



The Face of LCI

“In the final chapter of *The Castle*, Jesus and I meet in the ballroom and dance with joyful abandon and grace. In the quiet moments that follow, we are haunted by the faces of those still trapped in their castles.”

Storming the Castle

I'm not a risk taker. Not interested in motorcycles, jumping out of airplanes, or going anywhere I might not get a parking place. So, uprooting our young family and moving to Northern Virginia to plant a church? Ummm... NO. But God, in a way unprecedented, invaded my heart and desires with His own and in 1992 my husband, Rusty, and I moved to Northern Virginia to plant our dream: a church for the unchurched.

Planting is not a fitting analogy for this experience. Childbirth is. The growing intensity of expectation and preparation, the strain of labor, the agony and ecstasy of delivery, the craziness that comes when life as you have known it is completely eradicated. As we struggled in this process, God began showing me the futility of all my survival strategies. But I just worked them harder.

During that year, at some point of grace and on the verge of collapse, a friend pressed me to meet her in Glen Eyrie, Colorado for a conference with our heroes, Dan Allender and Larry Crabb. In a setting almost enchanted, I sat in the Glen Eyrie castle, surrounded by silence and snowcapped mountains.

Crabb and Allender began deeply stirring my heart with hope, truth, and a commitment to be “relentlessly real.” I clung to every word. I longed. I wrestled. I wept. And I repented. Standing before my small group, led by Brent Curtis (co-author of *The Sacred Romance*), I said, “I am a fraud. I am not trying to be, but I am. I am a minister's wife who has no idea how to love my husband or do this work. I am doing all I know to do, but it's not working.”

Afterwards, in strength and gentleness, Brent said “Becky, *find* and *stay with* the rage and pain in your soul.” In all my years of Christian conferences and in Christian circles, no one had ever said anything like that to me. It was weirdly comforting. I wrote it down, having no idea what it meant.

I gathered my courage and interrupted Larry and Dan at dinner to ask if they had trained any counselors in Northern Virginia. “Bill Clark,” they said, and I quickly scribbled his name in the corner of my notebook. When I look at that now, it feels almost sacred.



Becky Coram (lay counselor and LCI Board Member) and her husband, Rusty, standing on the construction site of New Hope Church on Ox Road in Lorton, VA. After 16 years of being a mobile church, New Hope will joyfully open its doors for its first worship service on June 15, 2008.

Within the next few weeks, I found myself in Bill's office. Within the first hour, I knew my life would never be the same.

For about two years, Bill and I engaged in a process that was agonizing and healing, chaotic and sweet. It was a profound mystery—what was revealed, the timing, and how it all unfolded. A mystery much bigger than us. I became painfully and joyfully alive as we unwrapped the shame that had quietly covered my soul. I began to understand dignity and depravity, stunned at the depths of both in my life. I waded into my longings and wrong strategies, especially in the way that they had shaped my marriage. I came face-to-face with my raging demand and self-contempt, defiantly clutching both as I viewed their damage in my relationships and to my soul. I found and stayed with the rage and pain in my soul. And in the end, remarkably, it led me to gaze freely and unashamedly into the face of Jesus.

During this time, strongly influenced by my experience in Glen Eyrie, I began to vividly picture and write about my life as being lived in a castle: “a glorious, majestic castle full of warmth and light, intrigue and mystery.” A castle with a magnificent locked door that I had spent years trying to unlock, now finally and forever opened by Bill,

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LCI Happenings

Spring Training at Reston Bible Church

The 25 participants who gathered in Reston Bible Church's Gap facility for training this spring weren't there to play baseball. The Lay Counselor Institute's Level 1 training, held April 17-19, 2008, drew people from 11 churches for an introduction to biblical counseling.

The relatively new training format—two evenings and a Saturday, rather than two weekends—allowed more people to attend the Virginia training than would have been able to otherwise.

"Everyone seemed so engaged in all aspects of the weekend, from the teaching and sharing in the large groups to the vulnerability in the small groups," commented Barbara Giuliano, LCI Training co-leader. The attendees participated eagerly during the teaching sessions and asked animated questions during a Q&A with a panel of lay counselors.

It's exciting to see how the word about LCI is getting out. "Two pastors are here; that's a little unusual," said training co-leader Bill Clark. Of some of the churches represented, he added, "we're not even sure how they heard about us!"

