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ABSTRACT

IMPROVING MARITAL SATISFACTION USING A STRUCTURED
FACILITATION PROGRAM IN THREE SOUTHERN
MAINE CONGREGATIONS

by

Merlin L. Knowles

Adviser: Richard L. Trott

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Theological Seminary

Title: IMPROVING MARITAL SATISFACTION USING A STRUCTURED FACILITATION PROGRAM IN THREE SOUTHERN MAINE CONGREGATIONS

Name of researcher: Merlin L. Knowles

Name and degree of faculty adviser: Richard L. Trott, DMin

Date completed: April 2011

Problem

Marital satisfaction for couples in general, and among members of the Seventh-day Adventist church in particular, needs to be improved. Research indicates that marital well being and longevity are critical issues facing both the church and the wider culture. Development of strategies and programs designed to increase happiness within the marital union are vital for strengthening family, church, and community.

Method

A structured facilitation marriage enrichment program was developed and presented by the researcher and his wife in three Seventh-day Adventist churches in

southern Maine over a ten week period. A pre-test and an identical post-test were administered to volunteer married participants at the beginning and end of the program. Results were tabulated to evaluate the effect of the program on the marital satisfaction of the couples in ten specific areas.

Results

All areas surveyed demonstrated an increase in marital satisfaction over the 10-week program. Statistically significant ($p < .05$) positive outcomes for marital satisfaction were found in 7 out of the 10 areas surveyed

Conclusions

This study demonstrates the value of conducting research-based marriage enrichment programs in order to improve the marital satisfaction of married couples in the Seventh-day Adventist church. Larger sample studies would be helpful in the future to determine if results are replicated for similar marriage enrichment programs. Longitudinal studies could prove beneficial in evaluating the positive duration of the change in marital satisfaction.

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

IMPROVING MARITAL SATISFACTION USING A STRUCTURED
FACILITATION PROGRAM IN THREE SOUTHERN
MAINE CONGREGATIONS

A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
Merlin L. Knowles

April 2011

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DEDICATION

To my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who established marriage in the beginning, who invites us to re-enter the Garden of Eden by faith, with gratitude for allowing me to experience a taste of that with the love of my life, my wife Cheryl Lee.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CES	Cooperative Extension Service
CEV	Contemporary English Version Bible
EI	Emotional Intelligence
<i>KJV</i>	<i>King James Version Bible</i>
<i>NBV</i>	<i>New Bible Version</i>
<i>NIV</i>	<i>New International Version Bible</i>
<i>NLT</i>	<i>New Living Translation Bible</i>
NNEC	Northern New England Conference
PCA	Positive Couple Agreement
PREP	Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program
<i>RSV</i>	<i>Revised Standard Version</i>

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I recognize and affirm that ...

Development of the bulk of the content for the ministry program used in this research was forged through a process of interaction between my wife and me.

God has allowed me to be the spokesperson here but in reality, we are a team of unity in diversity!

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Marriage Under Attack

Part of the traditional wedding vow affirms that spouses will love each other “for better or worse” and “until death do us part.” Overall marriage trends since 1960 indicate that significantly fewer couples who make that vow keep it. According to research for *The National Marriage Project* (Wilcox, 2009), the rate of divorce was 9.2 out of 1,000 married women in 1960. That rate climbed to a high of 22.6 out of 1,000 in 1980. While the rate had dropped to 16.9 by 2008, that is still almost twice the rate as in 1960. The high divorce rate has a significant impact on the way people view marriage as a viable relationship.

The drop in the divorce rate over the past three decades may be partly the result of fewer couples getting married in the first place. Unmarried, heterosexual cohabitation jumped from .4 million in 1960 to 6.4 million in 2007 (Popenoe & Whitehead, 2008). During this same span of years, the percentage of children under 18 living with a single parent increased from 9% to 26% and births for unwed mothers grew from 5.3% to 38.5%. Wilcox (2009) observes that high school seniors “have become more accepting of lifestyles that are alternatives to marriage” (p. 112). Fewer individuals find marriage as an attractive option.

Popenoe and Whitehead (1999) assert that in general, Americans have become less likely to marry, but if they do marry, their marriages are less happy. They observe that from 1980-1999, the percentage of individuals claiming to be in very happy first marriages declined by 10%. Further research during the decade of 1998-2008 reveals that “this trend has flattened out” (Wilcox, 2009, p. 68). Studies indicate only 62% of individuals from this time period said that their marriages were “very happy.”

While it may be encouraging that the trend toward lower marital satisfaction has flattened, the fact that only 3 of 5 said that they were “very happy” leaves much room for improvement. Couples who are dissatisfied are significantly more likely to consider divorce than those who are very happy with their relationship (Olson & Olson, 2000). On the other hand, many couples who are unhappy remain married. Evidence shows that marriage types who have “strong religious views” and “traditional role allocation” (p. 5), though less likely to divorce than other types, were, nonetheless, less happily married.

Anecdotal observations as pastor, family ministry leader, and administrator in Northern New England for over 22 years have yielded similar conclusions regarding the state of marriage and marital satisfaction. Similar patterns among Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) church members can be seen. There have been marriages between church members which have ended in divorce but also there are couples who appear relatively dissatisfied in their relationship, yet who remain together.

This brings us to the problem needing to be addressed in this project. The state of marital happiness among couples needs to be improved since research indicates that marital well-being and longevity are issues in the wider culture as well as the church (Olson & Olson, 2000). Strategies and programs which can improve marital well-being

for committed SDA couples are critically important. Improving marital satisfaction can not only increase well-being between couples, it can positively impact other relationships within the church and community as well. In our own marriage, my wife and I have experienced the value of participating in marriage education and focused couple enrichment programs. We have learned communication skills and interactional patterns that have enhanced and improved our relationship and have impacted the effectiveness of ministry to others.

Marriage enrichment programs, family Sabbaths, family ministry training events, and camp meeting seminars have all been conducted to strengthen marriage and the family. The researcher and his wife have benefitted from marriage education programs and have anecdotally witnessed the positive results of similar programs for other couples. However, there is no objective evidence whether or not any of these efforts actually result in improvement in marital well-being. The project herein described is an early attempt to address this lack and contribute to the improvement of marriage and marriage ministry in the Northern New England Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Inc. (NNEC of SDA).

Project Task and Components

Specifically, the task of this project is to discover and document whether or not a research-based structured facilitation marriage program results in measurably greater marital satisfaction among participant couples in three southern Maine congregations of the NNEC of SDA.

The project consisted of several components. For descriptive purposes, they will be placed in a specific order, but in reality, more than one happened simultaneously.

First, a research-based structured facilitation marriage enrichment program was developed. Next, a survey instrument was selected that fit the size, scope and purpose of the project (Appendix B). Then, locations where the program could be presented were established, dates and duration selected and session times chosen. After this, flyers and bulletin inserts were created and distributed to the churches so that the program could be advertised and promoted adequately (Appendix C). Fifth, materials were compiled and organized to hand out to participants (Appendixes D-F). Lastly, an assistant was recruited and survey protocol was established in order to obtain accurate results and protect the anonymity of the participants. Reliable results are important for the success of this project since its value extends to various constituencies.

Value of This Project

This program is important for a number of reasons. Married couples within the church demonstrate a need to be educated to identify and modify unhealthy relational patterns so that they will experience greater marital satisfaction. Next, improved marital satisfaction has positive effects on the atmosphere in the home and encourages united parenting. Another value is the impact on the wider church community. Since the church is made up of families, strengthening marriages strengthens families, which, in turn, strengthens the church. Fourth, the value of marriage education in the NNEC needs to be documented to demonstrate that it is a critical part of the gospel ministry. Resources and energy tend to follow what is shown to be valuable. Next, the message of the gospel is blunted by the disunity evidenced in Christ's body. The problem of marital dissatisfaction is a contributing factor to this disunity. Christ prayed for unity in the

home and church. That unity results in improved community witness and impact by making Jesus believable to the world (see John 17:21). Programs which strengthen marriage are an important part of answering that prayer. Finally, marriage education that has been demonstrated to improve couple satisfaction may have potential for use as a direct component of evangelistic outreach programs. Description of these program values leads to certain expectations and outcomes.

Expectations for This Project

Information gathered from this project will directly benefit participant couples as they experience the power of the gospel to restore relationships while increasing marital satisfaction through learning to identify and modify unhealthy relational patterns. Results will be useful toward developing a stronger research base to marriage ministry in NNEC. Hopefully, positive changes will extend months and years into the future. There can be several indirect benefits as well. Improving marital satisfaction among participants will, no doubt, inspire others to attend a future program. Positive effects on individual couples can strengthen the church body as a whole. This, in turn, can be one small part of answering Jesus' prayer in John 17. Unity within marriages, families, and the church body can even help give a stronger witness to the community.

It is also hoped that the program will have a statistically significant positive outcome. This would mean measurable improvement in marital satisfaction across a variety of issues faced by participant couples. These results will assist this researcher in doing a more effective job in marriage ministry. In addition, positive results can help

validate ministry for engaged or married couples and encourage church leaders to channel resources into marriage strengthening ministry.

Delimitations

It was recognized that this was only one small project with limited impact and scope. There were certain restrictions that were placed on this study so that it could be completed in a timely manner. Research for this program was limited to participants who volunteered to attend one or more of three church locations within the state of Maine. The program needed to be relatively close to the researcher's place of employment to allow simultaneous involvement in both activities. The program spanned only 10 weeks so as to allow time for completion of the research in a reasonable length of time. Only married couples were asked to be a part of the research, although others were welcome to participate in the educational sessions. The pre- and post-survey was administered at the beginning and end of the 10-week program and results were calculated on change in marital satisfaction during that timeframe. Although the program was advertised to church members, no screening was done to verify membership.

Limitations

Research was restricted to 10 areas of marital satisfaction based on a previously validated survey instrument. Only currently married couples were given questionnaires since the stated purpose was to measure change in marital satisfaction from the beginning to the end of the 10-week period. The number of participants was relatively limited because the pool of potential married attendees was drawn mostly from just three congregations. The short duration of the program did not allow for long term follow-up.

Couples voluntarily attended with no screening regarding their couple history for such things as previous marriages, prior separations, or divorces. The program was conducted during the winter which affected continuous attendance and created other challenges.

Definition of Terms

It may be helpful to define some of the terms used in the description of this study for the purpose of clarity and understanding.

Empirical evidence: Refers to evidence-based data obtained from controlled, randomized outcome studies. Generally, two or more studies from separate research are preferable (Jakubowski, Milne, Brunner, & Miller, 2004).

Marriage enrichment: Is a type of marriage education that is designed to enhance marriage relationships (Bowling, Hill, & Jencius, 2005). It varies in format and duration but generally includes such components as skill-building, learning empathic communication, improving couple intimacy, and enhancing problem-conflict resolution techniques (Jakubowski et al., 2004).

Marital satisfaction: Roach, Frazier, and Bowden (1981) define marital satisfaction “as an attitude of greater or lesser favorability toward one’s own marital relationship” (p. 537). It has become a standard measure in marriage research.

Project Description

Observation in the NNEC of SDA as pastor, administrator, and family ministry leader has identified marriages that appear to be at various levels of marital satisfaction. In some cases, marriages that were significantly stressed have ended in divorce. In other cases, marriages remained intact but appeared less than happy. A variety of methods

have been attempted over the years to strengthen marriages and improve marital satisfaction. Up to this point, there has been little objective evidence as to the effectiveness of these strategies. In order to address this need, a research-based structured facilitation marriage enrichment program was developed and implemented over a 10-week period in three southern Maine SDA congregations. A survey instrument was selected and administered to married participants at the beginning and end of the 10-week program. Comparison of the results provided measurable evidence regarding the effect the program had on the marital satisfaction of the participant couples.

Churches in which to conduct the program were selected based on proximity to the researcher's place of employment while being near enough to each other to allow couples to switch sites from week-to-week as needed. Next, the cooperation of the local pastor and board was obtained and program dates were selected. Couples were then invited to attend through personal announcements, bulletin inserts, and flyers.

A careful method was used to conduct and secure the results of the survey in a manner that maintained the integrity of the results and protected the identity of those willing to be part of the study. At the beginning of the program, married participants were invited to be part of a research project and then briefly instructed regarding the procedure to follow. At the close of the program, a second identical survey was handled in a similar manner.

The program addressed the 10 topics that were contained in the pre-/post-test plus other subjects determined to be helpful. They were presented by the researcher and his wife in a variety of ways. Most of the material was presented in a didactic manner through the use of PowerPoint, a white board, and a few visual aids. Participants were

given a 3-ring notebook that contained session notes, extra reading material, assignments, and short devotional readings. Leader dialog, the telling of stories, group discussion, and short group activities were used to reinforce what was presented.

The theme/title of “Magnetic Marriage: Unity in Diversity” was chosen and integrated throughout the 10 sessions. This was illustrated through the use of a specially designed set of magnets (Appendix H) that was referenced throughout the program. Emphasis was placed on the importance of valuing the unique qualities and characteristics that each spouse brings to the marriage relationship in order to have unity in diversity. It was noted that gender differences can either be used in a complementary or competitive manner. Program content was overtly based on a theological understanding of male/female diversity as a design feature of the Creator. Evidence from research reinforced the ways in which the two genders tend to process information and interact differently.

Content of the 10 Sessions

The program was developed to contain topics that research has determined to be important to marital satisfaction. The 10 sessions were organized to help couples recognize negative relational patterns and provide building blocks for construction of new ones. Some of the topics were presented during the session while others were addressed in the outside reading or assignments. The following few paragraphs give a short overview of what each session covered.

Session #1 considered marital expectations. This subject was presented first since all marriage relationships begin with certain expectations and many times they are

derailed because of both realistic and unrealistic expectations. Suggestions were made to help couples grow.

Session #2 explored the topic of male/female differences. This topic was seen to be foundational for all other topics since the male or female perspective affects the ways in which the rest of the material is processed and understood. Bringing understanding between spouses was seen as key to enhancing marital satisfaction.

Session #3 addressed couple communication. This was important as the lifeblood of relationships. Effective verbal and non-verbal interaction in a marriage is essential since it is the way that all other areas within a marriage are processed. Many, if not most, difficulties that arise in a marriage can be resolved between spouses if they develop skills in hearing and understanding the other.

Session #4 examined the topic of personality differences. The four temperaments known as choleric, sanguine, phlegmatic, and melancholy were the particular focus. By discussing the variety in personality types, couples were encouraged to continue the process of valuing the complementary gifts that each brings to the relationship.

Session #5 discussed couple intimacy and marital sexuality. The topic was placed mid-way in the program since it can be a sensitive area for couples to discuss and a certain level of understanding and ability to communicate might have been gained by this point in the program.

Session #6 dealt with family finances. This tends to be a top argument starter for couples. It was felt that its discussion should come after several other building blocks were in place regarding differences in a marriage. Helping couples understand the value

of different money types could reduce the potential for conflict and encourage appreciation for the spouse's strengths in this area.

Session #7 addressed the issue of anger and conflict which is common to all marriages. Anger was acknowledged as a universal and healthy emotion which typically needs skill development to help couples process in appropriate and constructive ways.

Session #8 introduced the importance of constantly making good choices regarding thoughts, words, and actions in a marital relationship. Couples were encouraged to avoid the negative patterns of escalation, invalidation, negative-interpretation, and stonewalling.

Session #9 continued what was introduced in session #8 and introduced ways to change negative patterns that have become habitual. Suggestions were made to help couples to nurture their relationship by remembering their courtship days and by focusing on the positive qualities in their spouse.

Session #10 wrapped up the program by discussing the importance of forgiveness and "starting over" when the relationship has become strained. Couples were challenged to consider how much they had been forgiven by Jesus and to pass that same graceful attitude to each other.

Couples were given assignments to work on during the week either to reinforce what was presented or to introduce new information. Spouses were encouraged to share a devotional time together as well. Another technique to help couples stay engaged in the program was to provide them with a weekly fridge magnet that summarized and reviewed the material covered in a given session (Appendix H). At the close of the program a

special commitment card was given to challenge couples to make a new start and to continue practicing what they had learned in the program.

At the beginning and end of the 10-week program, identical surveys were given to married couples willing to participate in the study. Roughly half of the 36 couples who registered and attended any part of the program completed both the pre-survey and post-survey since they were required to be in attendance at the beginning and end to complete the survey. Following the program, average results of the surveys analyzed were tabulated to determine the effect of the intervention on changing the marital satisfaction of the participants.

Comments

Family is at the heart of God's original plan and marriage is at the center of the family. I have witnessed many positive as well as negative aspects of marriage in over 30 years of ministry. I have experienced 32 years of a loving marriage that, nonetheless, has had its challenging moments. I have personally experienced some of the negative aspects when my selfish nature has gotten the upper hand in my own marriage while I have also witnessed negative aspects by observing unhappy marriages, divided parenting, confused children, blame, and divorce. I have also seen very happy marriages that have gone the distance, have experienced forgiveness, mutual and supportive parenting, and genuine friendship. It is hoped that this project will be a small part of increasing marital satisfaction so that the positive aspects grow and the negative aspects diminish.

CHAPTER 2

A STUDY OF MARRIAGE BASED UPON A RECOVERY OF THE GENESIS DESIGN OF UNITY IN DIVERSITY

Introduction

God established marriage in the beginning. It is one of the two critically important institutions that humanity received from Eden: the Sabbath (Gen 2:3) and marriage (Gen 1:27; 2:24). Several implications regarding marriage arise from God's method of creating as well as from statements He made to that first couple relative to His intent for the marital union. With this in mind, this chapter begins with an overview of marriage as a union of male and female established by the Creator in a perfect world as a covenant marriage relationship. The next and major portion of this chapter will consider specific features of that marriage as it relates to the theme of marital unity in diversity. Following the main discussion will be a short review of some of the negative affects of the fall on God's design for marriage. The fourth section will explore recovery of the Genesis design for marriage that is in Christ. The final section will briefly view the gospel call to marital unity in diversity. It will consider the connection between the unity observable in marriage and the effectiveness of efforts to evangelize others to Christ.

Marriage in the Beginning

God established marriage on the sixth day of this earth's history as a union

between one male and one female (Gen 1:27; 2:24). The Bible is clear that marriage was God's idea from the start. He did not create humankind to be alone. In fact, this was the first time in the creation week that anything was less than good. God said it is not good (Gen 2:18) that the man should be alone. Davies (1969) defines "not good" as being "not advantageous, not wise, not comfortable" and "not beneficial" (1:137). This implies that a wise God saw that the man was incomplete while he remained alone. Humankind was not finished yet. The Creator's statement that it was "not good" was not to denigrate singleness but rather it was to inform readers about important truths regarding God's plan for the partnership of marriage and implications of humankind as social creatures.

It was God Himself who caused the man to sleep deeply in order to complete the job He had begun earlier that day (Gen 2:21). It was the Creator who made the female from the male and then brought her to him to become one with him (Gen 2:22). The man immediately recognized and accepted God's choice of a help meet for him (Gen 2:23). God then concluded the ceremony by stating that the man was to "leave" his father and mother and "cleave" to his wife and become "one flesh" with her (Gen 2:24).

Marriage in Eden was established as a life-long covenant marriage relationship between one male and one female. Davidson (2007) notes that "God was the officiant at the solemn covenant-making ceremony" in the Garden (p. 45). Adam was simply responding to and acknowledging God's previous activity and expressing covenant marriage vows when he said in Gen 2:23, "this is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh." Additionally, the Hebrew word translated as "cling" (BVME) implies the idea of covenant because of the closeness and permanence referenced as well as its technical usage in other Old Testament covenants (Davidson, 2007). Tarwater (2006) argues

forcefully that all the essential elements of a covenant are present in Genesis 1 and 2. Regarding the Genesis design, he states that “if marriage is established by God as a covenant relationship, it unilaterally depends on His will and authority” (p. 63). In Eden, one might say that covenant marriage is about the miracle of God creating two from one and then making one out of two. It means unity in diversity based on God’s Word.

Features of the Eden Marriage

Marriage as established by God in Eden reflected at least ten distinctive features. Man and woman were made in God’s image. They were created equal but different. Each brought unique qualities and characteristics to their life as a couple. They each were created with needs. They were designed to give to the other and to receive from the other in order to satisfy these God-given needs. They were mutually given dominion over the rest of creation to serve as co-regents. They were instructed to participate in the creation process by multiplying. The man was told to leave his father and mother and become one flesh with his wife. They were created naked and unashamed. Finally, they were created from the same raw material. In the following pages, each of these ten distinctive features will be examined within the Genesis context and compared to other Scripture as well as with the writings of Ellen White. Each will also be considered relative to the theme of unity in diversity.

Created in God’s Image

Of all the creatures made on this earth, only humans are said to be in the image of God and after His likeness (Gen 1:26-27). What are some of the implications of being in God’s image and likeness? What may come to mind first is humankind’s outward

resemblance to their maker. Von Rad (1972) asserts that “the marvel of man’s bodily appearance is not at all to be excepted from the realm of God’s image” (p. 58). While the external is probably significant, internal attributes may be even more important. Viewing humankind holistically, White (1913) notes that the image of God which needs restoring includes “the body, the mind, as well as the soul” (p. 32). That is to say, humans are in God’s image physically, in their ability to think, in character and in moral nature.

God as Plural Yet One

The expression, “let us” (Gen 1:26), implies that the Godhead is in relationship, that God is plural and yet one. The character, nature, and purpose of the Godhead are all the same yet there are three. Scripture elsewhere lends support to the idea of a God who is more than one Person (John 14:6-12; Matt 28:19; Col 2:8-10) and yet one (Deut 6:4; John 10:30). Jesus claimed the titles (John 8:58; 11:25) and prerogatives (Matt 9:2-6; 20:20) belonging to divinity yet He is separate from the Father (Matt 3:17; 2 Pet 1:16-18). He is described as the Creator and Sustainer of all things (John 1:1-3, 14; Col 1:15-17), yet the Father and the Spirit are fully engaged in the process as well (Gen 1:1, 2, 26; Eph 3:9; Heb 1:2). God is described as love in 1 John 4:8. This core characteristic of love is evidenced through the unity or oneness within the Godhead (John 17:11, 21-23). In addition, this idea is supported by Christ’s expression of despair on the cross. It was a cry of agony of being torn from the Father’s love (Matt 27:46) as the sin bearer (1 Pet 2:24). It broke His heart (John 19:34). That Christ prayed for His church to be one as He and the Father are one implies that both will find their oneness springing from the love that is descriptive of who God is (1 John 4:8).

Humankind too is made in a plurality, a plurality of two genders. Created as “male” and “female” (Gen 1:27; 5:2) yet called to be one (Gen 2:24). Coupled with this is the statement that God created humankind as “male and female” (Gen 1:27) in His image. The characteristics and qualities of both genders in relationship to each other can reflect, in some way, the image of God (Briscoe, 1987). Implied in the concept of God’s image therefore, is unity in diversity.

