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**The  
Pastor  
And  
Marriage**

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# Introduction

by Richard A. Hunt, Integrator

Concern for marriage and family life is mentioned specifically in Imperative Three of Fuller's "Mission Beyond the Mission" statement, yet Christian marriage is a major avenue for reaching all five of those Mission imperatives:

1. One way to "Go and make disciples" is as spouses, loving and caring for each other as followers of Christ, who then reach out to love and care for the world in many ways.

2. One way to "Call the church of Christ to renewal" is as woman and man in marriage, open themselves and calling each other to renewal in the "mini-church" that exists in their own marriage.

3. One way to "Work for the moral health of society" is by enabling marriages to be healthy, flexible and strong. As the Holy Spirit permeates their relationships, Christian couples can share their experiences of continuing healing, wholeness and renewal with others who often hope in vain for these blessings.

4. One way that we "Seek peace and justice in the world" is by practicing peace and justice in our marriages. Then peace and justice naturally, because of God's grace, pervade our family and community relationships.

5. One way that we "Uphold the truth of God's revelation" is by continually experiencing God as the Cosmic Lover who validates eternal truth through the finite relationship of marriage, where a man and a woman espouse each other in special ways before God and the world.

Fuller Theological Seminary, with its three schools — Theology, Psychology and World Mission — can become the world center for the study of Christian marriage. Already more than a dozen of our faculty have written books and articles that directly relate to marriage.

Both basic and applied research, scholarship, teaching and training of both professionals and lay persons should be part of this goal of becoming the world's finest center for understanding Christian marriage and family. Many ways to define and approach Christian marriage must be part of this objective. I believe that this is one of God's calls to us in the wider Fuller community.

The articles in this issue on "The Pastor and Christian Marriage" remind us of a few of the many facets of marriage, especially Christian marriage. As integrator for this issue, my prayer is that God will use these reports to accomplish this threefold goal:

1. That marriages among clergy will be upheld, enhanced and strengthened.
2. That clergy will be more effective in their ministries with couples and families.
3. That all Christians will catch the vision of the central importance of marriage in the Christian community and in the world.

As these dedicated authors speak to you, my hope is that these three goals will also become yours.

*Richard A. Hunt*

# Marriage Dramatizes Theology

by Richard A. Hunt

Some ask, "Is there any good news about marriage today?" My answer is "YES!"

I do not want people to feel overburdened with the unrealistic demand that they must be perfect in their marriages. This simply produces guilt from failures and fears of rejection. But neither do I want to see marriage belittled, ignored or written off as less important than "more noble" efforts, such as feeding the hungry, world peace, space exploration or theology. What I do want people to know is that regardless of their early experiences in their families of origin, spouses are in charge of what is now happening in their relationship and can change for the better if they decide to do so.

I do want us to reawaken to the tremendous influence that the man-woman dyad has on us all, whether we are married or not. The Christian tradition in various ways has understood the vast importance of marriage as a major key to faith and order. Everett (1985) clusters these understandings of marriage into four major symbols: sacrament, vocation, covenant and communion. Each of these symbolic models may focus on the individual, couple, family or household.

For example, Kasper (1981) maintains that every marriage is a religious symbol that points to God's faithfulness. Allen (1984) describes marriage as a special covenant that serves the ethical goods of procreation and companionship. Jewett (1975) lifts up the co-equality of woman and man in marriage as an analogy of the covenant of grace expressed in

marriage. "It is the mutual partnership of husband and wife which makes marriage a parable of the covenant of grace" (Jewett, 1975, p. 141).

Marriage, like other human relationships, dramatizes or expresses theology of some kind, Christian or otherwise. By their actions, two spouses, whether aware of it or not, constantly shape the character, style and structure of themselves and of their marriage, for good or ill. This in turn impacts others.

To paraphrase a common saying, Christian marriage is not a way of spouses doing certain "religious" activities, such as prayer, Bible reading or church attendance. Rather, Christian marriage is made real in the ways spouses act in all areas of living, including finances, careers, sex, parenting, vacations, hobbies and everything else.

The fundamental task of individuals and couples is to become competent and able to love (Mark 12:30-31). How each person or couple does this becomes itself a living parable, or a lifelong drama, of God's ways at work in our lives. Marriage is a specialized workshop for love, through which God uses each circumstance to invite the partners to learn additional ways to love in that situation.

## The public effects of private relationships

This approach suggests a basic thesis that can be expressed in both negative and positive form: Bad couple relationships are the major cause of most of the world's problems. Good, healthy couple relationships are the major cause of most of the world's successes.

As described in an old Chinese proverb (Hunt and Hunt, 1981, p. 74), habits of the heart become the habits

and traditions of the couple, family, community, nation and world:

If there is righteousness in the heart, there will be beauty in the character. If there is beauty in the character, there will be harmony in the home. If there is harmony in the home, there will be order in the nation. When there is order in each nation, there will be peace in the world.

As Christians, we believe that the source of all order and stability is the creating, redeeming and sustaining God whom we know through Jesus the Christ.

## Some examples of the negative

Violence and crime begin with a woman and a man who live at war with each other. Intentional breaking of society's laws begins with a man and a woman repeatedly breaking promises that they make between themselves and modeling this in their parenting of their children. The use of guns and other weapons to get one's own way begins in the bondage of a woman or a man to past experiences of hurt and pain that continue in a seething rage toward others.

Capriciousness and unpredictability begin in the ways in which a man and a woman act without regard for what they said they will do, leaving their words as empty and broken promises. Thoughtless dishonesty and hateful manipulation between a woman and a man make both the family and the neighborhood unsafe at any time of the day as well as the night.

Disrespect for the rights and property of all persons begins in the put downs and nagging complaints a woman and a man force on each other at home. As individuals who fear each other and hate or ignore a God whom

"In marriage each spouse is called to imitate God's redemptive grace and love with the partner..."

they believe is vengeful and uncaring, they distrust both others and themselves and do whatever they want without regard for anyone else in the home or neighborhood.

## Some parallel examples of the positive

World peace begins with a woman and a man who live in peace with each other. Law and order begin in the graceful commitment of a man and a woman to live together in the "holy estate of marriage, which is an honorable relationship." By grace these spouses model their stable commitment through the parenting of their children.

Integrity and dependability begin in the ways in which a man and a woman consistently act as they say they will, validating their words with behaviors. Thoughtful honesty and loving openness between a woman and a man make both the family and the neighborhood safe at all hours of the night as well as the day.

Respect for the rights and property of all persons begins in the affirmation and confidence a woman and a man give to each other at home. As equal individuals before each other and before God, they maintain clear personal identities that enable them to set flexible boundaries at home. "His," "hers" and "ours" enable balance between privacy and community.

## Couples enact expectations

Marriage is the pivotal set of expectations and role behaviors by which a man and a woman define themselves as a couple. Couples who are "just dating," "just friends" or "living together" also use their images of marriage as the criteria for structuring their current relationship. Married or not, no couple can escape

dealing with marriage in some way.

The central thesis here is that spouses enact their understandings of God with each other through the ways they live, whether they are aware of this or not. The behaviors that produce the relationship of marriage come first, and then the spouses apply these experiences to their understandings of God.

## Marriage as parable in the Bible

Family relationships have often been used as parables to point to human relationships with God. Although father-child images have been most prevalent, mother-child, sibling-sibling, and husband-wife images also appear. We are less likely to think of God as "Lover" or "Spouse" than as "Parent," "King" or "Lord." Of the twelve images that Roof and Roof (1984) studied, respondents were least likely to think of God as "Spouse."

Several common biblical references illustrate the use of marriage as parable. The Song of Solomon, Hosea 1-3, I Corinthians 7 and Ephesians 5 are perhaps the best known of these. As both Jewett (1975) and Allen (1984) have noted, the patriarchal assumption of the superiority and dominance of husband over wife, a reflection of social customs of those times, is not the point of these accounts, and need not be accepted in order to grasp the insights about God that marriage offers.

The analogies work in more than one way: they speak about what marital love should be like, that of wife for husband as well as the reverse; and insofar as we have experienced true

marital love, they suggest something of the depth of God's love. (Allen, 1984, p. 228)

The analogical use of Christ as bridegroom and the church as bride (Mark 2:18-20, Ephesians 5:31-33) illustrates one use of marriage as parable. It is when we make this parable into an allegory, with husband as "godlike" and wife as "dependent," that we miss the primary meanings of the parable.

In marriage each spouse is called to imitate God's redemptive grace and love with the partner, regardless of how inadequate this imitation may be. Since each spouse is at times the recipient of the graceful concern and actions of her or his spouse, and at other times the giver of grace to his or her partner, each spouse plays both roles in the divine drama, under the tutelage of God, so that each individual learns to give and to receive love as God loves. In this sense marriage is a microcosm of God and the human condition. Out of these experiences we deepen our understanding and appreciation of God as "Spouse."

## Good marriages and positive faith go together

Many studies of marriage and religion point to positive relationships between marriage success and religious commitment. Marriage relationships tend to be stronger and more satisfying when both spouses are active in the same religious group (Hunt and King, 1978).

This link between psychology and theology points to the intrapersonal and interpersonal processes that are associated with religious and theological statements. The implication is that much more theologizing is happening in the lives of individuals

"Decisions about God...pro or con, permeate the lives of every individual in many ways."

than we are likely to recognize in verbal statements and traditional measures of religiosity. Making explicit some of the principles of interpretation (hermeneutics) as they apply to both religion and marriage is very useful to couples.

Gottman's concept of "temporal form" offers a way to understand how couples theologize about their relationship and God. "A relationship can be conceptualized as the temporal forms that people create and their cognitive apprehension of these forms" (Gottman, 1982).

Gottman proposes that observational categories, affective patterns, and a couple's perceptions of interactions are all necessary for a complete measure of couple and family interaction. It is in these expressions, rather than in verbal statements per se, that the major information about couple functioning is to be found. Through these temporal forms a couple dramatizes their worldview and theologies.

A similar theme is presented by Brody in his approach to marriage and family therapy:

Can you catch the rhythm of your own participation in your family's dance? Can you catch the moment when a slight variation will pull the dance along with you into a counterpoint, freshened by each other's knowing that a change is in progress?...A family's life is largely implicit. It lives far beyond the words that we know. (Brody, 1977)

Spouses are creating, often unwittingly, a complex statement about themselves, their relationship, and the world about them. In the actions of each spouse, for good or ill, with or toward her or his partner, and in the responses of the other spouse to these actions, both spouses express

the human conditions of estrangement and of community.

These theological statements, written in the forms of drama, are always part of, and often central to, the ongoing lifestyles that the spouses are creating. The religious experiences already exist in the couple's relationship, and part of the spouses' task is becoming more intentionally aware of the theology that they are already experiencing and expressing.

#### Faith appears in every facet of marriage

There is no way that any couple can avoid dealing with faith and other religious issues in some way, just as language includes both prayers and cursings. Decisions about God, whether deliberate or inferred, pro or con, permeate the lives of every individual in many ways.

Spending the limited amount of money each individual has is guided by the value that person places on food, clothing, shelter, health, and other essentials and luxuries. Charitable contributions and gifts to others result from the value one places on self in relation to others, a religious issue. These are expressions of one's stewardship of all possessions, based on one's faith perspective.