Level 2 Training at McLean Presbyterian Wraps Up

In March, the largest Level 2 training group ever gathered for its final meeting at McLean Presbyterian Church. The 30 participants, plus 8 group facilitators, came from a grand total of 14 churches located in Virginia, Maryland, and Washington, D.C.

Due to the size of the group, LCI inaugurated a new Level 2 format when the training began this past November. Each meeting started with a teaching time led by LCI's Executive Director, Bill Clark. Participants then divided into four small groups with two facilitators each for a time of discussion and application.

Greg Conrad, who attends Church of the Epiphany in Herndon, Virginia, described his experience facilitating one of the small groups: "As with most Level 2 sessions, our group slowly evolved and began to learn the value of being open and vulnerable with one another, thereby making room for the redemptive work of Christ through a demonstration of love and grace."



Level 2 small group facilitators

"The beauty in the work we did is that it will have a life reaching impact far beyond just a counseling role," said one participant. "Now it is an indelible part of me, so as God calls I am able to offer my heart to others as we share in the journey home toward Jesus."

Level 2 Comes to Maryland

Training that began in March and will continue to July is being hosted by Mid-Atlantic Community Church in Crofton, Maryland. Twelve people from five different Maryland churches are attending this Level 2, including three people on the staff at Mid-Atlantic Community.

The larger-than-usual group is utilizing the same format as was used at McLean Presbyterian Church this past spring. After a one-hour teaching time by Bill Clark, the group splits in half for a deeper exploration of the concepts taught. Dr. Clark divides his time between the two small groups, each of which has two facilitators.



Level 2 Training in Crofton, MD

"Bill has not taught LCI-2 in Maryland for several years," said Cindy Hunter, co-leader of the Maryland training and an LCI board member. "We're excited to have him on this side of the Beltway."

LEE ANN BISULCA

LCI Fall Level 1 Training Dates:

September 11, 12 & 13 at Grace Community Church in Fulton, MD

For directions and more information, visit our website at www.lciministry.org

Dates are being finalized for a Level 1 Training Session at New Hope Church in Virginia for the fall. Check our website for up-to-date information.

Save the Date:

Dan Allender – October 3 & 4, 2008, Vienna Presbyterian Church.

For more information, please visit www.viennapres.org.

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allowing me to wander freely with Jesus in and out of its rooms and walls. I called my story simply, *The Castle*. It has been a profound honor that Bill has used it some in the LCI training, and also at points in counseling some of his clients.

This past summer, 15 years later, I returned to Glen Eyrie. Walking the grounds, halls and rooms of the castle felt hallowed. I wept with gratefulness as I stood in the room of my confession, recalling the pain, fear and strange hope that I felt there. I felt awe at where I've been and where I am and the God who has pursued me, loved me, and led me through it all.

In the final chapter of *The Castle*, Jesus and I meet in the ballroom and dance with joyful abandon and grace. In the quiet moments that follow, we are haunted by the faces of those still trapped in their castles. Jesus says, "You can be part of freeing them. Open their doors. Lead them out."

"Lord, you know I will," I reply. "Nothing else makes any sense, but to live my life for them and for you."

Fourteen years after writing that, through LCI, opening castle doors is still the picture that compels me to do what I do. It is an honor to be part of



Glen Eyrie Castle in Colorado Springs, CO

women's lives and stories. I am still not a risk taker, but at 52 I sometimes see myself as a courageous adventurer flinging open castle doors, helping them to face the rage and pain in their souls and, at some point of grace, to find themselves gazing freely and unashamedly into the face of Jesus.

BECKY CORAM

For He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the Kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

(Colossians 1:13-14, NIV)

LCI's Couples Counseling Workshop

In March, over 80 people attended LCI's first workshop for lay counselors and local pastors focusing on counseling couples. Building on the LCI model of counseling, Dr. Bill Clark and Dave Myers, LPC, teamed up to look at the unique aspects of working with a couple.

Dave Myers shares, "Assisting Bill in this workshop was invigorating and profoundly encouraging.

I also came away sobered about the challenge of marriage and counseling couples, yet also very hopeful about the reality of God working in

people's hearts. Bill stimulated me to think more precisely and creatively about what it might look like to invite Jesus into the counseling time.

While I have heard about LCI for years, this was my first experience with the LCI community, and I was struck by the dynamic of quality content

presented in a relaxed setting. It was truly a privilege to participate and to be introduced to many who support LCI."