Until Adam was both “male” and “female,” humankind was not what God intended. When the man recognized her as “woman” he affirmed that she was a very part of him and yet clearly different (Gen 2:23). By using the terms “man” and “woman,” the English text appropriately shows the tight connection between “*ish*” and “*isha*” as is seen in the Hebrew text. Clark (1938, 1:45) notes that “a literal version of the Hebrew would appear strange, and yet a literal version is the only proper one.” She was the female version of him. The male and his counterpart female in relationship with each other reflected the divine image in its plurality and oneness and are included in Christ’s prayer for His church in John 17:11, 21-23.

God as Love and Goodness

Everything created was declared by God to be either good or very good (Gen 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31; 2:9, 12, 17, 18). God is love and goodness so it follows that anything God made would be good (Matt 19:17; 1 John 4:8). Undoubtedly then, being in God’s image included mirroring the attributes of love and goodness. In Eden, humankind was capable of loving, of being loved and able to accurately reflect God’s goodness back to Him and to others. That God would create people “for his pleasure” (Rev 4:11; Ps

149:4; Col 1:16; Isa 45:18) implies that love wishes for other beings who can love in return. Love by its nature selflessly gives love (John 3:16, Isa 53:10) but also desires to receive love (Henry, n.d., 1:18). Human beings, created by a loving God, were to be united in loving relationship with each other (Gibson, 1981), in a primary sense with their spouse and, by extension, with others (1 John 4:20).

Image of God as Having a Moral Nature

A third area that is critical regarding the image of God is that humankind has a moral nature (Adams & Gray, 1903). He has intelligence, he can choose to acknowledge, accept, and obey or to deny, reject, and disobey God (Josh 24:15). This becomes apparent when God instructs the couple to abstain from eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:16-17) and their subsequent decision not to do so (Gen 3:6). When they were held accountable for that sin (Gen 3:15-19), it was demonstrated that humankind could in fact choose right from wrong. Obviously, they chose the wrong and all humanity is suffering the consequences!

Image of God as Having Dominion

The Creator, as recorded in Gen 1:26-28, commands humankind to be in dominion over the rest of creation on the earth, “to subdue it” and to “multiply, and replenish the earth.” An aspect of being in God’s image appears to be the role of being in dominion over creatures or things of a lower order. That dominion, however, is given to “Adam” by God as a gift, not as an inherent right.

Created Different but Equal

Man and woman were created different from each other yet fully equal. One can understand this statement in two ways, the process and the result. The specific process of creating male and female was different. The man was formed from the dust of the ground and then God breathed into him the breath of life (Gen 2:7). The woman on the other hand was “built” from part of the side of the man. This was a unique act that required a different verb to be used (Livingston, 1969). Between the time that the male was “formed” and the woman was built, the man named the animals and discovered that no helper was evident (Gen 2:19-20). The manner of the female’s creation suggests that she is physically part of the male. This implies equality since their essence is the same.

The result of being created different but equal is observable in the physical characteristics of male and female as well as in their respective emotional and hormonal makeup. They were unique in many ways. These contrasts in no way diminish the equality of the pair. To the contrary, they affirm it. The very dissimilarity of certain features meant that there was mutual need that would require interdependence (Davies, 1969) and mutual submission to thrive and to reflect the oneness of God’s character. This concept is echoed in the New Testament admonition to submit to one another in the fear of God (Eph 5:21).

Creation Evidence of Male and Female Equality

That male and female were created equal is apparent from several statements made in Scripture. First, they are both created in God’s image. Genesis 1:27 says that “man” is created in God’s image but then goes on to describe that man as being “male

and female.” Male and female are given the one name of “Adam” to share, rather than “Adam and Eve.” The designation as “Eve” did not occur until after they sinned. Therefore one could say that humankind is created in God’s image but their makeup is male/female.

Second, they were both blessed and told to “be fruitful” to “multiply” and “replenish” the earth (Gen 1:28). Together they were to use their unique reproductive gifts for populating the earth. Neither one by themselves could accomplish this task. It required mutual cooperation and obedience to God’s command. Although their particular contribution to procreation was different, both were equally essential.

They were also both told to subdue the earth and have dominion over it (Gen 1:26, 28). God had said to let *them* have dominion over the fish, birds, cattle, and creeping things. Neither the male nor the female was instructed to have sole dominion. Again, it was a mutual task between equals.

Lastly, the female was created from a rib or a portion of the side (Clark, 1938) of the male. The location of the bone indicates equality. They were to stand side by side. They were connected, as it were, in the middle of their bodies. White (1958) bears this idea out when she states that Eve was to stand by Adam’s side as his equal (p. 46).

Woman Not Inferior

Regarding the designation as “helpmeet,” one should note the following. The fact that woman was created as a helper for the man in no way implies that she is somehow inferior or subordinate to man. The Hebrew word “*ezer*” (Strong, 1988) that is translated as “helper” in Gen 2:18 is used 20 times elsewhere in the Old Testament. In three out of

four times, the word refers to God as a helper for humans in some way (Briscoe, 1987). Davidson (2007) notes rather, it “is a relational term, describing a beneficial relationship, but in itself does not specify position or rank, whether of superiority or inferiority” (p. 29).

Unique Qualities and Characteristics Brought by Each Spouse

In the creation story, both husband and wife bring unique qualities and characteristics to their marriage. The sexual union of “male and female” (Gen 1:27) in marriage gives an excellent example of the unique qualities and characteristics that the husband and the wife possess. It is helpful in understanding the value of physical and emotional design differences because each spouse must reach out to meet the other’s needs in order to become physically “one flesh” (Gen 2:24) according to God’s instruction. Both genders must cooperate and be willing to celebrate and affirm the other’s unique role. The specific mutual contributions made by each are also integral and essential to reaching the outcome of replenishing the earth, that is, human reproduction (Gen 1:28). The act of selflessly loving and giving themselves to each other reflected God’s plan and His loving, giving, selfless nature (Phil 2:2-8). When children would be born as a result, God’s creation would be expanded, God’s love extended and His name glorified.

Marriage is a matter of teamwork. The importance of working together as a team is evidenced by such things as being created “male and female” in God’s image (Gen 1:27), being told to mutually reproduce, to jointly subdue and have dominion over the earth (Gen 1:28) and in the following of God’s instruction to become “one flesh” (Gen

2:24). These things all imply the need for cooperation, teamwork and communication between partners to accomplish God's design for marriage.

The importance of working together as a team is also seen in a negative sense by the disaster that happened when "*ish*" and "*isha*" (Strong, 1988) got separated. The breakdown of the team happened inadvertently (White, 1970) but the result was the same as if it had been done deliberately. The woman ended up by herself at the tree of knowledge of good and evil. That she was alone is evident from the fact that Satan speaks only with her and that she took of the fruit and gave it to her husband (Gen 3:1, 4, 6). She had no one to stand by her side and encourage her to resist. She was deceived. If they had remained together, perhaps they could have been a help to each other in resisting the temptation of the serpent (White, 1970). Once she fell, she formed an alien bond with the tempter and became his accomplice to tempt the man.

Each Made With Needs

The idea of humans "needing" in a sinless Garden with perfect minds and bodies seems illogical. One may be a bit ill at ease because of the connotation of a person being considered "needy." The idea is there, nonetheless. God said it is not good for man to be alone (Gen 2:18). Humans need companionship. Smalley (2004) says simply that Adam and Eve were encoded in their very DNA for relationships (p. 22). Even today, loneliness is an indicator that people were made for interaction with others. Individuals have a need to give love to and receive love from others.

Genesis 2:18 continues by saying that God will make a "help meet" (KJV) for him. This is variously translated "suitable helper, completing him" (NBV), "helper fit"

(RSV), “suitable partner” (CEV), and “companion who will help him” (NLT). In short, Adam needed help! He needed someone to be one with him, to be a companion, to complement his attributes, to be his sexual partner, to mother his children, to respect him (Eph 5:33, NIV), to complete him, and to be a team with him, both in the rearing of their children and in exercising dominion over the world.

The picture in Genesis is one of complementary companionship. Husband and wife were created to be friends (Davies, 1969) and “partners” (CEV) to be beside each other. The intent of Genesis 2 is to convey the idea of being mutual helpers. The woman needed her husband to cleave to her according to God’s command (Gen 2:24). She needed someone to be one with her, to be a companion, to complement her attributes, to be her sexual partner, to father her children, to complete her, to love her (Eph 5:33), and to be a team with her. It should be noted that a breakdown of the team likely contributed to the downfall in the confrontation with the serpent (White, 1970).

Designed to Give and Receive

God made humankind equal but not self-sufficient. They also were designed to give and to receive. The very act of procreation is illustrative of the design of giving and receiving. There is mutual giving and receiving of egg and sperm in order to fulfill God’s command to be fruitful and multiply (Gen 1:28). The infant that is the result of this process is also a mutual gift given by each of the parents to the other and of course by God Himself.

In this mutual giving and receiving, humankind exemplified that which God had intended for all of His creation. All of nature was meant to be both the recipient and giver

relative to people. Nature was meant to receive dressing and keeping (Gen 2:15) by its mutual co-regents (Gen 1:28) and in turn was to give of its fruit to sustain both animals and humankind (Gen 1:29-30). Beyond physical needs, the garden home was designed to give sensual pleasure to the human family (Gen 2:9). Male and female were created to give help and companionship to the other (Gen 1:18-20). The man and, by extension, the woman, were instructed to give the gift of focused attention on their partner by “leaving” father and mother and of “cleaving” to their spouse. They were both to participate in becoming “one flesh” (Gen 2:24) by giving themselves to the other. Everything about the creation of humankind was reflective of the love of God. God is love (1 John 4:8) and God’s love gives (John 3:16). Since people were made in God’s image, humans were designed to love and to give. The marriage institution is likewise built around this self-giving love.

Another element that should not be overlooked is that the married *couple* also gives and receives. Each new marriage was to “leave” and “cleave” (Gen 2:24) and form a new marital unit. This new marriage was not meant to be an island unto itself with no interaction, giving, and/or receiving from others outside its circle. The marital unit is to reflect God’s image within the relationship, between husband and wife but it is also meant to minister to others. Since marriages reflect the uniqueness of the marriage partners, each couple would have unique contributions to share and receive from others. In a limited way, this can be seen in Eden in the mutual command to *serve* as rulers over the creatures, to subdue the earth, and to eat *from* it (Gen 1:26-29).

Mutual Dominion

Man and woman were together given mutual dominion over all creation under God. It is clear that their dominion was to be mutual. He said to let us make man and to let *them* have dominion (Gen 1:26). God gave dominion to “Adam” but then he goes on to define that term as male *and* female (Gen 1:27). It follows that the term “Adam” refers to “humankind,” not to just the male. God then repeats Himself by saying that they should “subdue” the earth and have dominion over it (Gen 1:28).

They were both given unlimited dominion over the whole earth as co-rulers, mutual monarchs if you will. White (1890) agrees with this idea when she says: “While they remained true to God, Adam and his companion were to bear rule over the earth. Unlimited control was given them over every living thing” (p. 50).

There appear to be times within the creation account that the reference to “Adam” or “man” is talking about just the male (see Gen 2:19-21) but not relative to *dominion*. That is to say, “Adam” can be used to describe “humankind” in general or a man in particular depending on the context. The man Adam in particular appears to be the meaning, for example, in Genesis 2:15, 16, and 17. However, even there, it may be also understood as meaning humankind. When God speaks to the man in verses 16 and 17, He instructs him to not eat of the tree. If the command was only for the male then why would the woman tell the serpent that God had said “you” shall not eat (Gen 3:3)? Whether God informed her or the man told her is irrelevant, since the statement was based on her being the complementary counterpart of humankind. God, speaking to the man, obviously meant humanity as a whole. He, after all, did call *their* name Adam (Gen 5:2).

Mutually Instructed to Multiply

The male and female were *both* blessed. They were then mutually instructed to be fruitful, to multiply, and replenish the earth (Gen 1:28). There is no hint that this was not a team effort or that the fruitfulness of one was more important than that of the other. The fact that the male contributed the sperm and the female the egg did not make one or the other more or less important. It was a mutual role. The fact that the female carried the child for nine months and then nursed the child did not diminish the father's role. The gifts from God were placed in the male and in the female as He wished (Gen 1:27). They were still viewed as equal partners although their contributions were significantly different in nature. It was still, unity in diversity.

The ability given to humankind to participate and continue in the procreative process is truly amazing. Not even angels were given this ability (Mark 12:25). It must not be lost sight of however, that neither male nor female by themselves can produce children. The procreative process stops if there is not male and female. It requires cooperation between husband and wife. This was God's plan. Celebrating, affirming, valuing, giving, and receiving the gifts of the other spouse were all a part of God's design.

Man to Leave and Cleave

The command for a man to leave father and mother, cleave to his wife and become one flesh is cryptic but it is packed with meaning (Gen 2:24) and immediately follows the statement made by Adam in the previous verse. He says that woman was taken out of man, she was part of the same substance (Gen 2:23). Marriage then becomes

the primary relationship that is even more important than the parent/child relationship. She becomes the female version of him. More than one author has noted that this is so significant that Eve could be described as his “second self” (Henry, n.d.; White, 1890, p. 46).

It is of interest that God spoke to the man with these special instructions. The implication would seem to be that both bride and groom would leave their parents and become one but God certainly had a reason for stating things as He did. Leaving mom and dad may be a bigger issue for the man than the woman. Even in modern culture, though less so today than three or four decades ago, it is understood that the woman usually leaves, takes the man’s name and goes where his job leads. In ancient culture it was even more of a “man’s world” (Esth 1:9-22). God does something unusual here, He tells the man to do the leaving. The man’s new home must be priority over his home of origin and the woman must sense that fact. She needs to feel the husband’s undivided loyalty, that she is the queen of her new home. It is significant that the command was given before sin. God intended the marital unit to be a separate entity from either home-of-origin; even in the perfection of Eden. The Creator declared His purpose that marriage was to be a sacred circle which included only husband, wife and God.

Leaving was one thing, cleaving was quite another. In some ways, leaving was the easy part. Cleaving, becoming permanently one with a person so totally different from oneself, from how one thinks, and how one was raised, thoroughly shakes an individual out of their comfort zone. However, that was the command (Gen 2:24) and it was made by a loving Heavenly Father who knew best and knew He created humankind in His image. Unity in diversity is, at times, a hard saying for sinful married people but it

is still God's design. It is a reflection of who He is: selfless, loving and giving (John 3:16).

“One flesh” carries with it the idea of the sexual union but it connotes much more than that (Davidson, 2007, p. 47). The sexual union, at least in the ideal sense, is merely an outgrowth of the oneness that is taking place in all the other areas of a couple's relationship. God is telling Adam to think, feel, and treat his spouse as if she were an extension of him. What brings her joy is his greatest joy while what brings her pain, he will endeavor to share or remove. God's plan for marriage is for the design differences to fit like puzzle parts into the oneness that reveals His character of love.

Naked and Unashamed

Genesis 2:25 declares that the man and his wife were naked and unashamed. They were totally naked and open toward each other. The physical nakedness reflected the condition of the innocence of their hearts. Mentally, emotionally, spiritually, relationally, physically they were fully open to the other. There was no fear of being exposed in any area of their life. They were a living revelation of God's character of love. Fear could not exist in the presence of that love (1 John 4:18).

They were also unashamed. There was no guilt, no reason to hide from each other or from God. Shame would have been something foreign and odd in a perfect world. Shame would be illogical since both were sinless humans who selflessly loved God and each other. Unfortunately, that state did not last very long.

Created From the Same Material

Humankind was from the dust of the ground but the particular manner that God

used in creating the male and female is quite different. God formed the male and then breathed life into him (Gen 2:7). The female, on the other hand, was constructed from flesh and bone taken from the man's side (Gen 2:21-22). The text does not describe any use of new soil. It does not say that God formed woman of the dust and then put the man's rib inside her nor does it say that God used earth to form it around the rib. Quite literally, God made or built the woman *from* the rib. Clark (1938) asserts that "she was of the same nature, the same identical flesh and blood, and of the same constitution in all respects" (p. 45). One could say that the woman was created from the same raw material that was already in the living and breathing human. This appears to be similar to Christ's miracles of the loaves and fishes in the New Testament (Matt 14:19). Under Jesus' blessing, the food grew to feed the whole crowd. How else could one bone or a portion of the man's side, for that matter, end up the size of the woman? This is why Adam exclaims, "This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh" (Gen 2:23).

Initially God made humankind one individual, though it was not His intent to stop there (Gen 2:18). He then took part of that man to build his counterpart. The male was minus a rib along with some flesh while the female was totally constructed from that missing portion of the male. The woman was derived from the man. Then, God took the two parts which were now living, breathing people and brought them together to be one *again*. The fact that humankind started as one is significant because oneness is part of God's nature (Deut 6:4), but plurality also describes God (John 10:30; Matt 28:19). What completed humankind however, was when God again declared them to be one. The different manner of making the male and female describes the core of what God meant for marriage to be, perfect unity in diversity.

Affects of the Fall on God's Design for Marriage

When humankind succumbed to the temptation of the serpent, the adverse affects on God's original design were swift and pervasive. The features of the covenant Edenic marriage described above morphed significantly. Immediately, the woman became an accomplice with Satan to persuade the man to sin (Gen 3:6). Shortly thereafter, shame, self-sufficiency, self-dependence (Gen 3:7), fear, separation (Gen 3:10), blame, and self-justification (Gen 3:12-13) resulting from the self-centeredness that now ruled their nature took hold of the human race. All of these had a huge negative impact on God's original design for marriage.

Giving and Receiving Short Circuited

God's design feature of giving and receiving was short circuited by individuals becoming either self-sufficient or self-consumed. On the one hand was a denial of the need of others, while on the other hand was "self pity" (White, 1932, p. 177) which only took from others. Both were contrary to God's love and both were destructive to the marital union established by God in the Garden. To refuse to give or to refuse to receive are typically acts of selfishness and independence which come from the enemy of our souls. Soon after eating of the forbidden fruit (Gen 3:8), they were already floundering in the twin ditches of self-sufficiency and self-consumption.

Naked, Fearful, and Ashamed

The solution the man and woman invented to address their nakedness, fear, and shame was to hide their bodies from each other with fig leaves and to hide from God (Gen 3:8). The design differences in the couple that were meant to be complementary

suddenly became a problem. They were embarrassed to be in each other's presence without wearing clothing. They began to pull away and hide from each other and from God. From inside their ashamed, fearful hearts, they shot arrows of blame at the other and at God. They began to experience the results of design differences that were misappropriated. The misuse of their diversity caused separation and tended to torpedo their relationship with each other.

It is significant that as soon as Adam and Eve sinned, they forfeited love and goodness. They became selfish and sinners by nature. They became self-absorbed and self-protective. White (1900) attests that the covering light which was indicative of their innocence disappeared when they fell (p. 310). The image of God, in body, mind, and soul was severely marred.

God's Post-Fall Actions

God took action immediately to address the situation by cursing the serpent and placing enmity between the serpent and the woman (Gen 3:14). Both of these actions were for the benefit of humankind. Significantly, He also announced the plan of salvation and restoration of humanity in Christ (Gen 3:15). White (1968) beautifully states that "all that had been lost by yielding to Satan could be regained through Christ" (p. 27). This will be discussed further in the next section.

After the announcement of the recovery plan, God made several other pronouncements: that there would be pain in childbirth, that the husband would "rule over" the wife (Gen 3:16), that the ground was cursed and would yield a harvest only after hard toil, that the man would eat in sorrow (Gen 3:17), that there would be thorns

and eating of herbs (Gen 3:18), that the man would eat by the sweat of his brow and return to dust (Gen 3:19). Shortly thereafter, humankind was banished from Eden and the tree of life (Gen 3:24). But humanity was not left alone to face the results of their choices; humankind was not abandoned to the results of their rebellion.

God's Proscriptive Measures

God pronounced that the husband would “rule over” the wife (Gen 3:16). This was not just descriptive but proscriptive in nature (Davidson, 2007). It was God's judgment that was intended to promote the unity that was fast evaporating (see Gen 3:12). White (1890) states that the union of Adam and Eve “could be maintained and harmony preserved only by submission on the part of the one or the other” (p. 58). White (1958) notes that the submission of the woman was not based on her gender, but on the fact that she “had been the first in transgression” (p. 58). Unfortunately, men have often misunderstood the real meaning of God's words and the blessing intended has been turned to bitterness for many women. Hard work by “the sweat” of the brow (Gen 3:16) for man, though less controversial, was also meant to be a blessing. Rightly comprehended, all of the proscriptions were to benefit humankind and aid in the recovery of what had been lost.

Recovery of the Genesis Design for Marriage in Christ

God's redemption plan from the foundation of the world (1 Pet 1:20) included and intended the recovery of His original design for marriage in Christ. Sanctification in Christ (1 Cor 1:2) anticipates grace-filled changes (2 Tim 1:9) in the way humans relate to one another (Gal 3:28); it leaves no arena of existence untransformed by the gospel.

Rather, *all* things are new in Christ (2 Cor 5:17). White (1896) appropriately includes the marital union in the great work of the gospel when she says that although marriage has been perverted by sin, “it is the purpose of the gospel to restore its purity and beauty” (p. 64). Further, the author states that only Christ’s grace will accomplish for marriage “what God designed it should be--an agent for the blessing and uplifting of humanity” (p. 65). The three characteristics of unity, love, and peace between husband and wife identify and reflect heaven’s original plan.

Christ’s Affirmation of the Genesis Design for Marriage

In the New Testament, Jesus sanctioned the marital union and affirmed its divine origin when He attended the marriage festival where He turned the water into wine. It is significant that Jesus Christ began His public ministry by blessing the institution that He Himself had established in the beginning (White, 1952). He reaffirmed that truth through the apostle Paul (Heb 13:4). He also gave marriage a special place of honor by making it a symbol of His union with His bride, the church, which is described as “holy and without blemish” (Eph 5:25-27; Rev 19:7). It is significant that when confronted by the caviling Pharisees, Jesus based His answer on the Genesis design from Eden. He affirmed unity in diversity by saying: “What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Matt 19:6). White (1952) agrees that His purpose was “to restore it to its original sanctity and elevation” and “to restore the moral image of God in man” (p. 96).

Spiritual Gifts, an Illustration of Giving and Receiving

Spiritual gifts are an appropriate example of the principle of healthy giving and receiving in Christ. There are at least two dozen listed in Scripture and, while members of the body of Christ may be blessed with one or more, the Spirit does not bestow all of them on any one individual (1 Cor 12:29-30). Individuals are given these gifts by God as it pleases Him (1 Cor 12:18) according to His grace (1 Pet 4:10). Members of the body are described as stewards of these blessings from our Father; they do not own them. The gifts are given for the benefit of body of Christ (1 Cor 12:7). By passing on to others the blessings of the gifts, a humble spirit of preferring one another is demonstrated (Rom 12:10). Significantly, the primary reason each receives different gifts is so that there will be a mutual sense of need for one another (White, 1910; cf. 1 Cor 12).