Very private sexual thoughts and urges, sexual lifestyles, and the procreation and birth of children eventually result from a person's mind and heart, the most important sexual organs of every man and woman.

Whether prescribed, legalized or illegal, the use of medications and drugs by self, partner or children is usually influenced by what has happened and is happening between spouses, regardless of whether they are living together or broken apart.

Marriage is the central relationship in the family and the primary key to the quality of the family. Spouses are

the "priests" who minister to each other and to other family members with the power to control the quality of the household. How spouses act toward each other is not only the key way to evaluate the marriage, but also a dramatization of their understandings of their relationship to God and God's world. "We love (others), because God first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

Marriage is the laboratory or workshop for learning to love another person. Rather than "falling in love and then marrying," couples love each other just enough to marry and then begin a lifelong journey through which they learn the depths, extents, implications and skills of loving another human being as unconditionally and completely as is humanly possible. This life journey approach to marriage is described by Campbell (1980) and by Olthius (1986).

Couples provide in microcosm parables of what happens when God loves us, or what would happen if God should fail to love us. Couples who stay in contact with each other long enough to work through difficulties can experience the fullness of alienation, forgiveness, reconciliation, renewal and growth through the "seasons" of their lives.

#### Some implications

Two parallel implicit questions continually face each partner in a marriage. Expressed in many verbal and non-verbal ways, one question is, "Can I really depend upon another person to be present and available to me, voluntarily, at no charge, at any time, unconditionally, in any life situation?" This longing for at least one other person to care for me, to support me, and to want me, just as I am, is also an expression of my longing for God. God can become incarnate through my partner, and the

## An Enduring Marriage

A conversation with Bob and Edie Munger

experience of fulfillment with another person both results from God's love in us and points to that love for us.

The parallel question, even more crucial for our growth as Christians, is, "Can I be present to another person, be available, voluntarily, at no charge, under any and all circumstances, for that person, and care for that person unconditionally, with no strings attached, across life, with such commitment that only death can keep me from doing this?" This is God's amazing and challenging invitation to each partner to learn to love in the way that God loves us, to become an incarnation of God's Spirit in the real world for another person.

The limits of time force us to make choices and set priorities. Time limits may be the one fundamental reason for monogamy. To know (in every sense of the word) one person well requires much time, and attempting to know two or more persons in the same depth of marriage means that the available time and energy for each person will be reduced.

One's spouse is not god, nor can we assume a god-like role for our spouse. This points to a key issue in marriage: power or control in its many meanings. Control as ability and competence in the positive sense means that each partner can actually give (actualize)

— Please turn to page 26

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From 1969 to 1979 Dr. Robert Munger was a member of the faculty at Fuller, and returned to the seminary after serving as associate pastor at Menlo Park Presbyterian Church in the San Francisco Bay Area from 1979 to 1986. Since his return he has served as chaplain to the faculty and minister-at-large to students.

Dr. Edith M. Munger is assistant clinical professor at Fuller's Graduate School of Psychology. She is also a staff psychologist at the Pasadena Community Counseling Clinic.

In the report that follows both are in dialogue with Richard Hunt, Ph.D., the integrator of this issue of *Theology, News and Notes*.

**Hunt:** Statistically, clergy have the third highest rate of divorce. To what would you attribute the enduring quality of your marriage?

**Bob:** Compatibility. Marriage is more the quality and essence of the character of a person than his or her performance. From my first date with Edie, I knew intuitively that she was the one I had dreamed of meeting some day, even though we are opposite in temperament in many ways. I never doubted she was the one person in all the world with whom I could be as one, and this awareness has been constantly affirmed by my belief in Jesus Christ, who brought us together and would keep us together in love.

**Edie:** I don't think that the duration of a marriage is the clue to the quality of the relationship. I have a sense of wonder and awe that our marriage has survived so many years and that I still feel the commitment, excitement and love alive that I felt for Bob since the day we exchanged our vows.

I think it has to do with what we each brought to our marriage from our life experiences to that point, what

we learned from our parents, what our expectations were of marriage and each other, and what we share in our relationship to Christ. I married Bob because he was a certain kind of man, not because he was a minister. Our marriage has endured because he has been patient and tolerant with the differences in our personalities — even when it was difficult for him. And I have been able to accommodate myself to what I knew he could not change in his personality.

We both knew that we could never fill all of each other's needs, but the scales weighed so heavily on the qualities we respected, admired and loved about each other that we could handle the things on the lighter end of the scale. We were both confident of finding in each other what we wanted in a marriage.

Our marriage has endured because of the quality and integrity of Bob's life. We both have flaws and shortcomings. Otherwise the marriage vows would not commit us to promise to love each other for "better or worse." Sometimes we haven't liked our humanness, but we have learned to live with the ambiguities, paradoxes and contradictions of being imperfect human beings. For Bob to preach well, shepherd great congregations, and teach in an outstanding seminary are great gifts and actions. For Bob to endure his physical limitations with stamina and courage and not allow them to defeat him, to be able to laugh though he is not very playful, to deal gently and patiently with his wife and family are things more rare, most difficult, and less noticed in the world.

To hear "I love you" in a burst of passion is wonderful, but what counts in the long run is learning to share a whole spectrum of feelings, moods and thoughts on a daily basis. This

"Two people start teaching each other how to relate from the first time they meet."

is the excitement of not just living together, but loving and growing together.

**Hunt:** How did the differences in your backgrounds and personalities affect your relationship to each other and the congregations you served?

**Edie:** The magnet of attraction and the flavor of our marriage was that we are essentially different! During the years we have been married, the routine of everyday life hasn't blurred our differences, and we can end up arguing over some of the silliest differences which initially fascinated us.

He loves TV Cowboy and Indians movies, and "Whodunnits?" I don't. I like myriads of tiny sparkling lights on the Christmas tree; he likes as few as possible. He grew up in an intact Christian home where he experienced security, predictability and continuity. The warmest, most affectionate person in his early life was the Swedish nurse who "lived in" and took care of him.

The warmest person in my life until I was 5 was my affectionate, loving mother. But my parents' marriage was a mismatch. They separated when I was 5. From 5 to 12 I was reared by an order of Episcopal deaconesses — much like an order of Catholic nuns. In the simple habits that they wore, they seemed austere and strict, but they were caring and conscientious in "training a child in the way she should go." They had a great deal to do with my spiritual formation.

From age 13 I spent my junior high and high school years working in one of the largest department stores in Pasadena, learning office procedures and skills. I learned early to not expect anyone to meet my needs or make decisions for me, so one of the big

adjustments in marriage for me was learning to consult Bob about decision-making.

As a pastor's wife I was not programmed to spend my time in the kitchen helping serve luncheons or dinners, or on committees of the Women's Societies. I was too used to working in the world of men and business. The transition was not easy.

**Bob:** When Edie and I were married the roles of husband and wife were clearly defined. Pastor's wives devoted themselves to their husband, family, home and church, in that order. Before I met Edie she had been holding responsible administrative and secretarial positions in large churches serving thousands of people. It was not easy for her to make the transition to "pastor's wife" in a small church. She was attending UCLA part-time and working as a pastor's secretary when I met her, and I knew that her dream was to be a psychologist. It never occurred to me that she would pursue that goal any time in the future. So hers was the major adjustment — to me and to the pastorate.

My natural disposition and pattern of emotional withdrawal was more of a problem for her than any of the so-called problems of being a pastor's wife. She understood people and the behind-the-scenes stress and strains of the pastor. This enabled her to transcend the criticisms and personal conflicts which can make the lives of more vulnerable and sensitive pastor's wives utterly miserable.

**Hunt:** When in your relationship did you set the "emotional thermostat" on how close or distant you wanted to be with each other?

**Bob:** My emotional thermostat is normally set at the cool end of the continuum, but my first date with

Edie sent it soaring. The setting was conducive — a picnic with 16 other young people from my boarding house — at Mount Wilson on a then smog-free night in June, with a full moon rising over the sparkling lights of Los Angeles. Not only was she most attractive to me, but she also gave me something I had never before experienced — the liberating feeling that I could trust her with my whole self or any detail of my life; that she would understand and care. That initial feeling of trust has remained and deepened with time.

A most important question remained. What was the nature of her relationship to Christ? How was she committed to serve him? I was considering overseas service as a missionary in Korea or China, but the then Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. advised me that I had to serve a church here in the U.S. for two years before they would appoint me. I was praying for a wife who would be more than a "dutiful wife," one who would have a sense of call and commitment.

On our second date I caught her eager willingness to venture anywhere God might direct her. From then it was just a few days before I let her know how I felt about her.

**Edie:** Two people start teaching each other how to relate from the first time they meet. When I met Bob he had just graduated from Princeton Seminary and was starting his first pastorate at the South Hollywood Presbyterian Church. I was attending UCLA and working as a part-time secretary to the minister of the First Presbyterian Church of Hollywood. I had no intention of marrying at that point in my life — not until I had

"Our sexuality is an integral part of our humanity, and the temptation to abuse it...is part of the human predicament."

reached my goal of becoming a psychologist.

When Bob invited me to go on that picnic at Mount Wilson, I accepted. Then he asked me for a date the next night, and the next and next, and the next night this cautious, introverted, quiet, reserved, tall-dark-and-handsome young minister had asked me to marry him. Not in so many words, but he got the message across.

My emotional thermostat is normally set at the opposite end of the continuum from Bob's, and I knew instinctively that I would need to make some accommodations. It was not without some emotional pain and adjusting that we have both grown and changed. Bob has given himself permission to feel his feelings and find strength in tenderness. He has become more relationally and emotionally sensitive to other people. I have learned to accept the part of him that he cannot change and love him more deeply for the changes he has made. And I appreciate his willingness to understand and accept me.

**Hunt:** Everyone working in any helping or counseling profession has to deal with feelings and relationships with the opposite sex. How have you dealt with this issue?

**Edie:** This is a subject that no one wants to talk about. I have found that each pastor and spouse need to work together through their own unique approach to these problems. For many couples, feelings of attraction for other persons never creates a crisis as long as the feelings are not acted upon. For others, acknowledgement of such feelings for anyone other than one's spouse is a serious threat.

The greater the understanding Bob and I have of ourselves and of each other, the more we are alerted to be responsible in our behavior toward

the opposite sex. Being aware of and accepting the fact of my own natural response to some men in certain relationships helps me in understanding this same natural response of my husband to other women. Such attractions are normal, common, and in no way violate the commitment of our marriage vows or threaten the core of our love for each other. I trust him, but I am realistic enough to know that he could succumb to temptation no matter how good our marriage is, or how much we love each other.

From the beginning of our marriage women of all ages have been attracted to him, and half of the time he hasn't even recognized it. There have been emotionally mature, caring women who have loved and respected him in non-sexual ways that have enriched his life. Occasionally there have been some who have been overtly seductive, and he knew he had to be on his guard and if necessary, "run for his life."

We have built up a lot of "capital," and the caring and affection I give him I trust makes our marriage worth preserving. Next to my relationship with God, our marriage is the most important relationship in my life. With our busy schedules, I need constantly to work on making time for being together so that we do not find ourselves living in parallel lanes.

