



FEB 2008
CONTENTS



**Having Sex,
Making Love**

*An interview with Christopher and
Rachel McCluskey*



Sweat Equity

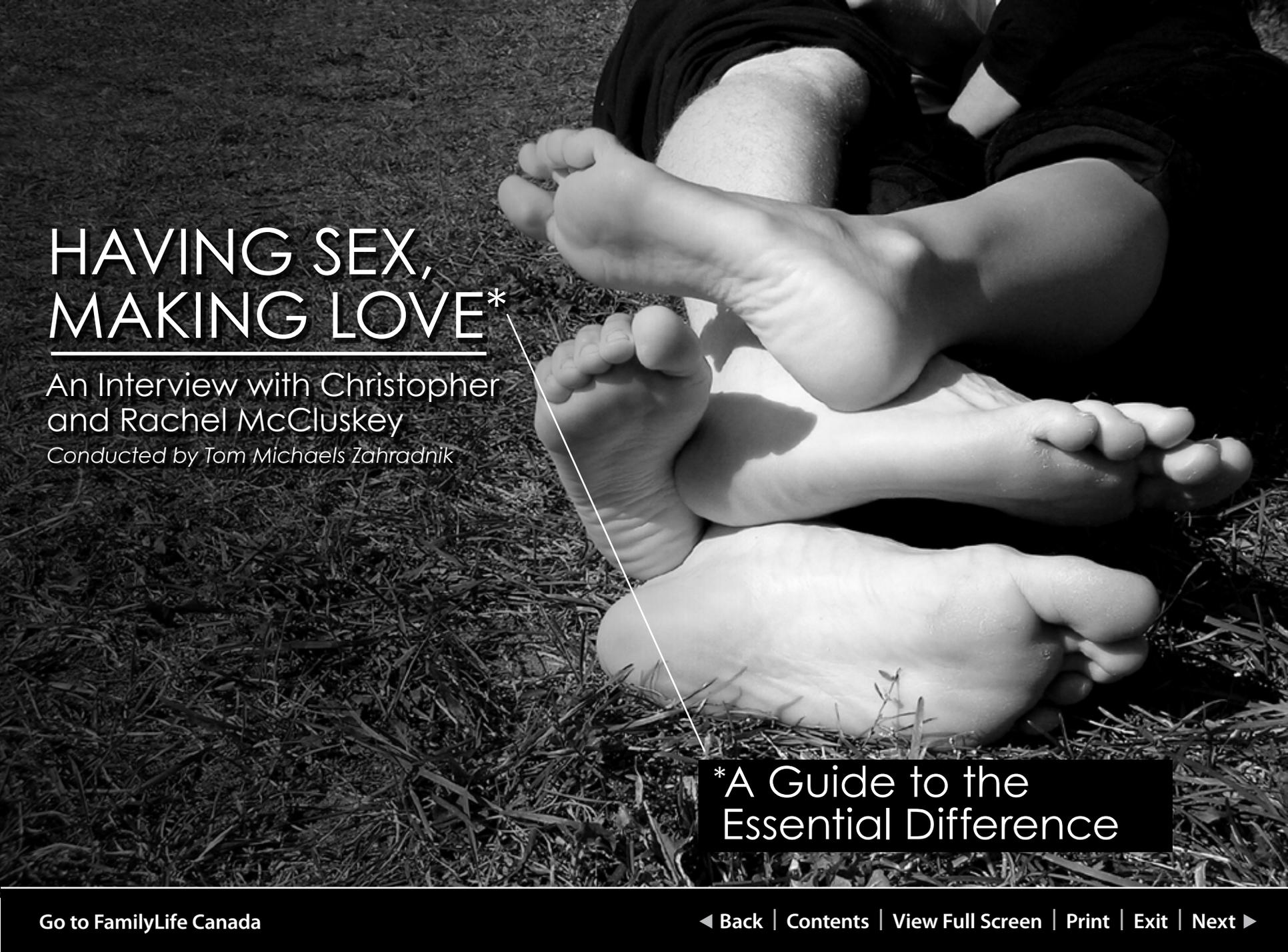
By Dr. Dave Currie, with Glen Hoos



**Dr. Laura Meets
Dr. Dave**

*A Video Q&A with Dr. Laura
Schlessinger and Dr. Dave Currie*

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HAVING SEX, MAKING LOVE*

An Interview with Christopher
and Rachel McCluskey

Conducted by Tom Michaels Zahradnik

*A Guide to the
Essential Difference



The title grabbed my attention: "Tackling a Taboo," but it was the subtitle that pulled me into the article: "Books on sex are increasingly front-and-center at Christian retail."

This tantalizing teaser appeared in a recent issue of Christian Retailing, and the article went on to state that the topic many pastors have feared to mention from the pulpit, and fewer teachers have dared utter in adult Sunday school classes, has become mainstream. Books on sexuality, from a distinctly Christian perspective, have become so plentiful that many Christian bookstores can't stock even half of the titles available.

One book appeared not once but twice on the top-sellers list for 2006* (once in hardcover and once in softcover) – When Two Become One: Enhancing Sexual Intimacy in Marriage by Christopher & Rachel McCluskey (Revell, 2004). Since its release, the book has been translated into Spanish and a Nigerian English-speaking edition, and a Mandarin (Chinese) translation is due out in 2008, marking the first time a Christian book on sexual intimacy has appeared in the most widely-read Asian dialect.

Christopher, a former Christian psychotherapist and certified sex therapist, and his wife, Rachel, were interviewed recently by Tom Michaels Zahradnik on his New York radio show, Heart to Heart, prior to a mega-marriage conference the couple did upstate. The following is an edited excerpt.



*"Sex Guide Sales" top-20 list from Christian Retailing, March 19, 2007, page 30. List based on sales from Christian Living/Relationships/Sexual category according to the Evangelical Christian Publishers Associations' STATS (Sales Tracking Analysis Trends Summary) data for the year ending Dec. 29, 2006.



Tom: Let me get right into asking you Chris; when people discover your background in Christian sex therapy, how do they respond? I mean you're at a party and they ask, "So, what do you do for a living?" How does that work?

Chris: (Laughs.) Well, honestly, usually in one of two ways. It's typically either with immediate interest and a litany of questions, or it's with an awkward, "Oh, really?" as

they look for the nearest exit. I've not found any other topic to be such a great conversation starter or stopper.

Tom: I'm sure! So let me ask you; why are we so reluctant? Particularly since we know that marriage is supposed to represent Christ's relationship with His bride, the Church; we don't even talk about it in church...

