



STRENGTHENING MARRIAGES

CHURCH PRACTICES SERIES

JANUARY 2023



GTA Region



WELCOME

Over the last few years serving as GTA Regional Director in the Western Ontario District, it became clear that there were some common challenges facing church leaders in the Greater Toronto Area.

As a result, we decided to develop The Church Practices Series to assist our leaders in addressing these challenges in their unique context.

In the following few pages, you will find links to interviews with those with an academic perspective on these challenges and those who have personally worked to address them. In addition, you will find links to resources and a curated summary of what we have seen in our research.

We hope this package helps spark conversation as we work together to see our region impacted for God.

Joel Spiridigliozi with Jonathan Gallo



GTA Region



INTERVIEWS

WATCH / LISTEN HERE: [HTTPS://VIMEO.COM/787937317/92DC31BFEC](https://vimeo.com/787937317/92dc31bfec)

GUESTS:



Ron & Ann Mainse
Heart to Heart Ministries
<https://www.h2hliving.ca>



Jeeva & Sulojana Sam
thesams.ca



Neil & Sharol Josephson
Directors
Family Life Canada
FamilyLifeCanada.com

STRENGTHENING MARRIAGES

Biblical marriage is the bedrock of the family, which is the foundation upon which a successful society is built. As leaders, it is important to invest in strengthening marriages in our churches. Here are some common practices when it comes to strengthening marriage beyond offering sermon series on the topic.

Pre-Marital Classes

It's vital to help young couples prepare for marriage by offering marriage classes. These classes can be done in person or can be offered online. While some churches and leaders have the capacity to build their own course, there are several good courses on video that can be offered the local church.

Whatever course you offer, good topics to cover include God's design for the family unit, Communication, Expectations, Goal Setting, Extended Family Dynamics, Healing from Past Hurts, Finances, Sex, Moving from Me to We.

Alpha – themarriagecourse.org
Focus on the Family – [Ready to Wed](http://ReadytoWed.com)
Before You Say “I do” – [Amazon](http://Amazon.com)

Pre-Marital Counseling

Beyond classes, offering pre-marital counselling or coaching sessions helps to bring up issues that couples can work through together. Prepare and Enrich Canada offers an assessment for couples to help with the awareness of areas of strength, conflict, and growth. Pastors can be certified as Prepare and Enrich facilitators. Prepare-enrich.com

Where pastors feel ill-equipped to offer premarital counselling, referring to experienced outside facilitators is encouraged.

Marriage Mentors

Over the last few years, the emergence of marriage mentors for new couples and couples who are having challenges has grown in popularity. In these cases, a mature and trained couple regularly meet with a young couple to share years of wisdom and experience with them. Marriage mentors provide both spiritual and general practical advice around specific topics as required. Often these arrangements are for a defined period of time, around a set curriculum or set of topics, with a clear written agreement.

There are several ministries that offer training and support for marriage mentors including familylifetoday.com, thesams.ca and connectedmarriage.org. Some programs are focused on mentoring new relationships and other programs serve as means to help hurting couples on the brink of breakup.

Marriage Groups

Some churches offer additional marriage classes and groups for those who have been newly married and to strengthen marriages through the years. These groups offer common curriculum, conversation, relationship, and connection for young families. There are several examples of curriculum available to churches from creators such as Focus on the Family, Family Life, Jimmy Evans, Gary Chapman, Emmerson Eggerich, Les & Leslie Parrot.

Enrichment Events

Holding annual marriage enrichment events or weekend retreats is a way to help invest in couples in your church. If your church is unable to hold its own event, or partner with other churches to do the same, several ministries also hold enrichment weekends where couples can join in. You can connect with [Family Life Canada](http://FamilyLifeCanada.com) or [Heart to Heart](http://HearttoHeart.org) Ministries.

Counseling

While pastors can offer biblical advice, it is important to refer couples to qualified biblical counsellors who have the time, training, and insurance to work through complex issues over an extended period. Building this network of Christian counsellors or counselling centres can aid your ministry.

The cost of counseling can be mitigated in several ways. As an example, some employee benefits pay for counseling and some counseling centers offer services that are geared to income.

Have a story or experience that you would like to share? Section meetings are a perfect place to debrief. We would also love to hear from you and help pass on what you have learned.

