

THE CENTRAL ARKANSAS MARRIAGE INITIATIVE (CAMI) MISSION AND APPROACH SUMMARY

January, 2016

The Central Arkansas Marriage Initiative (CAMI) is an association of Christians whose goal is to network, equip, and mobilize the Church community to strengthen marriages. We believe God desires to redeem and restore marriages in Arkansas by His power and for His glory!

Our Mission To improve the lives of Arkansans by partnering with local churches to foster and strengthen Christ-centered marriages within their congregations and communities

Our Approach CAMI resources, networks, and collaborates with individuals in churches and other organizations to promote healthy marriages. This is accomplished with the following process:

1. **Discover** – Who God is using for His work. The intent is to move individuals and churches from isolation to participation by building relationships based on listening to where God is at work in their Church and community.
2. **Gather** – Bring together people with a passion for marriage to move them from participation to partnership. Partnerships are developed with a shared vision and belief that we can accomplish more if we work together. Our gatherings are designed to encourage, equip, resource and connect individuals and organizations with a passion for strengthening marriages.
3. **Serve** – To help Churches move from partnership to ownership. Ownership involves dedicating time and resources to encourage and support Christ-centered marriage leaders, and utilizing and supporting lessons learned from these experiences. These results create a “Marriage Champion Church.”

CAMI identifies, partners with and equips “**Marriage Champion Churches**” and “**Marriage Champions**” to create a culture of strong marriages in their circles of influence.



Marriage Champion Churches (MCC)

A MCC is a church that is intentional about ministering to marriages on an ongoing basis. These churches develop a year-round marriage ministry strategy which guides them through the process throughout the year. Becoming a Marriage Champion Church is not about completing a task; it is about beginning or continuing a process.

Marriage Ministry generally focuses on three primary areas: 1) Pre-marriage 2) Marriage Enrichment and 3) Marriages in trouble. A MCC has intentional strategic plans to address each of these areas of ministry throughout their ministry year.



Marriage Champions are individuals, married couples, or groups working in their local church, workplace, and/or community on the “front lines” of marriage ministry.

Marriage Champions may contribute in the following ways:

1. Listen/empathize with individuals and/or couples who want to share their challenges and successes in marriage
2. Tell the story of your marriage, recovery, growth
3. Work with others to lead a small group or partner on a marriage event to help build strong marriages
4. Act as a marriage mentors
5. Participate in Marriage Preparation
6. Undergo training to serve as a biblical counselor or mentor

In order to achieve the CAMI Mission, we will engage in the following activities:

- Prayerfully seek out and engage individuals and churches who are currently involved or feel led to be involved in marriage ministry.
- Identify and equip Marriage Champion Churches and Marriage Champions to create a culture of strong marriages in their circles of influence.
- Identify and promote resources and practices to support marriage.

- Organize and facilitate regular gatherings of individuals engaged on the “front line” of marriage ministry to encourage, equip, resource and connect.
- Determine credible ways to assess marital health in order to benchmark progress.
- Provide a website of quality and accessible information about healthy marital resources, links, and articles.
- Use social media to inform, encourage and connect with individuals in Arkansas regarding healthy marriages.
- Publish a monthly newsletter highlighting upcoming opportunities to strengthen marriages and sharing success stories provided by CAMI partners.

CAMI definition of marriage: Marriage is a life-long commitment made between an imperfect man and woman that God alone makes possible by His power and for His glory.

CAMI recognizes Christian denominations as well as other groups and individuals hold differing views of marriage. Our hope is to encourage and support those individuals choosing the above definition while engaging in dialogue with those who differ. We believe the ideals and collaborative efforts developed by this initiative will have value for our entire community.

Why Marriage Matters?

To the Church¹:

- Marriage is God's way of revealing Himself to the World (Ephesians 5:25-33)
- Society holds the misconception that divorce rates are at 50% and its "not worth it."
- Faith practices improve marital health & reduces divorce rates.
 - Attending church
 - Praying together
 - Serving together

To Pastors²:

- 77% felt they did not have a good marriage
- 30% have had an extra-marital affair since beginning their ministry.
- 50% marriages will end in divorce
- 70% do not have close personal friends, and no one in whom to confide

Benefits to Children³⁻⁶: Children from healthy, two parent homes have:

- an 80% less likely chance of living in poverty and relying on welfare
- reduced behavioral problems and higher cognitive scores
- significantly higher score on math and science benchmarks
- lower involvement in drug and alcohol abuse, gangs, and crime.

Benefits to Men and Women⁷⁻⁸:

- Marriage increases the likelihood that fathers and mothers have good relationships with their children.
- Marriage is associated with reduced rates of drug and alcohol use for both adults and teens.
- Married mothers have lower rates of depression than do single or cohabiting mothers.
- Marriage is associated with better health and lower rates of injury, illness, and disability for both men and women.

Benefits to the Economy⁷⁻⁸:

- Over a ten-year period, taxpayers save an estimated \$100,000 for every marriage saved.
- In 2011, the US government spent \$330 billion on assistance to single-parent households.
- Parental divorce reduces the likelihood that children will graduate from college and achieve high quality jobs.

Healthy marriage and family initiatives are having a positive impact in various states with significant reductions in divorce rates and teen, unwed pregnancy rates, as well as increased commitment to intentional parenting practices. For instance, “First Things First” in Tennessee, since its inception in 1997, has saved taxpayers nearly \$4 million, reported that 86% of couples who have attended their premarital education class are still married, and has observed a 33 percent decrease in divorce filings in Hamilton County.⁹

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