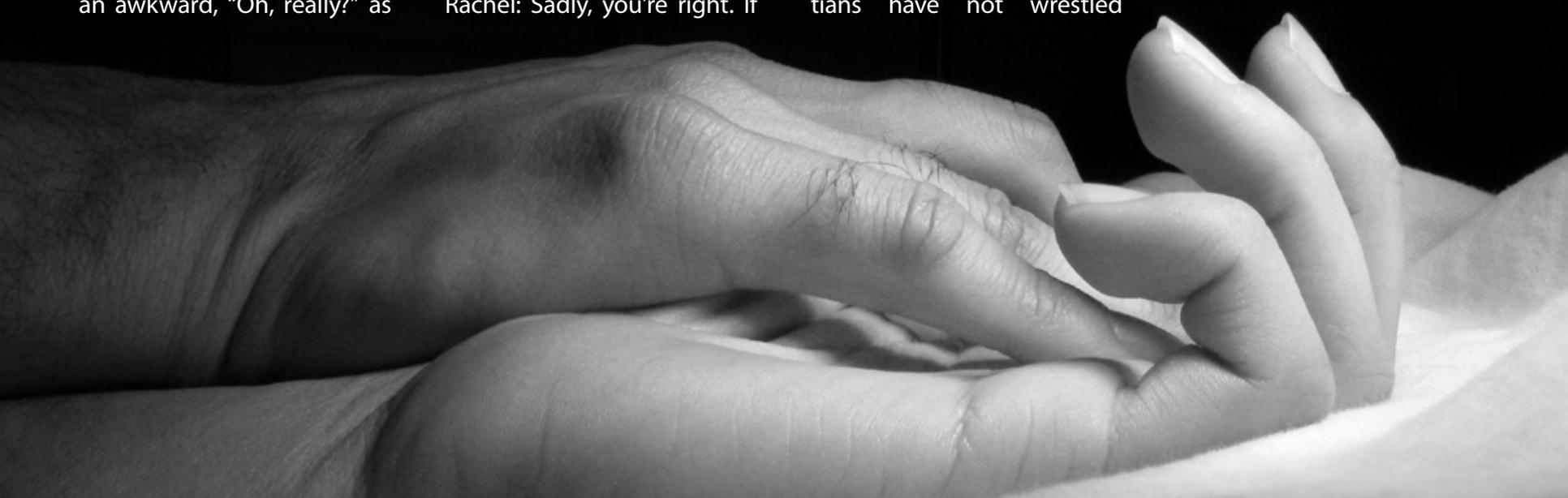
Rachel: Sadly, you're right. If

our only experience with sexuality has been in the context of sin – whether from the culture, from the media, sin of our own choosing, or even sin that was done to us, those experiences are going to skew the way we view sex. It will be a struggle to see it as something beautiful and holy and truly a creation of God.

Quite honestly, what Chris and I find is that many Christians have not wrestled

through the development of a sexual theology. They don't really know what they believe or why they believe it, so they struggle to integrate their sexuality with their spirituality. That's going to create difficulty in talking about it and will certainly make it hard to cast a godly vision for it.

Chris: There's a paradigm shift required if the Church is to be able to connect God





and sexuality together and come up with something other than it being kind of a “necessary evil”. You know – the view that maybe God just says, “Okay, look, you two are married now so you go have fun and I’m just going to turn My head.”

Tom: Right.

Chris: There is such a transition necessary to get from that view to a point where we can understand a passage like Paul quoting Genesis, saying, “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.” We read that and say, “Whoa... wait a minute! Paul just used a clearly sexual metaphor to directly communicate some-

thing about the mystery of the intimacy God wants to have with us, His bride, the Church. What are we missing here?”

Tom: And you contend that part of what we’re missing is what Jesus would have called “the spirit of the act”.

Rachel: Yes. In His earthly ministry Jesus made frequent reference to the importance of discerning the spirit of an act – whether the act was offering prayers and sacrifices, or the giving of alms, or even of adhering to the letter of the Law of Moses. He confounded people when they asked him specific questions with his constant emphasis on the spirit of an act more than anything else.

In that same way, we see a huge distinction between



two people just going through the motions of a bodily exchange to relieve sexual tension and the couple who come together to celebrate the intimacy they share on all planes of their marriage, to the delight and glory of God. There's a critical difference between the spirit of simply "having sex" and that of truly "making love".

Tom: You draw a sharp distinction between those two

phrases – "having sex" and "making love". Explain that.

Rachel: This is the central point of our book. We believe there is a world of difference between these two phrases because sexual intimacy is first and foremost a spiritual act. We normally think of it as primarily a physical act, and that's why our culture uses the phrases "having sex" and "making love" interchangeably, referring to the same

act.

Chris: We view sexual intercourse as a three-dimensional act involving body, soul and spirit. And, as Rachel said, it's our conviction that it is first and foremost a spiritual act. Romans 12:1 says, "...offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your *spiritual act of worship*" (NIV, emphasis added). How do we offer our physical bodies in spiritual

acts of worship? By serving others, by singing praises to God, by teaching or preaching or evangelizing or, basically, by doing anything that is pleasing to the Lord. Our physical lives are to bring glory and honor and praise to God in the spiritual realm.

Tom: Right.

