and to disciple and lead others.

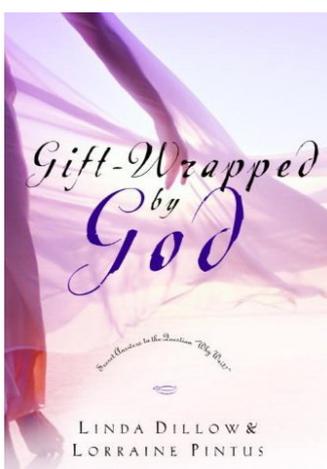
A typical weekday at beach project would involve waking up and having a quiet time before room prayer began at 8:40. The verses we studied were prearranged so that everyone was studying the same passages and could discuss what they were learning. From 9:00 we had two and a half hours of interactive sessions on bible study or great commission training. We also had worship time and often someone would share his or her testimony. For me it was really encouraging to hear how God had worked in so many peoples lives and how faithful he is during times of suffering. After lunch, we had free afternoons. Often we hit the beach and played sport or swam or took a trip to the internet cafes to relish the air conditioning and contact those back home. Each week we also had Bible verses to memorize, chapters from Hebrews to study with our room groups. We also worked our way through John Piper's books 'Filling up the afflictions of Christ' and 'In our joy.' This

work took up a chunk of the afternoons. The evening schedule varied. Sometimes we would have theme talks on being consumed by and for Christ. Sometimes we had vision nights where speakers would come and tell us about what God was doing through them. We had an American missionary, Betsy, come from Thailand for a week with three Thai students and tell us about the work being done to spread the gospel in the universities in Thailand. Another week, two people shared about the dire situation in Burma and how they have been working in refugee camps on Burma's borders. Other nights were social nights, which included a beach volleyball tournament and a barn dance. These were a lot of fun!

So what did I personally get out of beach project? I loved the way we had a few recurring themes woven throughout our time. The enormity of what Christ has done for us was one such theme. In the Old Testament, only certain people could go into God's temple at certain times. Now because of what Christ has done it is possible for God to live within us and for us to fellowship directly with him on a personal level (Hebrews 10:19-22).

In conclusion, I would love to encourage all university students to strongly consider going to Summer Beach Project. Your faith will be strengthened by both the fellowship of spending time with many other Christian university students and by learning how to go deeper into the Word. I can't stress enough how much I learnt and benefited spiritually from going.

- Stephanie Boyes
Grace, Dunedin



Gift Wrapped by God by Linda Dillow & Lorraine Pintus

'Gift wrapped by God' is a beautiful book about the reasons behind why God asks us to remain pure, both sexually and emotionally, until marriage. This had a huge impact on me during the earlier stages of my walk with the Lord and continues to do so

today. The journey into womanhood is not an easy one when being faced - or bombarded - with the different pressures and temptations of our "live for today" culture. But reading this book was like shining a light into the dark and unknown places that were approaching.

The authors provided really helpful tips and strategies for being PROACTIVE rather than REACTIVE when it comes to sexual purity, and uses other women's real life stories and struggles to put these into context. It also made me very aware

of the differences between what the Lord's voice sounds like, and what the world's sounds like - especially since the world's can seem a lot louder. I was moved to tears throughout the book after seeing a glimpse of what I look like in the Lord's eyes, and how he longs for spiritual intimacy with us. We are truly precious in his sight and are all made as beautiful gifts that can one day be given as a gesture of love and honour, if we remain faithful to what the Lord has asked of us. I have confidence looking to the future, knowing that the journey ahead is not promised to be an easy one, but knowing instead that the Lord will remain steadfast.

This is a truly special book for girls and woman at any stage in their lives to read and have a wonderful reminder of the love of our God.

- Reviewed by Rebecca Diack
Wyndham / Dunedin

P.S. Rebecca has recently become engaged to John McGimpsey (Wyndham/Waihola) and they look forward to marriage in January 2012. - Ed.

Book Review

Married to a Pastor

Not long before Helen Macpherson left Auckland with her husband Andrew to help start up a new church plant in Palmerston North, Michelle Willis sat down with her and asked her some questions.

How long have you been married to Andrew?

We were married on the 10th October 1980. That's 30 years with a few very unexpected changes!

What do you think is the best element of your marriage?

This may sound a little bit of a contradiction, but it is that we are very different, we have very different personalities. Andrew is (he won't like me saying this!) steady and a deep thinker. He doesn't make decisions lightly. On the other hand, I am very spontaneous and like action. Some might think that this will make a marriage difficult, and it does... sometimes, but mostly we complement each other. The best part is that he encourages me and keeps me on the ground, while I keep him on his toes.

If someone had told you, when you married Andrew, that one day you would be a pastor's wife, what do you think your response would've been?

Probably I would've laughed. I don't think I thought Andrew and I could've ended up in church leadership. We weren't Christians when we got married, so it wasn't on our radar. I also would've thought I wasn't good enough, cos I thought pastor's wives were special women. I still think I am not good enough, but the Lord is good and in His amazing grace has used me for the gospel and as a pastor's wife.

What advice would you give a new pastor's wife?