**Bob:** Our sexuality is an integral part of our humanity, and the temptation to abuse it and misuse it is part of our human predicament. Temptation comes to all normal, healthy Christians no matter how dedicated or spiritual we may be, and those in positions of Christian leadership need to be keenly aware of their vulnerability.

I started my ministry as a single pastor in a small neighborhood church in Hollywood. It was good "survival" training, and with God's

help I made it. I take seriously the Lord's Prayer, the reality of temptation and the tempter. It is presumptuous to think that we are invulnerable.

My relationship with Edie has been so fulfilling and satisfying that I have not had to undergo the severe struggles so many of my fellow pastors and friends have gone through. I have too much going for me to risk endangering what I have or hurting the one I love. The dominant desire to please Christ and enjoy his favor also outweighs the temptation of "the pleasures of sin for a season." Looking back over the satisfying years of marriage to Edie, I am profoundly grateful to God for his mercy in keeping us as one in loyalty and love.

I feel it is important that pastors — men or women — have resources to meet this part of their lives and ministry. Unless a minister leaves the ministry and stops counseling men and women, he or she will have sexual feelings about a counselee, or about another staff member. Certainly neither wife nor husband will help each other if either feels that every incident must be reported. The dimensions of such expectations are obviously childish and will not encourage communication. We need to trust each other, but not to take each other for granted.

**Hunt:** What insights have you gained about the stresses on a marriage when a wife pursues a separate career?

**Bob:** About the time our younger daughter was well on her way in elementary school, Edie enrolled at UC-Berkeley to complete her half-finished bachelor's degree. For the first time I became aware that she was in dead earnest about following through on her original goal of becoming a psychologist.

I had a deep resistance to the thought of her becoming a psychologist.

"...to love as Christ did means to serve, share and suffer for others. Then love your wife that way!"

I was most distrustful of what appeared to me to be non-Christian assumptions with long-term negative influence upon the patient. If Edie pursued her goal I feared that it would divert her time, interest and energy in a direction I was not going and could not fully share with her. And most important, I would miss her. I felt I would be losing part of myself to that academic world across the street, and we would not have the same close partnership in Christ that we had known before.

The crisis came when I accepted the call to teach at Fuller. I was at the University Presbyterian Church in Seattle, and Edie was admitted to the Ph.D. program at the Graduate School of Psychology at Fuller. This was a tough, demanding six-year program. Such a huge investment of time when she already was an excellent psychotherapist didn't make much sense to me. It was not easy for me to handle. Ephesians 5:25 spoke to me: "*Husbands, love your wives as Christ also loved the church and gave himself up for her.*"

Edie had given herself for me, being willing to meet my needs and support my ministry. Just as I had felt the call to preach the gospel, she had an inward calling to be a Christian psychologist with the best training she could get. But when my own ministry as professor in Fuller's School of Theology gave me a more predictable life with fewer demands from people, it was clear that I should take the supportive role for a change. My theology spoke clearly to me that to love as Christ did means to serve, share and suffer for others. Then love your wife that way!

**Edie:** There were no thunderclouds of the feminist movement even rumbling when I started back to finish my bachelor's degree at Berkeley. There were no "self-actualizing," "realizing

my potential," "liberated woman" buzz words to contaminate my motive and drive for going back to finish my degree. It was simply a matter of necessity if I were going to continue doing what came naturally and what I felt was right for me.

At 18 and in my early 20s I worked as research secretary for the popular woman evangelist, Aimee Semple McPherson. She was unique as a person and controversial as an evangelist, the "darling" of the press because she made such "hot copy." People were polarized "for her" or "against her," depending upon whether they saw her as saint or sinner. Many young people were magnetized by her powerful personality and passionate goal of preaching people into the kingdom of heaven, inspiring them to go to her Bible school and become preachers of the Foursquare Gospel. I wanted to understand the dynamics of her unique personality.

The Spanish philosopher Miguel de Unamuno speaks of the "tragic sense of life" as being the hunger for personal immortality, the effort whereby we tend to "persist indefinitely in our own being." I wanted to understand how she was working out this tragic sense of life in her unique way. This is when I developed also an insatiable need to know more about what effect the Christian faith had in changing the lives of some of the thousands of people who flowed like a river in and out of the Angelus Temple doors. That is when I decided that I wanted to become a psychologist.

Going back to UC was a continuation of that consuming purpose and motivation. Being married to Bob could be a full-time career, but his consuming motivation in those years to be all he felt God

wanted him to be left little space for family, and I couldn't be satisfied in finding a vicarious identity through him. When I walked across the commencement platform at the end of my Ph.D. program and the academic hood rested on my shoulders, I could only think of what Dr. Newton Malony expressed when he received his doctoral degree, "This is who I have always been."

I made the choice to live with the tension of building both worlds — my professional goals and my personal responsibility to my husband, our children, and the church. My personal goal was not worth imperiling my marriage or my children, yet I could not give up the conviction that I could balance the three arenas of my life if I managed well and made responsible decisions about each.

Reviewing our marriage, I am profoundly grateful to God for bringing us together, for the important events in our histories, our children who have enriched our lives, the turning points, our peak experiences, the people and places, the churches and educational institutions that have shaped our lives separately and together. They have all helped us in keeping our love alive and happening. We both agree unreservedly that we would still choose each other if we had to make the decision again. ■



## What Happened to the Wedding Pictures?

by Dennis and Lucy Guernsey

The year 1985 was a significant one for us. We celebrated our 25th wedding anniversary, and we participated in the marriage of our eldest daughter. These two milestones of middle age occurred within three months of each other. We had now been married longer than we had been single. And we were now the parents of an emerging young woman who was beginning her own marriage journey, just as we had so long ago.

Our daughter's marriage in particular provoked a sense of *deja vu* for us both. We couldn't help but remember when we had stood in a similar place 25 years earlier.

As is the case for most people, our wedding day was one of the most exciting days of our lives: "We're actually getting married!" After the craziness of the engagement, the headaches of planning the wedding, the doubts about whether or not we were doing the right thing, everything was in place and the day had finally arrived.

A wedding is a significant event. And to capture that significance, modern custom ordains that there be wedding pictures.

The newlyweds pose excitedly — their happy expectations clearly on their faces: "We will be forever happy. We will be committed to one another. We will be devoted. We will meet each other's needs. Nothing and no one will ever come between us."

The wedding party looks on with benign approval. And it's all captured on film. The pictures will always be there to remind the couple of their promises.

One way to interpret the importance of the wedding pictures is to say that culturally they represent the wishes and expectations that the families and the community have for the new couple. The pictures also can be seen

to represent the romantic idealism our culture has attached to marriage. When the two streams of community and culture merge, they influence the couple's own expectations of what their marriage promises to be.

The wedding day with its wedding pictures chronicles the beginning of a voyage colored by optimism, hope and promise. The romantic idealism has been both institutionalized and internalized. The couple and their community both agree: this marriage will be special.

### Welcome to the real world!

Just how different will it really be? Virtually all couples soon come to realize that the reality of marriage is markedly different from the promise. Somewhere between five and ten years into the marriage, the two people who posed so tenderly for their wedding pictures look at each other across the breakfast table, and each sees someone far different from the person who stood next to him or her on their wedding day.

Both spouses have changed physically; the slim, trim, athletic body of the wedding day (and wedding night) has developed a paunch or stretch marks. And both have changed emotionally as well. The delightful "free spirit" now seems irresponsible; the logical, analytical mind inexpressive and lacking in warmth and empathy. The easygoing, laid-back spirit has evolved into a terrible housekeeper, and the comfortably dependable soul has become boring and stuck in a rut. Over time, those qualities that once attracted us grate on our nerves.

Welcome to the real world of real marriage — when the day-to-day reality fails to live up to the ideal

promise of the wedding pictures.

And so now comes the decision: *Which do you keep, the pictures or the person?*

The solution for more and more people in the latter half of the 20th century is to throw away the person and keep the pictures. This process is called divorce. But what about the others, those who choose not to divorce? What can be said of them? Why do they stay together? What kind of marriage can they have?

### Five kinds of lasting marriage

One way we have come to answer these questions is to think in terms of five kinds of long-lasting marriages as identified in a research study done by J.L. Cuber and Peggy Haroff at the University of California at Berkeley in the mid-1960s. Even though the research is more than 20 years old, Cuber and Haroff's insights still provide useful pegs on which to hang our thinking.

These five types of marriages represent *intact, enduring* relationships. But that doesn't mean all five types are positive. In fact, the first two types of marriages described by Cuber and Haroff can be thought of as negative and destructive. We mention them here primarily to point out that not everybody who stays married does so for healthy reasons. But we hope also to show that even those in destructive marriages can change the way they relate to one another.

The first kind of marriage in Cuber and Haroff's model is the *conflict-habituated* marriage. Such marriages are marked by constant and recurring hassles and arguments — sometimes even violence.

The second kind of marriage is the *devitalized* marriage. It is a marriage in which the partners are living in an empty shell with, perhaps, the

"In the midst of seminary, while Dennis was busy studying the Bible... our marriage became conflict habituated."

memory of what used to be a "good" marriage. For the most part, husband and wife live separate lives, yet they maintain the appearance of being married.

The next three types of marriage as identified by Cuber and Haroff can be thought of as being more positive and constructive than either the conflict-habituated or the devitalized relationships.

The third type is the *passive-congenial* marriage. In a passive-congenial marriage, the partners live parallel lives, but not in the empty-shell manner of the devitalized marriage. The partners are usually friends, but not necessarily best friends. They get along and have worked out a relationship in which there is typically more separateness than there is togetherness. Often, as far as they are concerned, being married just "happens."

Still another type of marriage identified by Cuber and Haroff is the *vital* marriage. This kind of relationship is typically marked by frequent interaction and communication, interspersed with times of separateness. In a vital marriage, the married partners experience times of intimacy, but not at the expense of the identities of the individuals. In many ways, the vital marriage best typifies the "ideal" marriage of the 1980s.

The fifth and last type of marriage identified in the research is the *total* marriage. In a total marriage the partners' lives are so intermixed and interwoven with one another that it is difficult for others to distinguish between the two. Their goals are virtually interchangeable. They live together, work together, play together,

and love together. In terms of friendship, frequently they are one another's only close friend.

#### Which works best?

Contemporary wisdom suggests that the first two kinds of marriages — the conflict-habituated and the devitalized — would be better off if they were allowed to die. In fact, our experience indicates those are the ones that do die. Many of the supposedly "good" marriages that we have seen end in divorce were perceived by one or both partners as either marked by steady and constant conflict or an emptiness that could no longer be endured.

But we would suggest that the contemporary wisdom about what kind of marriages should continue sometimes leads the couple to pull the plug prematurely, before the issues have been fully explored and all the options measured and evaluated. The key is not to quit simply and only because the marriage is not living up to the ideal. The key is learning to face reality and then working together to build a healthier marital style.

The ideal marriage is typically thought of as being somewhere between the last two types, the vital and the total. After all, aren't we taught that "the two shall become one flesh"? Anything less is often thought of as failure, or at least as less than God's will for marriage.

But our own personal experience is that during the history of our life together we have experienced all five types of marriages, each at different times of our life. That we would pass through all five types as if they were stages makes sense when you consider our individual backgrounds and family histories.