Chris: So if we're agreed on that, we have to then ask how it could be any different



with the physical acts of our sexuality. We know God gave Adam and Eve the gift of sexual union before the Fall, and He pronounced everything he had done as being “very good”. So sexual union that is shared in accordance with God’s original design, and in a spirit of true Love, is not something from which God needs to turn His head – it’s not some “necessary evil”, or some little indulgence He allows us to have that is devoid of spiritual significance. It is actually a powerful spiritual act of worship!

Tom: Well many couples are certainly not experiencing that kind of feeling in the bedroom!

Chris: You’re absolutely right. Many Christian couples are saying, “There’s gotta’ be more to it than this.” “This

is not satisfying.” “This is not connecting us.” “I don’t feel like we’re celebrating anything.” “I feel used afterwards.” “This feels dirty.” “I feel lonely.” “I feel empty.” “It just feels dead.”

Here’s the key. We need to ask ourselves, if sexual intercourse is a spiritual act of worship, who is being worshipped?

If our love making is expressing love and truth (meaning it’s in the confines of marriage, and we’ve been expressing love on all other planes of that marriage); if it’s not selfish (meaning we are both giving and receiving); and if it’s in accordance with God’s Word, then God is not only being greatly glorified through it – He is actually manifesting Himself in the midst of it! If this is an

act of love and truth, then it’s an expression of the One Who is Love and Truth, and it worships and glorifies Him as such.

Rachel: That is vastly different from a couple who are simply “having sex” – just going through the motions because they have not been expressing love on the other planes of their marriage; maybe they’re fantasizing about being with someone other than their spouse; maybe they’re selfishly focusing only on their own pleasure; maybe they’re using pornography to “spice things up” and thereby defiling their marriage bed.

When a couple are not expressing love on all planes of their marriage but are, instead, criticizing each other, bickering, withholding forgiveness, failing to serve each



If sexual intercourse is a spiritual act of worship, who is being worshipped?

other in love – but then try to come together sexually – the “message” of their sexual intercourse becomes a lie. With their bodies they are communicating, “I love you and I’m giving you all of who I am, and receiving all of who you are”, but their lives have been communicating exactly the opposite.

Chris: Sexual intercourse is like the ultimate body language, and the language of our bodies needs to line up with the language of our lives. If our sexual intimacy is really expressing lust, lies, selfishness, or disobedience to the things about which God has clearly instructed us, who is going to be glorified in those physical acts? The Father of Lies; the Deceiver; the Disobedient One. You will still have a spiritual act of worship occurring on the physical plane,

but you will actually be glorifying the Enemy through it!

Rachel: That’s why we say sexuality and spirituality can never be separated – every sexual act is a spiritual act of worship, and the question we have to ask is, “Who’s being worshipped?” That will enable you to discern the spirit of the act. That will tell you whether you are simply having sex, or truly making love.

For more on this topic and the McCluskey’s practical model, The Lovemaking Cycle®, as well as detailed answers to the most frequently-asked questions by Christian couples, see [When Two Become One: Enhancing Sexual Intimacy in Marriage](#) (Revell, 2004). Christopher & Rachel live on their family ranch in the foothills of the Ozark Mountains where they homeschool their seven children. Visit them online at www.whentwobecomeone.net or at www.christian-living.com.