The manner in which God hands out spiritual gifts is a powerful illustration of His plan for marriage in Christ. He gifts a wife to enable her to aid her husband and gifts a husband to enable him to aid his wife. They are made to be mutual helpers. Neither has the upper hand. Neither male nor female can treat their mate condescendingly because their mate possesses needed complementary strengths. If one person in the marital boat damages the other, it is like shooting holes in your own canoe.

White (1952) states:

Neither husband nor wife is to make a plea for rulership. The Lord has laid down the principle that is to guide in this matter. The husband is to cherish his wife as Christ cherishes the church. And the wife is to respect and love her husband. Both are to cultivate the spirit of kindness, being determined never to grieve or injure the other. (p. 106)

Giving and Receiving

Galatians 5:13 says to serve one another. If all are to give, who are they to give to? It only makes sense if each person gives and in turn receives from others. Where one is weak, another is strong and vice versa (Rom 15:1-2). All the strengths a person has, they first receive from God (White, 1977). Those gifts are not to be hoarded but shared. As one gives, the gifts increase. When done in the Spirit of Jesus, both giving and receiving are acts of love.

In Christ, couples who give and receive according to God's plan demonstrate that unity in diversity is His design for humanity, for the restoration of His image and especially for the marital union. White (1961), speaking to this issue, makes the following insightful statement:

Unity in diversity is God's plan. Among the followers of Christ there is to be the blending of diverse elements, one adapted to the other, and each to do its special work for God. Every individual has his place in the filling up of one great plan bearing the stamp of Christ's image. (p. 169)

The author continues by asserting that "each is to be the complement of the others" and "The Spirit of God, working in and through the diverse elements, will produce harmony of action" (p. 169). In another book, the same author affirms that Christian marriage does not anticipate just "giving" but that there are needs for "receiving" as well. She states that "desire for love and sympathy is implanted in the heart by God Himself" (1911). Even Christ longed for human sympathy as He faced the cross (Matt 26:38).

Covenant Marriage

Recovery of the Genesis design of marriage includes its covenant nature. Covenant marriage at its core is based on God's word, work, and action rather than that

of humanity. God makes two, one (Mal 2:14, 15). Marriage in Christ acknowledges and proclaims the institution as the divine plan and not merely a human instrument.

A Marriage That is in Christ

Genesis chapters 1 and 2 form the crucial and foundational instruction for understanding other Scripture regarding the marital union. As noted above, Christ Himself referred back to the perfection of Eden as an anchor point when confronted by the Jewish leaders regarding putting away a wife (Matt 19:4-5). While the affects of sin will remain until Jesus returns, spouses can choose to grow back toward God's original plan given in paradise. Trust in God's grace and His promises allow couples to return to the Garden and enter there by faith. The church confidently proclaims that all things are new in Christ (1 Cor 5:17). It would seem logical that the relationship established in the Garden which reflects the very image of God, would be new in Christ as well. To return to the Garden ideal by faith in Christ should be extremely desirable for all Christian couples.

Genesis 3:16, rather than being antithetical to this ideal, anticipates it. Gradually, in Christ and by His grace, couples choose to return as close as possible to the pre-fall experience in response to God's "positive promised blessing" (Davidson, 2007). Beyond that, Davidson also asserts that "such movement back toward the egalitarian marriage of pre-fall Eden is the canonical thrust of the OT" (p. 76).

In the beginning, the Creator made each gender with certain external physical characteristics that differed from the other such as body build, genitalia, breast size, and facial hair. As noted above, many less obvious variations are implied upon a careful

study of the creation story. One would postulate, therefore, that men and women were created to be 'different by design'. In a sinless world, male and female were perfectly mutually complementary. Tragically, that same divinely-designed diversity has been used against one another in the post-fall scenario. In a sinful world, position, class, race, nationality, and gender often result in division and strife. Christian couples, on the other hand, in the face of similar potential dividers, are to live out the spiritual reality of their oneness in Christ (Gal 3:28) and exhibit a unique "one fleshness" in a permanent marital bond (Gen 2:24; Matt 19:5, 6; Eph 5:31). It follows that a marriage that is in Christ fulfills God's original design and is united in spite of gender differences. Ideally, the unique qualities of each spouse, when valued and cherished, will actually become synergistic.

Marital Unity and the Gospel

The gospel commission recorded in Matt 28:19-20 instructs the church to go and make disciples of all nations. This disciple making process must include what happens between husband and wife in the home. Division in marriage, and by extension, in the family and in the church is a denial of the power of Christ within, the hope of glory (Col 1:27). The very disunity seen in Christian homes reduces the effectiveness of witness to the world. The ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:17-21) given to God's people reconciles people to their Heavenly Father. It also brings together in Christ those formerly alienated (Eph 2:13-19). Reconciliation on the human plane is critical to the proclamation of reconciliation on the divine-human plane. Otherwise, the danger exists that the gospel message of reconciliation will be considered a fake (1 John 4:20).

Christ's last prayer before going to the cross was for unity in his body (John 17:20-26). This oneness is what Jesus said would validate His ministry (John 17:21). It makes God believable to the world because it is living testimony of His image being restored in humanity (White, 1900). Since that image was first on display in the marital union, it follows that this is central to where it should be restored for the most effective evangelistic impact. This adds extra meaning to the statement from White (1896) that "the purpose of the gospel" (p. 64) is to restore the purity and beauty of marriage.

Summary

Unity in diversity was central to God's plan for husband and wife. In the beginning, before sin marred humanity, God established the institution of marriage between a man and a woman. They were made of the same raw material in God's image, to be plural yet one, created equal but different. They were made male and female to bring many unique contributions to the marital union to benefit the other. Heaven's design was that each was to give to the other and receive from the other to meet their God-given needs. Mutuality of dominion, reproduction, subduing, dressing, and keeping the earth were apparent in the creation account because both the man and the woman were integral to God's original plan for humankind. God meant for them to leave and cleave, to be joined in covenant marriage in a loving, lifelong, mutually interdependent, synergistic relationship that would result in populating the earth with people in God's image. They were to always be innocent, shameless, and perfectly reflecting God's image. They were to exhibit all the diversity that only God can create and yet be fully united.

In Christ it is possible to re-enter the Garden of Eden by faith and experience a loving, complementary companionship where God's image is again visible. Since marriage is the first place that God's image was on display, the restoration of God's image in their experience is a very desirable goal for all Christian marriages. That restoration of the marital union is, in the view of this writer, a critical component of the gospel proclamation. The likelihood of God becoming more believable to the world and the gospel having greater impact is increased when marriages demonstrate true unity in diversity.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

According to the 2006 U.S. Bureau of Census, 85% of the population in the United States will marry at least once. Approximately 40% of first time marriages will experience relationship difficulties to the point of ending in divorce (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2006). A nation cannot thrive without strong marriages; therefore, deliberate action is needed to counteract this problem (Fowers, 1998). Church and community leaders interested in improving the quality of marital relationships have endeavored to address the crisis and improve marriages in order to stem the flow of divorce in our churches and communities (Doherty & Anderson, 2004).

This chapter will begin by discussing marital satisfaction and how it changes over the life of a marriage. Next, the marriage education movement in America and marriage enrichment as a subset of that broader methodology will be considered. A short section discusses the interrelated connections between marriage enrichment and marital therapy. Following this, a sampling of typical marriage enrichment programs will be reviewed to reveal common topics and formats currently used by marriage educators. Fifth, the importance and value of using marriage enrichment programs that are evidence-based will be discussed. Next, topics that research has demonstrated to be beneficial for

inclusion in marriage enrichment programs will be delineated. Finally, several gender differences that couples face will be considered.

Marital Satisfaction

Marital Satisfaction is a term used in marriage research that refers to a couple's perceived quality of their relationship. The study of marriage and the ability to predict the likelihood of marital success has fascinated students of social development since the late 1930s (Larsen & Olson, 1989). Following that initial interest, instruments based on empirical studies were developed for the purpose of assisting marriage researchers in determining marital well being in order to target areas which needed improvement in marriages. These research based tools brought together theory and practice related to marital satisfaction and marriage interventions (Olson & Fowers, 1993).

The PREPARE/ENRICH assessment scales, developed in 1978, are an example of such instruments (Olson & Olson, 1999). PREPARE was designed for counseling premarital couples, while the purpose of ENRICH was to assist married couples seeking enrichment. They were created to quantify common conflict areas related to marital satisfaction as well as to provide a means for comparison of outcomes from research projects (Olson & Olson, 1999). A few years previous, Fowers and Olson (1989) noted that "marital satisfaction and related concepts are studied more often than any other concepts in the field" (p. 65).

Marital Satisfaction as an Evaluation Tool

Researchers, during the 1980s and 1990s, used marital satisfaction as a scale for evaluating a variety of overlapping dynamics in marital relationships such as cognition,

affect, physiology and interactional patterns (Bradbury, Fincham, & Beach, 2000), marital equity (Utne, Hatfield, Traupmann, & Greenberger, 1984), the level of education and income status (Kurdek, 1991). Bradbury et al. (2000) assert that especially “the 1990s witnessed a vast number of papers published on a wide array of topics pertaining to marital satisfaction” (p. 964). Similar studies about other issues such as family-of-origin (Botha, Van de Berg, & Venter, 2009; Riggio & Weiser, 2008), emotional skillfulness (Mirgain & Cordova, 2007), communication, role predictability and sexuality (Rosen-Grandon, Myers, & Hattie, 2004), couple similarity (Gaunt, 2006; Shiota & Levenson, 2007), and couple differentiation (Patrick, Sells, Giordiano, & Tolerud, 2007), have continued to make use of the marital satisfaction construct as a measuring tool in research. This leads to a description of the assessment scales of the ENRICH (Olson & Olson, 1999) instrument used by the current researcher.

ENRICH Assessment Scale Predictive of Marital Satisfaction

According to Olson and Olson (1999), ENRICH is an evaluation instrument which measures twenty relationship areas of marriage. It particularly focuses on the five items of: communication, conflict resolution, family-of-origin, finances, and goals. Couple exercises are provided on these topics. Information is gathered by instructing spouses to individually fill out a score sheet indicating their response to each of 165 statements. They indicate responses of: strongly disagree, disagree, undecided, agree, or strongly agree. The results are then tabulated and couple responses compared for the purpose of demonstrating areas of relationship strength and potential growth areas. The

counselor is then better able to facilitate discussion and encourage mutual understanding, relationship enhancement and marital well being.

Olson and Fowers (1993) along with a later study by Allen and Olson (2001) identified five distinct marriage types by using the ENRICH inventory on a large sample of couples. The empirically derived types resulted from comparing positive couple agreement (PCA) on responses to the inventory statements. The five types of marriages in descending order were: vitalized, harmonious, traditional, conflicted, and devitalized. Couples with the highest PCA scores correlated with the vitalized marriage type while couples with the lowest PCA correlated with devitalized marriage type. The other couple types fell in between the two extremes. In general terms, marital satisfaction was higher with those couples with higher PCA and lower with those with lower PCA. Increased marital distress, separation, and previous divorce were also correlated with those with the lowest PCA scores.

Studies Reveal U-shaped Pattern of Marital Satisfaction

Marital satisfaction trends downward shortly after the vows are said (Bradbury et al., 2000). A study by Kurdek (2005) found that the decrease was generally greater for women than for men. Typically, couples go through a U-shaped pattern of marital satisfaction over the life span. The child rearing years tend to represent the lower satisfaction timeframe while the “pre-nest” and “empty nest” years correlate with higher marital satisfaction (Hagen & DeVries, 2004). One study indicated that perhaps the lowest point of marital satisfaction was during the early teen years (Gottman & Levenson, 2000). Although there is a decline in satisfaction for most couples during the

first few years of marriage, the transition to parenthood brings a greater rate of decline for new parents than for those who are not parents (Lawrence, Rothman, Cobb, Rothman, Bradbury, 2008). Not surprisingly, newlyweds with relatively higher marital satisfaction and who also plan to have children tend to have children earlier in their marriage compared to those who have relatively lower satisfaction (Lawrence et al., 2008).

Effect of Core Values Agreement on Marital Satisfaction

Research indicates, however, that it is not just children or the lack of them that influence marital satisfaction. The level of agreement in the core values and beliefs between spouses is highly related to couple satisfaction. Hagen and DeVries (2004) indicate that the higher the degree of couple agreement on their core values during the early years, the higher the marital satisfaction during later years. Various types of stressors such as a financial downturn, parenting struggles, increased pressure by an employer or chronic disease tend to decrease marital satisfaction.

Modification of Interactional Processes Can Improve Marital Satisfaction

Significantly, Bradbury and Karney (2004) demonstrated that much of the negative shift in marital satisfaction can be mitigated by modification of a couple's interactional process. It is not just the presenting problem or issue that is critical but rather the patterns of expression and interaction which are used to process and react to that problem or issue. This leads us to a discussion of the importance of interventions like marriage education and marriage enrichment programs that are aimed particularly at the modification of a couple's interactional process.

Marriage Education

The need for marriage education in the United States has come to the forefront during the past few years due to the elevated divorce rate and the high child bearing rate outside of the marital union (Hawkins, Carroll, Doherty, & Willoughby, 2004). In response to the need to strengthen marriages and encourage individuals to wait until marriage before bearing children, church based programs and community initiatives were developed (Doherty & Anderson, 2004). Some addressed pre-marital education; others focused upon already married couples. Our focus here will be on married couples.

Marriage Education Trends in the Cooperative Extension Service

The Cooperative Extension Service (CES) was established by the United States congress early in the last century to address certain educational needs that had emerged and to extend education in a somewhat semi-formal type of learning beyond the academic setting of a traditional college (Goddard & Olsen, 2004). The CES programs have been used effectively to educate the public in topics related to agriculture and home economics. According to Goddard and Olsen (2004) the growing marriage education movement has prompted CES to look into spending more resources in this area. CES has teamed up with several state initiatives in the implementation of particular marriage education programs. For example, CES was a major partner and collaborator in the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative (OMI) to decrease the divorce rate in Oklahoma by one third by 2010. CES contracted with Oklahoma Department of Human Services to train CES educators to conduct free workshops of the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP); (Stanley, Blumberg, & Markman, 1999). Initially 400

residents were reached through 58 PREP workshops. Eventually, at least 15,000 individuals attended PREP. Goddard and Olsen (2004) note that further expansion of marriage education through the established CES network is promising to toward reaching many communities across America.

Marriage Education Trends Among Churches and Communities

Beginning in 1995, “a revived marriage education movement began to coalesce” (p. 426) between professionals and lay persons (Doherty & Anderson, 2004). Church leaders in several cities joined the marriage education movement by collaborating with their communities in taking steps to raise the awareness of marriage issues in the public sector. Community marriage initiatives as discussed by Doherty and Anderson (2004) are one such effort. Typical of these programs, stakeholders from various sectors of society such as clergy, business persons, and government officials come together to draft a document of marriage affirmation. The document includes certain guidelines for marriage and pre-marriage policies that all the key players agree to. With church, business, and government leaders signing such documents, these communities hope that better preparation for marriage will take place. This reflects a “widespread cultural trend” to “revive the institution of marriage” (Doherty & Anderson, 2004, p. 426).

Marriage Education Through Marriage Enrichment

Marriage enrichment began in an organized manner in the early 1960s (Bowling et al., 2005), flourished during the 1970s, faltered in the 1980s but was then reborn in the mid-1990s during the time that the larger marriage education movement was gaining momentum (Doherty & Anderson, 2004). Marriage enrichment was designed to improve

self-awareness as well as awareness of one's spouse, teach positive communication skills, healthy conflict resolution, self-disclosure, intimacy, and self-regulation (Jakubowski et al., 2004).

Marriage enrichment programs address a variety of issues faced by couples. They help inform couples of what to *expect* in the marital relationship since as Stanley, Trathen, McCain, and Bryan (2002) assert, "Expectations affect everything" (p. 139). This awareness can in turn, prepare them to realistically deal with "normal" adjustments through the course of marriage and prevent needless cycles of conflict. Other elements of marriage enrichment found to be helpful were the opportunity to spend time together and a chance to deepen one's relationship with God (Bowling et al., 2005).

Marriage enrichment programs differ in format and scope but their focus is on enhancing marital relationships and reducing marital distress through building a couple's interpersonal skills (Bowling et al., 2005). They further state that marriage enrichment "is an educational approach to help enhance couple relationships" (p. 87). Jakubowski et al. (2004) assert that reviews of marriage enrichment program results have "conclusively demonstrated" their effectiveness and "consistently lead to an improvement of communication skills and relationship satisfaction" (p. 528).

Marriage Enrichment Interrelated With Marital Therapy

DeMaria (2005) notes that there is a "historical tendency" in marriage therapy literature "to place treatment and enrichment at opposite ends of a continuum" (p. 242). It has been assumed that while distressed couples might seek therapy, they would not choose to attend a marriage enrichment program. Research is suggesting just the

opposite. The majority of participants in the DeMaria (2005) study which were choosing a marriage enrichment program were in fact in a distressed relationship with high levels of marital dissatisfaction. She concludes that a “systemic model that explores overlapping dimensions” giving a “wider range of intervention strategies for couples” (pp. 251-252) may be more useful. This may speak to the complementary nature of marriage strengthening programs and marital therapy. In the experience of Markman et al. (2004), attendance in a marriage program “often opens the door for individuals seeking out other community services” (p. 510) such as marital therapy.

Sample of Marriage Enrichment Programs Currently in Use

Various styles and formats are used in marriage enrichment. Skills are sometimes taught by modeling and other times by didactic methods. Many different topics are discussed, although there are a few that are common to almost all programs. The programs reviewed below demonstrate differences as well as similarities relative to their content, style, and format.

Comparison of the six programs selected for review below provides helpful information relative to the validation of features of the marriage enrichment program developed by this researcher. Overlapping content argues for inclusion in the program while unique topics may be important based on evidence from empirical studies or because though untested, they appear valid for other reasons.

The first two programs, PREP (The Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program) and CC (The Couple Communication Program) have been the object of considerable research. Jakubowski et al. (2004) label them as efficacious, that is,

supported by “two or more published outcome studies by separate research teams with control or comparison groups and random assignment” (p. 529). The next two programs reviewed, ACME (Association of Couples for Marriage Enrichment) and CCET (Couple Coping Enhancement Training) were considered by Jakubowski et al. (2004) as “possibly efficacious.” These were supported by one published, controlled, randomized study or more than one study by the same researchers. The last two SANCTUS (Sager & Sager, 2005) and SYMBIS (Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts) are empirically untested.

The Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program

PREP was developed as a marriage enhancement program in the early 1990s (Bowling et al., 2005). It is a program for both married and unmarried couples. It teaches effective communication, team problem solving, how to handle conflicts, and commitment enhancement. The program includes 12 contact hours and is held either in a group setting or as couple therapy sessions. Four main goals of the program are to communicate and resolve conflicts, to explore couple expectations, to consider attitudes and choices about commitment, and to strengthen bonding by promoting fun, friendship, and sensuality.

The Couple Communication Program

CC was developed in the late 1960s by Miller, Nunnally, and Wackman (Jakubowski et al., 2004). The goal of this program is to elevate awareness of self, partner, relationship, and rules for conflict by developing clear, direct, and open communication between spouses. “Communication skills are taught through a series of interventions, such as directed practice, didactic presentations and homework exercises”

(p. 530). CC is conducted over four weekly sessions of two hours each. Before leading in CC, instructors are required to be certified by completing a one or two day training program.

Association of Couples for Marriage Enrichment

ACME was developed by David and Vera Mace in 1973 (Bowling et al., 2005). ACME uses a wide variety of activities and formats that encourage participants to grow through experiential learning and group processes (Jakubowski et al., 2004). Activities include such things as the use of role plays, dialog, and skills practice. The goals of ACME include elevating awareness of self and partner, developing effective communication skills, identifying directions for mutual growth, learning skills for inducing marital growth, and increasing intimacy and empathy between spouses. The group leader couple presents educational material, models communication skills, and leads in group discussions. The program is typically conducted over a weekend.

Couple Coping Enhancement Training

CCET is a program to prevent marital distress which uses cognitive-behavioral therapy along with theories of stress, coping, and social exchange (Jakubowski et al., 2004). Topics in the program include: stress and coping, communication, boundaries, problems solving, and fairness and equity. The goal is to help couples learn skills to improve “communication, problem solving, stress management, and coping” (p. 531) along with increasing sensitivity toward mutual fairness. This fairly structured program lasts 18 hours and can be conducted over a weekend, during a week long series, or over

several weeks. Instructors are required to receive 30 hours of training using a very structured manual followed by 20 hours of group supervision.

SANCTUS

SANCTUS (Sager & Sager, 2005) is a faith-based program that is conducted in a conference format which includes post-weekend meetings, daily couple meditations, and individual exercises. This program underscores love and relationship with one's Higher Power, one's self and others. Goals also include: awareness of one's thoughts and emotions, awareness of how those thoughts and emotions are expressed, and the rebuilding of one's marital relationship. Seven truths are summarized from the Bible to help couples have healthy and dynamic marriages. They are described as: mirroring the heart of God to each other, managing the internal servants of will, mind, emotion, and body, resolving personal brokenness, moving from fear to faith, neutralizing resentments, processing of pain, and moving through unforgiveness to behaviors of reconciliation. The primary tool use is the FSP+ (five step process). The five steps which are repeated throughout the program are: Pray for power, choose to change, identify and own, excavate and evict, and "counter fear with faith, resentments with love, pain with hope, and unforgiveness with reconciliation" (p. 215).

Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts

SYMBIS is designed to encourage couples to build good marital relationships through strengthening self-differentiation (Jakubowski et al., 2004). There are three primary components of SYMBIS. The first is administering and interpreting PREPARE (Premarital Preparation and Relationship Enhancement) assessment instrument. Next,

8-10 psycho-educational sessions lasting one hour each, are conducted with the couple. Finally, the couples are placed in a year-long relationship with a mentor couple. Topics covered in the educational sessions are: “marital myths, understanding of love, general attitude about life, communication, gender differences, conflict resolution, and exploration of the faith journey” (p. 533). Instructors are required to have a master’s degree in psychotherapy. Mentors are recruited and trained in strategies that support the instruction previously given to the couples. It is of interest that this program deals directly with the topic of sex differences as it relates to marriage.

Value of Empirically Based Marriage Strengthening Programs

Marriage strengthening programs vary in their popularity and effectiveness. Some derive their apparent success from the popularity of the individuals who have created them or the public relations that surround them. A few have been well-researched and it has been empirically shown that they make a difference in the lives of couples. Jakubowski et al. (2004) asserts that “most marriage enrichment programs have received little or no rigorous empirical validation” (p. 533). There is, therefore, a need for randomized studies to either validate or invalidate currently untested programs. Marriage education practitioners need to be provided with best information so that the most effective programs can be made available for marriage education (Jakubowski et al., 2004).