Dennis, for instance, was raised as the only child of a single mother. He remembers very little conflict at home,

but also not a lot of closeness or togetherness. His relationship with his mother could be thought of as being passive-congenial.

In contrast, Lucy was raised as the eldest of six children. Her home was marked by constant interaction and communication. Something was always going on. In terms of the Cuber and Haroff types, Lucy's was a vital family.

In a very real sense, our family backgrounds established our expectations as to what our marriage would be like. Dennis envisioned a kind of parallel peacefulness, while Lucy envisioned a kind of active vitality. And no less than two years into our marriage, while Dennis was attending seminary, our differing expectations began to clash. Lucy increasingly yearned for interaction and closeness, while Dennis opted for peace and distance.

Lucy's reaction to this conflict of expectations was to push and nag (after all, as the oldest of six brothers and sisters she was accustomed to taking charge). Unfortunately, Dennis's response to her pushing was to withdraw and move farther and farther away. And the more he withdrew, the more Lucy pushed. In the midst of seminary, while Dennis was busy studying the Bible and preparing for ministry in the church, our marriage became conflict habituated. To one degree or another that pattern lasted for several years, although we kept it to ourselves.

Then approximately seven years into our marriage, Lucy grew tired. She decided that she had had enough and she stopped trying to make the marriage work. Dennis was preoccupied with his work and not working all that hard at the relationship, either. And so

"If things are going to change, we must face the facts and decide to do the work that is necessary..."

the marriage drifted into a pattern of devitalization.

It was a terrifying time for us. Fortunately, by God's grace, we caught ourselves before it was too late. But the basic problem was still there; we had mutually exclusive expectations.

Our solution was to try to figure out how to build a marriage that had enough distance for Dennis yet enough closeness for Lucy. But this meant Lucy had to lower her expectations and Dennis had to work harder. Clearly we weren't going to have the ideal marriage promised by our wedding pictures. Like all married couples, we eventually had to face real life as real people.

As we said, at some time or another our marriage has seemed to fit each of Cuber and Haroff's patterns. This may be true for some of you. Or even if you haven't experienced all of the types, you may have experienced one or more of them, perhaps even simultaneously. Types are not precise; they're only useful. But they can help us identify where we might be at any given time and where we'd like to be heading.

#### Changing your marriage style

So, what if you find yourself in one type of marriage and would like to change? Suppose, for example, you find your marriage to be like one of the two "destructive" types. What can you do? Several suggestions based on our own experience may be helpful.

First of all, you have to face facts — to "own" the reality of the situation. This is what happened to us when our marriage reached its time of devitalization. Before we could change, both of us had to face where we were in our relationship.

We also had to acknowledge that both our perceptions of reality were valid and equally "real." The tendency during difficult times is to blame the other person in the relationship and

to become defensive. But neither of these responses is helpful. Even if your viewpoints are totally different, the truth for your marriage is that both perceptions are real — in the same way that one coin can have two sides yet still be the same coin.

The next step in the process is to determine what your expectations are. Where do you each want to go? And how do your expectations compare with reality? Expectations lie inside us like unused blueprints; until they are made explicit, they can't be dealt with.

It was at this point in our relationship that we came face to face with our own conflict between the ideal and the real in marriage. And we believe this is the point where real growth in marriage begins.

We had to face that fact in our own marriage. Each of us was trying to meet our own internalized ideal in our own way, but our ideals were different and, in a sense, mutually exclusive. We realized we had to find a way to compromise. You can imagine the amount of work it has taken over the years.

This brings us to our last suggestion: the work never ceases. At least it hasn't for us. It just seems to be a part of being human, living life in the arena of reality rather than the arena of idealism. If things are going to change, we must face the facts and decide to do the work that is necessary to make the change happen.

#### Facing up to reality

Real marriage for real people involves an accommodation with reality based upon the personalities, backgrounds and abilities of those who are in it. A decision to keep any romantic ideal alive in face of an inability to deliver the goods results in frustration. For some, that frustration leads to divorce. For others who choose not to actually divorce, the

decision to cling desperately to the ideal leads to an emptiness of lives together marked more by habit than by relationship.

So what does the Christian church have to say to this situation? For the most part, in our opinion, not much that is different or helpful. When Christians experience marital difficulties and turn to the hundreds of books and films generated by the Christian community, they usually find volumes which merely reinforce the romantic ideals of society at large — or which add still another set of even higher ideals designed just for Christian couples.

Now please don't misunderstand what we are saying here. Ideals are not bad in themselves; we all need something to work for. But the trouble comes when in our idealism we fail to make room for reality. Often, in the church's attempt to preserve and strengthen the institution of marriage, it has raised expectations to such a level that even the best of marriages can't deliver what is demanded. It has paradoxically weakened the very institution it wants to protect.

In our view, the church cannot call upon the people of God to keep rather than divorce their mates and not at the same time help them accept the ongoing realities of being human.

The ironic thing is that the Bible itself is the most realistic of documents. It holds forth high ideals, but it also spends a lot of time teaching how we can handle those situations where the ideal runs head-on into the real. If we could all live up to even biblical ideals all the time, why would we need a Savior, anyway?

At this point there is a fascinating parallel between what it means to be



# Courtship and Counseling

by Hendrika Vande Kemp

married and what it means to be a Christian.

Many of our sermons and books about living the Christian life center upon the ideal of "pressing for the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." How many times have we been challenged to reach for the very best for God? Now, there's nothing wrong with such a challenge. But the problem comes when we are promised — either explicitly or implicitly — that in exchange for all this dedication, we will be given what we want.

In this popular view, life is a *quid pro quo* of dedication: *If we meet his ideals, he will meet our ideals.* And the natural but regrettable corollary is that if our ideals aren't met, God has fallen down on his part of the bargain.

Over the years each of us has interacted both personally and professionally with Christians who are flat-out mad at God. When you probe their reasons, almost always they respond with a litany of complaints having to do with their disappointment with God. The bottom line is usually, "God has blown it. I've done all that I know to do, and he hasn't rescued me from my problems."

Unfortunately, for them, the reality of the Christian life just doesn't match

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As a Christian and clinical psychologist specializing in marital and family therapy, I am often faced with the dilemma of whether marriages should be kept together at all costs, and its counterpart, whether divorce can be prevented. These problems are intensified in the parish, where pastors and churches are torn between a culture that manifests an ever-increasing divorce rate and a religious value system that upholds the marital commitment as sacred.

One of the best treatments of the problems of inadequate and dysfunctional marriages is improved pre-marital education and counseling by pastors and trained lay couples in parish and inter-church cooperative settings. In a course I offer to our graduate students on "Courtship and Mate Selection," we consider theoretical and practical issues of marriage from a family-oriented perspective that emphasizes early childhood experiences and motivations (a psychodynamic approach).

It is very difficult for a couple's relationship to be any more healthy than the two individuals involved and their families of origin. Few individuals can transcend the legacy of their early relationships, and marital success depends on mate selection based in areas of strength rather than mutual need. Thus these psychodynamic perspectives are important for pastors as they work with individuals who are thinking about marriage, with couples who are entering marriage, or with couples who seem stuck in a troubled marriage.

## Four themes in mate selection

Theories of mate selection in the past decade have emphasized three levels of factors (Lewis, 1979; Moss, 1977). The first level includes social

and background factors such as education, occupation, religion, ethnicity and social class. At this level similarity or homogamy between partners is desirable. In general, the more of these factors that the two partners have in common, the higher their chances of success in marriage.

Second is the level of personality characteristics in which complementarity of needs and other personality variables may be a primary attraction. Klimek outlines a theory in which partner interaction may express "depressive" and "manic" qualities along six lifestyle dimensions: restrained-impulsive, internalized-externalized, organized-disorganized, realistic-idealistic, voyeuristic-exhibitionistic, and overcontrolled-undercontrolled. For more detail, see Klimek, (1979) *Beneath Mate Selection and Marriage*.

A deeper, third level of spouse interaction occurs at the unconscious level at which partners experience "many basic similarities of character structure and epigenetic (developmental) crises" (Moss, 1977, p. 293). At this level the external observer may not see what the two partners do see in each other — namely, each person is familiar (whether for good or ill) with the personality structure and stresses he or she experiences in the other person.

A fourth theme cuts across these three levels and reminds us of the biblical warning that God has built the world in such a way that subsequent generations will experience "the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation..." (Exodus 20:5, Deuteronomy 5:9). What happens in one generation intimately affects the next generation, and the next after that. Many pastors can attest to this

"The choice of mate seems to be incredibly 'accurate' in the way it brings together the essential forces in two lives..."

as they encounter the effects, for both good and ill, of three of four generations of the same family clan in a parish.

In its most pathological extreme, this theme is epitomized by what has been termed the "multigenerational transmissional process," in which inadequate levels of ego development and differentiation in parents are transmitted to their children (Bowen, 1978, pp. 205-206, 308, 384-385, 477). This is also the basic assumption in Toman's (1976) "duplication theorem": "Other things being equal, new social relationships are more enduring and successful, the more they resemble the earlier and earliest (intrafamilial) social relationships of the persons involved" (p. 80).

Family therapists of the "intergenerational" school have strongly emphasized the role of familial factors in mate selection, focusing on unresolved family issues and "invisible loyalties" in the family of origin (Boszormenyi, Nagy and Spark, 1973; Napier, 1971). Marriage may be regarded as a developmental phase involving the couple in the construction of a new social reality and the creation of "family myths," which are as necessary to the survival of their relationship as ego defenses are to the individual's survival (Ferreira, 1965).

Napier and Whitaker (1978) comment that:

People who decide to marry are doing more than making two individual decisions: they are borne along by an interpersonal process that is more powerful than either of them. The choice of mate seems to be incredibly "accurate" in the way it brings together the essential forces in two lives — their histories, their present state, their yearnings for the future. Irrespective of pleasure or pain, the meaning of

their lives is summarized in the choice of mate. (p. 221)

Individuals' definitions of meaning, and thus of marriage, are strongly influenced by their experience in their family of origin. "One cannot examine the marriage without investigating the extended family" (Fogarty, 1976, p. 332). Out of the family of origin, an individual sets up internal anticipations and expectations about how one will get what seemed to be missing in the original family, how one can now change when it was not possible to do so in that family, and ways one can try to compensate for or resolve rejections and hurts that one experienced in growing up.

As Haley (1963) comments, "People have a remarkable skill in choosing mates who will fit their needs, although they may insist later they married the unexpected...The process of working out a satisfactory marital relationship can be seen as a process of working out shared agreements, largely undiscussed, between two people" (p. 122).

## Family contexts surrounding the wedding

From these perspectives marriage is a developmental process, and the pre-marital and post-wedding work of the pastor needs to be set in this context. Among good references are *The Family Life Cycle* (Carter and McGoldrick, 1980, especially pp. 93-109) and *The Indelible Family* (Roman and Raley, 1980, especially pp. 69-90). Problems relating to these stages, along with some creative solutions, are also examined by Jay Haley in *Uncommon Therapy* (1973).