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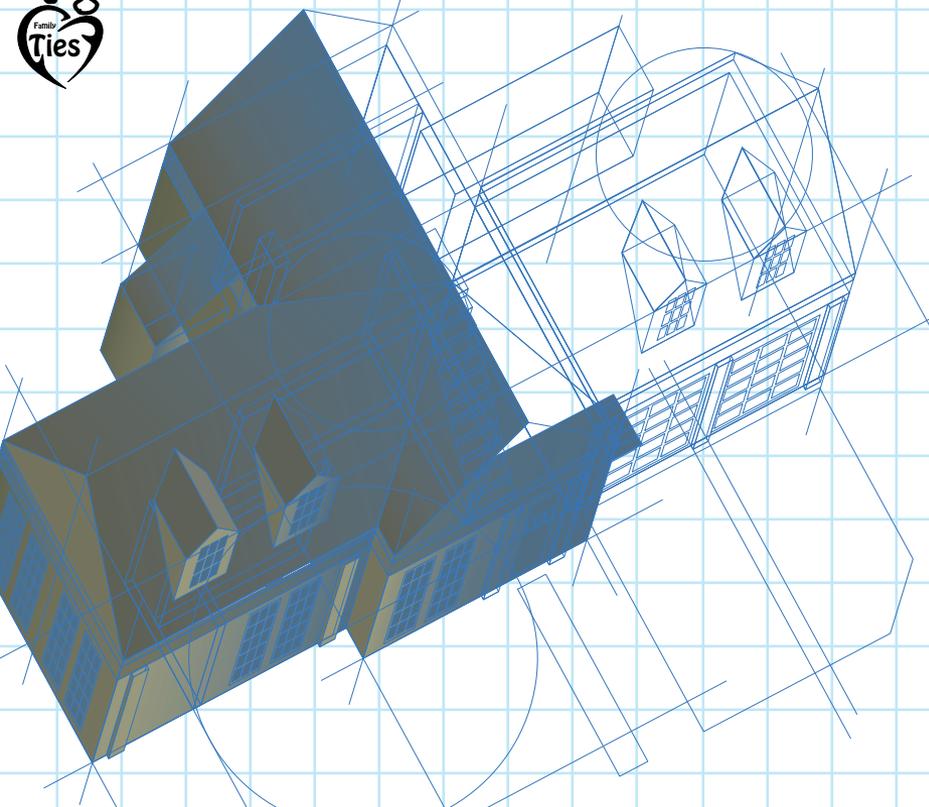
FAMILYLIFE

**BUILDING A GODLY HOME
FROM THE GROUND UP**

SWEAT EQUITY

BY DR. DAVE CURRIE, WITH GLEN HOOS





As a young couple just over twenty years ago, when we clearly had more time than money, we ventured into the project of building our own home. It was a monumental task for a fledgling craftsman like me, yet it proved to be both an amazing learning experience and an incredibly rewarding one. Everything from

concrete, to framing, roofing, duct work, electrical, finishing, siding, brick work and landscaping... we read, researched and carefully did it all. Shockingly, twenty years later, the house is still standing.

The house was not built by accident; it was built by clear intent. We carefully chose

our house plans and built accordingly. We even ripped a few things out to correct our mistakes when we hadn't read our plans carefully enough. By the time that project was over, I had referred to the plan so many times that I almost knew it by heart.

When a couple painstakingly goes through a four month period to build a home, they are investing "sweat equity." The idea is that there is tremendous value in putting in the time and effort to build your own home. The same holds true when it comes to building a godly family.

When you build with a goal in mind, according to a plan, you end up with a finished product: a home that is structurally sound as well as aesthetically pleasing. Not unlike actual construction, building a godly

home with God's kind of blueprint in mind creates a family that is structurally sound and unbelievably pleasing to be a part of.

Ready to get to work? The following are some of the principles that you need to practice if you want to build a godly home.

CHOOSE GOD'S BLUEPRINT

Make a choice as a couple that you will do family God's way. Put a stake in the ground like Joshua did when he announced, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:15). This decision to surrender your marriage, your family relationships and your family's ongoing well-being to the Lord is a hugely significant step to take. You are not going to build a family by ac-



cident but by clear intention, and it is very important that you know God's plan like the back of your hand.

LIVE BY THE BLUEPRINT

It is so critical that parents model the difference that Jesus makes in their life personally,

as well as within a marriage. We may say, "Yes, God's way is best," but our kids are more influenced by our actions than by our words. So much more is caught than taught. For years I have been saying that we will have a new generation of committed Christians only to the extent that this generation, you and I as parents, live dedicated to Jesus. If they see it in our lives, they certainly have a better chance of finding God and the significance that He brings to a life.