An alternative to choosing an empirically tested program is to use the knowledge gained from empirical studies to develop a marriage education program where the *content* is based firmly in such research. This method would still be consistent with best practices in marriage education (Adler-Baeder, Higginbotham, & Lamke, 2004). Adler-

Baeder et al. (2004) identified over 2,000 articles from a variety of family social science fields, narrowed them down using a rubric of restriction criteria, and then developed research supported categories for inclusion in marriage education program content. This information enables family life educators to use the empirical research to build a program that is most effective in their particular context.

Topics Beneficial to Marriage Enrichment Programs

Research indicates that several topics are important to marital satisfaction. The topics below were found to be beneficial for inclusion in a marriage enrichment program.

Marital Expectations

According to Jenkins, Stanley, Bailey, and Markman (2002), “To expect is to consider something probable or certain—to assume” and those expectations are “beliefs about the way things will or should be” (p. 73). Since as previously noted, “Expectations affect everything” (Stanley et al., 2002); it would follow that this is an important topic to address in a marriage education program. Unrealistic expectations particularly place a strain on a relationship. Faubert (2008) notes that “high and demanding expectations” in a marriage “often result in unhappiness” (p. 3).

Couples enter marriage with expectations about what it will be like to be spouse, a lover, and a parent but they also come with expectations about fun, freedom, and finances as well as romance, security, and fulfillment. There are expectations about common issues such as who will buy groceries or mow the grass, but there are also expectations based on hidden issues such as power, acceptance, integrity, caring, commitment, and what it means to be loved (Craig, 2004). It is often the hidden issues that are most

difficult for couples to deal with since they are invisible (Jenkins et al., 2002). If there is a great disconnect between what one thought things would be like and what actually happens, it can result in tension and conflict between spouses.

Communication

Consistently, couple communication is in the top four or five items that are critical toward improving marital satisfaction in current literature. One hundred percent of the programs considered efficacious or possibly efficacious by Jakubowski et al. (2004) included a large component for developing open, effective, empathic couple communication. According to Thompson (2008), poor communication relates closely to marital unhappiness and is implicated as a key contributing factor leading to divorce. He goes on to state that “some marriages are more difficult than others but only communication difficulties make them untenable” (p. 1641).

On the other hand, researchers Kotria, Dyer, and Vargas (2007) affirm the value of positive communication stating that it “leads to increased understanding [sic] contributes to more rewarding interaction, greater likelihood of conflict resolution, and higher levels of intimacy and satisfaction with one’s partner” (p. 9). Ogle and Hasz (2004) assert, however, that communication should be open and honest and not just positive and upbeat. They state that for communication to be effective and create greater marital satisfaction, it is important that couples “actually communicate, whether it be positive or negative” (p. 26).

The topic of communication in marriage education becomes critical because it is not an end in itself. Effective communication affects all of the other topics covered in a

marriage enrichment program. Olson and Olson (2000) point out that it is the “one crucial ingredient that defines a relationship” and “is the link to every aspect” (p. 23) of one’s relationship.

Conflict Management

The topic of conflict management is closely associated with communication since the problem may not be the conflict but rather how the disagreement is discussed and processed. Miller, Yorgason, Sandberg, & White (2003), in ranking the problems (i.e., conflict) that couples bring to therapy, listed communication as the number one area of difficulty. That is to say, how to process a particular area of conflict seems to be the overarching issue.

Conflict in marriage is inevitable. It is therefore not surprising that all of the marriage enrichment programs which were considered efficacious by Jakubowski et al. (2004) and supported by two outcome studies, included the topic of conflict management. Research suggests that the “inability to manage and constructively resolve conflict that produces the anger is a leading factor for marital distress” (Kotria et al., 2007, p. 10).

Research by Clements, Stanley, & Markman (2004) indicates that “potentially changeable variables are strongly associated with marital outcomes” (p. 623) relative to interactional patterns. Therefore, a marriage enrichment program which assists couples in developing healthy interactional patterns and positive methods of conflict resolution may be helpful.

Personality Traits

According to Barelds and Barelds-Dijkstra (2007), “Personality traits refer to consistent patterns in the way individuals behave, feel and think” (p. 480). During the mid-1930s, as many as 4,500 individual traits were identified which were distilled to 35 trait variables by 1943. In 1945, these were summarized into 12 factors. Since that time, personality inventories based on these factors were developed that tested up to 16 personality variations. For example, these 12 factors “form the basis of 12 of the 16 scales of the internationally known ‘16PF-questionnaire’ (p. 480). Research has been mixed as to whether similarity between individuals in personality is more or less romantically attractive prior to marriage. Following the wedding, however, research has shown “that husbands and wives with similar personality characteristics tend to have happier marriages” (p. 481). Gaunt (2006) agrees by noting that “greater similarity between partners was associated with higher levels of marital satisfaction” (p. 1416). Results of a study by Gonzaga, Campos, & Bradbury (2007), indicate that personality similarity and convergence may have a beneficial effect for couples by promoting shared emotional similarity and convergence. Discussing personality may be helpful “to facilitate mutual understanding and respect for partner differences but not as a way of predicting marital satisfaction within the relationship” (Miller, 2006, p. 200).

Sexuality

In his master’s thesis, Wilson (2007) notes that the subject of intimacy and sexuality is “generally considered to be a private, intimate matter” (p. 1). He goes on to observe, however, that the topic needs attention in marriage education since it is such an

important part of the marital relationship. It may be ironic that portrayal of sexuality in the media is very prevalent yet intimacy and sexuality that relates to an exclusive committed marital relationship is considered private. Male/female differences in this area of a couple's life help create the potential for misunderstanding, pain, and frustration. When couples have misunderstanding in the arena of sexuality, it can negatively impact their relationship and lead to significant problems (Lieser, Tambling, Bischof, Murry, 2007).

Lieser et al. (2007) argues strongly for inclusion of the subject of sexuality in marriage education programs. Research suggests that open and honest communication with couples about their sexuality reaps dividends which can prevent future sexual difficulties. When sex is good in marriage it plays a relatively small part in marital satisfaction but when sexual difficulties are present, it becomes a powerful and dominant part of what is wrong in the relationship (Lieser et al., 2007).

Sexuality is not just a physical act but rather it is tied closely to a couple's sense of closeness and connection. A significant part of sexuality is the emotional component. Cordova, Gee, and Warren (2005) note that men and women are different in the ways that they communicate emotions. They assert "that emotional skillfulness affects marital health through its effect on the intimacy process" (p. 219). Since emotional skillfulness and the approach to sex varies relative to the gender (Eggerichs, 2004), it is certainly of value to provide education in this area.

Finances

Historically, financial conflict has been understood as one of the top two causative factors cited in divorce cases (Thompson, 2008). Miller et al. (2003) found similar results in their research. This suggests that the topic would be a good candidate for inclusion in a marriage education or marriage enrichment program. During the past decade or more, both public and private groups have been creating programs and materials to help educate Americans toward becoming financially literate because of the increased need for personal retirement planning (Vitt, 2004).

Recent research, however, seems to indicate that financial issues are not as much of a factor for marital distress as was once thought (Dean, Carroll, Yang, 2007). While conflict over finances can still be problematic for couples, it is currently less accurate as a predictor of marital dissolution. This may be due to the fact that except in cases of extreme poverty, money *itself* may not be the real issue. Research by Dean et al. (2007) studied materialistic ideology and *perceived* financial problems as they relate to marital satisfaction with interesting results. It was found that a materialistic ideology did have a “direct negative impact on marital satisfaction, albeit at a modest level” (p. 273).

Jenkins et al. (2002) assert that money is not usually the core problem but that it is often a trigger that starts an argument. The real conflict is likely over hidden issues such as power, caring, recognition, commitment, integrity, or acceptance rather than money *per se*.

Roles and Responsibilities

Gender roles have been in flux for the past three or four decades (Corrigan & Konrad, 2007). Women increasingly have sought careers outside of the home. The number of traditional homes where the man is the single bread winner have diminished significantly (Raley, Mattingly, & Bianchi, 2006). Understandably, this phenomenon in the larger culture has created a need for readjustment in marital roles. The majority of conflict over this issue takes place during the first years of marriage (Miller et al., 2003) when adjustment from being single to being married is taking place. Young children also add pressure to the mix because of the additional time needed for household duties and responsibilities. A drop in marital satisfaction in the transition to parenthood reported by Lawrence et al. (2008) may be reflective of the increased home work load.

Studies show that the division of household chores between husband and wife tends to be asymmetrical (Braun, Lewin-Epstein, Stier, & Baumgartner, 2008; Thompson, 2008). The wife typically carries a greater number of chores and puts in more time doing so. It is interesting that both men and women recognize this to be the case (Thompson, 2008). Such research suggests that the topic of “roles and responsibilities” would be a fruitful topic for inclusion in a marriage enrichment program.

Parenting

Most of the marriage enrichment programs considered efficacious or possibly efficacious do not directly include a component on parenting skills (Jakubowski et al., 2004). They do, on the other hand, address issues that are interrelated with, and important to, successful parenting. These topics include: communication, conflict

management, couple bonding, problem-conflict resolution, couple time and boundaries. These subjects carry more value when it is noted that transition to parenthood is generally associated with lower marital satisfaction (Lawrence et al., 2008). Also, problems between spouses over parenting challenges such as values related to childrearing, discipline, and family management styles typically intensify over the first ten years of marriage (Miller et al., 2003). It becomes critical for spouses to keep their relationship healthy as the parenting pressures mount.

Hughes (2005) discusses the importance of a “parenting alliance” relative to raising children. Her research suggests that “the directions of causality between parenting alliance and marital satisfaction are reciprocal and circular” (p. 73). That is to say that if a wife feels emotionally supported and respected by her husband and if she in turn respects and trusts him, results will trend toward greater marital satisfaction for both spouses. Marriage education that includes direct or indirect components covering issues related to co-parenting are beneficial since there are special challenges to the marital bond in early, mid, late, and even post-parenting years (Hawkins et al., 2004).

Religious Beliefs and Values

An honors thesis by Nelson (2008) considers religious discrepancies between spouses. Her results suggest that religious dissimilarities between spouses lead to decreased marital satisfaction as well as an increase in “maladaptive coping tendencies” (p. 26). Larson and Olson (2004) obtained mixed results in their national survey on spiritual beliefs and marriage. Religious beliefs, they found, may show a positive or negative effect on the marital relationship depending on factors such as the extent to

which couples shared religious faith and practice as well as whether both partners are religious. If both partners are religious, do they share the same religious persuasion or is it an interfaith relationship? The important issue appears to be the amount of couple agreement on “how spiritual values and beliefs are expressed” (p. 2).

Forgiveness

According to Ogle and Hasz (2004), empirically-based research from a decade ago suggests that forgiveness is a critical component of rebuilding a relationship. Tsang, McCullough, and Fincham (2006) agree by noting the effectiveness of forgiveness in restoring relationship damage. Another recent study (Karremans & Van Lange, 2008) suggests that “forgiveness helps individuals to feel part of the relationship again” (p. 86). An older study by Karremans, Van Lange, Ouwerkerk, & Kluwer (2003) revealed that forgiveness in a marital relationship gave the forgiving spouse a greater sense of “psychological well-being” (p. 1011) than to forgive someone in general. Ogle and Hasz (2004) observes that this increased sense of well-being influences future relationship outcomes. They go on to state that “when a couple makes forgiveness a priority, their relationship begins to grow and flourish” (p. 23). On the other hand, being forgiven by someone else can also encourage an individual to forgive. Holeman (2004) states that “the greater the interpersonal debt we have been forgiven, the greater the model we have for becoming forgivers” (p. 42). These studies suggest that forgiveness has such significant implications for restoration and renewal in marriage as to make it an important topic for inclusion in a marriage education program.

While there are other presenting problems that couples bring to family therapy (Miller et al., 2003), the literature review reveals that these areas are among the important ones to address in a marriage enrichment program. Some of these issues are also impacted by one's gender. This leads to a discussion of a few of the differences between males and females.

Male/Female Diversity

Studies show that males and females are different in important ways (see Appendix A). Research also indicates that gender diversity within the context of a marital relationship is evident for a variety of issues that couples face. Some of those issues will be considered below.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EI) is defined by Brackett, Warner, & Bosco (2005) as “an individual's capacity to reason with and about emotions to enhance cognitive processes and social functioning” (p. 198). Their research showed that females are generally much higher in EI than males. Couples who both had low EI tended to have low relationship quality as one might expect but interestingly, couples who both had high EI did not consistently have higher positive outcomes. Significantly, the couples who were different from each other in EI resulted in the best positive outcomes.

Typically, emotional expressiveness varies between the sexes. Facial reactions to fear stimuli were found to be stronger for women than men (Thunberg & Dimberg, 2000). Similarly, research by Sonnby-Borgstrom, Jonsson, & Svensson (2008) supported the notion that women generally reveal more facial expressiveness while men tend to

mask facial responses. According to another study across two ethnic groups, females from both groups showed more social smiles and reported more intense emotions than males (Chentsova-Dutton & Tsai, 2007). Given the number of studies demonstrating difference in the location of brain activity between men and women for a variety of stimuli (Goldstein, Jerram, Whitfield-Gabrieli, & Makris, 2010; Gaab, Keenan, & Schlaug, 2003; Ruytjens et al., 2007; Ruytjens, Albers, Dijk, Wit, & Willemsen, 2006; Shirao, Okamoto, Okada, Ueda, & Yamawaki, 2005), it is not surprising that external differences show up as well.

Communication

Research shows that there are gender differences in certain areas of communication. A study by Pomplun and Sundbye (1999) revealed that girls tend to have an early verbal fluency advantage over boys which generally continues well into high school. In other research, females tended to be better at decoding non-verbal clues of face, body, and voice (Brune, Bahramali, Hennessy, & Snyder, 2006). A third study of male and female physicians demonstrated different communication skills between genders in dealing with patients. Females tended to spend more time talking with patients and expressed a greater variety of emotions (Lovell, Lee, & Brotheridge, 2009).

Personality

A research project spanning 55 cultures demonstrated robust gender differences in personality traits (Schmitt, Realo, Voracek, & Allik, 2008). Men typically were more assertive, higher in excitement seeking, and in openness to new ideas while women were generally higher in aesthetics, feelings, and tender-mindedness. Other studies similarly

showed females to be less assertive and more empathically responsive than males (Wang, 2008; Moore, 2007; Fukushima & Hiraki, 2006).

Risk Taking

Gender difference in risk taking and aggression style has been noted in some studies. Research by Harris, Jenkins, & Glaser (2006) showed that men tend to take more risk in the areas of health, recreation, and gambling. Males anticipate less negative consequences and greater enjoyment from engaging in risky behaviors. Difference in aggression style is evident between boys and girls at least into their adolescent years. Hess and Hagen (2006) found that boys' aggression style tended to end in direct hitting or yelling while girls' aggression style was more subtle and expressed in gossip, ostracism, and criticism. A third study revealed a different response to stress between men and women (Verona, Reed, Curtin, & Pole, 2007). Externalizing hostile feelings tended to bring greater aggression in men than women. This may be partly due to the idea that men feel more justified and less guilty in using aggression.

Social Connection

The importance of social connections also varies between the genders. Women tend to have larger social networks and have more emotional involvement within those networks than men (Kendler, Myers, & Prescott, 2005). These networks appear to be significantly more protective against depression for females. Similarly, Vandervoort (2000) found that males are generally more socially isolated than females and are less likely to create emotional intimacy as a single person. A study by Westermann, Ashby, and Pretty (2005), which gathered data from several cultures, suggests that the presence

of women tended to facilitate more collaboration and better conflict resolution in a group. Even in something as simple as watching a movie, it has been shown that women enjoy movies based on relational themes more than men (Oliver, Weaver III, & Sargent, 2000).

Marriage Enrichment and Male/Female Diversity

A study by Faulkner, Davey, and Davey (2005) asserts that marital satisfaction varies according to gender and that there is support for the notion that wives are typically a couple's relationship barometer. Another study by Cordova et al. (2005) found that the ability to communicate emotions was less for males than females. They go on to state "that emotion skills, such as the ability to identify emotions, express emotions, empathize, and manage challenging emotions, are essential to the maintenance of healthy marriages" (p. 219). Research by Mirgain et al. (2007) found correlation between emotional skill and marital satisfaction due to the influence of that skill on couple intimacy.

Arguably, men and women are more alike than different (Hyde, 2005); however, the research referenced in the above paragraphs suggests that a marriage enrichment program which addresses gender differences for the purpose of mutual understanding would likely be helpful to couples. Addressing some of these differences seems critical to their mutual understanding.

Summary

This chapter began by considering marital satisfaction and how it changes over the life of a marriage. It was noted that increased marital satisfaction is correlated positively with marital longevity and that couple marital satisfaction tends to be

U-shaped, generally it is highest early in a marriage before child bearing and after the empty nest. Next, aspects of the marriage education movement in America and marriage enrichment as a subset of that methodology were discussed. Following this, the positive connections between marriage enrichment and marital therapy was considered. Often, marriage education and enrichment programs provide a link to other community marriage interventions. Fourth, a sampling of typical marriage enrichment programs were reviewed which revealed topics and formats commonly used by marriage educators. Next, the importance and value marriage enrichment programs that are evidence-based was considered. Use of an evidence-based program or one which contained empirically researched content was found to be important. Topics delineated that research has demonstrated to be beneficial for inclusion in a marriage enrichment program were: marital expectations, communication, conflict management, personality traits, sexuality, finances, roles and responsibilities, parenting, religious beliefs and values, forgiveness, and male-female differences. It was shown that several topics such as emotional intelligence, communication, risk taking, personality, and social connection are generally experienced differently depending on the gender. It was suggested that marriage enrichment programs that take gender differences into account may be of value.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY AND IMPLEMENTATION NARRATIVE

Introduction

Marriage research in America has shown that couple response to specific variables related to marital satisfaction are predictive, not only of marital well-being, but of marital longevity (Fowers, Montel, & Olson, 1996). In order to contribute toward improving marital well-being among couples who are church members in the Northern New England Conference, where this researcher and his spouse are responsible for marriage ministry, we developed a structured facilitation marriage program that addresses key issues related to marital satisfaction. As there is no known systematic study of the effectiveness of such a program in the conference, this research may be an important starting point in validating the effectiveness of this type of marriage enrichment program as well as to help determine the allocation of marriage ministry resources in the future.

Overview

The chapter begins with a look at the Northern New England Conference demographics as well as the ministry context for the marriage program. Next, the intervention is described relative to its purpose, theme, and philosophical basis of unity in diversity. The third major section of this chapter describes the development of the intervention including module content and organization rationale, description of the

participant manual, and review cards. The final section is a narrative of how the program was implemented. This section also covers location selection, promotion and advertising, equipment and logistic requirements, registration process, opening night format as well as the nightly format, and the post program survey tally process.

Demographic and Ministry Context

Northern New England Conference Demographic

The Northern New England Conference of Seventh-day Adventists is predominantly rural in nature and encompasses the states of Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont. R. Smith, Conference clerk (personal communication, July 27, 2009) said current membership stands at 5,121 with 65 churches and companies, 13 elementary schools, 2 academies and 1 hospital. Roughly 25% of the churches have a membership of 35 or less, about 1/3 have a membership of 35-75, another 1/3 have a membership of 75-150 and only 8% have membership of over 150. The congregations reflect the region's demographic of roughly 98% Caucasian and 2% African American and Hispanic individuals.

One area in the conference has three churches with an active membership of over 150 each which are within proximity to allow participants to move easily from one venue to another. This three church region was chosen as the pilot project area for the current research.

Ministry Context

This researcher has been a pastor and administrator in the Northern New England Conference for the past 22 years. During that time, he has observed that some marriages

appear to have high levels of marital satisfaction, others less so and some appear to be very dissatisfied. Some are stressed to the point of divorce. Marriage enrichment weekends or other education and enrichment events have been provided by the family life department of the conference for interested couples at intervals of every four to six months for the past eighteen years. While anecdotally the results have been positive, the empirical effect on the couples' marital satisfaction is unknown.

Anecdotal observations indicate that couples experience increased marital satisfaction after attending a marriage strengthening event. However, research to determine the effectiveness of such programs is lacking. No systematic study that compares marital satisfaction of couples before and after a structured facilitation marriage enrichment program is known to have been conducted in the Northern New England Conference. Such a study is important as a starting point to validate this type of marriage enrichment program, to encourage continuation of marriage strengthening programs, and provide information that may aid in determining the allocation of marriage ministry resources. The current project appears to be the first of its kind for the Seventh-day Adventist church in the northeast United States and possibly in the North American Division, which is comprised of the United States, Canada, and Bermuda.

The three local pastors that were impacted by this program were happy to have their church members participate in this pilot project. They cooperated fully in the preparation and promotion of the 10-week event. It was their desire to see marriages grow and God's kingdom be advanced.

Program Description

The intervention consisted of a structured facilitation program for married couples designed for improving marital satisfaction. The program was developed and presented in three southern Maine Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) congregations. The program consisted of once-per week meetings for ten consecutive weeks in three separate locations from January 12 through March 19, 2009. The schedule was as follows: Monday- Portland SDA church, Tuesday- Freeport SDA church, Wednesday- Brunswick SDA church. Each night the program started at 7:00 and ended at 8:15. In order to accommodate the time constraints of people's busy lives, individuals could choose to attend any of the three sessions as well as switch from one to another week by week.

Individuals were recruited from the three locations where the program was conducted. Each evening the program was facilitated by a leader couple consisting of the researcher and his spouse. The program was attended by a total of 84 individuals for at least one of the ten nights. Out of the 84, only 72 were married. The remaining individuals were single, though two did not have their significant other with them. Those who were single did not participate in the survey that was given to attendees at the beginning and end of the program.

Participants each received a 3-ring notebook in which to organize the weekly notes, extra reading material, group activities, homework assignments, and other documents. The program covered a variety of subjects related to marriage structured in a format to facilitate information and skill transfer to participant couples. Topics deemed

to be beneficial to couples for increasing marital understanding, intimacy, and helpful for increasing marital satisfaction were addressed.

Purpose and Methodologies

The purpose of the program was to enhance marital well-being and to discover if the interventions used would reveal an increase on a marital satisfaction scale for participant couples.

A variety of methods were used and emphasis was given to several values that were deemed important. From the first session, couples were taught to value gender differences. This subject was specifically addressed in one of sessions but the theme ran throughout the series. Couple communication skills such as the use of “I” messages and reflective listening were taught and modeled. Constructive conflict resolution methods were contrasted with those which tend to be destructive in nature. Affirmation and healthy couple dialog was modeled and the value of making positive choices in one’s thought processes was encouraged. Couples were encouraged to complete weekly assignments to reinforce what was being presented as well as address topics that program time constraints did not allow.