Don't do it! *(Helen laughs)* That is a great question. I would encourage her to understand that she has been given a great opportunity to touch the lives of many with the gospel.

You have looked after many children that are not your own over the years. How do you balance your own family life when you have lots of pastoral care duties?

I don't even think of trying to get a balance, though of course there are priorities like my hubby. When you have passion to share the gospel you just get on and do it. Yes, I have times where I have gotten tired and grumpy as the people at Trinity will tell you. But I strongly believe that Jesus tells us that life is not about 'me'. And we are called to love others, not just in word but in deed. If we try to balance our lives, it means we will hold back on loving.

Greatest blessing and perks of being pastor's wife?

One of the greatest blessings has been meeting so many different and interesting people. I have made many dear friends along the way. But the biggest perk is getting so many opportunities to share the gospel with people. We've cried together and sung together. Another perk is I get to hear the gospel over and over as Andrew applies it to different life situations.

What is the greatest burden of being a pastor's wife?

Sometimes it's not being able to whizz off for the weekend! But more seriously, watching your husband take the hits on negative issues. Also knowing sometimes he has to deal with stuff alone, which he may not be able to share with me.

What was your first thought on hearing that Andrew was being called by Central Presbytery to Palmerston North?

My first thoughts were 'Andrew is really crazy! Too crazy for me!' Seriously though, I thought, if this happens do I have the strength to help start another church? And I felt the fear of having to start a new life in a different city and of leaving my home of 16 years, my friends and of course my family - Simon, Melissa and wee granddaughter Abby.

How do you feel now as you are moving there soon?

After our send-off service, it really struck me what a big move we are making. We came home and watched a DVD the youth made for us and we blubbered and cried. To be honest, I have to block out some of my feelings about the reality of moving. However, I am choosing to see it as a new adventure. A new challenge and a new opportunity for personal and spiritual growth.

You have influenced many people for Christ at Trinity Church. Have you got a favourite story of someone who has come to know Christ?

There are so many stories but two are dear to my heart. They are Clara Allan and Zelita Aiolupo. These beautiful young women came to Trinity as pre-teens, reached through our youth outreach. Over the years they have faced many difficult personal challenges. But, through Jesus' strength, they have persevered and shown maturity of faith that has inspired me. They have become very dear friends as have many other people at Trinity.

We are going to miss you at Trinity. How can we, and other women in the Grace Churches, support you (and Andrew)?

This is a difficult one, because we are physically separated. But please lots of prayers and visits. Trinity will always be our 'church' so we want to hear how you are doing. We'll miss you all.



In Brief

News & Prayer Points from around the Country

While not all our congregations feature in this edition, please still be faithful in praying for them in their work of the Kingdom as well as those listed below. We trust you are encouraged by what you read, gain new ideas for what would also work for you, and are helped to pray more effectively for each location.

Northern Presbytery

MANGERE

Providence Presbyterian Church

We had an encouraging children's outreach over the school holidays run by Bruce & Megan Levi and our young people. Pray that contacts made at the holiday programme will be built upon and that children will come to our weekly Friday meeting and also to Sunday School.

Give thanks for the two weddings we had in January – Nalini & Vicky Kumar and Dave & Jessie Martin. Pray for both these couples, who worship with our congregation.



Nalini & Vicky Kumar

On the 13th March, Providence Ladies commenced a monthly Bible study, held before the morning service. We will be studying the Gospel of John. Pray that this study will be an effective means of spiritual growth for all ages. Quite a few of our ladies are studying this year. Pray that they will be able to manage their time between study, work, family and church commitments.

Our play group has recommenced and already there have been a couple of new mums. Pray for Megan Levi as she coordinates this and for the ladies and their children who come along and pray more contacts will be made.



Providence Playgroup

TAKANINI

Trinity Presbyterian Church

Give thanks and pray for Janina Muriwai & Roimata Pao who do an amazing job of leading our growing Girls Group. Also give thanks to God for the many young girls who come regularly to church.

Give thanks for eight youth who recently became believers.

Pray for Gina Young as she leads the Mums and Bubs group.

Pray for Trinity as we have said goodbye to Pastor Andrew and Helen Macpherson (who are now planting a church in Palmerston North) and now search for a new Pastor.

MANUKAU

Redeemer Grace Presbyterian Church

Give thanks for our first visit to Summerset Retirement home with ten of our homework club children. There were four ladies present to help the children read and one of the most enthusiastic was a lady of 102! The manager and coordinator of the village were delighted with the success and think more residents will join – the children were delighted with the afternoon tea!

Do continue to pray for the team that coordinate the homework club – there are generally 40 children who regularly attend now with 90% also coming to kids church.

Continue to uphold Aria as she battles a skin allergy and

In Brief

pray that her stomach may settle down so normal feeds can be recommended.

Thank God for Katherine Young's time in Mexico and her safe return.



A Redeemer homework club kid at Summerset Retirement Village

Central Presbytery

ASHBURTON

Evangelical Presbyterian Church

We are rejoicing with Jan and Michelle Steenkamp on the birth of Lynn Mari on Feb 3rd, a wee sister for little Jan.

