

Counselor's Corner by Margaret McCray

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Currently, I am seeing a number of couples who have come to the counseling center for marriage therapy. I have the privilege and sometimes the heartache of hearing the stories and watching the changes that happen when two people take the time to focus on their relationship. Whether it has been 30 years or 3 years, their time together has shaped and reshaped, torn and healed, buffed or roughed, tarnished or gilded the bond of their covenant with one another. The joy or pain they carry into the room with them is in their eyes, their faces, the way they sit or don't sit together. This is where we start. If communication has stagnated, if gratitude and kindnesses are infrequent, if intimacy has been replaced with silence and distance, then where we end depends on what they can bring to bear on themselves and their commitment to the other.

Our covenant relationship with God is very much like this. Over time and circumstances our faith is shaped and reshaped, torn and healed, buffed and roughed, tarnished and gilded. We carry the pain or the joy of our relationship with God in our bones and muscles, our emotions and choices. I believe that the covenant of faith and the covenant of marriage mutually inform and influence one another. Both covenants need the undergirdings of confession, repentance and forgiveness, the emotional intimacy of meaningful conversation, times of joyful celebration as well as times of quiet solitude, and the nurturance of a supportive, caring community.

Healthy covenant relationships, specifically marriage, have certain practices and relational activities that are present most of the time. Lists of such things abound. My list is influenced by books I've read, couples I've talked to, and my own experience.

Healthy couples:

- Speak kind and sincere words of appreciation often;
- Are willing to talk about and clear up feelings of anger, resentment, fear, etc., when or soon after they occur;
- Go to bed at the same time (without a TV on!) so emotional or physical intimacy has an opportunity to happen;
- Speak honestly, listen without judgment, and respond without reactive emotion (this is one practice where a counselor can be helpful);
- Collaborate to resolve differences (another one where counseling helps);
- Are willing to ask for help from a counselor, pastor, or other trusted and experienced individual.

Especially sad are those marriages that have endured unhappiness, resentment and anger for so long that they reach a point of no return. I am always heartened and grateful when a couple comes to marriage counseling when things "aren't that bad." They have a good prognosis for finding their footing together. But even long-standing hurt and unhappiness can be redeemed with God's help and patient, steady commitment to change and understanding.

Whether we are talking to God or talking to our beloved, honesty, promptness, kindness, patience, love and respect are essential ingredients in a long and deeply meaningful relationship. If you suspect or know that your marriage or your faith is struggling with symptoms of dis-ease, please act to save and protect what God gave you at your birth: the potential for being lovingly connected, in flesh, in spirit, in bonds that are ultimately the foundations of freedom.

Thanks from Troop 100

A belated thank you from Boy Scout Troop 100 to the Westminster congregation for its continued support of the troop's annual fruit sale. It was another successful sale, and in addition to the many people from the church who purchased fruit, several more donated bicycles to be used as prizes for the top fruit sellers!

Troop 100 sincerely appreciates your generosity and interest. We the leaders and scouts of Troop 100 also want to express our sincere appreciation to the Camping Board and the Board of Deacons for making scholarships available for many of our scouts to attend Camp Ajawa each summer. Camp Ajawa is a very important part of Troop 100's scouting program, and we are especially grateful for their support of our troop.

Sincerely,

Mel Hoagland, Chair, Troop 100



At a recent Gathering of Eagles dinner for the combined Viking and Indianhead Councils, Eagle Scout Chakong Thao received a new scholarship presented to Eagle Scouts who are high school seniors. Shown in the photo, from left, are Mai Vue and Souyeng Thao (Chakong's mother and brother), Chakong Thao, and Scoutmaster Dave Moore.