The core material was presented in a didactic manner through the use of PowerPoint. These topics were then illustrated by the telling of stories from the experience of the researcher and his spouse. Positive couple interaction between the researcher and his wife was modeled during the story telling. At various times during the series, participants were encouraged to offer suggestions for the benefit of the group. For instance, a list of money saving ideas was compiled from the audience following the discussion of family finance which was subsequently typed up and handed out (see

Appendix E). Another strategy was to encourage group participation during a session. For example, in one activity, participants were divided into groups of four to six, and asked to discuss a scenario concerning possible “hidden issues” that created conflict for the couple in that scenario. Each small group then shared their scenario with the larger group along with their conclusions.

Theme and Title

The 10 week intervention was developed around the theme of unity in diversity. The program was developed based on an understanding God’s original plan for unity between spouses with the recognition that male/female diversity was a design feature of the Creator. Emphasis on the unique qualities that each spouse brings to the marriage was seen as integral to the success of the program. Creating an environment where those differences were viewed as positive would be an early step in the process of improving marital satisfaction. Once diversity was seen to be a good thing, it was hoped that couples would make choices and use strategies that affirmed and celebrated those differences.

Magnetic Marriage: Unity in Diversity was chosen as a title for the program because it was cryptic, descriptive of the content, and consistent with the underlying theological and philosophical foundations. The phrase represented the positive and negative differences within marital unions. North and south poles, lined up in a complementary manner and therefore working together, tend to enhance “God intended” unity and oneness while those same differences used in a competitive, adversarial

fashion bring division and destruction to the relationship as spouses repel each other and grow further apart.

The title also addresses the reality and value of diversity in marriage. Differences celebrated move a couple to greater harmony and marital satisfaction while criticism results in separation. Spouses who choose to appreciate the unique characteristics and qualities of the other become synergistic. When this takes place, God's image can be revealed to others who are given a living demonstration of God's original plan.

Program Content Based on Synergistic Design of Male/Female Diversity

The program content was overtly based on an understanding of male/female diversity as a design feature from creation. However, it is recognized that not all agree with a view of male-female relationships that acknowledge gender diversity. For some, gender diversity equates with inequality, dominance, control, and oppression of females by males. While not denying that there can be negative social implications when gender difference is exploited by one gender to control the other, the many inherent differences as are evident anecdotally as well as supported in the literature cannot be overlooked. Those who wish to undo gender (Lorber, 2000) and who see it as merely a socially constructed phenomenon (Lorber, 1986) have gone too far in the opinion of this researcher. Many voices assert and the evidence is clear that significant and important differences exist inherently (Burke, 2000; Davidson, 2007; Feldhahn, 2004; Feldhahn & Feldhahn, 2006; Ginger, 2003; Hines, 2005; Rhoads, 2004; Sax, 2005; Tannen, 1990; Wright, 2000). Taylor (2005) asserts that holding to the view that male/female

differences are simply a social construct is doomed by the rapidly approaching train of scientific evidence.

It is no secret that marital dissatisfaction that ends in divorce is often blamed on dissimilarities or irreconcilable differences. One author states that “conflict arises because family members perceive a difference between them” (Fitzpatrick & Noller, 1993, p. 99). While this may be true, the same difference that results in divisive conflict can also promote synergy if approached openly and carefully. Rather than a negative problem to fight against, gender diversity is an opportunity for a couple to recognize the mutual strengths and the complementary perspectives that each brings to the marriage (Burke, 2000). Moir and Jessel (1989) suggest that what is needed is “an appreciation of sex differences” rather than a denial of them (p. 126). The value of male/female diversity with the unique qualities, insights and energy that each one brings is a positive quality for the marital relationship. In the workplace, the two genders “bring different, often complementary skills to the jobs they do” and therefore “it would make sense to put these combined talents to good use” (Moir & Jessel, 1989, p. 164), how much more so within a marriage. With this in mind, this researcher considered gender diversity a valuable component of the program.

The American Heritage Dictionary (1992) defines synergy as “the interaction of two or more agents or forces so that their combined effect is greater than the sum of their individual effects.” Covey (1997) discusses two types of synergy. The first type he calls *transformational* and the second *transactional plus*. Transformational synergy happens when two or more people come together to discuss an issue or problem. They choose to

listen carefully to each other and to find a solution that is one where everybody in the discussion wins. Neither spouse nor any family member loses.

“*Transactional plus*” synergy is “an approach in which one person’s strength is utilized and his or her weaknesses are made irrelevant by the strength of another” (Covey, 1997, p. 269). This type of synergy may require self-awareness and concern for the other’s well-being since another’s weakness can be exploited to the detriment of the relationship. A program such as the one developed by this researcher can benefit couples by educating them to appreciate the unique contributions that their spouse brings to the relationship, to parenting, and to the many decisions of married life.

Development of Material for Program

The “ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale” (Appendix B) used in this program was derived from the larger ENRICH marital inventory. The ENRICH marital inventory which was developed through “extensive theoretical and empirical analyses” (Fowers & Olson, 1989, p. 66) uses 14 scales to assess a variety of issues that married couples face. Research demonstrated high discriminate validity for ENRICH so that it can be used with considerable accuracy to “distinguish between distressed and nondistressed couples” (p. 76).

Fowers and Olson (1989) indicate that the 10-question ENRICH marital satisfaction scale provides a general measure of marital satisfaction by surveying 10 important areas of a couple’s marriage. According to Fowers and Olson (1989), studies have shown that “marital satisfaction is the most prominent contributor to global satisfaction for married people in the United States” (p. 65). Analyses of the research on

ENRICH shows the scales to be good predictors of marital satisfaction. The 10-question marital satisfaction scale addresses the areas of conflict resolution, communication, sharing of household responsibilities, personality, leisure activities, finances, sexuality, parenting, in-laws, and religious beliefs.

The program material was gathered and organized with an eye to the survey instrument chosen. Subjects were presented and assignments given that related specifically to that instrument. Measurable improvement in marital satisfaction among participant couples could replicate and reinforce the previously validated results and increase confidence in the outcomes for this program.

A core concept in the development of this material has been unity in diversity in the marriage relationship; therefore, demonstrating that reality through facilitating, modeling, and interacting as a married leader couple was important. In this manner, participant couples were encouraged to believe that greater marital satisfaction is an achievable goal.

Content of Modules and Organization Rationale

Topics were chosen that research has shown to be important to marital satisfaction. Research basis, rationale for inclusion, and value of the topics were discussed in chapter three of this paper. The modules were organized in such a way to build on and complement each other. This section will briefly consider the content of each module and describe where it fits in the organization of the material.

Session #1 addressed the idea that expectations affect everything. This idea was seen as an important springboard for future topics since it often sends a couple on a

certain trajectory. Proverbs 13:12 was used to introduce and reinforce the idea by noting that there is a negative emotional response when expectations are unmet. Since all couples face unmet expectations, spouses were encouraged to acknowledge and eliminate unrealistic expectations and then to address more realistic expectations that were not being met. The importance of identifying the source of one's expectations was explored. At times, choosing to accept the current situation may be helpful while at other times it may be necessary to lower one's expectations. This module concluded by reminding participants of the covenantal nature of marriage and that understanding God's expectations for couples helped to refocus attention on the important issues.

Session #2 examined the concept of males and females being different by design. Understanding the complementary nature of the creation of man and woman was seen as foundational to many future discussions for things such as personality, communication, sexuality, and parenting. Genesis 1:27 was used to introduce the idea that humankind was diverse by design from the very beginning in a perfect world. Viewing male and female differences as complementary instead of competitive set the stage for encouraging an attitude of a celebration of that reality. The idea that God designed people both to need and to give was considered. The value of appreciating the strengths that each spouse brings to the marriage relationship was explored. It was concluded that the marital team is strongest when mutually valuing each other's strengths.

Session #3 discussed communication theory, presented skills to enhance understanding, and considered some of the differences in the styles of communication between men and women. The topic of communication was essential since it is the manner for processing everything else and it is often the number one complaint when

marital dissatisfaction has become a significant problem. Genesis 2:18 was used to introduce the concept of humankind being created for relationship and companionship. Healthy interaction between spouses is important to building and maintaining that original plan. Since humankind fell, restoration of broken relationships is the purpose of the gospel, especially the marriage relationship. Since couples listen and speak through many filters such as gender, religion, home-of-origin and life-experience, education, and skill building in the area of communication brings rich dividends. It is also helpful to understand the various levels of communication and the value of sending “I” messages in order to communicate more effectively.

Session #4 reviewed the particular personality that each individual brings to their marriage. This topic continued the discussion of understanding and celebrating the variety of contributions that spouses make to each other. This was important as a building block toward improving marital satisfaction. Psalm 139:14 introduced the subject by focusing on God’s special plan in creating each person to be unique. The four temperaments of choleric, sanguine, phlegmatic, and melancholy were viewed as windows to increase mutual understanding and appreciation between partners. It was observed that like the two sides of a coin, spouses come to the marital union “as a package.” The value of seeing the qualities of the various temperament types as being mutually enriching was emphasized.

Session #5 discussed the gift of couple intimacy and marital sexuality. This topic was important because though couples often know about the physical differences between males and females, there is need of an open and honest picture of healthy sexuality and couple intimacy in contrast with media distortions. This is a critical area

that impacts couple satisfaction. Genesis 2:25 was used to introduce human intimacy as the first gift given to married couples from the Garden of Eden and that because of that it is under special attack by the devil. The two extremes of “free sex” and “celibacy as the highest virtue” were discussed and then contrasted with God’s design of healthy sexuality within a committed marriage. Healthy sexuality was presented as incorporating all of what takes place between a couple and not just the “act of sex.”

Session #6 dealt with family finances. Since money can be a top argument starter for many couples, this provided an opportunity to highlight the pluses of mutual money management and using the skills that both partners bring to their family. This topic can generate conflict so it was placed well into the program after other key topics were presented. Matthew 6:33 was used to introduce the subject of money as being a lower priority for couples to face than that of their relationship with God. The value of the several money types was explored where couple’s differences generally provide greater financial stability and prosperity. The concept was explored that marital conflict over money issues typically revolves around hidden issues rather than the money itself. The value of identifying those hidden issues can be helpful in reducing future money disagreements which often results in greater marital satisfaction. Several secrets of good money management were shared such as: staying within one’s income, having a budget, finding ways to stretch the money, thinking like a millionaire, avoiding money traps, saving and investing.

Session #7 explored the issue of anger and conflict in marriage. Since anger is a universal emotion, it is essential that the topic is discussed in order to aid couples in learning good anger management skills and techniques. The topic was placed later in the

program when couples had been given tools to help process anger more effectively. James 1:19 and Eph 4:26 were used to introduce the subject since anger is typically experienced and expressed in one of two ways—internal or external, cold or hot. The important issue for couples to learn is how to handle the emotion of anger in a manner that is not destructive to oneself or to one’s spouse. Usually, anger is a secondary emotion. The primary emotion is often fear, shame, or insecurity. Each partner was encouraged to accept ownership of their emotion of anger or the primary emotion leading to that anger in order to deal with conflict in a positive manner. Dealing with conflict in this way promotes increased marital satisfaction.

Session #8 focused on making the best choices within the marriage related to thoughts, words and actions toward one’s spouse. This topic was placed late in the program to provide opportunity for reflection on previous subjects and to prepare couples for transition to specific changes in the future. Jas 3:3-5 was used to introduce this topic to emphasize the large impact that small and seemingly irrelevant thoughts, words, attitudes and actions can have on a martial union and future marital satisfaction. Typically, thoughts and feelings lead to attitudes, words and actions, so it becomes critical to change the thoughts. Couples were encouraged to be positive and to avoid the traps of escalation, invalidation, negative-interpretation and stonewalling. Such choices help change the tone and atmosphere in the home. It is of interest to note that research validates the importance of these positive interactional choices between spouses (Carrere, Buchlman, Gottman, Coan, & Ruckstuhl, 2000).

Session #9 continued and expanded the previous topic by educating participants to begin changing the negative patterns that most marriages develop over time. This

subject was important to cover late in the program to springboard couples into new ways of interacting. James 3:17 was used to introduce this session to help couples focus on the goal of increased marital satisfaction through claiming God's promise of assistance in the process. Realization of the need to grow should be followed by doing things that promote growth. Couples were challenged to learn more about healthy marriage, to spend energy to study their spouse, to value their spouse's advice, to nurture fondness and admiration, to remember the courting days, to focus on the good things in one another, and choose to cherish their spouse.

Session #10 used the subject of "challenges with in-laws" to springboard into the topic of forgiveness. Since the goal of this marriage program is to improve marital satisfaction by encouraging growth in the marital bond and greater closeness with one's spouse, forgiveness would be critical to accomplish this. Addressing the importance of forgiveness at the conclusion of this marriage program provided a platform for renewal and new beginnings for couples. Ephesians 4:31 and 32 was used to introduce the topic of forgiveness within the context of Christ's forgiveness for His children. The need for forgiveness in marriage is inevitable since each person is selfish by nature and living in close connection is certain to result in friction and conflict. Forgiveness is needed sometimes because of big wounds by one's spouse and at other times due to repeated little wounds. It is a process that requires time and goes through predictable stages but when given to the other person, it frees the giver from resentment and frees the forgiven from condemnation. This process opens the way for the return of joy and intimacy in a marriage. It is based in the forgiveness one first receives from God in Christ.

Concerning gender differences and forgiveness, it is not insignificant that a recent meta-review of the topic suggests variation exists between the sexes (Miller, Worthington, Jr., & McDaniel, 2008).

Several other topics were addressed by providing material to read at home or through the couple homework assignments. Topics addressed in these ways included: roles and responsibilities, parenting, leisure activities and together time, and religious beliefs and values.

Participant Manual

Registered participants were given 3-ring notebooks with labeled tabs for each subject to be covered. Pre-punched, topic coordinated materials were handed out nightly that had several sections with different colored pages to simplify organization. Each packet consisted of the following items: A fridge magnet topic review card, note pages to coincide with the PowerPoint presentations, homework reading assignment handout(s), homework written assignment for couple discussion, take home couple devotional assignments, occasional other miscellaneous documents.

Fridge Magnet Review Cards

A fridge magnet was created for the first session which included the title of the series (Appendix H). That evening and on subsequent evenings a card was handed out which hung from the magnet to form a chain of cards. Each card had a Bible verse addressing the particular night's topic on one side and a review of the main points made on the other.

The purpose of giving attendees a weekly fridge magnet was to reinforce the ideas presented and endeavor to increase their retention. Each card in the series became a visual aid to hang in their kitchen that could provide an opportunity for enhanced exposure to the material. Couples were encouraged to read them from time to time in order to review the principles shared. It was the intent that repetition and exposure would strengthen positive attitudinal changes.

At the close of the program, a specially-designed commitment card was given to each person to hang at the bottom of the series of magnets. Participants were invited to sign the commitment card to remind them of key growth areas that they planned to pursue. This would provide an ongoing opportunity for couples to be reminded of their response to the material and principles presented.

Implementation Narrative

Establishing a Location for the Program

Location for the program was based on several factors. The plan was to have from 15-30 couples take part in the program and complete both surveys. This seemed important for obtaining outcomes that would be statistically significant. Since roughly 50% of church members attend regularly with about half of those being married and it was estimated that only 20-25% of married couples in attendance could be recruited, congregation size had to be considered carefully. A church membership base of 500-1,000 was needed to net 15-30 couples. Given the sizes of churches in the Northern New England Conference, this required at least three churches.

Finding three Seventh-day Adventist congregations which were near enough to one another to provide participants with flexibility for scheduling conflicts might increase attendance consistency. Five or six locations would work using only this criterion.

Another consideration was the selection of three SDA congregations that were in close enough proximity to the Northern New England Conference office to allow the leader couple to conduct the program while maintaining other ministry responsibilities. This criterion meant that only two or three areas would be possible matches.

The three churches of Portland, Freeport, and Brunswick, Maine were selected as the best option considering all of the possibilities. Willingness on the part of each local pastor and/or board of elders to cooperate with the project was essential for success. Initially, each local pastor was contacted by phone and later in person to confirm his interest and support. Local board members or decision makers were also brought into the process. All three local pastors along with other church leaders agreed to host the program.

Promotion and Advertising

Advertisement and promotion for the marriage enrichment program was done in a variety of ways for over two months prior to the opening session. First, the communication secretary in each of the three churches announced the program in their respective bulletins beginning eight to ten weeks prior to the event. Next, a half sheet bulletin insert listing some of the topics to be covered was distributed on two occasions, at about six weeks and two weeks before the start of the program. Another method of promotion was printing a tri-fold flyer (Appendix C) which was made available at all

three churches and which had more details of the event. The availability of the flyer was announced in the bulletin, in the bulletin insert, and verbally. Lastly, personal announcements were made either by the local church pastor or this researcher to encourage participation.

Equipment and Logistics

Common audio-visual equipment was used at each location. Each venue was different relative to the seating arrangement for the participants. The formal seating of the sanctuary was used in Portland, informal seating in the fellowship hall with tables and chairs was used in Freeport, while informal seating in the sanctuary with tables and chairs was used in Brunswick. Each location provided childcare for very young children. Part of the registration fees were used to cover the cost of hiring personnel for this task.

Registration, Survey Oversight and Attendance

Phone-in pre-registration was encouraged in the promotional material but was not required. Most of the registration took place at each meeting site. The first night, the meeting started 15 minutes early to allow extra time for accomplishing this. A \$25.00 per couple fee was charged to encourage consistent attendance and to help defray the cost of materials and childcare. Scholarships were made available for any couple that might be unable to attend due to lack of finances. A table was set up in the rear of the venue and was manned by a person recruited for that purpose.

A survey given on the first and last nights of the program was overseen by an assistant. A brief explanation of the purpose of the survey was given. The assistant then supervised the handing out of the surveys and informed consent forms to protect the

confidentiality of participants. Those married individuals willing to do so were asked to read and sign copies of the informed consent form. As each participant completed the form he/she folded them in half and brought both the signed consent form and the completed survey to the rear of the meeting room and placed each form in a separate secured box that was appropriately labeled. One form was on white paper and the other was on colored paper so that they could be folded in half and easily placed in the appropriate box. Males were given a different colored survey from females. The assistant supervised the placing of the forms in the correct box and ensured that there was one consent form for every returned survey. After all the surveys and forms had been placed in the boxes, they were secured in the conference office under the direction of the researcher to be opened following the end of the last meeting.

Since the survey was given both before and after the 10-week program, a number was assigned to each person and placed on their survey form. The assistant correlated numbers and names. The assistant did not see any individual results since they were sealed and kept confidentially by the researcher. The researcher did not see the correlation of numbers and names since they were kept confidentially by the assistant and destroyed as soon as the surveys were taken the second time at the end of the 10-week process. The numbers were also used to take attendance for the purpose of determining any correlation between attendance and change in marital satisfaction.

Following the last night of the program, the surveys were handed over to the researcher to tabulate and destroy. This was to insure against individual results being available to anyone in the future.

Opening Night Program Format

The opening night was a little different from the rest of the sessions since the facilitators were introduced, program expectations were covered, certain ground rules (Appendix J) were established, and the survey and the informed consent forms completed.

As soon as people started arriving, an assistant completed the registration process for participants. Next, participants were welcomed and encouraged to fill in the blanks on a sheet describing what they could expect from the seminar. Following that, the Magnetic Marriage guidelines were shared. Since this program was also being used for research purposes, married couples were invited to participate in a survey if they chose to do so. That process was conducted according to the details listed in the section above.

A visual aid (Appendix H) consisting of two magnets connected by two dowels was introduced with the following applications that would be amplified night by night:

1. Unity in Diversity: Is God's plan for marriage
2. Males and females are created different by design
3. Spouses were created with mutual needs
4. Differences often attract couples to one another
5. Differences were meant to be complementary
6. Our strengths when used wrongly repel one another
7. Competition in marriage is not usually helpful for the relationship
8. Choices are critical to a healthy marriage
9. Diversity means "strength"

Program Nightly Format

Each meeting's module was begun with some type of humorous icebreaker (Appendix G). Most evenings a short video clip was used that related to the topic to be covered. Following the icebreaker, the facilitators had a "couple" prayer. This prayer modeled the cooperation, unity, and complementary nature of praying together as a team.

After prayer, the leader couple shared the evening's topic, modeled healthy couple interaction during the presentation, encouraged couple participation whenever appropriate, moderated group discussion, questions and comments, and referenced written back up documentation.

The bulk of the didactic material was presented with the use of PowerPoint. Each of the participants had a set of note pages that coincided with the slides on the screen. Usually there were one or two group discussions conducted sometime during each nightly session facilitated with the use of a whiteboard. For example, during the session on expectations, a list of typical expectations was generated from audience comments. There were occasional group activities to illustrate the topic covered that involved the participants more directly. For instance, to illustrate the importance of treating one's spouse gently, a soft foam ball was vigorously tossed around followed by gently passing around a raw egg. The contrast in attitude and actions was then discussed as it related to marriage. At the close of the evening, the reading material, homework assignments, and couple devotionals were described. Spouses were encouraged to take time during the week to read, write and discuss the material that was provided.

Post Program Informed Consent and Survey Tally

Upon completion of the 10-week program, the researcher unsealed the informed consent form box, and the pre-program survey box to verify that the count matched between the two. The post-program survey box was then opened and the numbers correlated so that those completing both surveys could be tabulated. Those not completing a post-program survey were kept separate to be noted in the research outcome. After processing and tabulating the surveys, they were destroyed. The completed outcomes and conclusions will be available to the public as a part of the research project results.

Summary and Comments

The chapter began by looking at the conference demographic and ministry context for the program. The churches consist primarily of middle class, white members. Congregations are mostly small and rural in nature. Second, the intervention purpose, theme, and philosophical basis were described. The purpose of increasing marital satisfaction among couples was seen as integral with the theme and importance of unity in diversity along with the understanding of gender differences. Next, the development of the intervention was described including each of the key components for its success: module content and organization rationale, participant manual, and review cards. Each of these served to reinforce the theme of unity in diversity. The final section was a narrative of the program implementation. This section also covered such things as: location selection, promotion and advertising, equipment and logistic requirements, registration process, opening night format, nightly format, and the post program survey tally process.

CHAPTER 5

OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION

Introduction

Observations as a pastor and administrator in the Northern New England Conference region indicate that a significant number of church members experience dissatisfaction in their marriage. Assumptions have been made that marriage enrichment weekends and events contribute to the happiness and marital satisfaction of couples. However, no systematic study that compares marital satisfaction of couples before and after a structured facilitation marriage enrichment program has been conducted in the Northern New England Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The current study represents a starting point for documenting just such information and may be the first of its kind for the Seventh-day Adventist church in the Northeast. Data was gathered at the beginning and end of a marriage enrichment program through the use of a carefully chosen survey instrument. Change in scores were tracked and tabulated. Through this means, the effectiveness of marriage ministry aimed at improving the marital satisfaction of couples was measured.

Overview

The first major section of this chapter will describe the research method. The section begins with a description of the research instrument, followed by discussion of

the content, and validity of the survey tool. Lastly, the process for administering the research instrument will be considered.

