



# Married Life Ministry

## Merry Christmas!

I wanted you each to know that I am praying for you as we serve God together "for such a time as this".

I know you are all aware that when it comes to marriage the message we get from society is clear, "nothing lasts forever". High schoolers influenced by our culture now refer to a first marriage as a "starter marriage". Can we blame them? I just heard about a website that sells miniature coffins for a person desiring to bury not only a failing relationship but his or her wedding ring. The site reads, "Give a dead marriage it's proper final resting place, the wedding ring coffin is the perfect gift for yourself." [weddingringcoffin.com](http://weddingringcoffin.com)

As we serve to change the climate of marriage, we and our families are certainly not immune from this divorce culture. As we dive into the holiday season let's be sure to think over how it is affecting our personal marital climate. Tim Muehlhoff wrote Marriage Forecasting: changing the climate of your relationship one

conversation at a time. He says, "The more we understand how the cultural climate surrounding our marriages presses in on us and threatens to hinder our intimacy, the more we can make plans to counter those challenges." In his book Muehlhoff lists some ideas for married couples to improve the communication climate that I thought might be applicable for us in the stress of the holiday season. He gives four elements to strengthen communication in marriage: acknowledgment, expectations, commitment, and trust.

1. Acknowledgement: Practice what communication experts call "mindfulness" - being fully present in one direction on one person. Acknowledge the past and invest in the present.

2. Expectations: Dr. Sue Johnson says, "Most of us no longer live in supportive communities with our birth families; we work longer hours, and have fewer opportunities to develop close relationships, we now ask our lovers for support and emotional connection that my

grandmother received from a whole village." She goes on to say that being involved in a body of believers helps meet personal and spiritual needs and keeps expectations from being unrealistic. 3. Commitment : Author Gary Thomas writes that staying faithful in marriage during difficult times leads us to experience a depth of God's love that comes only through perseverance and dependence; he calls it the "sacred history".

4. Trust: Communications experts agree that the level of trust that exists between spouses is foundational to the health of a marriage.

Muehlhoff ends with a quote from Peter Kreeft, "Marriage is the union of two good forgivers. Any problem can be solved if two things are present: forgiveness and determination."

Merry Christmas &  
A Blessed New Year!

Claudia Mitchell and  
the Married Life Team