Marriage in relation to becoming an adult and being emotionally independent (self-differentiated) from one's family of origin is discussed in detail

by Murray Bowen. He emphasizes that persons are usually attracted to others who are about as equally healthy (or unhealthy) as they are, whether their personalities are complementary or similar (Bowen, 1978, p. 377).

## Hidden contracts and intimacy

Achieving and maintaining intimacy in marriage is closely related to past experiences of closeness with family members and friends. Klimek (1979) discusses intimacy patterns using concepts such as openness-guardedness, closeness-distance, interdependence, dependency panic, overdependence, and reversal of dependence. Napier (1978) focuses on styles to regulate emotional distance between partners and a rejection-intrusion pattern. Feldman (1979) describes five types of intimacy anxiety: fears of merger, exposure, attack, abandonment, and one's own destructive impulses.

Sager, in *Marriage Contracts and Couple Therapy*, describes how spouses are often unaware of what attracts them to each other, so their expectations for the relationship remain unclear and implicit. When these hidden expectations are not met, then each partner feels uneasy, hurt or rejected, but may be unable to describe these feelings or their sources.

Another way to approach the unconscious marriage contract is through Haley's (1963) exposition of three levels of "rules" in marriage: (a) those concerning the kind of relationship the spouses will have, (b) those determining who has the right to set the rules, and (c) those used to resolve disagreements between them. In a sense these are the "meta-rules" by which a couple operates.

The patterns a pastor sees enacted between spouses often result from unconscious collusion between them,

# Ministry to Stepfamilies

by Jim Smith

which has been described at length in Willi's *Couples in Collusion* (1982). Collusion occurs when the motivational systems of the two partners interlock, especially in ways that are hurtful to both of them.

## Siblings and marriage

Toman (1976) gives careful attention to the relation between sibling experiences and marriage and the impact of siblings on marriage. Two recent books in this area are *Siblings: Love, Envy, and Understanding* (Dunn & Kendrick, 1982) and *The Sibling Bond* (Bank & Kahn, 1982).

The concept of loyalty to the family of origin is extensively treated in *Invisible Loyalties* (Boszormenyi-Nagy and Spark, 1973) and in their review chapter in Gurman and Kniskern (1981, pp. 159-186). Sexuality is one major area in which loyalty conflicts often come forth. This is treated in Peck's chapter, "The Family Jewels: A Transgenerational View of Sexual Impotence" (1976, pp. 112-123).

Pastors also need to place this psychodynamic approach to marriage in a theological context. One resource in this area is Shideler (1962), *The Theology of Romantic Love*, a treatise

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Today, as the divorce rate in America continues to escalate, stepfamilies result primarily from remarriage after divorce. Since 80 percent of those divorced remarry, and 60 percent of these remarriages involve an adult with primary custody of one or more children, it is estimated that between 15 and 20 million children now live with a remarried parent.

This emerging group constitutes a major challenge to the church and to ministers. Many special stepfamily needs and issues are quite different from those of first-marriages. Consider some of the ways in which stepfamilies differ from other families:

- 1) The parent-child bond predates the couple bond.
- 2) There is a biological parent elsewhere (living or dead) who has influence on the stepfamily.
- 3) Children may spend time in two households with different rules and expectations.
- 4) The values and lifestyles of the adults and children in these family systems may be very different and often in conflict.
- 5) Children may feel tremendous loyalty conflicts between their biological parents.
- 6) Stepfamilies are born of loss: the loss of a spouse through divorce or death.
- 7) Most of society is still structured to accommodate intact or first-marriage families.
- 8) The role of stepparents is poorly defined, with little accepted agreement on what is real and workable.
- 9) There is little or no legal relationship between a stepparent and a stepchild, unless the adults involved initiate a legal relationship.
- 10) There is usually an outsider trying to join the inside group — most

often a stepfather trying to join a mother and her children.

I suggest a practical working model for four or five premarital counseling sessions helping either to prepare people for remarriage and stepfamilies, or for getting a handle on existing issues in a present stepfamily.

## Session one: information-gathering

The task of the first session is to get the various family systems clearly in mind so that in future sessions, one can refer to them as needed. I usually use a blackboard or a large sheet of paper to diagram the various "players" and their ongoing relationships. The first session can set the stage for a number of pastoral issues, particularly those of grief work, forgiveness and healing. Key questions are:

- 1) How long ago did the divorce(s) take place?
- 2) Who initiated the divorce? (The one initiated against usually takes longer to work through grief and anger.)
- 3) What are visitation rights? Are they being exercised?
- 4) Who has primary custody?
- 5) What are the financial terms of child support? Inequity between the two new spouses in these matters is a source of pain.
- 6) How does each spouse feel about his/her former spouse?
- 7) Have either of the former spouses remarried? How does either of the couple you are working with feel about the former spouse's remarriage?
- 8) Have they forgiven the former spouse(s)?
- 9) Does the couple realize that their new spouse is still tied to his/her

## "Myth number one: Stepfamilies are the same as nuclear families."

former spouse through parenting issues?

10) Has enough time elapsed since the divorce or death for each spouse to have completed his/her grief work?

11) Have the children had enough time to grieve? Often children take longer to grieve the death or divorce than adults. Allow a minimum of 12 to 18 months for adults, and longer for children.

12) Is either partner still tied to the former spouse through anger? Anger is as strong a glue as love!

13) Is the former spouse still using the children or playing destructive games with either of the new couple? Often former spouses will "sabotage" the parenting process with unforgiven issues of the first marriage.

14) Have both faced the failure in the first marriage and acknowledged this failure to God? Have they experienced God's forgiveness and grace? Do they understand how God deals with failure, and do they believe that the gospel brings new beginnings?

With the couple, identify the primary family system. This is the system that will have priority over others and be together the greatest amount of time. Then identify the secondary family systems that occur when the non-custodial children come to visit, or when the custodial children leave to be with the other biological parent, or when no children are present.

There may be as many as four or five secondary family systems, and the ground rules and dynamics are different for each of these systems. Stepdad may act quite differently around his stepchildren when his biological children are present. The children may resent sharing their room when the non-custodial children come to visit. Stepmom may be

unprepared for the onslaught of stepchildren's visits, and so on.

There are also grandparents and stepgrandparents to factor into the equation. Many grandparents are quite fearful of not seeing their grandchildren as often as before a remarriage takes place. And the non-custodial parent may be reluctant to share with the grandparents his or her limited time with the children.

This time of strategic information-gathering and sorting out of feelings may actually take several sessions. Dealing with guilt, forgiveness and the healing of personal hurts require wisdom and sensitivity. Individual time with either or both of the new partners may also be appropriate.

Draw a diagram or modified genogram of the stepfamily and include particular information alongside of the "players." Often I refer to the diagram to clarify my own thinking as well as theirs.

## Sessions two and three: stepfamily myths

It is helpful also to get into the various myths that surround stepfamilies. Four major myths can impede the adaptation to remarried family life.

*Myth number one: Stepfamilies are the same as nuclear families.* This establishes unrealistic assumptions for stepfamilies that often create rules and role expectations which are not workable. Stepfamilies are unique and cannot be expected to function exactly like first-marriage nuclear families.

*Myth number two: The death of a spouse makes stepparenting easier.* In truth, the death of a spouse often makes stepparenting even more difficult because it is very difficult to compete with an idealized image of a dead parent. The stepparent(s) may suddenly realize that the children have

"canonized" the deceased parent and that there is no way to live up to that image.

*Myth number three: Stepchildren are harder to live with and manage when they are living in the home.* When stepchildren only visit, it can be very difficult to establish a routine and ground rules. When they are living in the home, it is possible to maintain daily rules, routines and expectations that help everyone adjust.

*Myth number four: Love happens instantly.* Many stepparents feel that they should love and care about their stepchildren as if they were their own. Or they may expect their stepchildren to love them quickly, especially for all the work stepmom has done and all the sacrifices she has made for the children.

## For stepmothers

One mini-myth is the Cruel Stepmother. Think of how mythology has depicted this role in the eyes of children. One stepmother came to me in tears. She had noticed one of her stepdaughter's friends staring at her. She asked the child if anything was wrong. "No," replied the child. "I just wanted to see what a wicked witch looked like!"

Experiences like this may put undue pressure on the stepmom to create instant love. She may feel that she is being evaluated by the children, by her husband and by other members of the family, as well as by neighbors and by society as a whole. A pastor can be helpful in getting the stepmom and her husband to face some of the following:

- 1) Accept the role of the stepmother. You are not a substitute for the biological mother, nor should

"...it takes about three years for the 'dust to settle' and for everyone to find a...niche in the new stepfamily."

you wish to be. A stepmother's role can be rewarding and meaningful too.

2) Do not be a non-parent! Gradually establish how much mothering the child or children may need from you.

3) Clarify with your spouse what he expects from you in the parenting role.

4) Learn to accept the reality of ex-spouses. Never criticize the absent parent in front of the stepchild. This can lead to loyalty conflicts in the child and in the spouse.

5) Do not blame yourself for everything that goes wrong in the stepfamily.

6) Do not expect to draw all your emotional gratification from being a stepmother.

7) Remember that relationships take time to develop, especially in stepfamilies. Give it time.

8) Remember that you are new and unfamiliar. The children may perceive you as taking their father away or of robbing them of his time and attention. Encourage the father and children to have time together by themselves. Also make yourself available to spend individual time with your stepchildren. But do not be too pushy or eager. Give it time.

9) Seek God's help and guidance daily in keeping things in perspective and in balance.

Research indicates that it takes about three years for the "dust to settle" and for everyone to find a comfort range and niche in the new stepfamily. (Interestingly, 40 percent of all second marriages end in the first four years.)

#### The stepfather

There are not many "wicked stepfathers" in mythology, but stepdads experience some unique problems as well. They are often seen

in the role of an intruder, since more often than not, he is the "outsider" moving in with a mother in her residence and with her children. He may feel that he is on someone else's turf, and therefore feel uncomfortable establishing personal space for himself. His new wife may have a hidden agenda for how he is to discipline the children. He may end up confused over how much to discipline, when to discipline, and whether his spouse supports his efforts at discipline. It is most helpful if the wife can clearly communicate what she wants and expects.

Many stepfathers find that they have a lot of responsibility but little or no power, and little or no appreciation. This can result in their overreacting by becoming either authoritarian or withdrawn. A pastor can help a stepdad and his wife with the following counsel:

1) Be patient. Give the new relationships time.

2) Develop a relationship with your stepchildren before attempting to discipline them.

3) Help establish values but do not be too quick to take on the role of enforcer.

4) Remind your stepchild that their mother's love for them has not changed because of the marriage. Very young children often fear that there is "not enough love to go around."

5) Do not criticize the stepchild's biological father in front of the child. This creates loyalty issues and conflicts within the child.

6) Encourage mother and children to spend time without you so that they can maintain their closeness.

7) Make yourself available to have personal time with your stepchildren, but do not be pushy or over-eager.

8) Make sure you and your spouse have time to be alone together, including an occasional weekend

without the stepchildren or your children.

9) If you feel undermined in your disciplinary role, discuss different ways your spouse may support you in your role as a stepfather.

