



MINISTERIAL  
MARRIAGE  
AND FAMILY



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MARRIAGE AND FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS are the source of our highest joys and our deepest sorrows. Because these relationships are the most intimate in our life, they have a great impact upon those things which are most meaningful to us—our sense of self-esteem, success, fulfillment, and happiness. If things are not right in the marriage and the family, they will not be right anywhere else.

Pressures which impinge upon marriage and family relationships are greater today than ever before. The decline in moral values, the self-centeredness of society, the confusion in gender roles, the emphasis on materialism—these all militate against having a happy marriage and a stable family.





The growing societal pressures upon marriage and family in general are even more pronounced for the minister and his family. The unique dynamics of ministerial life multiply the effect of some of these negative influences.

## MINISTERIAL **S** STRESS

THE DEMANDS PLACED upon ministers, especially pastors, in these turbulent times can be debilitating, to say the least. As a result, statistics indicate that each month over 1500 pastors leave their churches, primarily because of their disillusionment with people and their concern for their marriage and family.

Surveys taken among ministers in recent years reveal troubling trends which have developed in ministerial marriages and families. In one study, over 80% of the pastors surveyed believed that pastoral ministry negatively affected their family. Of that same group, 33% said that being in ministry was an outright hazard to their family. In their interviews with several hundred ministerial couples, Emerge Ministries compiled the following statistics: 66% felt there was a problem with understanding between spouses, 58% said there was an emotional problem with either a child or a spouse, 54% had sexual problems in their relationship, and 49% admitted that they argued on a regular basis.

The normal flash points of disagreement between husbands and wives and between parents and children are aggravated by the pressures of being in ministry. One of the major reasons for the additional stress connected with ministry is perception of always being on display, what is known as the “fish bowl” or “glass house” syndrome. The truth is that being on display or serving as a model cannot be avoided in the ministry. It goes with the territory.



## A SIGNIFICANT MODEL

While the idea of “living in a glass house” may not be the desire of a ministerial family, it is an inevitable and necessary function of ministry. When one enters the ministry, he or she is inviting behavioral inspection. Despite significant shifts in the way members of the clergy are viewed, there is still a strong feeling that the minister and his family members should be held to a higher standard of conduct than so-called “ordinary” people. Such a perception has both positive and negative implications. It is negative in the sense of producing unwanted stress, but it is positive in that it provides the possibility for the giving of instruction and inspiration in family living.

It has been said that there are very few heroes these days. That same observation also could be made about models. Where are those persons who can be looked to for exemplary behavior? Where are those bold souls who will join with the Apostle Paul and challenge those around them, “Follow me as I follow Christ”? With the dearth of positive personal examples in society in general and the plethora of negative examples presented in the media, it is more important than ever that followers of Christ be the salt and light they are admonished to be. This is particularly true for those who are called to the ministry.

The obligation of ministers and their family members to serve as models in marriage and family life cannot be set aside or wished away. The responsibility to be a good example is clearly stated in Scripture (John 13:15, 1 Tim. 4:12). The problem is there are no perfect models. Conscientious ministers and family members have to be careful they do not let their desire to be a light be thwarted or destroyed by an overwhelming sense of imperfection. It is important to remember that the power of example does not come from perfection, but from passion and persistence.



## FAMILY LIFE RESOURCES

The Center for Ministerial Care (CMC) understands the stress and strains of ministerial life and the dilemma faced by not having a perfect marriage or family. That is why a number of resources have been developed to enrich and enhance clergy marriage and family life. The following information gives details about the several programs offered through CMC that will make “living in a glass house” a little less stressful.

### *The Intimate Life Concept*

The Center for Ministerial Care is pleased and excited to announce the partnership which has been established between the Church of God Center for Ministerial Care and Intimate Life Ministries of Austin, Texas. Dr. David Ferguson and Intimate Life Ministries are at the forefront of ministry aimed at supporting and strengthening clergy marriages. A number of our



ministerial couples have been greatly blessed and challenged by attending one of Intimate Life's Galatians 6:6 marriage retreats for clergy couples. It is our hope that ultimately all of our ministerial couples across the United States and Canada will have the opportunity to participate in one of these life-changing marriage retreats.

Also, this new partnership with Intimate Life will enable CMC to fulfill a long-held vision of providing top-notch marriage and family resources for our ministers, their families and the church members they serve.

Following is information about some of the resource and training opportunities offered by CMC through Intimate Life.





**Galatians 6:6 Marriage Retreats**—Quite often couples in ministry leadership become so involved in “giving to others” that their personal lives are neglected. They miss out on the first part of the biblical principal found in Matthew 10:8, “Freely you have received, freely give.” A Galatians 6:6 retreat is a time of personal renewal and encouragement for ministry couples, a time to “freely receive,” a time to be reminded that Great Commandment love begins at home! The two-day retreats are held in various locations in the U.S., Europe, and elsewhere—the teaching team and worship leader are provided as a gift from Intimate Life Ministries. Through this strategic partnership, others who have “freely received” this retreat are being encouraged to “freely give” in order to provide the retreat as a gift to other ministerial couples.