The second major section of this chapter will describe the survey results. The section begins with a review of the data collected, the manner of simplifying it for consistency, and an outline of attendance and survey results data. Next, the interpretation of the data relative to the pre-test and post-test group will be considered. Following this is a discussion about sample size, the pluses and minuses of using a 10-week program, and implications of marriage enrichment for distressed couples. Finally, program limitations and suggestions for future programs will be noted.

Description of Research Methodology

Description of Research Instrument

The research method used an identical survey at the beginning and end of the program. A Likert style ENRICH marital satisfaction survey consisting of 10 statements with five response options was chosen (Appendix B). The five options corresponding to the 10 statements were: strongly disagree, disagree, undecided, agree, and strongly agree. The survey was designed to measure perception of marital satisfaction in the 10 areas addressed.

The questions were sometimes stated in the positive and sometimes in the negative so that participants were required to consider each question carefully and not just put one response number on all the questions. For instance question #1 states: "I am happy with how we make decisions and resolve conflict" while question #2 states: "I am unhappy with our communication and feel my partner does not understand me." In both

cases the participant would need to put a number from 1-5 that corresponded with one of the five agree/disagree options mentioned above. If a person was very satisfied with the couple relationship in both question #1 and #2, they would need to answer “5” (strongly agree) for question #1 and “1” (strongly disagree) for question #2. Arranging the questions in this manner requires more careful reading by the participant and may increase the accuracy of the results.

Topics Addressed on the Survey

The survey consisted of ten questions that related with statistical significance to marital satisfaction. The ten areas covered on the evaluation were: (1) decision making and conflict resolution, (2) communication and partner understanding (3) household roles and responsibilities, (4) personality characteristics and personal habits, (5) leisure activities and time spent together, (6) financial position and financial decision making, (7) affection and sexuality, (8) handling parental responsibilities, (9) relationship with in-laws and partner’s friends, and (10) practicing of religious beliefs and values.

Research Instrument Reliability

The ENRICH marital satisfaction scale was selected because it had been previously validated for reliability by other research (Fowers & Olson, 1989). Validity was determined for the *ENRICH Inventory* by using a national sample of 5,039 married couples who had taken the inventory. The sample was split randomly in order to obtain cross-validation of the results. The study provided unambiguous evidence of the discrimination validity for the ENRICH inventory. The cross-validation of the results

confirmed the outcome. The survey instrument used for this project is with permission from its author, Dr. David H. Olson (Appendix B).

The marital satisfaction scale was a subscale of a larger ENRICH Couple Scale made up of 35 questions that has been used in counseling premarital and married couples. It was chosen because of its high validity. The larger ENRICH Couple Scale measures the four areas of: Marital Satisfaction, Communication, Conflict Resolution, and Idealistic Distortion. The scope of the current research did not merit the use of the larger instrument.

The instrument from which the satisfaction scale was taken covered topics that had been shown to be important to the marital satisfaction of most couples. The study done by Fowers and Olson (1989) consistently differentiated with 85-95% accuracy between satisfied and dissatisfied couples. The scales were determined to be statistically significant relative to predicting marital satisfaction. It was decided by this researcher that the ENRICH marital satisfaction scale could help determine the effectiveness of the current structured facilitation marriage program. Choice of ENRICH as a previously validated survey instrument gave some confidence that the outcome would be relatively reliable.

Process of Administering Research Instrument

Pre- and Post-Program Survey

Two identical surveys were given to each person. All except the 2 or 3 participants noted above completed those surveys on the first night and on the last night of the program (Appendix B). The survey results of the pre-program survey and the post-

program survey were compared to determine if there was an increase in marital satisfaction from before to after the 10-week program. Data from the two surveys were then used to evaluate the short term effectiveness of the marriage education program and determine if the intervention made a statistically significant change in the perceived marital satisfaction of couples between the beginning and end of the 10 sessions.

Security of Survey Collection Process

Confidentiality of individual survey results was protected because the researcher did not have access to correlate the attendees' names with the numbers assigned to each sheet. The assistant taking attendance and supervising the placing of the surveys in the lock box did not have access to the information on the surveys since they were folded in half and secured until after completion of the program.

Survey Tracking Method

Each survey was numbered and color coded so that wife #1 received the pink survey #1 the first night and the red survey #1 on the last night. Her husband received the light blue survey #1 on the first night and the dark blue survey #1 on the last night and so forth. In this manner, a system for tracking the results of each person would be preserved in the final tally both individually and as a Composite. While the surveys were being taken, participants were instructed to fill the survey out according to how they personally viewed their marital satisfaction, not how they wished it to be. Couples were also instructed to turn away from each other while filling out the survey so as to not be influenced by their spouse's answers.

Informed Consent Forms Collected

On the first night, participants read and signed an informed consent form. It was on white paper so it could easily be distinguished from the surveys. They were folded in half and placed in the second lock box under the supervision of the assistant to insure that there was one informed consent form for each survey in the adjacent lock box.

Reversing Negative Data for Consistency

The survey consisted of 10 questions, each with a ranking of #1 through #5. Number 1 meant that the individual strongly disagreed with the statement, while #5 meant that they strongly agreed with the statement. Questions #2, #4, #6, and #8 were stated in the negative. For tabulation purposes, the data is easier to read if one keeps #1 as the most negative and #5 as the most positive. Therefore, the four questions that were stated in the negative were reversed to a positive in the tabulation process.

Description of Survey Results

Total Registered Compared With Those Participating in the Research Project

A total of 84 persons attended at least once during the program, about 85% were married. Thirty married couples and 8 single persons registered at the beginning of the program; however, other couples and singles began attending later in the program. Two or 3 individuals who failed to attend the first session were permitted to fill out the pre-survey a few days into the program. While it was recognized that this could slightly skew the results downward due to missing the first session, it was allowed since the increase in overall sample size outweighed the potential negative impact on the results.

Those who began attending on the third night of the program were registered but did not participate in either the pre- or post-survey. Since the surveys were only for married couples, only the initial 30 married couples were invited to be part of the research project. None of the eight singles who registered at the beginning were invited to be part of the research project.

All 30 couples who came on night one or two of the program agreed to participate in the research project by filling out the pre- and post-surveys as well as the informed consent form. Out of the 60 individuals represented by the 30 couples, 36 took both the pre- and post-test, while 24 took only the pre-test. The 36 represented 17 couples and two spouses who were not married to each other but who were in attendance alone at the last meeting.

A paired samples “t” test program (SPSS) was used to test for significance. The data gathered from the pre-test and post-test indicates statistically significant change in 7 out of 10 of the survey items (see Table 1). These items had a “p” <.05. There was positive change seen on all 10 items surveyed from pre-test to post-test (see Table 2).

Table 1

Test of Significance of Change for Survey Items

	t	df	p
#1 Conflict Resolution	3.38	35	0.002
#2 Communication	2.41	35	0.022
#3 Household Chores	2.42	35	0.021
#4 Personality	3.47	35	0.001
#5 Leisure	4.87	35	0.000
#6 Finances	1.56	35	0.128
#7 Affection and Sexuality	3.91	35	0.000
#8 Parenting	1.88	32	0.070
#9 In-laws and Friends	0.17	35	0.869
#10 Religious Beliefs	3.73	35	0.001
Composite	4.87	35	0.000

Means of Survey Items

The pre-test Composite mean for those taking both the pre-test and post-test was 3.22 out of 5 possible (see Table 2). The post-test Composite mean was 3.72. The total mean change in the positive direction from pre-test to post-test was .5. The means of the pre-test survey items ranged from a low of 2.88 on survey item #5 to a high of 3.83 on survey item #10 (see Table 2). The means of the post-test survey items ranged from a low of 3.36 on survey item #6 to a high of 4.28 on survey item #10 (see Table 2).

Table 2

Pre-Test and Post-Test Data

	Pre-Test		Post-Test		
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean Diff.
#1 Conflict Resolution	2.97	1.24	3.58	0.94	+0.61
#2 Communication	3.13	1.30	3.75	1.10	+0.57
#3 Household Chores	3.47	1.21	4.03	0.74	+0.39
#4 Personality	2.92	1.17	3.53	1.25	+0.75
#5 Leisure	2.88	1.04	3.75	1.02	+0.69
#6 Finances	3.10	1.24	3.36	1.25	+0.39
#7 Affection and Sexuality	3.00	1.28	3.61	1.13	+0.69
#8 Parenting	3.36	1.15	3.76	1.09	+0.36
#9 In-laws and Friends	3.58	1.11	3.64	1.17	+0.03
#10 Religious Beliefs	3.83	1.14	4.28	0.85	+0.58
Composite	3.22		3.72		+0.50

In order to determine if there was a difference in the marital satisfaction level of those who took both the pre-test and the post-test as compared to those who took only the pre-test, the pre-test Composite means of both groups were calculated. The pre-test Composite mean for those taking only the pre-test was 3.22 and as noted above, the pre-test Composite mean for those taking both the pre-test and post-test was 3.22 out of 5 possible (see Table 3). No difference was evident between the two groups at the beginning.

Table 3

Comparison of Means of Pre-/Post-Test and Pre-Test Only Groups

	Mean Pre-Test	Mean Attendance	Total Attendance
Pre/Post Group	3.22	8.97	36
Pre Only Group	3.22	3.71	24

Interpretation of Data

Pre-Test/Post-Test Group

Seven out of the ten questions resulted in a mean difference that is statistically significant. The mean difference of the pre- and post-tests represents meaningful change. That is to say, the change was not due to random chance. It was pretty much across the board and it was a relatively large number. The Composite mean of the group started at 3.22 (see Table 2). The total change possible would only have been to add 1.78 thereby moving to 5. The fact that the program added .5 in only ten weeks in almost all areas surveyed is very encouraging.

The Composite mean of the group starting at 3.22 indicates that as a whole the group was on the plus side of neutral regarding marital satisfaction. Or to put it another way, participants were more satisfied with their marriage than they were unsatisfied at the beginning of the program. The importance of the positive change in a relationship that is already somewhat satisfied is greater than if the marriage had a greater distance to travel toward being very satisfied. In other words, if couples started at 1 on the satisfaction scale and moved .5 to 1.5, that would be only about 12.5% of the distance toward the high of 5 possible on the scale. Moving from 3.22 to 3.72 means the group traveled

about 28% of the distance toward the high of 5. Marital satisfaction for participants went up in a statistically significant amount over the 10-week period. This movement is important both in the amount of change (.5), and in the position on the scale where the change took place (between 3.22 and 3.72).

Attendance Comparison: Pre-Test/Post-Test Group and Pre-Test Group Only

Out of the 60 who began the program, only 36 completed it. The question could be asked, “What if all 60 would have taken both surveys?” The outcome of that question is not apparent but what *is* apparent is that the group who took the pre- and post-tests and the group who took only the pre-test had a statistically identical starting place. That is to say, one group was no more or less satisfied than the other on the first night of the program

Discussion and Comments

Limitation of Sample Size

The 36 individuals who completed both surveys is a relatively small group compared to the rest of the Northern New England region. The question may arise regarding the value of the results because of the small sample size. It should be noted that positive change was seen on all 10 items surveyed. Seven out of the 10 were statistically significant specifically taking into account the sample size.

Ten Week Program, Pluses and Minuses

A marriage enrichment program spanning several weeks carries both pluses and minuses. On the positive side, there are several potential benefits. For starters, the

material presented would be spread out and therefore not so overwhelming as it could be when sitting through 10 modules over a weekend. Second, there would be more opportunity for discussion of the information by each couple since they had seven days to do so. Next, spouses might have opportunity to actually work the insights into their relationship during the week; they could practice what they were learning. This advantage could help bring more long term positive change and therefore help sustain the increase in marital satisfaction. Another benefit could be providing time for God to change their hearts as they participated in the assigned couple devotionals. Anecdotally, one person who had previously attended a weekend program commented that they had received more help from the 10-week approach.

On the negative side, there are several liabilities. First, the momentum may be more difficult to maintain during a 10-week program versus a weekend seminar. Next, the commitment of 10 weeks of time of 2-3 hours per week might seem more difficult than 15-20 hours over a weekend. Also, taking time during the work-week may be more difficult for some. Fourth, finding a 10-week time period with no scheduling conflicts can be a challenge for both the leaders and the participants. Another issue is that there may be less control over disruptions in the meetings due to late arrivals, early departures, child care issues, and so forth. A final area of liability for the 10-week approach is variation in attendance due to many disruptive factors. For instance, this program was challenged by a significant snow storm, by vacation travel, by a conflict in the use of one of the churches, by frozen and broken water pipes at another church, and by an academy ski program. The potential for disruption will always be an issue but spreading the program out increases the exposure for difficulties.

A technique that may have helped mitigate some of the negatives was holding the program in three locations during the same time frame. By providing the opportunity for couples to switch venues week by week, some absences were likely prevented. This researcher observed that most weeks saw one or more couples move from one location to the other. More than one participant expressed their appreciation for this feature of the program.

Implications for Distressed Couples

The Composite mean of the pre-test for couple marital satisfaction was above neutral (Table 1). About half of the scores would be above the mean and about half would be below that number. Since this is a Composite, individuals or couples may have been significantly above or below that mean. That is to say, some may be in a more distressed situation and therefore have a lower level of marital satisfaction while others may be more satisfied. Given the relatively significant positive movement evidenced by the Composite mean of the post-test, one would speculate that both those who may have been distressed and those who were quite satisfied were benefitted by the program. The percent of change by those in a more distressed situation would have a greater impact on the Composite score than would the same percent of change that were relatively more satisfied. Research indicates (De Maria, 2005) that “distressed” couples participate in marriage enrichment events as well as those who are coming along for a marital *tune up*. Further analysis could be done to determine if this type of marital enrichment program brings greater change for distressed couples, for more satisfied couples or both equally.

This suggests that if couples who are already relatively happy in their relationship

can grow significantly, then those who are less than happy may grow even more. Further research would be need to determine if there is a threshold of marital satisfaction below which it will become increasingly difficult to facilitate any change.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Programs

Results from this project were limited because of the small number of participants, by the fact that couples were surveyed only two times and also because the surveys were conducted within a relatively short period of time. It is encouraging that the results were statistically significant but it would be interesting to confirm the findings with additional and larger samples as well as to do a six month or one year follow-up to determine long term effects. This researcher suggests that marriage enrichment which demonstrates long term improvement in marital satisfaction would be a valuable project.

Future programs may be enhanced by considering various issues. First, these programs might be developed in such a way to test and address long term improvement. A system of follow-up and on-going contact of couples with each other as well as monthly meetings could be helpful. Next, it would be well to prepare for unexpected surprises to keep the program running smoothly. Things like equipment malfunction, location changes, weather related issues, lack of a person with a key, and even a flat tire (which were all experienced in this program) can create havoc and stress. Another suggestion would be to differentiate between those who are currently parents and those who do not have children in the home. Finally, assuming a multi-site program, it might be of interest to keep attendance separately at each site (which was not done in the

current research) in order to discover whether differences in the style of venue (such as formal or informal seating) had any significant impact on the outcomes.

Summary/Conclusions

The outcome of the program was positive for participants. Post-testing revealed statistically significant change for those attending 8-10 sessions and anecdotal change was also noted by participants. The ministry intervention demonstrated that this kind of marriage education program had measurable positive effects on the participants.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Project Overview

Marriage as an institution has been on the decline during the past four or five decades. The divorce rate doubled from the beginning to the end of that period, though the rate slowed during the last half. This reduced rate of decline may be partly due to the fact that young people have become much more accepting of alternatives to marriage, such as co-habitation. A marked increase in single parenting and births for unwed mothers underlines this phenomenon.

Research has shown that Americans have become less likely to marry and that if they choose to marry, they are less happy. Couples who are less satisfied with their relationship tend to be more likely to consider getting a divorce. However, those with strong religious views who are unhappy in their marriage are more likely to stay married than their non-religious counterparts. Personal observations as a pastor have revealed anecdotal evidence of unhappily married SDA couples who sometimes end in divorce while other couples, though dissatisfied, remain married.

In order to address the problem of marital dissatisfaction among SDA church members, a structured marriage enrichment program was developed and implemented in three southern Maine churches. This program provided objective research to demonstrate

program effectiveness and validate the spending of resources in this area of ministry.

This project represented an early attempt to provide evidence-based research regarding the value of conducting marriage enrichment programs and endeavored to contribute to the improvement of marriage and marriage ministry in the Northern New England Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

This project was beneficial in many different ways. It was a direct benefit to participants in increasing their marital satisfaction and it was useful toward developing a stronger evidence-based marriage ministry in NNEC. Other potentially positive effects of the program include: inspiring others to attend future programs, improving extended family relationships, bringing greater unity in the church body thereby resulting in enhanced community witness.

Implications from Biblical Research

The Edenic marriage was established and designed by God in the beginning as part of the Creator's original plan. The current condition of marriage reflects a dramatic and significant departure from that ideal. Understanding the original plan provided the researcher an anchor point to develop a solid biblical foundation for the material to be presented during the program.

Several ingredients critical to improving marital satisfaction were gathered from the description in Genesis before the entrance of sin as well as from what God told mankind immediately after the fall. Humankind was created as male-female. Each sex was different and complementary by *design*. Both the man and the woman were made with needs that anticipated help from the other, yet they were also equal co-regents.

The entrance of sin resulted in division and disunity which significantly damaged the God-designed unity-in-diversity. In response to the crisis and to retain a degree of unity, God announced as well as proscribed that man would “rule over” woman. This, however, did not reflect the ideal of what the original plan had been. The method of recovery of the Genesis ideal would come later as the result of the power of gospel.

Paul, in the New Testament (Gal 3:28; 2 Cor 5:17), announced that part of the good news of the gospel was that the gospel was given to do away with all dividers. That is to say, those who are in Christ could move back into the experience of the Garden of Eden by faith. Since marriage was the first earthly relationship established by God, it followed that the unity in diversity originally designed could be experienced by those who are one in Christ.

Part of answering Jesus’ prayer for unity (John 17: 21) in His body is evidenced in Christian marriages when they allow the power of the gospel to bring them into true unity. This unity in marriage results in more effective witness. It can be said that “the purpose of the gospel” is to restore marriage to its “purity and beauty” (White, 1896, p. 64).

Implications from Current Research

Current research, while neither considering God’s design nor the impact of the gospel, nevertheless acknowledges male/female diversity and affirms the value of increasing marital satisfaction which can result in greater marital unity. It is recognized that the very fabric of the nation is at risk when marriages and families disintegrate.

Marital satisfaction typically changes over the span of a marriage. The highest satisfaction tends to be in the early years, lowest during the child-bearing and child-rearing years and then rising again later in marriage. Government, community, and church leaders in an effort to improve marital satisfaction have taken steps through government extension programs, community marriage initiatives, and church marriage education and enrichment programs to strengthen marriages. Research suggested that marriages across the spectrum of marital satisfaction participate in and benefit from these marriage programs. Often, it is such programs that provide a link for couples to seek other community services like marital therapy.

The content of marriage education and enrichment programs that is based on empirical research is important although format and style appears less critical. Current research suggested that topics important to marital satisfaction and helpful to include in marriage programs are: marital expectations, effective communication skills, conflict management, sexuality, finances, roles and responsibilities, parenting, and forgiveness. These and other subjects were found to be important to the success of the program in Maine.

Project Summary

Material was developed based on the biblical foundations for marriage and what current research demonstrates is helpful toward improving marital satisfaction. It was presented over a 10-week period on three evenings each week in three different locations. A pre-test was given at the beginning of the program to measure the level of marital satisfaction among participant couples. Following the intervention, an identical post-test

was given to determine if the program resulted in a positive change in marital satisfaction.

The program was facilitated by the researcher and his wife. Team leading in this manner gave opportunity to model unity-in-diversity while providing a male and female perspective. The material was presented didactically through the use of PowerPoint as well as by means of leader dialog, story telling, group interaction, and short group activities. Participant couples were given a 3-ring notebook that contained session notes, extra reading material, assignments, and short devotional readings. Resources were handed out at the beginning of each meeting.

The value of unity in diversity and appreciation for the complementary nature of male/female differences was emphasized throughout the program. Topics addressed during the program included: expectations, communication skills, healthy conflict techniques, personality differences, leisure time, family finances, sexuality, parenting, in-laws, and forgiveness. The topics were organized in a manner that built on each other with care to address (after several other building blocks were in place) more difficult or sensitive topics such as conflict, finances, and sexuality.

The survey taken at the beginning and end of the program was an effective tool to demonstrate change in marital satisfaction during the program. Seven out of the 10 areas surveyed resulted in a statistically significant change from session #1 to session #10. The average change for all 10 areas was about .5 points on a 5 point scale. This particular type of structured facilitation marriage enrichment program was found to have a measurable positive impact on participant couples.

All together, 84 individuals attended at least one session. Some were married and some single but only married couples who came at the beginning were eligible to participate in the research. Thirty couples took the survey initially and a total of thirty four individuals representing 17 couples completed the survey at the close of the program.

Research Findings

Project outcomes yielded positive change for all 10 areas surveyed. In 7 of the 10 areas surveyed that change was statistically significant with a “p” <.05. The Composite mean of the marital satisfaction for participants was 3.22 out of 5 possible at the beginning of the program and 3.72 at the end of the program. This .5 change in satisfaction is a robust number representing 28% of the total change possible. It is significant since the group mean was initially above average in marital satisfaction. That is to say, the position on the survey scale at the beginning of the intervention limited the increase that was possible for the group mean at the end of the program.

A total of 60 individuals took the survey at the beginning. Thirty six also took the survey at the end while 24 did not since they were absent from the last session. The mean of those who took both the pre-test and post-test was essentially identical with the mean of those who took just the pre-test.

The fact that only Composite scores appear in the outcomes is to say that those who were relatively more satisfied in the beginning were not separated from those who were relatively less satisfied to start with. Since the more satisfied would be closer on the scale to 5 initially, and those who were less satisfied would be further from 5 initially, the

relatively less satisfied would effect mean movement on the scale in a more dramatic amount. It would be of interest to test whether there is greater change seen in distressed versus more satisfied couples, but that was not addressed in this study.

Recommendations and Closing Comments

While results were positive and significant, further research would be beneficial. A larger sample might be useful to determine if the outcome would be replicated. The demographic was quite narrow, primarily white, middle class SDA Christians. A wider demographic would be helpful to determine if results were similar for other ethnic groups, other classes, and other religious groups. The survey covered only a 10-week period. A follow-up study that evaluated marital satisfaction of participants in six months or a year would be useful to determine the long-term effect of this type of program. Establishing some kind of mentoring follow-up groups could be beneficial to help maintain lasting results. It would also be of interest to further investigate the one area that demonstrated little change. Was the small effect due to the topic, the demographic, sample size, the timing of the presentation or other factors? Regarding the allocation of resources within the church, the current and future results should be shared with decision-making entities so that consideration might be given for greater emphasis on strengthening marriages within the church. This can be important because it directly relates to the success of the gospel proclamation.