10) If your stepdaughter is physically mature, be aware of potential sexual feelings toward her. You may want to set clear limits on dress, nudity and privacy to reduce provocative behavior. Occasionally, the stepdaughter may act in a seductive manner toward you in retaliation against her mother. It is important that the stepfather and mother talk about creative ways to handle seductive approaches by the stepdaughter.

11) Try to avoid making your own children's visit a "Disney World weekend" to make up for lost time or to atone for guilt feelings of neglect toward your children. Instead, keep the routine as near to normal as possible, and be sensitive to your stepchildren's feelings of neglect when your kids are present. Treat biological children and stepchildren equally in terms of rules, rewards and responsibilities.

12) You have the right to expect appreciation from your stepchildren, but do not expect to be thanked for everything you do for them.

#### Fourth and fifth sessions: concerns of the children

In these sessions it is now important to shift the focus to the reactions, issues and concerns of the children. The first set of reactions center around the child's sense of loss. Again, we know children take longer to work through grief than do their parents. Doubt, fear and insecurity are often present and must be dealt with in a pastoral fashion.

There is a double loss to the child. First is the loss experienced due to the end of the marriage of their biological

"Many young children cling to the myth of the remarriage of their biological parents..."

parents, and the loss of one parent in the household. Second, the remarriage ends the single-parent household and often causes children to lose some of the attention of the biological parent. Children may view the remarriage as another desertion or betrayal.

If the loss of the biological parent was due to death and not divorce, the child or children may cling to the memory of the other parent. They may experience great anxiety about the degree of the remaining parent's love and perceive the new stepparent as a threat to their own security. Often children assume much false guilt, thinking that they somehow caused their biological parents to divorce.

Many young children cling to the myth of the remarriage of their biological parents and realize that for this to happen, the current pending or established marriage must first be dismantled. Children may act in various ways to sabotage the existing or pending marriage, hoping to "clear the way" for the biological parents to be reunited.

Stepchildren often feel, and perhaps rightly so, that if they have a good relationship with their custodial parent that the non-custodial parent will be angry or hurt and reject them, or vice versa. If the child praises the stepparent, he or she may be surprised to find the biological parent going right through the roof and declaring that the child cannot like the stepparent and still be loyal to his or her biological parent. This is the loyalty crunch that leaves so many children in a state of bewilderment and frustration.

To the degree that forgiveness, grief work, healing and reconciling can take place, both biological parents need to be encouraged in allowing the children to have an ongoing and accessible relationship with both biological parents. Reassurance that

the stepparent is not going to take the place, position or role of their other parent is crucial.

Other losses of the child, either perceived or real, may include home, friends, school and familiar surroundings, particularly if the divorce causes a change of location, or if the new marriage brings about a move. The child is being asked to adjust to a situation not of his or her own choosing. Angry acting out may be expressed in sullenness, bad grades and rebellion. The following can cause increased stress for children in stepfamilies:

1) Hearing their biological parents argue (over the phone, at the door, in the car, etc.) and say very destructive things to each other. Children may wonder if they are somehow to blame for this.

2) Not being allowed to see their other biological parent and resenting the custodial parent or the stepparent for this. If anger and hurt are not dealt with, the parents may continue to fight each other using the kids as weapons.

3) Having their parents do more for a stepsibling than for them.

4) Hearing their parent and new stepparent fight, and fearing that the new marriage will break up too.

5) Having stepsiblings get into their belongings and intrude on their space and privacy, or having no sense of their own personal space when they visit the non-custodial parent.

6) Having a stepparent tell them what to do and resenting it deeply.

7) Feeling like pawns and messengers tossed between their biological parents who may still be bitter and angry toward one another.

8) Adjusting to all the new rules in the household of both the primary

family system and the secondary system(s).

Parents will find it helpful to remember that during times of major family changes — such as remarriage — children may exhibit disruptive and irritating behavior. Some of this is to be expected.

Since the gospel is truly the good news about new beginnings, we will need the special wisdom of God to help all parties to a stepfamily in their search. Though many second marriages still fail, helping couples face some of these issues squarely improves their chances for success. It is worth the effort. ■

JIM SMITH is executive director of the Family Life Center, Highland Park Presbyterian Church, Dallas, Texas.



# Domestic Violence

by Eva Baranoff

Recognizing violence between partners can be difficult, especially for those unaccustomed to working with domestic violence. Many couples do not report violence as a part of their relationship. Victims seeking services at Fuller's S.A.F.E. (Stop Abusive Family Environments) program frequently tell stories of numerous attempts to end the violence in their relationships by seeking pastoral counseling or therapy. Yet, during those times, neither they nor their partner mentioned violence as one of their concerns. Others report describing the details of their abuse only to be told, in one way or another, that the problem is their fault, that it is not a serious one, or that they must submit, pray and endure.

The challenge to those of us who minister to people in the capacity of therapist or pastoral counselor is to be able to understand the dynamics of violence, recognize its presence and respond effectively. Understanding the prevalence and dynamics of violent relationships helps to assure that members of our congregations and clients under our care will receive the support and assistance they need to live violence-free lives.

## Understanding the violence

Violence in marriage is present in astounding proportions. The best estimate of the latest surveys show that repeated incidents of violence are prevalent in at least 20 to 25 percent of marriages in the United States. In a presentation to the American Psychological Association in Los Angeles in 1985, K. Daniel O'Leary reported that through a longitudinal study of marital relationships in the general population he discovered that 41 percent of the couples participating in

his research had experienced at least one incident of violence *six weeks prior to marriage*.

In some relationships, violence occurs only periodically when stress factors are high. Partners in these relationships may report that violence occurs at rather lengthy intervals. In many relationships, however, violence increases in frequency and/or severity over time, thereby increasing the risk to the victim of permanent disability or death. This phenomenon appears to be related to the addictive nature of the use of aggression for the purpose of discharging feelings. The violence provides a sense of release and relief to the perpetrator that is tremendously satisfying in the immediate moment. This makes it more likely that the perpetrator will resort to violence the next time feelings of anger or frustration are experienced if the aggressor has not developed more appropriate ways to manage uncomfortable feelings.

Violence in a relationship tends to have three phases (Walker, 1979). In the first phase, labeled "tension building," irritations and annoyances accumulate. Conflict is usually verbal — although there may be minor incidents of violence — and is managed by the victim's engaging in placating behaviors in an attempt to reduce the tension. When the emotional tension in the relationship reaches the critical point for a couple, the second phase, consisting of an acute battering incident, occurs. This may involve anything from slapping and pushing to beatings which result in severe injuries.

Following the acute incident there is most often a period of calm, a loving respite. During this third phase, the batterer is filled with remorse and promises never to be violent again. Motivated by guilt or fear of the loss of the relationship, the batterer will also

often engage in gift giving and helpful or placating behaviors. Based on a strong desire to have a successful relationship, the victim believes the perpetrator, and is filled with hope that the violent incident was truly the last. The tension-building phase begins again, and the cycle repeats itself unless the partners are able to find more appropriate and effective means of conflict resolution.

For some couples, the respite phase is skipped altogether. This occurs when the batterer refuses to acknowledge responsibility for the violence by denying that it happened, minimizing its severity, or blaming the victim as the cause of the violent behavior.

## Assessing the violence

Violence cannot be eliminated from a relationship if it is not openly acknowledged and discussed. As previously mentioned, clients and parishioners will often seek assistance for violence-related issues like conflict resolution, depression, low self-esteem and marital difficulties, to name just a few, without mentioning the presence of violence. It is important for the helping professional to explore any individual's or couple's style of expressing anger, and it is important to inquire specifically whether conflict is ever expressed physically in the relationship.

Avoid the use of terms like "abuse," "violence" and "battering," at least initially, as they are very negative, emotion-laden words, and may foster denial. Many people have narrow definitions of violence as well. When victims calling S.A.F.E. are asked when the last incident of violence occurred, they will often reply that there has been little or no violence in their relationship. When asked, however, if

"...be alert to the tendency for all parties to minimize and deny the level of conflict and violence."

they have ever been slapped, kicked or punched, the reply is often, "Oh, that happens all the time. I thought violence was getting stabbed with a knife or shot!"

Some reasons why couples do not mention the presence of violence are fear of rejection, guilt and shame. By inquiring into the possibility of the presence of violence, the counselor or therapist is demonstrating that abuse is an acceptable topic for discussion. This gives permission and encouragement to discuss a taboo subject. It implies that the counselor or therapist is knowledgeable about violence, that the victim and/or perpetrator are not the only ones who are experiencing problems with abuse, and that the therapist or counselor is able to be supportive as they work through these issues.

When it is first ascertained that violence is a part of a relationship, the first concern must be the safety of the victim. If it is determined that the victim is at risk for severe injury or death, alternate shelter should be found. This may be with a friend or relative, or in a shelter for victims of violence. Sometimes it is possible for a victim to remain at home while the perpetrator leaves. This is often accomplished by having the victim acquire a restraining order, an injunction issued by the courts instructing the perpetrator to stay away from the victim, their home and any other location where assault or harassment are likely to occur. It can also resolve custody, visitation and child support issues.

If a victim is not ready or able to separate from the perpetrator, it is important to make emergency plans for the next episode of violence. Most incidents of violence occur late in the evening, and victims will often find themselves standing outside their homes in their torn nightclothes, too

humiliated and embarrassed to seek help. They will, instead, attempt to gain reentry into their homes by pleading with their batterers.

It is also important that victims be helped to anticipate the violence and be instructed to get out of the house (away from the perpetrator) before attempting to seek help. Attempts to enlist the assistance of law enforcement officers, friends or family members in the presence of the batterer only further enrage the partner and result in intensified violence.

## Emergency planning

At S.A.F.E., we recommend packing a bag with a few changes of clothing, and basic necessities along with important papers and some cash. If children are present, clothes for them should be included along with a few toys. The bag should be kept in a place that is accessible at any time, and should be away from the house if at all possible. This might be in the trunk of the victim's car or at the home of a friend or relative.

Once the couple is separated or emergency plans have been made, longer-term counseling may begin. The first determination is whether a couple can be seen together, individually, or a combination of the two. Unless the violence is mild and infrequent, it is best to see the partners individually until the batterer has brought the violence under control. Until a batterer has learned appropriate anger management skills, the confrontation that usually occurs in couples sessions often trigger incidents of violence. It is generally non-productive to focus on other marital problems until the violence is under control.

The focus of individual therapy should be on each partner's expecta-

tions and needs within the relationship. It is commonplace for both batterers and victims to have highly unrealistic expectations of each other. As a result, when disappointed, both respond by trying harder to make their partner conform to their wishes. As needs go unmet, tension builds, and violence erupts again.

Therefore, it is essential that each member of a relationship develop healthier strategies for getting his or her needs met both within and outside the relationship. By learning to be more emotionally independent, self-confidence increases, while disappointments and frustrations can be better tolerated.

As treatment progresses, it is important to be alert to the tendency for all parties to minimize and deny the level of conflict and violence. This includes the pastor or therapist. It is very tempting to believe that rapid progress is being made, and that peaceful reunification is imminent. However, if problems are not truly resolved, the conflict will emerge once again, leaving everyone frustrated and undermining faith in the counseling process. It is better to err on the side of caution, celebrating and solidifying small successes despite the temptation to do otherwise.

