

A Marriage Seminar to Make Every Day Valentine's Day

Debby Gullery
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On Saturday, February 18, in celebration of Valentine's Day and National Marriage Week, the Belvedere Family Church of New York hosted a one-day marriage enrichment seminar. The attendees were quite diverse, many being intercultural and interfaith couples, and they ranged from newlyweds to couples married for 34 years. One important thing they all had in common though: They recognized the value of intentionally investing in their marriage and taking time out of their busy schedules to do so!

The presentations were given by Debby Gullery, a trained marriage educator and author of a book on marriage entitled *Small Steps to Bigger Love*. In the morning, she presented a talk on how expectations can get in the way of intimacy and what to do about it, and the first part of a talk on the importance and challenges of effective communication.

In the afternoon, she reminded everyone of the value of forgiveness in marriage, and presented second part of the communication presentation. This presentation included instruction about a technique for communication about a difficult topic, and one courageous couple volunteered to practice the technique in front of everyone. That gave the participants the chance to understand how to use the technique, and then they all had an opportunity to practice with their spouse, with coaching from Debby when it was needed.

The weather was unseasonably warm for February, and everyone enjoyed having lunch "al fresco" with a beautiful view of the Belvedere property and time for personal discussions with their partner and with other couples. They left with a few new tools in their relationship toolboxes, some homework to do that would help them hone their new skills, and more confidence and hope to continue building the marriage of their dreams. All in all, it was a great way to celebrate Valentine's Day!