**Training Opportunities**—“Equipping the saints for the work of the ministry”—a crucial challenge for every ministry! Great Commandment conferences for married couples, parents and single adults are designed to help leaders develop ongoing ministries in these areas. Community Training Classes conducted over an eight-week period or on the weekend provide additional opportunities for training and ministry in a growing number of communities. Other specialized training helps build model Great Commandment ministries.

**Leadership Institute**—These 4-day Leadership Institutes have a two-fold purpose: to provide further enrichment and refreshment and to equip ministry leaders for relevant Great Commandment ministry in the 21st century. Many ministry couples come to the Institute as a follow-up to their Galatians 6:6 experience along with lay leaders. Entire ministry staffs have come to the Institute in order to help build an effective ministry “team.”

**Ministry Care Intensive Retreats**—Ministry Care Intensive Retreats provide pastors, missionaries, and ministry leaders a structured, focused opportunity for personal and relational heal-



ing and enrichment. The Intensive experience seeks to halt the deterioration of important relationships before the pain becomes any greater and to help facilitate healing unresolved issues within the support of a caring environment. Retreats are available for couples, families, and singles.

### *Marriage Encounter*

**What is Marriage Encounter?** Marriage Encounter is a weekend away from home, family and responsibilities. Here in a comfortable, secluded environment, a couple is guided in the discovery of a new way of communicating that will help them know each other better. It is not a retreat, but a program designed to give couples the opportunity to examine their lives together, their strengths and weaknesses, and their attitudes toward each other and their families. Marriage Encounter is based on the belief that the marriage relationship is the most significant, most intimate relationship on earth.

**What happens during a Marriage Encounter Weekend?** Sessions begin Friday evening and run through Sunday afternoon. At each session a husband and wife team and a Church of God (or other Pentecostal) clergy couple give an informal talk on various aspects of marriage. Time is set aside following each presentation for couples to discuss privately, away from the group, their relationship as it relates to the topic presented. This Weekend is structured, orderly, and informative.

**What it is not.** The Marriage Encounter Weekend is not a marriage clinic or a sensitivity group. It is not a problem-solving workshop. Couples do not disclose their problems to the group or team couples for discussion or criticism.

**Who is Marriage Encounter for?** Marriage Encounter is for any couple who desires to enrich their relationship and improve their communication. Since every marriage can be improved, even the best marriages can find new meaning and deepened joys



through the Weekend. Marriage Encounter is open to couples of all ages who have been married for at least a year. Couples married for only a few years as well as couples married more than 40 years have attended and found the Weekend rewarding. The Marriage Encounter Weekend is conducted from a Pentecostal perspective, but couples of all faiths, or no faith at all, are welcome.

**What does a Marriage Encounter Weekend cost?** A non-refundable registration fee of \$55.00 is required to ensure a reservation. Marriage Encounter is entirely self-supporting. At the close of the Weekend you will be given the opportunity to make an anonymous donation, sharing in the cost and support of Marriage Encounter. However, no one is ever refused the opportunity to attend a Marriage Encounter Weekend because of lack of funds.

**Who puts it on?** CMC is the agency which helps facilitate and direct the program. Each Marriage Encounter is conducted by three or four couples, including a minister couple, who are trained to present the Marriage Encounter Weekend.





## FAMILY LIFE RETREAT

The Center for Ministerial Care has developed a one-day retreat format for ministerial families that can be adapted and used at the state level. The idea is to involve every member of the family (including married children and grandchildren) in a meaningful time of instruction, inspiration, and fellowship. Classes on relevant family topics are held for every age level during the morning and afternoon. Family fun and fellowship are emphasized at the lunch time “pizza fest.” The day is concluded with a worshipful communion service in which each father administers the sacrament to the members of his family.

Following is a suggested schedule for the retreat:

9:00-9:30 am	Registration
9:30-10:30 am	Morning Classes (Ministerial couples, adult PK's, youth, children, nursery)
10:30-11:00 am	Break
11:00-12:00 pm	Continue Morning Classes
12:00-1:30 pm	Pizza Fest and Family Fun
1:30-3:00 pm	Afternoon Classes (Clergy husbands, clergy wives, adult PK's, youth, children, nursery)
3:15-4:30 pm	Family Worship and Communion

In most areas, families could drive to the retreat and return home in the same day. In larger states or territories, more than one retreat could be planned. Generally, Saturday would be the best day to hold the retreat. An expanded version of the retreat could include an overnight stay on Friday evening.

Detailed information regarding the Ministerial Family Life Retreat is available from CMC. Also, CMC personnel would be happy to help plan and/or participate in the retreat.



## COUNSELING RESOURCES

Ministers and their family members who need help personally or for others have access to a variety of resources through the Center for Ministerial Care.

**Telephone Consultation**—CMC counselors are available by telephone 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The toll-free number is 1-800-762-5656. This service is provided not only for personal needs, but also for consultative help for pastors with questions about parishioners.

**Professional Referrals**—CMC maintains a data bank of several thousand qualified Christian counselors, psychologists, and psychiatrists in both the United States and Canada. Also available is information regarding psychiatric hospitals and drug rehabilitation centers. This information is shared confidentially with ministers and family members as needed.

**Resource Materials**—Printed materials and audio/video resources covering a number of pertinent marriage and family topics can be obtained through the CMC office.



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