Donalyn and I call Philippians 4:9 the parents' prayer as it says, "Whatever you have learned, received, heard from me or seen in me, put into practice and the God of peace will be with you." We're basically saying to our kids, "Watch and see that God's way is best."

TRAIN YOUR APPRENTICES

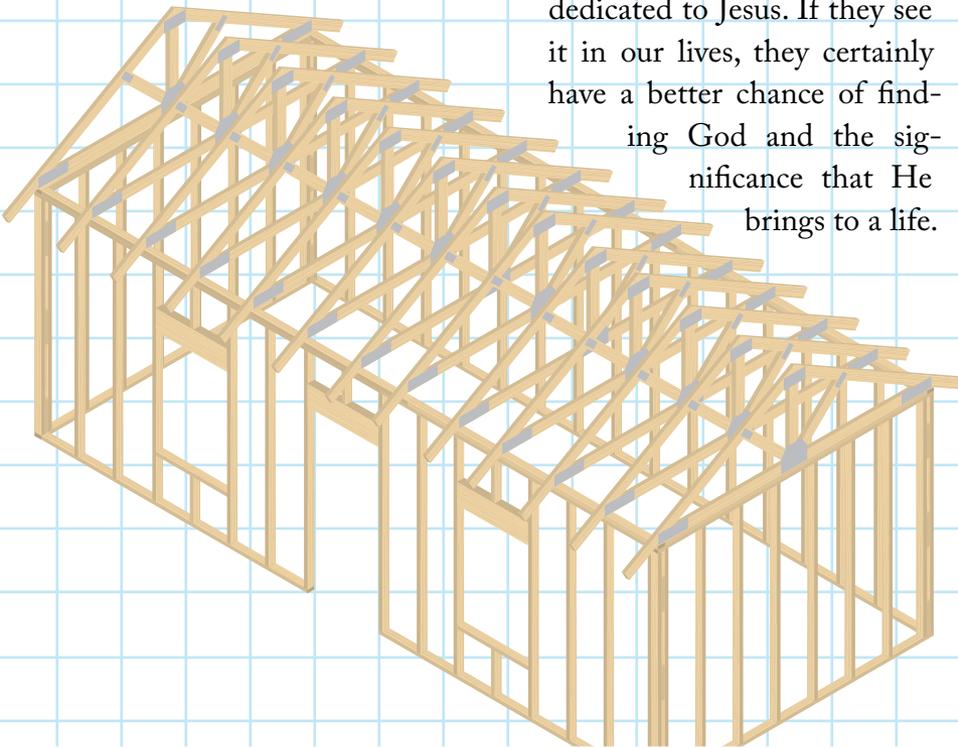
Over the course of the approximately 18 years that we have to influence our children, it should be our goal to instruct and guide them in God's plan for a person's life. Beyond that, we will find that each child has a unique calling of God on their life based on their gifts, their heart and abilities. We need to help them sort through that to discover God's specific plan for their life.

Deuteronomy 6:7-9 tells us we should talk about the Lord when we get up in the morning, when we're traveling, when we're sitting down for meals, and going to bed at night. Talking about the influence of God on our family and our lives needs to be 24/7 and as natural as breathing.

KEEP A SAFE WORK ENVIRONMENT

Your home should be the safest place on earth for every member of your family. It should be the child's haven; they should always feel free to come to mom and dad for help and support.

Family members are to be cherished and respected. God's plan requires proper treatment on the job site – it is mandatory. How you treat your spouse matters hugely to





God. The way in which you believe in and support your kids matters hugely to God. What goes on in the four walls of your house, and the belonging that each family member experiences, is a test of the validity of your faith. Make your home the safest place your family could ever live.

BUILD AS A TEAM

Time together as a family has to be a non-negotiable commitment. There needs to be extended times spent having fun and laughing together. Adjust your priorities if necessary so that you are spending a significant amount of time with the kids – and not just mom, but dad too. Time with each other as a couple is equally important, because one of the greatest gifts you can ever give to your kids is to love your spouse. This brings

the stability and security that only a tight home can give a kid.

