

A Letter From the Past... Our Personal WWME Story

By Tracy & Joleyn Larson

7 years we had shared between us, and it seemed our marriage was slowly going down hill. 3 small boys, and a baby girl on the way, and we found ourselves drifting apart. Life seemed to have taken its toll on us. Work, school, and finances - the fun was gone and so were our smiles. We were lost in the hustle and bustle of this so called "real world". We talked less, we cuddled less and we laughed less and the things we did get around to doing didn't involve spending quality time with each other. Late nights at the office, long hours spent with friends-time tearing us apart. Often times, it was the little things that we stopped talking about that really added up to the big misunderstandings. Resentment and anger stored deep inside our hearts as our communication completely shut down. We didn't "click" anymore.

We saw an announcement in our church bulletin about a **Worldwide Marriage Encounter** in Richardton, I thought, *we should do that*. The insert said that it was a weekend to encourage good marriages to find that "spark" again *not* to council troubled couples - *was our marriage "good" enough to attend - I wasn't so sure*.

After reading the announcement three more times I made the call and registered for the March weekend. We needed to do something about our sinking relationship, and maybe this would help. It was a three month wait for us to get on the next available weekend and it was the longest three months of our lives. Our weekend arrived; we packed our things, kissed our 4 children goodbye, hugged Nanna and Bampa, and then drove to Richardton in complete silence.

We barely looked at each other as we unpacked in our designated room. More silence and then, we headed out to the hall to wait. My feelings were up and down all night as the presentations began. I remember sitting through the first couple of talks, thinking, we aren't supposed to be here at this one--this weekend is for only good marriages.

By Saturday morning my uneasiness was soon replaced with determination. On our weekend we learned how to deal with conflict, not avoid it. We did something that we never really knew how to do together--and that was **communicate**. We learned to listen with our hearts and not our heads. We learned about our personality styles and how completely opposite we were--no wonder it was hard to click. We stopped trying to **change** each other and we became more **forgiving and accepting** of our individual personalities. Our smiles came back, and we started to laugh again. We were able to enjoy the time we had. Our love was back! Our weekend was beautiful, it was life changing, and it was part of God's plan. We renewed our vows that weekend, celebrating our 8th wedding anniversary and we made a promise to love each other forever.

After the Worldwide Marriage Encounter weekend, getting back into the real world was not easy. Issues were still there, but we were given "tools" and an opportunity to start changing some things and we did. The **rebuilding** has taken time and we still have to work on things daily, but the love, the trust, the happiness that has been rebuilt is even

stronger than before. Our marriage encounter weekend was a **turning point** for our marriage, it breathed new life into our hearts.

Some afterthoughts... almost 4 years later. We'll be the first to tell you that marriage is not an easy road. It's a day to day journey that we must choose to travel together. We still struggle, we have our fights, but each morning we have a choice and we try to **choose love.**

Tracy and I have been part of the Worldwide Marriage Encounter ministry ever since our first weekend. We attend weekends yearly and we want to be a breath-of-fresh air to our family and friends amidst today's hectic world. We hope to share the love we received on our weekend with those we meet by sharing our personal story and encourage you to attend your own Worldwide Marriage Encounter weekend.

In Christ We Are,
Tracy & Joleyn Larson



The Larson Family

The Worldwide Marriage Encounter Mission Statement:

Worldwide Marriage Encounter's mission of renewal in the Church and change in the world is to assist couples and priests to live fully intimate and responsible relationships by providing them with a Catholic "experience" and ongoing community support for such a life-style.

What you may not know about Marriage, but is so important.

- Periods of disillusionment are normal in every marriage. Keeping them to a minimum is what makes for a successful relationship! Our decision to love will help us break out of disillusionment. Today's "Married Singles" lifestyle tempts us to put our relationship on the "back burner".
- Listening is the key to communication! When we experience what our spouse is feeling, then we know that we have listened with our heart. This is not to imply that we need to understand and agree with what they are feeling. Do not listen just to hear the words but to accept the person to whom you are listening. Make what your spouse is saying as important to you as it is to them.
- Marriage is a living sign of God's love. We did not receive a Sacrament on our wedding day, we became a Sacrament. What kind of a sign do we want to convey to others? True happiness comes when we live intimately and responsibly in our relationship. By being intimate we are open to love and to be loved. By being responsible we are living out the decision to love in our daily lives.
- Worldwide Marriage Encounter offers a weekend experience designed to give married couples the opportunity to learn a technique of loving communication that they can use for the rest of their lives. It's a chance to look deeply into their relationship with each other and with God. It's a time to share their feelings, hopes and dreams with each other.
- The emphasis of the Worldwide Marriage Encounter weekend is on the communication between husbands and wives. The weekend provides an encouraging environment for couples to spend time together, away from the distractions and tensions of everyday life, while encouraging them to focus on each other and their relationship.
- A Worldwide Marriage Encounter weekend is not a retreat, marriage clinic, group sensitivity, or a substitute for counseling. It's a unique approach aimed at revitalizing Marriage.
- This is a time for you and your spouse to be alone together, to rediscover each other and together focus on your relationship for an entire weekend. Every marriage deserves that kind of attention!

To have information sent to you, or to have someone call you with more information, email Mark or Mary Jantzer at jantzer@srt.com or Phone: 852-6291

The next Worldwide Marriage Encounter weekends are scheduled for: Feb. 16-18th, and April 13-15, 2007 at Sacred Heart Monastery, Richardton.

Please visit our website for more information. **North Dakota Encounter: *Serving the North Dakota Area one Couple at a time.*** <http://www.ndwwme.org/>

The story above will be appearing in our Dakota Catholic Action (monthly newspaper for the Diocese of Bismarck) later this month and possibly the New Earth publication (Fargo Diocese). We think it is great, and hope that it will be a fruitful inviting tool. Tracy and Joleyn were willing to tell their story and willing to have it spread around to other areas if anyone else would like to use it/publish it. The attached photo puts their gorgeous faces with the story, and may be a great connection for people to see.

Ken Kessler
January 20, 2007