



May 12, 2009

Hello everyone,

Last week I was down at Angelsea for a fabulous Leaders 2 Go conference. Both Beth and I had a great time and were personally challenged and encouraged in our ministry. I hope you will all keep your eyes out for future conferences such as these. In fact, I have just finished writing my article for the next issue of Links looking at the question of why we train. I'd love to hear from you your thoughts about the training opportunities you have attended in the past and what you have found to be useful (or not) about them. What sort of training would you benefit from?

Today I'd like to start a 3 part series on practical ways to minister to Playgroup Families which I hope you will find helpful and relevant to your setting.

1. Supporting Playgroup Parents in their Marriages
2. Supporting Playgroup Parents in their Singleness.
3. Supporting Playgroup Parents in their Parenting.

Supporting Playgroup Parents in their Marriages

I once read that the quality of a couple's marriage reaches its lowest point after the birth of their first child and I remember being stunned. How could that be so?! And yet it is so for many, many couples. Perhaps it's been true for you. I wonder if it's been true for the parents in your Playgroup. As I talk and journey with new parents, I see an outpouring of disappointment, hurt and anger as they adjust to their new roles individually and the changed dynamic a new little person brings to their family life. Knowing how to respond to this isn't always easy and doesn't always come naturally to us but it's vital that as Playgroup leaders we equip ourselves to pastorally care for people through this season of life. Here are three simple suggestions:

1. When someone is sharing their story with you remember that it's not about you. Try not to get drawn into empathising, rather listen and ask "tell me how that made you feel", "what would be the best thing you could see come from this situation" questions. Remind them that this is a normal challenge for new parents; they aren't alone in feeling this way. Try not to feel overwhelmed when you hear the statement "I just don't know why I married him/her". This is a real feeling for lots of new parents, they don't need you to

tell how to fix it or that they are wrong to be feeling like that, they just need to know that they can work through it and that they probably won't feel like that forever. Remember that it's a scary thing for a person to feel and they need your love and support as they share these big fears with you.

2. Get informed! There are some fabulous books out there that deal with many of the issues everyday couples face. Perhaps you haven't or didn't go through anything like this in your marriage, perhaps you aren't married, or perhaps it's been a while since you had young children in the house. It's time to refresh your memory! Get some books and read them so you know what you think of them and which ones you are happy to recommend (be discerning! – if in doubt ask a respected friend or church elder or feel free to email me), then organise a Playgroup Bookstall and start doing weekly reviews encouraging your families to borrow, borrow, borrow! Some books I am happy to recommend as a starting point are [The 5 Love Languages](#), [The 5 Languages of Apology](#), [How to Get Your Husband to Talk to You](#), [Love and Respect](#). You can also check out [these links](#) for more Marriage resources
3. If you are finding that lots of your families are facing issues in their marriage seriously consider running [The Marriage Course](#) (for couples) or [MarriageGym](#) (for women only) at another time during the week. If you offer the Marriage Course try and find respected members of the congregation who have Working With Children Checks to volunteer for free babysitting so as to make the course as accessible as possible.

For the past few years we have talked about Playgroup as Missional and so it's concept many of you are probably familiar with. One of the ways we can be missional is to support people in their life. This is a great first step to the goal of sharing the truth about Jesus with someone. I'd love to hear from you about this, how does this look in your Playgroup? Does any of this raise questions for you? Let's dialogue and together continue to grow our Playgroups in effectiveness for sake of Christ!

I encourage you to forward this email to your fellow Playgroup Leaders and to find some time to talk about its application in your setting

*Blessings,
Louisa*