Working individually for a minimum of at least six months is common to assure that clients have made some progress in identifying and taking responsibility for themselves in their relationships.

Once gains have been made individually, meeting as a couple is often alternated with individual sessions for the purpose of practicing effective communication skills and learning appropriate methods for resolving conflicts. The alternate individual sessions allow the parties to objectively explore their feelings

# The Minister's Own Marriage

## Recent research findings

about themselves and their partner. If all goes well, reunification can eventually take place.

It is important to be aware that a successful, violence-free relationship may not be possible for many couples. This is most often due to batterers refusing to take responsibility for their behavior. When reunification is not possible, the couple should be assisted in making a safe, permanent end to the relationship.

Space does not permit the detailed presentation of all the issues surrounding the occurrence and management of violence between partners. While some of the important areas have been highlighted in this article, it is perhaps most important that the reader understand that violence is merely a symptom of much deeper, long-standing personal difficulties. As such, it is often most helpful to refer abusive couples to a professional experienced in the treatment of domestic violence.

If domestic violence resources are not available, becoming thoroughly educated about the dynamics of violence and the most effective methods of treatment is essential. Also, the helping professional should obtain support from knowledgeable colleagues through the use of case consultation and supervision. Otherwise, even with the best of intentions, violence between couples

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**W**hat do we really know about the marriages of clergy? Are these marriages better or worse than other marriages? How can we assist ministers and their spouses, as well as those in their congregations, to have successful, satisfying marriages?

Several faculty members and students in Fuller Theological Seminary's Graduate School of Psychology have deep concern for clergy marriages and families, and want to enhance the quality of marriage and family life among clergy. These professionals have searched for the truth behind the negative headlines concerning the marriages and families of clergy and have found some encouraging answers.

For this issue of *Theology, News and Notes* we have invited the authors of five outstanding doctoral dissertations on clergy marriage and family life to share implications of their findings for clergy in the field.

Richard Blackmon and Duane Alleman completed their Ph.D. degrees in clinical psychology in 1984 and 1987, respectively, under the direction of Graduate School of Psychology Dean Archibald Hart. Blackmon studied responses from 300 pastors in four denominations. In a related study, Alleman analyzed responses from 225 wives of pastors, also in four denominations.

Cameron Lee completed his Ph.D. in family studies in 1987, under the direction of Professors Jack Balswick and Dennis Guernsey in the Marriage and Family Ministries Program at Fuller. Dr. Lee is now assistant professor of marriage and family studies in the Graduate School of Psychology. He looked especially at how church and congregational contexts affect the quality of ministers'

family life, using a sample of 102 couples in the Fuller Doctor of Ministry Program, and another 221 pastors and spouses in Southern Baptist and Adventist churches.

Also in the Graduate School of Psychology, Herbert Robinson, under the direction of Prof. Richard Hunt, completed his clinical psychology dissertation this spring. Drawing from four mainline denominations, Robinson studied 301 couples in which both spouses are ordained clergy ("dual clergy career couples"), compared to 237 male clergy with non-clergy wives and 69 female clergy with non-clergy husbands. Also completed this spring, Janet Hackley, with Prof. H. Newton Malony as dissertation director, analyzed data from 209 clergy wives from five denominations in Southern California and Arkansas.

We asked these five researchers two central questions: First, for married clergy, what are the most important findings from your research on clergy marriage? Second, from your research and clinical practice with clergy persons and their spouses, what guides, suggestions, cautions or encouragements can you offer married clergy?

### General findings

**Blackmon:** Most clergy marriages are healthy. Of my 300 respondents, 78 percent considered their marriages as generally healthy and satisfying. This is true across all theological groups, including conservatives, evangelicals and liberals. We hear a lot about the bad clergy marriages, especially with some of the recent sensational disclosures about a few well-known ministers, but the majority of clergy marriages are basically solid. Still, most of these healthy couples could make changes that would enable them

"I urge my clergy clients to buy a telephone answering machine and to turn it on, especially during evening meal times."

to enjoy loving each other more and to live less stressful lives.

**Alleman:** The most urgent problem areas mentioned by these pastors and by pastors' spouses are insufficient time together, poor communication, lack of money and sexual problems. There are still many pressures on the clergy couple and family to be "super models" of marriage for their parishes.

**Lee:** That last point brings up the importance of the couple's relationship to the congregation. I've found that when the congregation is too intrusive, the clergy couple's marital happiness goes down. Parishioners may not be fully aware of this, so the pastor and spouse must work with each other and with parish leaders in establishing flexible and appropriate boundaries between the clergy family and the congregation.

**Hackley:** A major example of intrusiveness occurs when a pastor robs time from his or her spouse and family to meet seemingly unrelenting demands of the parish. When this becomes a pattern, it is no wonder that the non-clergy spouse wants her (or his) clergy mate to leave the ministry.

**Alleman:** Pastors need to learn to say "no" at times. They can't do all the ministries in a congregation. Trying to be indispensable by doing everything prevents the congregation from sharing in ministry and can destroy the minister's own marriage.

**Blackmon:** I urge my clergy clients to buy a telephone answering machine and to turn it on, especially during evening meal times. Some won't use an answering machine after they buy it because they feel guilty for taking time away from their parish duties. Even in

this case, use the machine anyway and get help to deal with the guilt feelings.

**Alleman:** True. I grew up in a parsonage, and we always knew when it was dinner time because the phone began to ring.

**Robinson:** Edwin Friedman, in his book, *Generation to Generation*, shows clearly how both the congregation and the minister's marriage and family are intricately related to many influences from the past as well as the present. Both churches and ministers can learn to cope better with these influences.

**Lee:** Clarifying what are clergy family matters and what are church and congregation issues is important. A clergy couple can become the vortex of all the emotional issues swirling around in the congregation. Clergy and spouse have to learn to distinguish which problems are actually theirs, and which ones really belong to someone else.

### Clergy and spouse on time and communication

**Alleman:** Since our studies had mostly clergy husbands and non-clergy wives, we know much more about the non-clergy wives of male clergy than we know about the non-clergy husbands of female clergy. The major complaint of pastors' wives, and perhaps of female pastors' husbands, is not having enough time together. About 30 percent of the wives in our sample reported that their clergy husbands spent less than one hour per day — excluding meals and sleeping — with their families during the midweek Tuesday through Thursday period.

**Hackley:** One of the hazards of being a minister is the temptation to meet the needs of one's congregation at the expense of the needs of one's family.

Especially for male clergy, spending extra time with their wife each week will go a long way in decreasing the wife's stress level. This in turn will probably increase her satisfaction with the marriage and decrease her negative feelings toward the church.

**Blackmon:** Most ministers and their spouses know they need more quality time together, but they may not know how to organize to get couple time without feeling guilty about it. Sometimes time and communication problems are symptoms of deeper influences at work in the two partners. The first step is for the two partners to talk together about their commitment and goals with each other. Out of this common sharing they may plan their weeks and months to take account of busy seasons in the church and still have times apart as a couple.

**Robinson:** There is some tendency for wives to be more involved in their husbands' careers than husbands want their wives to be. This may in part result from the women feeling left out of their husbands' lives in other ways, as well as differences in what each spouse wants from the other.

**Alleman:** When one or both spouses seem unable to find time together, forget to say "I love you," or neglect to touch and hold each other every day, then anger and resentment may grow between the partners. This can lead to increased stress, fatigue, or depression at times, without either partner noticing the connection between these negative symptoms and earlier failures to express love to each other. In more extreme cases, after months or years, this smoldering rage may

"To our surprise, 37 percent of the pastors reported some type of inappropriate sexual contact..."

erupt in a romantic affair, leaving the ministry, or divorce.

#### Money and its lack

**Blackmon:** Both pastors and their spouses think that their income is much less than needed, and that both savings and anticipated retirement pensions are very inadequate.

**Alleman:** It is the pastor's wife, however, who feels the financial pressures more. This discrepancy between the way the wife and husband experience financial pressure may compound the original money problems and suggests the need for greater marital communication around finances. This is probably because she is, appropriately or not, often the partner who is dealing with money details, such as food, clothing, paying bills, and other home related needs. Wives who are not working for pay are often the most dissatisfied with their marriages, yet about 10 percent of the working wives really did not want to be employed but felt they had no other choice financially.

In 1962 about 25 percent of pastors' wives worked for pay outside the home. In our study, we found that about 64 percent work outside the home. About half of these wives are employed full-time. This is still a bit under the national average of 72 percent of married women who are employed outside the home.

For many wives, their answer to low income is to get a job themselves. They usually work out of a sense of financial need. Not surprisingly, employed wives consider their clergy family combined income to be more adequate. More generally, however, the message must be strongly communicated to both lay and administrative leaders that pastors

deserve to be paid on a level with other professionals in the congregation.

#### Roles and expectations

**Hunt for TN&N:** Money and finances are directly related to the role perceptions of each spouse. Roles refer to what each thinks she or he should be doing in the marriage, and what each expects the spouse to be doing or not doing. When actions match the expectations of both spouses, they will be satisfied with their marriage. When their behaviors are quite different from their expectations, then trouble appears and the spouses are unhappy.

**Hackley:** For clergy wives, higher stress comes with greater role conflicts. Stress on the non-clergy wife can be greatly reduced when both wife and husband talk openly about what it means to be "the minister's wife." By discussing their role expectations, both spouses can support each other in the ways they arrange their own lifestyles in relation to the minister's work with the church. The clergy person also needs to communicate clearly with parish officials about the level of involvement their non-clergy spouse will have in the clergy spouse's ministry.

**Lee:** Many clergy wives still seem to be more oriented toward the home than their husbands are. For example, when the pastor's family is under stress, this tends to make the minister's wife want to leave the parish. The ministers, however, did not feel compelled to leave because of family stress. This has important implications for what happens when the spouses discuss how things are going.

**Alleman:** The pastors' wives I studied ranked several major roles in their marriage. They tended to see themselves first as an individual,

second as a mother, third as a wife, and last as a pastor's wife. This suggests that today's pastor's wife sees herself and her marriage and family relationships as being largely independent from the career of her husband as a minister.

When a male pastor expects his wife to perform as though she is hired by the church, then the marriage is likely to be in trouble because of the clash of role expectations and the husband's demands. Few wives of clergy today see themselves as primarily a pastor's wife.

**Robinson:** When both spouses are ordained professionals, relating marriage and ministry is more complex, but it can also be quite positive. Spouses can share with each other their callings to the ministry and can be unique resource persons to each other for understanding and support. They may even have some friendly competition that motivates both to better work in their respective careers.

#### Some sexual surprises

**Blackmon:** In my study of male pastors, we asked if they had ever had inappropriate extramarital sexual contact with persons in their congregations. To our surprise, 37 percent of the pastors reported some type of inappropriate sexual contact, and 12 percent of the total sample reported that they had engaged in sexual intercourse with another person outside of marriage. In a later survey sponsored by *Leadership* magazine, we again found similar percentages for the pastors who responded.

Of the reported inappropriate sexual contacts, about seven out of ten were with parishioners, with the remaining 30 percent being with other staff members, such as associates or

"...dual career clergy do feel more criticized...for their work and marriage arrangements."

secretaries. These rates are somewhat higher than for other professional groups.