A faith relationship with Jesus that changes how one thinks and feels, and which results in improving the way one treats others is the practical application of the gospel. The primary human relationship that should be affected by the gospel is marriage. The

marital union is the quintessential relationship that can demonstrate God's character and reflect God's image. Happily married couples become the backbone of the church family. They show in their lives the reality of Christ within. In ever widening circles, the church family can be challenged and inspired toward unity in tremendous diversity. It becomes more and more apparent that oneness in the midst of large differences among God's people speaks to God's original design. That is not to say that God will not work with His church until married couples get it right; God uses a plethora of means to save His children but it is the opinion of this researcher that we should pray, educate, and strategize toward the plan instituted in the Garden of Eden: Unity in Diversity.

Is marriage strengthening ministry important? Yes, because it can improve marital satisfaction for couples thereby strengthening church and community but, yes, also because the effectiveness of the SDA Christian witness is increased. The power of the gospel is demonstrated in a practical way in Christ's body. God desires to reveal His love through His children in a union of differences. Where better to see that love revealed than in the first of the twin institutions lingering from Eden: the marital union? Holy wedlock, that place in humanity where the image of God was originally reflected, is the place for it to shine most brightly again.

APPENDIX A

GENDER DIVERSITY AND SEX DIFFERENCES

Gender diversity and sex differences will be discussed somewhat interchangeably here for convenience since the terms are often used in that manner in the literature. The purpose is to consider the reality of male/female differences rather than debating the source of those differences. Research by Feldhahn (2004) and Feldhahn and Feldhahn (2006) resulted in two books which were tailored “only” for men and “only” for women.

Gray (1992), author of the book, *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*, has popularized the idea that men and women are very different in their approach to life. This topic, however, is somewhat controversial given the mixed nature of the literature on this issue as well as the manner that male/female issues have been approached historically (Hines, 2004). Adler-Baeder et al. (2004) assert that there is little support in the empirical literature for the polarized view presented by Gray (1992). Adler-Baeder et al. (2004) also notes that whatever gender differences may be present are outweighed by similarities. Kurdek (2005) also could find no support for “*his* and *her*” versions of marital processes. On the other hand, studies have revealed differences that are evident from the earliest hours of an infant’s life (Sax, 2005). Before any socialization has taken place, measurable contrasts appear between boys and girls in how they respond to certain environmental stimuli. Further, a study by fourteen neuroscientists from three universities determined that “female brain tissue and male brain tissue are intrinsically different” (p. 15). Recent brain imaging studies also reveal both anatomical and process differences between the sexes (Gorbet & Sergio, 2007; Jung et al., 2005; Sowell et al.,

2006). Considering the importance and value of research in determining program content, there will be obvious tension created when the research seems to point in two different directions.

Given the inequality that has unfortunately existed between men and women for millennia around the world, it is not surprising that discussion of this topic has strong negative feelings attached to it, especially by some (Lukas, 2006). The feminist movement generally has viewed research on sex differences or promotion of gender diversity as an attack against hard-won gains made relative to female equality with males (Rhoads, 2004). They would argue that while *sex* differences may exist innately, *gender* differences are a social construct which need de-constructing (Lorber, 1986). Research points to the idea that biological differences do in fact favor one sex or the other (Taylor, 2005) and that, at least in some ways, males and females are endowed differently (Goldstein et al., 2010; Ruytjens et al., 2007; Gaab et al., 2003; Obleser, Rockstroh, & Eulitz, 2004).

Gender Difference Matters

Sax (2005) argues forcefully that gender difference matters tremendously, especially relative to the education of children and youth. He asserts that the gender neutral education that has been promoted during the last few decades has done significant damage to the learning of both boys and girls. He maintains that male and female brains are *organized* differently. He goes on to say that “the tired argument about which sex is more intelligent or which sex has the ‘better’ brain” is meaningless and that the question should rather be, “Better for what?” (p. 32). Hines (2004), as well as research by Colom,

Juan-Espinosa, Abad, and Garcia (2000), also validates the idea that there is no difference in intelligence between the sexes.

A sampling of the research discussed by Sax (2005) demonstrates a variety of interesting facts about the differences found between males and females. To begin with, men and women *see* things differently because some of the cells in their eyes are quite diverse. In addition, the sexes generally *hear* at different levels of intensity. Third, brain imaging technology reveals that the processing of information and emotional response takes place at different locations depending on the sex (compare McRae, Ochsner, Mauss, Gabrieli, & Gross, 2008). Parrott & Parrott (2004) note that recent research with brain scans reveal that even the manner in which males and females use their brain while resting is dramatically different. Other studies (Lovden et al., 2007; Saucier et al., 2002; Kersker, Epley, & Wilson, 2003) documented distinctive sex connected differences in navigational skill, some of which were already apparent by age five and which are still evident among college age adults (Ruggiero, Sergi, & Lachini, 2008). It is also of interest that careful observation of various types of non-human mammals revealed consistent and sex specific “play behavior” (Cahill, 2009).

APPENDIX B

ENRICH MARITAL SATISFACTION SCALE

David H. Olson, Ph.D.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

Indicate how strongly you agree or disagree.

- ___1. I am happy with how we make decisions and resolve conflict.
- ___2. I am unhappy with our communication and feel my partner does not understand me.
- ___3. I am happy with how we share our responsibilities in our household.
- ___4. I am unhappy with some of my partner's personality characteristics or personal habits.
- ___5. I am happy with how we manage our leisure activities and the time we spend together.
- ___6. I am unhappy about our financial position and the way we make financial decisions.
- ___7. I am pleased with how we express affection and relate sexually.
- ___8. I am unhappy with the way we (will) each handle our responsibilities as parents.
- ___9. I am happy with our relationship with my parents, in-laws, and my partner's friends.
- ___10. I feel very good about how we each practice our religious beliefs and values.

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2009

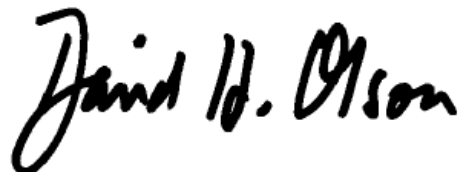
Permission to Use ENRICH Couple Scales

I am pleased to give you permission to use the **ENRICH Couple Scales** in your research project, teaching or clinical work with couples or families. You may either duplicate the materials directly or have them retyped for use in a new format. If they are retyped, acknowledgement should be given regarding the name of the instrument, the developers' names, and Life Innovations.

In exchange for providing this permission, we would appreciate a copy of any papers, theses or reports that you complete using the **ENRICH Couple Scales**. This will help us to stay abreast of the most recent developments and research regarding this scale. We thank you for your cooperation in this effort.

In closing, I hope you find the **ENRICH Couple Scales** of value in your work with couples and families. I would appreciate hearing from you as you make use of this inventory.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David H. Olson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

David H. Olson, Ph.D.

The Family Life Ministries Department
of the
Northern New England Conference
Invites you to experience



Monday, January 12, 2009
7:00—8:15 p.m.

At the
White Memorial
Seventh-day Adventist Church
97 Allen Avenue
Portland, ME.*

*see the inside panel for
additional locations



Husband and wife team,
Merlin and Cheryl Knowles
have been married for over 30 years
and leading marriage retreats
and seminars for 17 years.



CoNNECted we make a difference

91 Allen Avenue
Portland ME 04103
207-797-3760
nnec@nnec.org

NOTE
**REGARDING MEETING TIME
AND LOCATION:**

This seminar is also being offered at
2 other locations.

- ◆ Tuesdays
Beginning January 13 at the
**Freeport Seventh-day
Adventist Church**
(63 Pownal Road) and
- ◆ Wednesdays
Beginning January 14 at the
**Brunswick Seventh-day
Adventist Church**
(333 Maine Street).

- ◆ All seminars begin at 7:00 PM.
- ◆ You are welcome to switch
locations each week as needed.



Come
with your sweetheart
and remember how to
"Smell the flowers"
together again.



Some of the topics covered

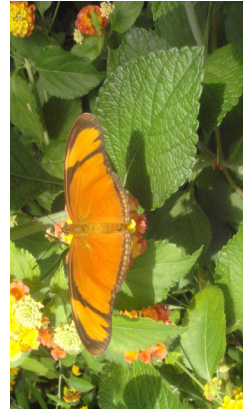
- * Constructive Conflict
- * How to grow your marriage
- * Money Harmony
- * Healthy Sexuality
- * Choosing a Winning Marriage
- * Male/Female Communication Styles
- * God's plan: Complementary marriage
- * Cultivating Companionship
- * Choosing Courtship over



10 week seminar

Come and learn how to:

- *Rekindle love*
- *Stay in love*
- *Stay best friends*
- *Become best friends if your relationship has cooled*
- *Cultivate companionship*
- *Have fun*
- *Have a fulfilled marriage*



**Marriage
"Tune-up"
Opportunity!**

Whether your relationship is "singing in harmony" or "a bit off tune", come strengthen and enrich your marriage.



Cost:

\$25 for the series. Scholarship funds available upon request.

Pre-Register:

call 207-797-3760, ask for Rita or Merlin or leave a voice mail at extension 14.

Onsite Registration:

on the Opening Night from 6:00-7:00 PM

APPENDIX D

SAMPLE SCRIPTS WITH SLIDES: SESSIONS #1 THROUGH #3

#1 “EXPECTATIONS”

Greetings and Welcome Etc.

Things are not always what you expect. Just be careful if you try to stretch after you finish jogging. This clip relates to our topic tonight. (View Icebreaker video clip)



CK

EXPLANATION OF NOTEBOOK CONTENTS

MK/CK

Review Guidelines for Program



Introduction of Magnetic Marriage Seminar



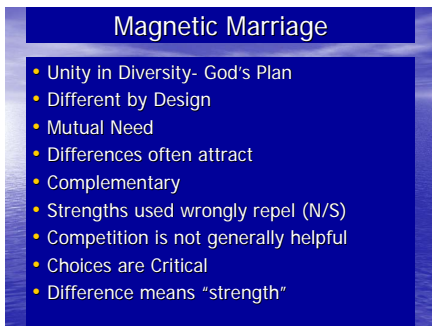
(Note: Fill out sheet)

MK/CK

(Note: Go through and comment)

MK

Prayer (M&C)



MK- Magnetic Marriage- What is MM about? **Illustrate by the use of the magnets**

- Unity in Diversity- God's Plan-
 - God did not mean for our differences to drive us crazy.

CK

- Different by Design
 - The value of differences
- Mutual Need-
 - Is “need” weakness or strength?
- Differences often attract
 - Especially Personality, Strengths and Abilities (not values)

Dialog?

CK spatially challenged: getting paper clips to hang right on the cards

MK

- Complementary
 - “Complementary Sex rather than Opposite Sex”
- Strengths used wrongly repel (N/S) and cause separation
- Competition is not generally helpful
 - competition between team mates means you lose the game.

CK

- Choices
 - Thoughts lead to feelings which lead to attitudes, words and actions
 - M M is about making good choices
- Difference means “strength”
 - A strong marriage needs both perspectives

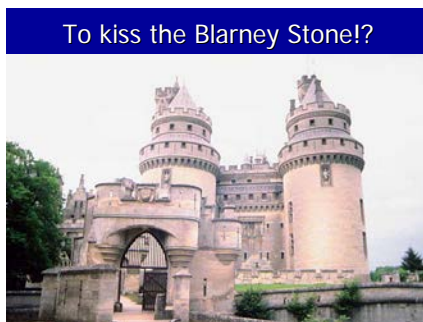
Dialog

Ck frantically looking for glasses. “They’re on your head.”

MK



CK

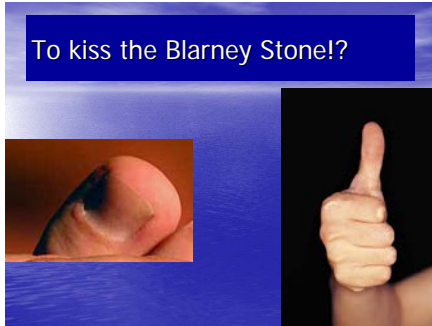


A castle near the town of Cork, Ireland is visited by thousands of tourists every year.

One of its main attractions is the chance to kiss the Blarney stone located on one of its

parapets. It is supposed to confer “the gift of expressive, convincing speech” (blarney) on whoever kisses it.

MK



(Tell the story below)

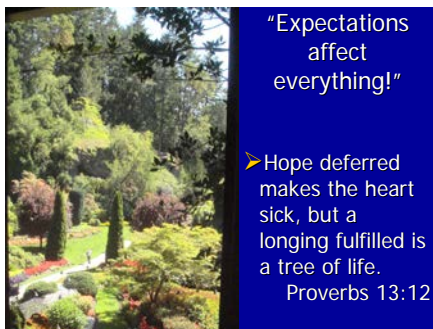
A few years ago, young people invented a game named after this practice that they called, “Kiss the Blarney Stone”-without traveling all the way to Ireland. This is how it works: At a party, kids who are ignorant of how the game works are asked to volunteer for the privilege of “kissing the blarney stone”. Usually there are several volunteers but only one at a time is selected so that more can experience the fun. Each volunteer is taken into another room and asked to sit in a chair. They are then blindfolded and instructed to slowly count to 5 and then kiss the blarney stone placed in front of their mouth. After kissing it, they count slowly to 5 again- at which time the blindfold is quickly removed. The object that they kiss is someone’s thumb, however as they are counting the second time, someone else puts their big toe near the kisser’s mouth. When they open their eyes they see a big toe and conclude that they just kissed it! Needless to say, they are usually pretty “grossed out”. After an explanation and a good laugh, they are usually more than willing to help fool the next hapless victim.

CK

What makes this game funny is that most people don't expect to voluntarily kiss someone's dirty big toe.

- Expectations are like that.
- When we expect *one* thing but get something entirely different, it can cause a wide range of emotions:
 - *from laughter to anger
 - *from fear to relief.
- Because, like we said, "Expectations affect everything"

The Bible states this idea another way...



MK/CK



(ACTIVITY # 1- Great Expectations)

Let's do a little brainstorming... What are some of the expectations that couples bring to their marriage? (Write on the board and in your notebook)



MK

All of us come with expectations about what it will be like to be a spouse, a lover, a parent.

- Expectations about common issues
 - such as who will buy groceries or mow the grass
- Expectations based on hidden issues-
 - Power, acceptance, integrity, caring, commitment, and what it means to be loved.

In fact, it is often the hidden issues that are most difficult

Dialog: Washing and vacuuming the car-(Process “hidden issues” with audience?)

CK

Disillusionment, blame and anger can come into a relationship because of unmet expectations.

- Negative spiral downward.

- stop being friends
- become “competitors”)

Because all couples face unmet expectations we are going to look at some of the ways to deal with it.

#1. Unrealistic Expectations

- My spouse will always meet my needs
- My spouse will never disappoint me
- I will always feel madly in love
- Married life is predictable



MK

First, identify and choose to dispose of *unrealistic* expectations.

Choose to give up the unrealistic expectation that your partner will always be able to meet your needs.

- We each have a variety of social, emotional, physical, and spiritual needs.

Our spouse can only meet some of the needs, some of the time.

- For example, it's unrealistic to think that M/F communication styles will be identical. **We think differently!**

CK

Give up the idea that your spouse won't ever disappoint you or let you down.

- There are no perfect spouses- starting with the person who looks back at you in your mirror every morning- yourself!
- All spouses make mistakes.
- Don't sweat the small stuff!

- choose instead to develop an attitude of grace toward the other instead of picking at every flaw.

MK (Tell story)

One woman married for 50 plus years was asked what her secret was. She said, “When I got married I made a list of 10 things that my husband did that bothered me a little and then gave them to him as a gift” (In her own mind). In other words, that’s just part of the package that she loved and accepted. When ask what was on the list, she said “Oh I’ve long since forgotten what was on the list, but when my husband does something that bothers me, I just say to myself- that must have been one of he 10 items on the list”!

There is a lot of wisdom in showing this type of grace to each other.

- We tend to receive what they give.
- Choose to give a lot of grace.
- Don’t keep account of the other’s wrongs.

CK

Another unrealistic expectation is that you will always feel madly in love with your spouse.

- Feelings change from day to day, or from moment to moment.
- Feelings are not going to be glowing at 3 AM when cleaning baby’s bottom
- When caring for a spouse who is sick and has just thrown-up
- When your spouse says something cutting and unkind.

Another unrealistic expectation is that married life will be just like it is right now...

- Fact is marriage is constantly changing.
- We are changing, our spouse is changing.

-Flexibility is essential!

-Choosing to bend with the storms of life will keep us from breaking!

Dialog: Unrealistic Expectations about CK with MS...

-change from day to day or hour to hour

-Office Christmas party,

-Housework-doing well enough to make a mess but not clean it up.



MK/CK

Second, discover where your expectations come from. (Brainstorm other areas with couples).

MK

Knowing why you expect what you expect can help de-fang the expectation so that the marriage does not get bitten.

- Knowing the source of the expectation may show it is an Unrealistic Expectation.

-In that case, choose to dispose of it.

- Knowing the source of the expectation may show that it is a Realistic Expectation.


-In that case, deal with it respectfully with one another.

Dialog about source of expectations in our case...

-Who locks up at night...?

-Hidden issue of “care” “safety” “provider” “house-band”

#3. How to handle wacky Expectations



- Clear up *misconceptions*
- Choose to *Accept* the reality that “is”
- Choose to *Lower* expectations
- Choose to *Raise* the reality

CK

Third, choose to correct expectations that are out of wack.

- Sometimes, expectations are based on faulty or incomplete information.
 - So we choose to educate ourselves in order to clear up the misconceptions.

Once the misconception is cleared up, we have at least three options:

1. Choose to *accept* the reality that “is”, even if that is not what we expected or would like. For example, the family income may not

support the purchase of new cars every year or two. We may need to adjust to the idea of buying “pre-owned” vehicles. (works for us)

MK

2. Choose to lower the expectations. In other words, my spouse will not usually (insert rarely to never ☺) be totally predictable. Sometimes they will be late getting home from work. Sometimes an ‘innocent’ comment will result in a totally unexpected response. Lowering expectations gives each other more wiggle-room and lowers the potential for conflict.

CK

3. Choose to raise the reality in order to reach the expectations.
If I am habitually late to church, and MK hates to be late, I can choose to get up a few minutes earlier or set out the clothes the night before.
 - That is to say, at least in some cases, we can choose to make changes in order to meet our spouse’s expectations and needs.
 - Part of a good marriage relationship is for each to reach across the isle to meet the other’s needs.

Dialog?

I choose to scale back to the essentials.

I choose to accomplish less in order to have the strength to have supper on the table when you get home.



MK

Fourth, don't let even realistic expectations get in the way of commitment.

Marriage really is about committing to love each other "for better or worse".

- Marriage cannot be based on the ebb and flow of feelings, else it is doomed.
- There is no escape clause in marriage if my spouse doesn't do what I expect!
-I probably don't do what they expect either.
- "It is an unconditional commitment into which a man and woman enter *for life*" (Wright, 2000, p. 9). The Christian marriage ceremony doesn't contain conditional "if" clauses. It would be better defined as a covenant.

CK Read

David Augsburger (1971, p. 16) states it well in the following paragraph.

"Basically the Christian view of marriage is not that it is primarily or even essentially a binding legal and social contract. The Christian understands marriage as a covenant made under God and in the presence of fellow members of the Christian family. *Such a pledge endures, not because of the force of law or the fear of its sanctions, but because an unconditional covenant has been made.* A covenant more solemn, more binding, more permanent than any legal contract".

MK

What does this covenant “commitment” look like? Commitment means several things within a marriage relationship.

--**First**, commitment is pledge based, not feeling based, it is *decision*, not romance.

--**Second, Quote** “Commitment requires you to give up the childish dream of being unconditionally accepted by your partner and expecting that partner to fulfill all your needs and make up for all your childhood disappointments” (Wright, 2000, p. 9).

--**Third**, “Commitment is investing- working to make the relationship grow” (Wright, 2000, p. 10).

--**Fourth**, commitment means “sticking to someone regardless of circumstances” it means “not turning back” (Wright, 2000, p. 10).

--**Fifth**, and probably most bluntly, commitment means... until death do us part! Divorce is just not considered an option

Dialog: Couples who deal with chronic illness are more vulnerable than the average.

90% end in divorce! Commitment is critical!

CK

Companionship: Created for Relationship



At creation, God said specifically that it is “not good” for man (generic) to be alone.

- We are designed for companionship and built for relationships.

- If it wasn't good to be "alone" in a perfect world, how much more in an imperfect one!
- The Creation of mankind was "*not good*" or "*not complete*" until there were two- one male and one female.

So how do we nurture companionship?

- "One of the greatest reasons most relationships go so well early on is that both partners are very motivated to please the other. Both of you try to figure out what the other likes..." (Bailey, pg 89).
- So, even if we have been married for a while we can choose to reach out and meet the other ones needs, like we did in the beginning.
- Think of the things you did in courtship and early marriage to make the other happy.

Dialog? One way we nurture companionship.

We have to choose activities where Cheryl can be in a wheelchair sometimes.
(Sea Lion Caves- 5 family members pushing CK up the hill).

MK



Completeness is also in God's plan.

Genesis 2:18 says that the woman was "a help meet for him" (Bible: KJV)

- male and female were *mutually* fit for each other
- God meant for these differences to compliment and complete. In other words, there is mutual need in a marriage ***by design.***
- Rather than weakness, it is strength when we choose to submit to each other, to seek help and give it.

CK



Apparently, God would come daily to talk with Adam and Eve.

- Communication is the way we build a relationship and is an essential part of marriage.
- The more effectively we communicate, (that is to *really* hear and understand) the more satisfying our relationship will be.
- Communication is really about getting to know each other.
- Really knowing one another takes a lifetime.

Communication is said to be the "life-blood" of marriage.

MK



- Expectations affect everything!
- All spouses face unmet expectations.
- We must choose to identify & eliminate unrealistic expectations in ourselves.
- Discovering where expectations came from can help ‘de-fang’ them.
- Some expectations are based on misconception and should be cleared up.
- Accept the reality that “is” or “lower” expectations or “raise” what is reality.
- Christian marriage is a covenant, not a contract.
- God’s expectations include companionship, completeness and communication.



So.....

