

“...THAT THEIR HEARTS MAY BE ENCOURAGED,
HAVING BEEN KNIT TOGETHER IN LOVE...”

Colossians 2:2



From my Heart

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This is, as Paul Harvey would say, “the rest of the story” most of you have never heard.

My heart was grieved when I visited the home of a couple whose marriage appeared to be in trouble. (The year was approximately 1971 when I was helping to oversee the campus staff women on major universities in eight states). I shared my observation with my director in hopes he could help them. A few years later, as a part of the National Campus team for Campus Crusade, I encountered the same couple on yet another campus. My heart was stricken to see they had been promoted and had more responsibility, but their marriage difficulties had worsened. To think they'd been given more responsibility and yet their marriage issues had been ignored broke my heart. I knew it did not honor God and I felt we were being irresponsible as an organization.

During the next National Team meeting, as was our custom, we all shared about our most recent travels. I spoke of my dismay about the couple and their situation. I read some verses from I Timothy 3. Deeply burdened and with passion, I said, “Here we are helping to reach the world for Christ and we are hurting on the inside. How long are we going to promote people when they are having difficulties in their marriages?”

And then without warning to myself or the others, I began to cry, and the cry turned into sobs as I put my head on the table and wept for what seemed like a long time. I have never had this happen before or since, but as I look back it was as though God were crying through me. There was a “holy hush” in the room. When I was finally able to lift my head, our Director, Paul Eshleman said, “Ney, what do you want us to do?” I said, “I don't know, Paul, but we've got to do something.”

Shortly thereafter, Paul sent me and fellow Campus Crusade staff Dave and Sande Sunde to the 1976 Continental Congress on the Family in St. Louis sponsored by J. Alan Peterson. In attendance were thousands from all over the U.S. and the world who cared about marriage and the family.

The turning point for me was a session by Dr. Howard Hendricks, distinguished Dallas Seminary Professor. His words were profound. He said, “There are three reasons for marriage failure.”

- 1. Inadequate teaching**
- 2. Unrealistic expectations**
- 3. Inadequate preparation**

He elaborated. “By **inadequate teaching**, I mean that today the church isn't doing a very good job teaching you that just because you are a Christian and someone else is a Christian doesn't necessarily mean either of you will be a good marriage partner.”

Dr. Hendrix continued, “By **unrealistic expectations** I mean people are entering marriage today expecting marriage and sex to do what only God can do. And the result is they are disappointed.”

His third reason was my favorite. He said, “By **inadequate preparation** I mean that today in Dallas, if you want to be a garbage collector, you have to go through two weeks of intensive training to become one. But today, in Dallas, if you want to get married, all you have to do is make a sound at the altar, and you’re in. Frankly, if a couple is unwilling to go through marriage preparation, I am unwilling to marry them.”

The final session of the Continental Congress, J. Alan Peterson said to all of us, “What **burden** are you leaving here with? The word “**burden**” in the Hebrew, means **an assignment from the Lord.**” And I thought, “yes, that’s it.” I have a burden, an assignment from the Lord to give help to our marriages within Campus Crusade, starting with getting some help to those who were preparing for marriage.

Soon thereafter we started with Pre-Marriage Conferences (where I loved doing all the logistical work involved to help pull them off). My dear friend, Don Meredith, President of Christian Family Life, was our speaker. Don who was a Campus Crusade alum had spent years studying marriage and was the perfect person to speak. The conferences were so successful that Singles began to say, why can’t we hear this material? And those who were married, said, we need to hear this, too. And we were off and running. Within a few years, another dear friend, Dennis Rainey, became the Director of this new Family Life Ministry within Campus Crusade.

Fast forward with me now to a recent scene 30 years later:

There was a lump in my throat and tears were in my eyes as I drove up to the Gaylord Convention Center, the location of the Dallas FamilyLife Conference. Outside there were scores of couples sitting on the grass, some perched on cement walls, others sitting on benches—all conversing with each other...their notebooks at hand. As I walked in the entrance I joined throngs of couples coming from every direction heading up the escalator toward the massive Conference Center auditorium. I saw a large inviting space where couples could order food and sit and visit. Nearby was a huge bookstore with an abundance of books and tapes on marriage, family, raising children, and other related subjects.

As I moved into the cavernous Conference Center meeting room, I saw a big screen in the front and **thousands of couples** already in their seats anticipating the next speaker. I pulled a chair over and sat against the back wall. I couldn’t keep back the tears. I felt overwhelmed at what God had done and was doing.



And this was **just one** conference. Today **in every part of the U.S.** and most parts of the world there is access to a FamilyLife Conference. There is a FamilyLife Radio broadcast hosted by Dennis Rainey and Bob Lepine reaching a weekly audience of **9 million**. There are now an abundance of marriage and family materials. To date an estimated **1.5 million** have attended a FamilyLife Conference somewhere in the world. Thousands and thousands have come to Christ.

First Corinthians 1:27 KJV states, “God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise” (a single woman to help start a marriage conference).

No one is more overwhelmed at what God has done than me. To Him be all honor, and glory and praise. I was grieved by the needs of the couple but not nearly as grieved as God. He prompted me (an unlikely person) in an unusual way and used it beyond my wildest dreams. He is truly a God of miracles.

And now...you know “the rest of the story.”

And, may I ask you...what are you **grieved** about? What is your **burden** today? Who knows...it may be **your assignment** from the Lord.

In His love for you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to be "Dennis Rainey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

For further information on Family Life and a conference near you, visit **familylife.com**.
For more information on Christian Family Life, go to **christianfamilylife.com**.