**Hunt for TN&N:** What can be done to help couples prevent this from happening, and to strengthen both pastor and spouse in coping well with sexual temptations?

**Blackmon:** Certainly if pastor and spouse can talk about these situations before they occur, then they can join together in coping with situations that might otherwise lead to inappropriate sexual contacts. Often the male pastor's wife can identify those few women in the congregation who may be "dangerous" or a potential "snare" to the pastor because of their own personality makeup and needs. If the pastor and spouse can talk privately between themselves about these situations openly and comfortably, then they can structure any appointments for church business, counseling, or other purposes to diminish the likelihood of misuse of these important pastoral relationships.

For example, another person could be present in the church building or office area when the pastor meets with this type of parishioner or staff person. In some situations, the pastor may need to refer the parishioner to other professional help, or may need to obtain professional therapy or consultation himself. Together the ministerial couple can find ways to support both pastor and other persons in order to accomplish legitimate ministerial goals with parishioners and staff persons.

**Alleman:** A healthy relationship between pastor and spouse is very important. Often these types of affairs and near-affairs occur because the couple's affectional system, of which sexual intercourse is a part, is not working well for the couple. One

source of help is for the couple to participate in marriage enrichment or couple therapy. If one partner won't join in any type of couple work, the partner who does feel the need can begin some individual counseling as a way to plan next steps for coping with these concerns.

**Blackmon:** A strong marriage is essential, yet not enough. The pastor also needs professional training in emotional transference and counter-transference dynamics, coping with his or her own depression, burn-out, or personal disappointments, and greater awareness of the many psychological dimensions of the pastor's work.

#### Dual clergy career marriages

**Robinson:** Dual clergy couples are generally just as healthy as couples in which only one spouse is ordained. Arguments between clergy-husband and clergy-wife are no more likely to "spill over" into their ministerial work than are those for one-clergy couples. Compared with one-clergy couples, dual clergy couples tend to have more competition between spouses about career matters and to bring details of their work into their home and couple time.

In general, dual clergy career couples and other types of married clergy are much more similar than different. However, dual career clergy do feel more criticized by other clergy and by parishioners for their work and marriage arrangements. The ordained men tend to feel somewhat more limited in their career advancement by being married to an ordained woman. These rates do differ among denominational groups.

Experience as measured by number of years in the ministry does not affect

these response rates. While couples do change across the years, both successes and difficulties seem to be produced much more by the quality of the persons who are in clergy marriages, regardless of whether one or both spouses are ordained, than by the type of career each spouse is in.

**Hackley:** However, in my research I found that clergy wives who had been married longer and who had older children reported lower stress levels. Perhaps those who remain married have found ways to talk with each other often and to resolve conflicts more constructively.

We know how to assist couples to share their hopes and expectations with each other earlier in their marriages. Even if they don't agree on every goal, just the process of taking time to share and encourage each other is very valuable for a couple because they rediscover and validate the areas they do have in common.

**Blackmon:** This also argues for the great value of clergy couples utilizing for themselves the various resources for strengthening marriages. Among written resources, the book by David and Vera Mace, *What's Happening to Clergy Marriages?*, is still a helpful resource for married clergy.

**Alleman:** Despite the problems and pressures, the overall news is good. Almost 90 percent of the women in my study consider themselves both happy and satisfied in their marriages, and about three-fourths of them consider their family life to be more positively than negatively impacted by their husbands' involvement in professional ministry.

**Postscript:** Many resource persons are available through Fuller, as are programs such as the Doctor of Ministry, special seminars and workshops. Blackmon and Alleman are in private practice at Pacific

"The 'bonds of marriage' come out of, and are shaped by, the bond between individuals and God."

Psychological Resources, a group committed to providing comprehensive psychological services to pastors and the Christian community.

At least three new books will be coming from these five clinicians. Several resource persons at Fuller are available to go to other areas for workshops and seminars for clergy and their spouses. In addition, a pastor and/or spouse from any part of the country can contact the seminary to arrange for a few days of intensive marriage work on campus and to obtain other referral contacts.

For more information, contact Dr. Richard A. Hunt in the Graduate School of Psychology, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California 91182. Or call 1-800-235-2222, extension 5555, or (818) 584-5555. ■



ALLEMAN



BLACKMON



HACKLEY



LEE



ROBINSON

### Marriage Dramatizes Theology

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affection, love, care and concern to the partner and receive these qualities from the partner.

To be out of control can be dangerous if one perceives either oneself or one's partner as less than unconditionally loving. To be open and vulnerable, with the possibilities and risks for growth that accompany this, can only happen when one perceives her or his spouse as caring, loving and sensitive to one's needs.

The beliefs of partners and their lifestyles with each other are intricately bound together. The "bonds of marriage" come out of, and are shaped by, the bond between individuals and God. As we enable couples to realize the amazing, awesome and wonderful ways that they participate in both faith and marriage, this hope becomes a real link between faith and love (1 Corinthians 13, Romans 12). ■

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Note: Most of the major concepts in this article are also expressed in Hunt, R.A. (1987) "Marriage as Dramatizing Theology." *Journal of Pastoral Care*, 41(2), pp. 119-132.

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### Whatever Happened to the Wedding Pictures?

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the ideal they have been promised. Life for many Christians is marked by illness, turmoil, heartache, frustration and disillusionment — just as it is for many non-Christians. If the Christian life is seen as an idealistic *quid pro quo*, then when it doesn't seem to balance out, we have a right to bail out. We did our part — where is God?

Such are the perceptions of the Christian life in a narcissistic culture which focuses upon the needs of the individual as paramount. We think of God as existing to meet our needs rather than of ourselves as existing to glorify God.

The reality is that there is a cost to discipleship. The nature of the costliness of being a committed Christian will vary from person to person. But the Bible makes it clear that there *will be persecution*, in one form or another. Unfortunately, in our culture this truth is often forgotten.

In the same way that our narcissistic culture can idealize the Christian life and bring us to a place where we focus primarily on our own

"Not everybody can and should have a 'total marriage.' Not everybody... should have the same kind of marriage."

needs, a narcissistic approach to marriage can cause us to focus our marriages solely upon our own needs. We simply exchange a theological *quid pro quo* for a marital one.

Rather than renegotiate the ideals of marriage in light of reality, our dominant culture encourages us to "tear up" the person we are married to and to keep the pictures. Too often, the church's answer has been to foster larger than life pictures rather than to help the people of God to deal with what exists in fact.

Not everybody can and should have a "total marriage." Not everybody can and should have the same kind of marriage. But the facts are that real marriage is satisfying in itself, as is a disciplined relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Neither is easy. Both demand work. Probably we would all agree that if one is to be a disciple of Jesus Christ it is good to "count the cost" because following him will be costly. There is a "costliness" to being married as well. Our call to reality is meant to be a call of "costliness."

Our intent, then, is to base our picture of marriage on real life and not on some ideal outside or above it. It is attainable and it *is* workable. Marriage can be romantic, but more often the greatest meaning in marriage comes from the satisfaction of living it as a real person with another real person. ■

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### Courtship and Counseling

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based on the writings of Charles Williams.

Two helpful guides for pastors in working with family or origin issues are Stahmann and Hiebert (1980), *Premarital Counseling*, and

McGoldrick and Gerson (1985), *Genograms in Family Assessment*. Friedman (1985), using theoretical concepts from Bowen, analyzes how marriage and family issues interrelate with the congregation.

Courtships that lead to marriage are far more than a private affair between two consenting adults. Just as these two individuals are directly affected by their family experiences, we all are affected by who marries whom and by the quality of parenting these persons provide to the children they procreate. ■

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### Domestic Violence

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may be exacerbated by our attempts to assist with conflict resolution. But couples who desire to resolve their conflicts and end the violence in their relationship can be helped by sensitive and knowledgeable support. ■

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## FOCUS ON FULLER

### Fuller and the Family by Wayne Ibara

Fuller's commitment to strengthening marriage and family life is most noticeable in its academic programs and in a number of clinics within The Psychological Center of the Graduate School of Psychology. But it is also evident in its periodic sponsoring or co-sponsoring of workshops and conferences. During the last academic year Fuller's Lowell W. Berry Institute for Continuing Education co-sponsored a number of conferences which addressed issues of family life. These included "Women, Alcoholism, Other Addictions and Society"; "The Puzzle of Partying," a look at teens and addictions; "Baby Boomers and the Church"; "Enjoying the Gift of Sex"; and "Healing the Cycle of Abuse," a look at all types of domestic violence and resources to assist in the healing process.

Another conference this summer will continue to address the concerns of the family. On August 8-11 "Building the Church Through Strengthening Its Families" will be the theme of a national conference in Seattle, Washington. The event is being sponsored by Fuller in Seattle, the Fuller Institute of Marriage and Family Ministry, University Presbyterian Church in Seattle, Seattle Pacific University and CRISTA Counseling Service, Seattle. Also participating is the Family Life Task Force of the Church Council of Greater Seattle. The Lowell W. Berry Institute is coordinating the event.

The conference will take a fresh look at the concept of the family — its dimensions, problems and potentials — and reassess the role of the Christian community as a resource for strengthening the family. Plenary sessions and

workshops will help participants discover and apply new ways of ministering to the family, as clergy or other church staff, concerned laity or professionals in the helping disciplines.

Plenary speakers will be Bruce Larson, senior pastor at University Presbyterian Church in Seattle; Dennis Guernsey, associate dean of marriage and family programs at Fuller; Marie Fortune, executive director of the Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence, Seattle; and Dan Chun, associate pastor for singles ministries at Menlo Park Presbyterian Church, Menlo Park, California.

Fuller faculty members Ray Anderson and Cameron Lee will also be participating as course and workshop leaders at the conference.

In ways like these Fuller has sought to enliven the third imperative of its Mission Beyond the Mission statement, first published five years ago. That statement views the strengthening of marriages and families as a necessary part of working for the moral health of society. It directs Fuller's mission "to the positive demonstration of God's intention for marriage and family; to the expression of the church's role as the family of God with its ministry of support and friendship; and to the reversal of the tide of divorce and the healing of the malaise in family life."

Families are both enormously influential and frighteningly fragile. One of life's paradoxes is that the most powerful influences in our lives are often themselves the most frail. The family can function as a furnace within which strong character is forged for a lifetime. But families have been self-destructing in our society, and no neighborhood, no matter how secure

from other threats, is free from the quiet detonations which sever the fragile bonds of the family.

The paradoxical power and vulnerability of families is a challenge to the ministry of the church. But the church is uniquely equipped to meet the challenge, for its gospel is one of paradox, of divine treasure being conveyed in earthen vessels. To some this kind of paradox is a sign of confusion and contradiction, leading to loss of confidence and hope. But to the Christian this paradox is always a possibility of God's power being perfected in human weakness.

The need is great for more ministers and counselors equipped to act as agents of hope and reconciliation in the church and in the world. Fuller's marriage and family programs aim to help meet this need. And through its academic programs and other educational opportunities the seminary continues to seek to provide life-changing aid to as many people as possible.

For more information on conferences sponsored by Fuller contact the Lowell W. Berry Institute for Continuing Education at 1-800-235-2222, x 5338, or 818-584-5338.

  
EDITOR