Tots and Tunes has begun back well.

We plan to start fortnightly ladies Bible Studies in March, using Barbara Barker and Denise Hamilton's "Faith Points". One lady said last night, "This is good – I got into it and found it hard to put down".

Pray for wisdom, strength and grace as we assist with earthquake repercussions, especially that there will be opportunities for the Gospel.

Southern Presbytery

WAIHOLA

Grace Presbyterian Church

We have a small group who enthusiastically meet weekly for prayer, fellowship and study. This year we have just finished a Lifeguard study book on Romans by Jack Kuhatschek, which we have found helpful and challenging. We are now commencing "Don't Make Me Count To Three", by Ginger Plowman, focused on children.

We have celebrated two weddings recently; Paul Duthie and Brenda Thompson, who together head-up the Youth Group Team and Brenda who co-leads Waihola *Learn to Ride* Club, and Tim Bullin and Judith Calder who help run our Youth Group and participate in the Worship Musical Team. Pray for these new couples. Also, Ross and Lorraine Thompson celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary.

We are looking forward to having two Missionary families speak in early April.



Tim & Judith Bullin

DUNEDIN

Grace Bible Church

A new year, a new start and many new things are happening at Grace Bible Church Dunedin. We have new babies, new people joining us to serve in Dunedin, the students are beginning to arrive back and our regular small groups are back into full swing after a quiet summer.

December saw us celebrating two Baby Showers in one weekend. This was a fun social time as well as a chance for young Mums to be, Mau and Becky to glean some shared wisdom. Mau & Brandon Vista have since welcomed adorable Shekinah Grace into this world. Meanwhile, Karen & Bill Boyes are excited to be joining the Grandparents club with the arrival of Jordan & Becky's wee Ella. We are also waiting with anticipation for the arrival of more babies to join the families of Melissa & Azriel Gray, Peju & Lanre Shittu and Megan & Simon van Gelderen in the coming months. Please remember these new mums and busy families in your prayers.

January is often a quieter month here in Dunedin as our people are either holidaying or involved in ministry outside of the city. This year was no different with people involved in many of the CYC camps and ten of our students went off to Summer Beach Project (see article pg. 16).

In Brief

We are very excited to start 2011 with the arrival of Pippa Kuchel and Irene Bayne as they join Dave & Kristy Richards (who arrived in October) and Josh & Kirsten Eyre in the student ministry, *Engage Otago*. It is great to have more workers heading out into this university mission field and they already have had many opportunities to serve and make contacts. Please pray for these contacts in the coming weeks and pray that they would be part of making Christ known on the Otago campus. Check out the 'Engage Otago' facebook page for more information.

Aside from this, many of our women continue to be involved in various forms of ministry across our church. Our women's Coffee Group for Mums continues, while others continue with involvement including Sunday School, hosting, serving drinks, music, or even meeting one on one with other women. Please do pray for us as we grow and relate together and as we seek to impact our community for Christ here in Dunedin.



Melissa Gray and Peju Shittu admiring newborn Shekinah with mother Mau.

Prayer Points

- Give thanks for the addition of new ministry workers to the Student Ministry.
- Give thanks for more babies and growth amongst our families.
- Pray for our young mums from other cultures as they adjust to parenthood in an unfamiliar context.
- Pray for Engage Otago, in particular for Irene, Kirsten and Pippa as they seek to make contacts for Christ amongst the young women of Otago University.

- Pray that the principles of Titus 2 would be alive and active amongst us as we relate to each other, that across cultural and age barriers we would be nurturing and encouraging one another in our walk with the Lord.

INVERCARGILL

Grace Presbyterian Church

As a church, Grace in Invercargill supports a ministry called *ARK Ministries International*. Based in the desolate northern Kenyan area of Turkana, ARK Ministries seeks to reach their own people in their own language and cultural context with the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ. Many of you will know Don and Dawn Wallace. They were fundamental in the establishment of this ministry. They serve as the key contacts for ARK Ministries here in New Zealand. The ministries leader is Gabriel Namus, from whom we receive regular reports and updates.

In the life of the church here in Invercargill, there are a number of exciting things happening in regards to women's ministry.

In our Thursday 'Ladies Studies' we are currently going through the book of Galatians. The number of groups and study facilitators has halved this year (1 in the morning and 1 in the evening). As we look at Galatians, we are learning about the freedom that comes from our in-Christ-ness.

Richard and Judith Snoek are expecting their second child. By the time this goes to print, he or she (they don't know the gender, how exciting!!!) may have already been born. Natalie will be a wonderful big sister.

Elvira Masters is pregnant for the first time and is about half way through her term. Please pray that Elvira and her husband, Greg, would be prepared to embark on the journey of parenthood.

Pray for Phyllis McIntosh as she is recovering from a broken hip. Phyllis broke her hip while playing tennis with her grandchildren.

Sandy Butler has set sail on a journey of home-educating their youngest daughter. Pray for discipline, enthusiasm and Christ-centered-ness.

The Helper is a publication of the Christian Education and Publications Committee (CE&P) of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, through its Women's Sub-Committee. Comments or inquiries are welcome and can be sent to:

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