

'Fireproofing' Marriages

The Christian film Fireproof, which releases on DVD today, has spawned church-based campaigns to help strengthen marriages.

✖ **Jan. 27, 2009** – A film about a man's attempt to save his marriage has scored big at the box office and spawned a marriage-enrichment movement that is spreading nationwide.

Released on DVD today, *Fireproof*-produced by pastor-filmmakers Alex and Stephen Kendrick and the members of Sherwood Baptist Church in Albany, at No. 4 the weekend of Sept. 26 and has since grossed more than \$33 million. The film stars actor Kirk Cameron and was created on a \$500,000 budget.

"I'm certain that Hollywood has scratched their heads and wondered how these movies got this type of response," said Alex Kendrick, who with his brother, Stephen, previously produced the films *Facing the Giants* and *Flywheel*. "There is a strong need for family-friendly movies with wholesome storylines that don't offend the faith and values of most Americans."

Since *Fireproof* premiered, *The Love Dare*, a once-fictional book that is featured prominently in the film, has become a best seller, as churches across the country host 40-day Love Dare campaigns to help build healthy marriages.

"So far, we've been astounded at the response we've received from both the movie and the books," said Alex Kendrick, who helped launched the Web site in tandem with the film. "Thousands of testimonies have already come in that have been an encouraging sign of what God is doing in this area. If the divorce rate in America is lowered by even 1 percent, then a million kids won't have to experience ... the pain of a separated family."

Interest in the book spawned a workshop curriculum and other

materials to help couples improve their marriages. LifeWay Church Resources developed the video-based *Love Dare Bible Study*. “We developed an online journal/blog where readers can register and log their 40-day Love Dare journey,” said John Thompson, senior vice president of marketing for B&H Publishing, which published *The Love Dare*. “As we have read some of these stories, there is overwhelming evidence that marriage is important to our heavenly Father. He really is making all things new.”

In addition, Outreach Inc., a Christian marketing firm, released the *Fireproof Your Marriage* curriculum for couples and small groups. Eric Abel, vice president of marketing for Outreach Inc., said the products were breaking records. “Not since *The Passion of the Christ* have we seen such an enthusiasm for a film among pastors,” he said. The company also offers licensing agreements that permit churches to host *Fireproof* movie events.

First Baptist Church of LaVergne, Tenn., began a *Love Dare* workshop in October and is planning another one in the spring. “It’s a real eye-opener for couples who enroll in the workshop,” said Timberlee Ramsey, a church administrative assistant. “They say, ‘I didn’t realize that I was doing that,’ or ‘I had no idea this was affecting my partner this way.’ This is something that needed to be done a long time ago.”

Trudy Champion, care pastor at Christian Life Church in Orange Beach, Ala., has used the *Love Dare* materials in her small group. “The impact on marriages comes from couples being able to talk about issues in their marriages, some maybe for the first time,” Champion said. “Often times, there is an underlying issue but never discussed, and this brings those to the forefront.” -Randy Rudder