



# Marriage CoMission NEWSLETTER



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## New Manna

by Jeff Fray

"You can't resist the world on old manna." This thought came to me as I was journaling last week. The older I get the more I appreciate the great challenge of being "in" the world but not "of" the world. In psychological terms we call this being "differentiated." The most courageous and differentiated person to ever be in our midst was Jesus Christ. While we tend to form our sense of identity through the eyes of others and largely via the roles that we take on in life, Jesus knew who he was without looking to the crowd for feedback.

The Israelites were escaping Egypt and on their pilgrimage to the Land of Promise when God provided them with "manna." Whatever manna was, they could only gather enough for one day, and if they tried to do otherwise it would just rot. So they found themselves having to trust Yahweh for their daily bread. This is the context for the phrase, "You can't resist the world on old manna."

Being differentiated is not so much about who we are not, or what we are against, but who we ARE and the force of our being in the world. In the first half of my life the "need to please" shaped much of my world and is why my idols included the likes of "Mr. Useful," "Dr. Relevant," and "Captain Needed." Idols became alternative sources for my identity. Properly served, my idols had the power to silence the "you stink" voices - at least temporarily - on the strength of feeling needed and relevant. In order for me to be an "actor" on the planet and not just a "reactor," I require freedom from my idols and the fear that drove me to them to start with. I wish this battle was over, but in fact every day I have to choose the way of differentiation...that is why I can't resist the world on old manna. His manna feeds my sense of identity as His child, nurtured and fed by His love.

Here is some fresh manna. Paul wrote to the Ephesians: "For this reason I kneel before the Father (he is in a Roman prison) from Whom His whole family in heaven and on earth derives their name. I pray that out of his glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being... that you may grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ." The power of being in the world rests in the love of Christ...it is a reality when embraced by faith.

The Marriage Movement is a movement to revitalize marriage

and family and restore the covenant between a man and a woman and between one generation and the next. It calls young people to the sacred bond between commitment and sexuality - not so much as a moral choice against something, but rather a moral choice that preserves a great treasure. It calls married couples to invest daily in the simple tasks essential to growing a healthy and loving relationship, and in turn raise hope-filled children. It calls one generation to put the interests of the next generation ahead of its own. Who of us can carry out this work in their own strength?

This Movement calls me to seek fresh manna every day - that is if I want to walk in the freedom to fully engage the world with the dominion that God has entrusted to me.

*Jeff Fray is the Chairman of the National Steering Committee of the Marriage CoMission.*

## A Vision for Marriage & Family Legacy

### What does "I do" mean?

According to **Lakita Garth Wright**, a powerful voice in the Abstinence Movement, "I do" means "I 'do' you, you 'do' me, and we don't 'do' nobody else!" Wright, along with other dynamic speakers and educators, gathered last week for the **Abstinence Clearinghouse** annual conference. Wright and her counterparts have found powerful ways to articulate a vision of marriage and family for young adults today. The Abstinence Movement has been on the frontlines of messaging to youth about marriage and family for years, passionately exposing myths about sex, cohabitation and marriage. But the longing of many educators is to awaken hope and to enable youth to envision healthy relationships in their future - including marriage.

The Abstinence Movement is a vital part of the larger Marriage Movement. As teammates, we are both "headed west"- both see stirring up the created desire in men and women for life-long, healthy marriage as a key to providing a context in which enrichment, intervention and skills-training can fit. With the understanding that sustained motivation for purity is most empowered by running toward a vision of hope rather than running away from negative consequences, Abstinence Movement leaders are working to paint a picture of what a great marriage looks like.

With its extensive grassroots network, the Abstinence Movement also has a strong presence in cities. Collaborating with their network is an important part of revitalizing marriage and family in a community since they are already deeply engaged in reaching students within the school systems. Find ways to connect in order to help our youth gain and sustain a vision for a healthy marriage and family:

1. Are the schools in your community using an abstinence-based curriculum that includes marriage preparedness and a vision for family legacy?
2. Are churches and youth groups including healthy relationships training in their schedules?
3. Is your media reaching teens and young adults?

It's exciting to think about how passionate people can find ways to work together to create catalytic change - change that ignites other community stakeholders to overlap their efforts and pool their resources to accomplish more together than they ever could apart.

- Andrea Lee

## Summit on Marriage, Parenting & Family at Hampton University

Hampton University and the National Center for African American Marriage and Family (NCAAMP) will host a National Summit on Marriage, Parenting and Families this fall at the University's campus in Hampton, Virginia. This groundbreaking event will gather a small group of influential leaders to discuss the critical issues facing marriage and families. Please see the [Summit brochure here](#) for more details. This important event seeks to encourage more national dialogue on how to help marriages and families thrive.

## Upcoming Events

### Fireproof Institute at Smart Marriages

July 8 and July 12 (Smart Marriages Conference, July 6-12)

[Please see the flyer here.](#)

### AMFM Marriage & Family Ministry Training Conference

Phoenix, AZ, August 3-7

[www.amfmconference.com](http://www.amfmconference.com)

### Corporate Working Group Conference Call

August 11, 12pm EDT

More details coming soon.

### Business as Unusual Conference

WinShape Retreat, Rome, GA: August 16-18

[Please see the flyer here.](#)

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Thanks!  
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