

**Parakletos Newsletter**  
**December 2009**

"We exist to facilitate the church to be a safe, honest, and intimate place to meet, know and grow in Christ and His Body. Parakletos creates a safe place through means of individual counseling, seminars, and mentoring."  
[www.parakletos-cz.org](http://www.parakletos-cz.org); [parakletos@volny.cz](mailto:parakletos@volny.cz)

We are often invited to speak at churches or at conferences or seminars organized by Christian organizations. The topics are in the area of relationships, marriage, family, sexuality, parenting, or Christian counseling. Often we do also seminars for pastors and church leaders.

A weekend visit in a local church typically starts with a Friday night program for the church youth. Then on Saturday a whole day seminar is given for marriages, and then on Sunday morning a sermon. And possibly a final lecture made on Sunday afternoon for the public as a kind of church outreach for invited friends. Most important though usually is the time we spend with pastor and his family. We often have late night conversations about their ministry and personal, family, and ministry issues they face. Very often we hear their traumas and struggles they have never shared with anyone else before. As a result we have now several deep ongoing relationships with pastors after such visits.

This autumn we had many such speaking opportunities. During the last two months we had the following seminars:

**Male Sexuality conference**

We spoke at the conference about male sexuality. It was organized by one charismatic church for men and women together with a US speaker who had program for women. Pavel had a seminar for men. Men were in wide range of ages and those present were very responsive. Many of them had an opportunity to talk openly about struggles in that area for the first time. One young man later wrote to us saying that he was deeply touched by the seminar and when he arrived home he was sad and cried. But God started to heal him and he was able to talk to his father and started also healing in their relationship. Another man expressed deep gratitude for the seminar saying that he started to understand what had been inside of him in a completely new way. In his past he could not get over the hurts in that area and now he understood what was the real purpose and function of our sexuality as God designed it.

**Seminars for non-believers**

We had another series of marital seminars and father seminars for non-believers. It was again exciting to talk with people who do not know Christ about serious issues in our lives. We present ourselves as Christians and by serving them and by presenting a simple Christian message in the seminars we hope that their hearts will open for the Gospel. From the participants' responses we select:

- "It was an exciting seminar. I feel hope and strength to go on in dealing with my problem. I understood some of my wrong attitudes and decided to change them."
- "I was touched by the humility and seriousness of this seminar. It struck me how exactly it described my own situation."
- "I found an answer for my questions in dealing with conflicts in my relationship. I feel that what I heard improved my marriage as well as other relationships."
- "The way of the speaker's presentation built trust in me and I made a decision to be humble myself as well."

## Conference about Divorce

Pavel spoke at the first conference about divorce in the Czech Republic organized by Evangelical Alliance. Divorces are becoming an issue in churches. In the past people in churches rarely divorced. But now it becomes much more frequent. Recently even church leaders divorced. Churches are shocked and it becomes a trauma for the whole fellowship. The purpose of this conference was to open the discussion on both theological and pastoral aspects of divorce. Pavel was the main speaker and spoke about the consequences of divorce on multiple levels, for ex-partners, children, family, community and society. And Pavel led a seminar on "Ministry to the Divorced". Pavel was even interviewed for the Czech TV and the conference was reported on the TV.

## "A Marriage That Will Survive" Seminar

Another seminar was held in Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia. The fear in churches of the break up of marriages spreads over the country. "Now even Christian marriages are not immune to failure?" - everywhere we speak we can feel that traumatic question, especially from young people. We were asked to have a seminar about "Marriage That Will Survive". And we spoke about the way conflict develops in marriage and how it can either destroy the relationship or make us grow. The participants (there were about 120 people) evaluated the seminar quite highly; some said: "It was one of the best seminars on the topic!", "It was a great encouragement for me. I value the honest and down-to-the-earth approach and truthfulness and practicality of the content." Over the weekend Pavel also preached on Sunday morning and there were several more meetings with individuals or those who have hearts for helping marriages.

## Fatherhood Lectures

The Christian Library, a good ministry where Pavel had been a board member for many years, celebrated an anniversary and for the occasion they asked us to have a seminar for fathers. Those were two nights, one for fathers and the other about reconciliation with the father. There were predominantly Christians though one person was an unbeliever. And it again showed the significance of fatherhood to people in the Czech Republic today.

## Marital Sexuality Seminar

We were invited to the church in Pavel's mother's town Vysoké Mýto on the topic of Marital Sexuality. The church put posters with an expression *Marital Sex* all over the town so there were at the seminar both Christians and non-Christians. The seminar was very interactive with participants highly involved in discussions about different levels of intimacy in marriage. One non-Christian lady who was present said to the pastor that the seminar was extremely helpful and helped her to understand the problem in her marriage. Another Christian lady wrote to us "it was so important to talk about that topic openly". In her home it had never been spoken about. After she became a Christian she felt awkward to speak about it and was left alone with her husband to talk about this among themselves. The seminar was the first opportunity to speak about it openly. They found it very helpful to clarify the relational values in that area for themselves and understand better what they were experiencing.

I should also mention that leading those seminars and speaking engagements are not financially rewarded. It has not been the custom in the churches in the Czech Republic. Churches usually just pay for travel expenses. Though recently we have sometimes received a small extra donation to our ministry.

We really enjoy that part of our ministry. There are many topics that have been taboo, new in the churches or just not spoken about and we feel that for real Christian lives these are critical to be addressed from a Christian biblical world-view perspective. Furthermore, the discussion about practical aspects of our everyday discipleship is critical. We need to understand God's will for our personal lives, marriages, families and communities. One survey lately showed that in the Czech culture the highest value for people is success in a primary relationship. That is what we intuitively felt and what we speak about. And that is why we are so excited to help people to understand the biblical wisdom in the realm of relationships.

## **Family**

We celebrated our 25th wedding anniversary. Our girls bought us a few days in Rome but unfortunately with SkyEurope airlines which went bankrupt so we lost the tickets. But we then decided to go to Scotland to visit our girls (we have never seen yet the place where Jana lives and studies in her second year). It was not a typical anniversary celebration but we enjoyed the time and for financial reasons it seemed the best solution.

Happy New Year! We wish you God's presence and mercies in the next year!

*Pavel and Julia Raus*