LCI plans to offer future workshops for pastors, pastoral staff and/or individuals who have completed Level 1 and 2 LCI Training. If

you would like to be added to the mailing list for future training workshops, please send your email address to info@lciministry.org.

"Well you see, counselor, my husband never takes the time to... And he always acts like..."



"But, I try to...
...Hey! I'm a good guy! Really! And, it's not like I really mean to..."

We've Moved!



LCI's new office address is:

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Bill Clark

We know marriage is rich ground; much growth occurs when we address our dreams and demands of marriage and spouses.

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The Director's Couch



"I wouldn't give 10 cents for a marriage that hasn't been on the brink of divorce..." Larry Crabb, said in a class

"The deepest struggles of life will occur in the most primary relationship affected by the Fall: marriage." Dan Allender and Tremper Longman III in **Intimate Allies**

"I believe that much of the dissatisfaction we experience in marriage comes from expecting too much from it." Gary Thomas in **Sacred Marriage**

"Have you ever wondered why God doesn't just make your relationships better overnight?" Paul Tripp and Tim Lane in **Relationships: A Mess Worth Making**

What are these authors, counselors, teachers trying to say? How is it different from some of what we hear on the radio, from Dr. Phil and Dr. Laura, eHarmony, and the like? Even in the church we rarely hear the darkness, enmity or struggle implied in these kinds of statements. We rarely hear the mystery and hope hidden here as well.

In March we held our first LCI workshop; "advanced" training for the lay counselors currently serving in the many churches with which we are connected. LCI's ministry committee agreed that we should address the counseling of couples. We know marriage is rich ground; much growth occurs when we address our dreams and demands of marriage and spouses. We know that many are struggling in marriage and would seek help if it were available. We wanted to plant the idea that lay counselors can do marriage counseling too!

After some introductory remarks and an exercise to examine our changing beliefs about what marriage is fundamentally about, Dave Myers and I presented a "simple model for marriage counseling." I thought it might be helpful to summarize each of the four phases we described.

Phase one is the *assessment* stage. Couples describe their marriage; hypotheses about what is right and wrong with the relationship, what has helped or hurt them, key stresses, how they met, what their hopes were and are, what the nature of their pain, fear or disappointment is, etc. It is especially important to help each spouse articulate their

deepest beliefs about marriage, gender, intimacy, etc. This "theology" is what most of us are using to evaluate our marriage.

The second phase is a time of *exposure*. Here the counselor and the couple explore the nature of the marriage, how each spouse treats the other and the relationship. Conversations are broken down so that each can see the personal messages being sent or heard (many of which are demanding or defensive). Events are used to explore the choices each partner makes and the beliefs driving those choices. Repetitive cycles and scripts are described and each partner has the chance to see what their behavior reveals about them. This is tenuous work. Counseling, if done well, exposes realities that we are often not prepared to face and leaves us in a painful state of choice regarding direction and resources. This can be either redemptive or destructive.

Phase three is *education and frustration*. Education should come *after* exposure; we want to read the marriage books once we see what we are doing and believing; how unhelpful it often is. The frustration part is the acknowledgment that a change in paradigm or theology is not easily undertaken and is fraught with resistance (within us and often from our spouse!). Letting go of the dreams that got us married and clinging to the vision that God wants to give us is not naturally appealing to most of us!

The final stage, presuming a couple is moving through the other stages, is the *encouragement and inspiration* phase. Here, the insight, hope and courage that one or both spouses demonstrate is highlighted. The slow change and/or hopeful signs of movement are affirmed. The resistance is understood and gracefully addressed because there is good news here. A marriage is becoming something different, two people are submitting to God in ways they never anticipated doing before they wed one another or sought to follow Him.

Like all counseling models, this is simple. Sounds great on paper. Real life, we know, is messy and unpredictable. Marriage counseling is too. Paul said in 1 Corinthians, "now we see through a glass dimly." Clearly, we need paper towels and Windex! Here's hoping that our words and experience will be of some help in the dimness we all know so well.

We Need Your Feedback

We welcome your input & suggestions; please email info@lciministry.org, Attn: *LCI News*. If you would like to receive an electronic copy of the *LCI News* by email only, please send your request to the above email address.

Our Mission

The Lay Counselor Institute (LCI) is a non-profit organization that assists the local church in establishing and growing an effective ministry of biblical counseling by identifying and training caring and gifted believers who are grounded in their knowledge of the Bible and committed to biblical counseling.