PRAY THE PLAN INTO BEING

It is crucial that a couple prays together for their marriage, for each child, and for issues in the home. And not only do we need to pray *for* our children, but we need to be praying daily *with* our children. As they get older, we may not be having bedtime prayers anymore, but we need to continue to pray together about significant events in their lives, and in the lives of other family members. To pray with your kids (and your teens) during difficult times in their lives is so critical. For them to actually hear you holding them up before the Lord is a real gift. They will understand God's

place in your life as they see you living it out in this way.

Sweat Equity. It's the value you put into your home through the extra time and effort you choose to expend in building it - and it's likely even more true with your family. Put God first in your

family. Spend time with each of your kids, affirming their value to you and their incredible worth to God. Get excited about what God wants to do not only *in* your family, but *through* your family. Then you will not only have legacy that is talked about, but an influence that is extensive.





In a world that pulls families apart, FamilyLife draws them together. But we can't do it alone. We need help from people who believe in what we're doing... people like you.

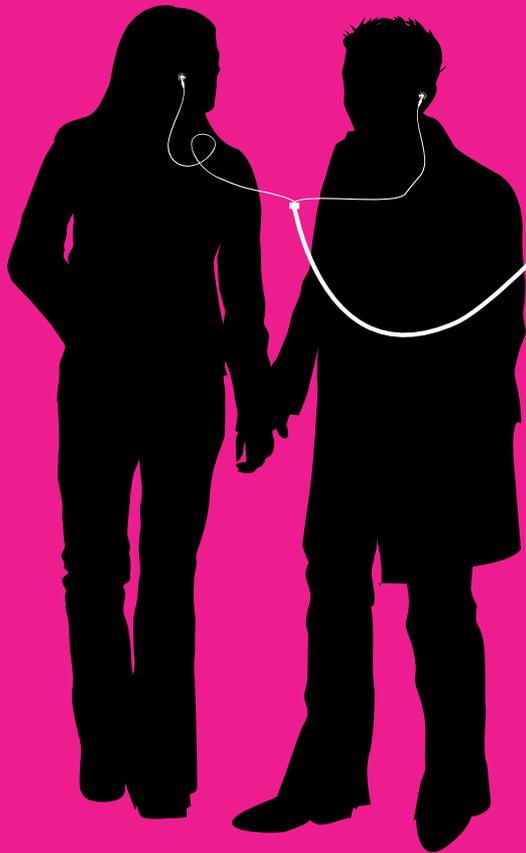
Would you consider coming alongside us in our mission to help Canada build better families? Your support enables us to continue to provide family-strengthening resources like FamilyTies to those who need it most, free of charge.

The next family we help could be the one next door. Or, it could be yours. Thanks for making it possible for us to be here for them... and for you.

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MARRIAGE UNCENSORED PRESENTS



DR. LAURA
MEETS
DR. DAVE





Dr. Laura Schlessinger was a recent guest on FamilyLife's TV show, *Marriage Uncensored*. Between her and our own Dr. Dave Currie, there was no lack of energy in the house. Here, we present several clips of them answering viewer questions. To view the full show, click [here](#).



"I only looked at porn on the computer a couple of times, and it was only when my wife wasn't having sex with me. Does she really have the right to be angry?"

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"Our kids just left home and I feel like I'm suffocating. Do you think it's okay to separate from my husband for awhile so I can find myself?"

**CLICK HERE
FOR ANSWER**





"I can't say one negative word about her family, or she goes off the deep end. But she can attack my family all day long and it's no big deal. I'm tired of it."

**CLICK HERE
FOR ANSWER**



"Between our work and our kids' schedules, we are worn out. The passion has faded and we just feel like tired roommates. What are we supposed to do?"

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FOR ANSWER**



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A photograph of a man and a woman sitting together, looking at a laptop. The man is on the left, wearing a light blue shirt, and the woman is on the right, wearing a grey tank top. They are both smiling and appear to be engaged in a conversation or looking at something on the laptop screen. The background is a soft, out-of-focus indoor setting.

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