(Read slide)

(PP Bibliography)

#2 “DIFFERENT BY DESIGN”

1. Did you learn anything about yourself that you’re willing to share with the group from last week’s assignments?
2. Plywood illustration:
 - a. (Ask audience for components of plywood)
 - b. (List on board: Veneer, glue, heat, pressure, sanding, designer)
 - c. Make parallels to marriage
 - i. Cross grain strength
 - ii. Protects the imperfection of the other
 - iii. Becomes one under heat and pressure
 - iv. Needs cutting and sanding
 - v. Needs the hand of the master designer

MK/CK- Prayer

Different by Design: “Designed to Give, Designed to Receive”

MK



This evening we’re going to study some important truths about God’s plan for our happiness, the way we are created and how that impacts the way we relate to each other. **We are equal but different by design!**

MK/CK



-List of Gifts of the Spirit

-\$

-Age

-Gender

-Temperament

-Personal Tastes- Food, Clothing, Music

-Creative Bent

-Heaven's Order- Cherubim, Seraphim, 24 elders, 144,000, 12 gates

-Personality

-Left Brain/Right Brain

-Culture

MK



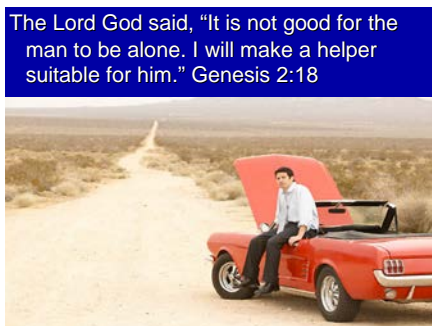
There are at least 20 different Spiritual Gifts listed in the Bible.

But nobody has all or even most of the gifts... Why?

- God's design in the spiritual world as in the natural world is to create us different so that **we need each other** and so that **we help each other.**

God designs us in specific ways because he knows how we experience true happiness...

CK



Gen. 2:18- "A design feature"

- Ladies, would you agree that “men need help?!”
 - Of course they do, that was a design feature.
 - Now ladies, before you get too smug let me ask...
 - Men, would you agree that “women need help?!”
 - Of course they do too. That was a design feature.
- We were created different so that we both need from and give to the other.

Even Jesus had and expressed needs... Can you think of any?

- In the garden (asked 3 times)
- I thirst (cross)
- Lazarus, Mary and Martha’s home (relax, gain support, “retreat”)
- Give me a drink (Samaritan woman)

MK/CK



Brainstorm ways in which we tend to fight against this “design feature”

(Note: don’t separate into two lists until after audience is finished)

Self-Sufficient

- Deny I have needs
- Don’t seek help
- Pride- Superior to other mortals
- Self-sufficient attitude
- Treat others with “needs” in a condescending manner
- Think of “needs” as a weakness
- Treat those with needs with contempt

Self Consumed

- Misuse of need (needy)
- Use my needs to manipulate others
- Expect you to make me happy
- Blind to the needs of others

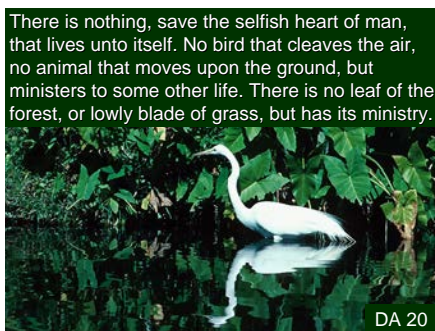
MK



There're 2 categories that the list that we made hangs on...

1. Self sufficiency is contrary to God's design and "anti-relationship"
 - a. It's an independent attitude that says I don't need God, I don't need people, I don't need my spouse.
 - b. The Island Mentality
2. Being consumed with self is also "anti-relationship"
 - a. It "takes" but does not give
 - b. It sucks the life and energy out of others
 - c. I am the only one who has needs
 - d. The Black hole mentality

CK



God's design for marriage, and all relationships, is like a flowing stream; both giving and receiving.



If we stop the out-flow, the Giving, the stream of our marriage becomes a polluted and toxic pond.



If we stop the in-flow, the receiving, the stream of our marriage dries up.



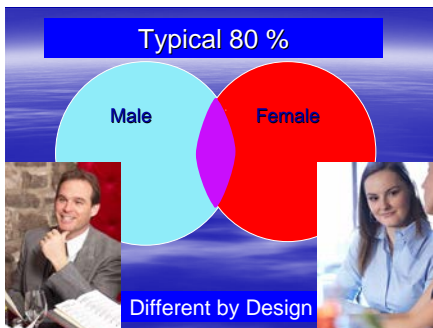
A healthy marriage is one where we both are reaching out to “give” and as well as reaching out to “receive” from each other.

MK



Modern science is beginning to catch up with the Bible. It confirms God's word that men and women were **designed** by God to be complimentary rather than competing.

We know that males and females are sexually different from each other, but that's just part of the story!



What we'll look at is typical male and typical female, we're talking about the norm, not the individual.

- About 80% will fall into what is considered typical.
- If you are in the 20 %, the chances are that your spouse is also in the 20% as well.

There have been some fascinating scientific studies in the last couple of decades about when differences show up in males and females.

CK



Infancy

Researchers studied newborn babies *on the day they were born*.

The babies were given a choice between looking at a live young woman and a simple dangling mobile.

- The young woman smiled at the baby but said nothing.
- The mobile dangled and twisted but made no noise.

They wanted to determine if there was a gender difference in what the babies preferred to look at. All 102 babies in the study were videotaped and analyzed by researchers who didn't know the sex of the baby.

What would you guess the results showed?

- The boys were much more interested in the mobile than in the young woman's face.
- The girls spent far more time looking at the young woman's face.

The results of this experiment suggest that

- girls are born prewired to be interested in faces, people,
- while boys are prewired to be more interested in moving objects, action, things.

This pattern is seen throughout the life cycle from childhood on into adulthood.

MK



We need each other

- Women are interested in the emotional world;
 - What makes you tick,
 - nurture, close relationships, connection
- Men are interested in their external world;
 - what makes it tick,
 - action, physical activity, doing

Both are needed and both enrich us

Dialog about Lancaster PA Play: Noah & the Ark

CK



Early Childhood

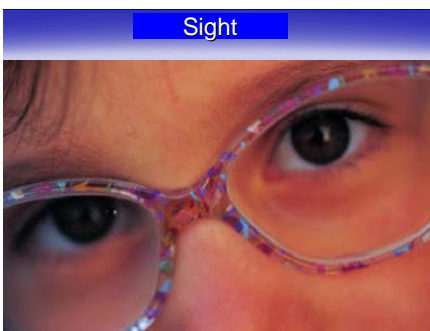
Behavioral differences begin early in life and persist through out childhood.

- Boys do a lot of aggressive rough and tumble play, are noisier and take up more space.
- The girls by contrast are less active, gentler, quieter and take up less space.
- Girls tend to form close friendships with one or two other girls and share secrets and confidences within that intimate group. Connection is vital to their lives.
- While boy's friendships are rarely that close, and tend to revolve around mutual interests and activities like sports.

In fact, even before birth, “male human fetuses are much more active prenatally than the females”

- The male is wired for action in the womb
- the female is wired for connection in the womb

MK

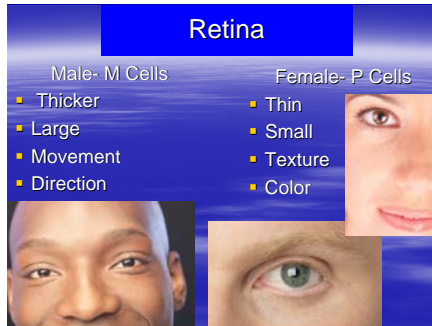


Along with differences in behavior, males and females have some rather striking differences in the 5 senses; and even women's sixth sense.

Globally speaking, “the female brain is organized to respond more sensitively to all sensory stimuli”

Sight

Women and girls, and men and boys see differently. That is because the retina in the eyes of the male and female are structurally different.



Two types of cells in the retina are the large M cells and the small P cells. The M and P cells have very different functions.

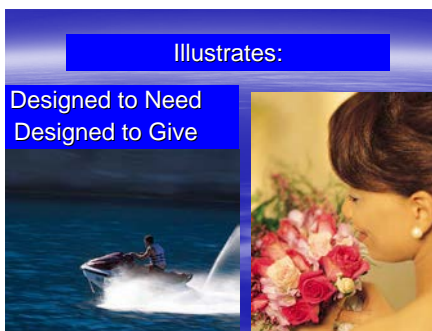
- The larger, thicker M cells of the male retina compile information about movement and direction;
- The smaller, thinner P cells of the female retina compile information about texture and color”.

CK



So, how does this translate into real life?

- Males have a narrower field of vision with greater concentration on depth, like a spot light.
 - Because of their more focused vision they are able to judge position and speed with greater accuracy than women typically can...
- Females, on the other hand, have a wider peripheral vision that gives her an overall view like a flood light.
 - This makes her able to see more of the subtle nuances in color and texture that he usually can't see. (Color blindness is typically a male phenomenon)
 - When little children draw or color...
 - Girls use a lot of different colors, red, orange, green, and beige, because that is what their P cells are pre-wired to do.
 - The boys on the other hand use far less color, black, grey, silver and blue, and much more action in their drawings, because that is what their M cells are wired to do.
 - Mention kindergarten picture drawing?
 - She sees better in the dark.
 - His vision is better in the daylight.



We meet each other's needs:

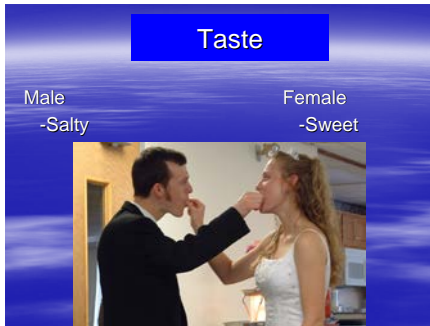
MK standing in front of closet

(He needs me to give what I have)

CK always lost

(I need him to give what he has)

MK



Taste

There is strong evidence that men and women have different preferences in taste.

- Women are more sensitive to bitter flavors, but prefer more concentrated and larger amounts of sweet things. (Chocolate anyone?)
- Men, on the other hand, are more able to detect and prefer salty flavor

CK

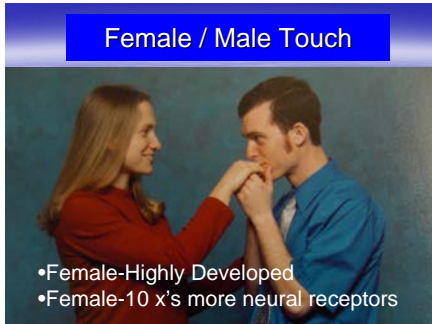


Closely connected with taste is the sense of smell.

- Women's sense of smell is much sharper than men and is the keenest during ovulation when she is the most fertile.

- At this time her sense of smell can be as much as 100 times more acute than the man (2003, Ginger; 2004 Rhoads).

MK



The sense of touch is very different between males and females.

The female sense of touch is far more developed.

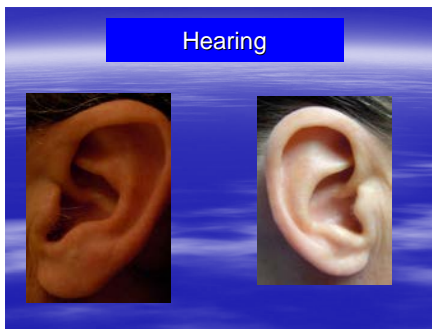
- The female has ten times more skin neuroreceptors, which makes her extremely sensitive to any type of touch on any part of the body.



Dialog:

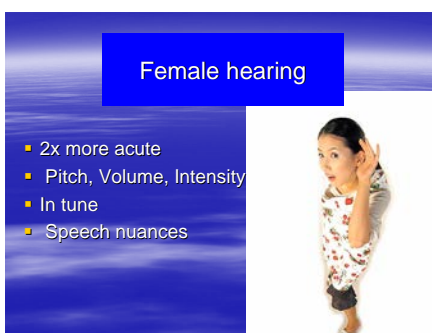
MK finished cleaning bathtub for ck. “You will feel it.” Meaning, where it was not clean. Told me later you couldn’t feel it. I was surprised because I could feel it so easily.

CK



Differences in hearing can be seen in infancy and continue into adulthood, in fact the gap in hearing widens as people age.

- Baby girls have better hearing than baby boys, especially at higher frequencies, which is so important for “speech discrimination”.



At 8 or 9 decibels (a very soft sound) women hear about twice as well as men.

{ 11 dec.= whisper }

- Girls are distracted by noise levels that are *ten times* softer than noise levels that distract boys. (May have to do with boys' brain structure as well. More able to focus attention and block everything else out.)
 - That boy who is *tap-tap tapping* his fingers on the desk, may not be bothering the other boys, but he *is* bothering the girls, and the female teacher.

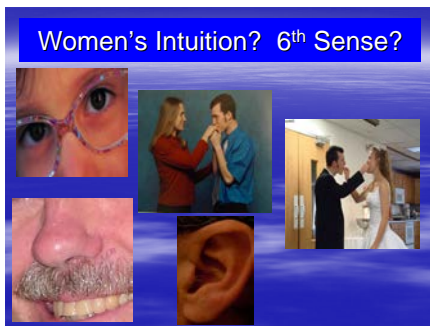
She is much more adept at picking up variations in pitch, volume and intensity.

In fact, six times as many girls as boys are able to sing on tune.

Her hearing acuity makes her able to pick up on the subtle little nuances in speech that signal emotional flags, which he misses.

- And that brings us to the matter of the sixth sense.

MK



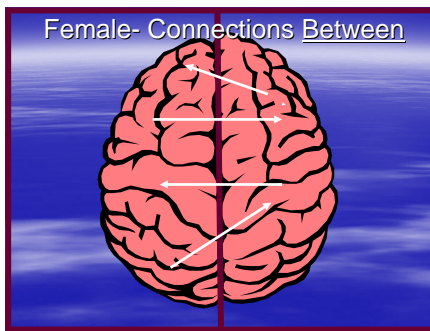
Maybe this is what is referred to as women's intuition or the sixth sense. Females are simply better equipped to notice things that men do not notice.

- Generally, women are better at picking up social cues, little nuances from tone of voice, intensity of facial expression, or the subtle cues of body language.

- Interestingly, the higher the estrogen levels the more pronounced the sensory acuity.



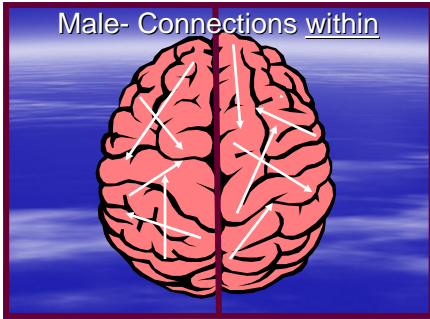
CK



The corpus callosum is a bundle of nerves that connects the two hemispheres of the brain.

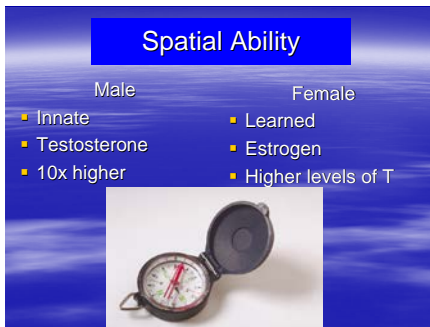
- Women have more connections *between* the two brain hemispheres and tend to use more parts of their brain simultaneously to accomplish tasks.
(something like a flood light.) [she is always thinking- in fact, several things at once]
 - This means that more “information is being exchanged between the left and right sides of the female brain”.

MK



- Men have stronger connections *within* each half of the brain.
- Men typically think in a more focused way, something like a spot light, whether they are solving a math problem, reading a book or feeling angry or sad.

CK



Spatial Ability

It has been well documented that the male has greater innate spatial skill than the female.

- They have a greater ability to judge time, distance, direction, and make mental rotations.
- The Lower the levels of estrogen during the monthly cycle, the higher the spatial performance in women.

- (As the estrogen level decreases the testosterone level increases.)

A research team in a Toronto hospital did a study that measured the levels of the male hormone testosterone in the amniotic fluid; the fluid that surrounds the growing fetus.

- They discovered that the testosterone in the fluid surrounding the male fetus was typically between five and ten times higher than the levels of the female's.
- There was a great deal of variation of testosterone levels in the amniotic fluid surrounding the females.

When those children reached the age of seven they were tested for spatial ability.

- The boys, as expected, did better than the girls, but what was more interesting was the discovery of a “correlation between the girls’ spatial abilities and the amount of testosterone to which they had been exposed in the womb.
- The higher the testosterone, the greater the spatial skills”.

MK



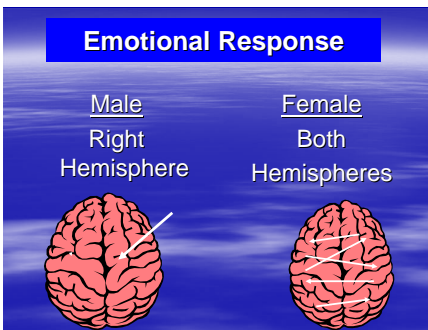
No one understands the exact process, but it is increasingly clear that testosterone is “the architect of the sex difference in brain organization”. The bulk of evidence suggests that the effects of sex hormones on brain organization occur so early in life that from the start the brains of boys and girls are wired differently.

CK



Emotion



Of all the differences between men and women, the one that tends to get the most attention is the area of emotion.



- Male emotional response is deep in the right hemisphere of the brain.
-very difficult for him to access
- Female emotional response is in a larger area and it is in both hemispheres of the brain.
-easier to access and easier to verbalize

MK/CK

Emotional Response

Male	Female
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change the subject Thinks she is volatile 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talk about it Thinks he is cold
	

- **Women** talk about their feelings / **Men** change the subject to football scores;
- **Women** share their emotions with friends, / **Men** regard that as an act of indecent exposure;
- **She** thinks he is emotionally cold, / **He** thinks she is emotionally volatile.
- **She** wonders why he shies away from connecting with his inner world.
- **He** doesn't know anything about his "inner world" and what's more, he doesn't want to know.

Parenting and attachment

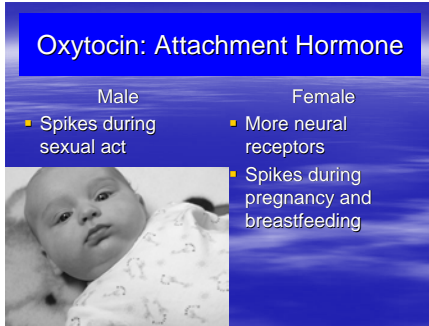
CK

Attachment to child

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Female: inherent
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Male: learned

- Female attachment to an infant seems to be inherent.
- Male attachment, on the other hand, is something that is learned.
- Mothers are natural parents; men, with the best of intentions, are not. It must be learned.

MK



The most important nurturing hormone is oxytocin. In both male and females, oxytocin promotes bonding and a calm, emotional state.

- In men it is released in large quantities during the sexual act.
- Women have more neural receptors for oxytocin than men do, and the number of receptors increases during pregnancy.
- In women, oxytocin is released in large quantities during pregnancy and breastfeeding (2002, Campbell).
- The mother releases oxytocin while she is nursing and some reaches the child through the breast milk.

-“By inducing a mutually pleasurable experience for mother and child, oxytocin increases the feeling of mutual attachment.


Of course father’s also bond with their children, but as already stated, it is largely a learned response. Mother’s do most of the child care, especially when they are infants.

- Interestingly, the father’s testosterone level decreases when he becomes a father, and this helps to facilitate the bonding that needs to take place.
- However, a father will never get the “neuro-chemical high” from cuddling the baby that the mother gets.

CK

Female: Distinctive Qualities

- nurturing
- child rearing
- Sensory acuity
 - hear
 - sight
 - touch
 - taste and smell
 - 6th sense



Equips:

- Sympathy
- Empathy
- Awareness of feelings
- Relationship building

Remember the sensory acuity of the female? Her hypersensitive senses make her better equipped for the task of child-rearing, especially the infant.

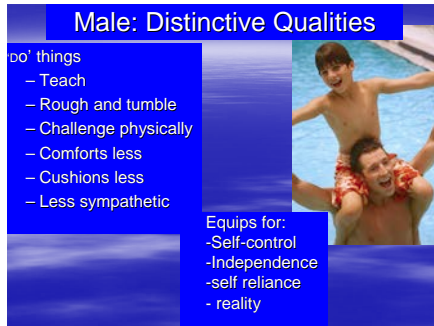
- She is better equipped to hear and identify the infant's cry, more sensitive to touch, sound, and smell.
- She can use her delicate touch to see if the baby is cold, hot, rigid, shaky or soggy—all of which can be signs of discomfort or distress.
- She can also detect fainter odors than men and identify more accurately what she smells.

It can be very difficult for the mother of an infant to go out for an evening alone with her husband; she may feel like she has left a part of herself behind at home.

- There is nothing abnormal about this, she is simply responding to the neuro-chemical call of her wiring.
- It is not as hard for the father to leave his child however, and he may not understand his wife's distraction, and may even feel a little jealous.
- "Fathers simply put a hold on their parenting functions when away from their children in a way women rarely do".

- This is partly due to the way the male brain compartmentalizes, as well as the factors already described.

MK



It is when the child begins to grow up that Dad comes into his own; when the child is old enough for him to ‘do’ things with. (MK Comment) In the first few months baby eats, sleeps, pees & poops. What can a father ‘do’ with that, particularly if mom breast feeds? (I know, change the diapers! But with no neuro-chemical high, I want you to know that is done from principle!)

- Father’s interactions with the baby are about ‘doing’—
 - tweaking the nose,
 - pedaling the feet,
 - flying baby through the air. (MK comment about delivery room with Nathan)
- While the mother deals with the child–as-it- is, fathers’ relate to the child-as-it-will-be,
 - Preparing them for ocean surf by sliding them across the kitchen linoleum or horse- back riding by riding daddy’s back.
- Father’s communication with the child is primarily about teaching and doing.

- Father's presence in the home, in the child's life is important for healthy development.
- Fathers tend to rough-and-tumble more, tease more; play harder, and physically challenge the child more.
- Fathers tend to comfort them less than the mothers; and are less prone to try and cushion the child against the world.
- Research shows that this challenging and less sympathetic handling has real benefits.

Father's rough and tumble play teaches not aggression, as some have feared, but self-control. Research shows that paternal involvement in this type of play "is associated with children's skills at regulating their emotional states".

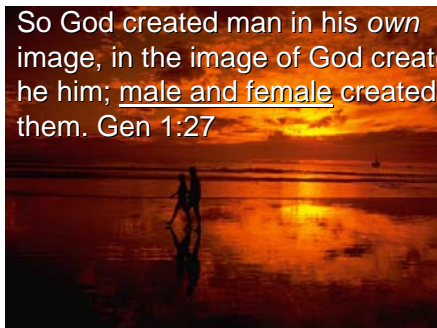
- Fathers teach preschool boys, not to bite and kick.
- They teach when "enough is enough" and when it is time to "shut it down".
- Children need to learn to handle the emotional ups and downs of life and the 'sterner virtues' that dad provides will be of benefit as the child grows older.

Science confirms God's word that men and women were designed by God to be complimentary rather than competing.

Understanding that men are strong and weak in areas where women are weak and strong is the beginning of wisdom and the beginning of a happier and more fulfilling relationship between husband and wives.



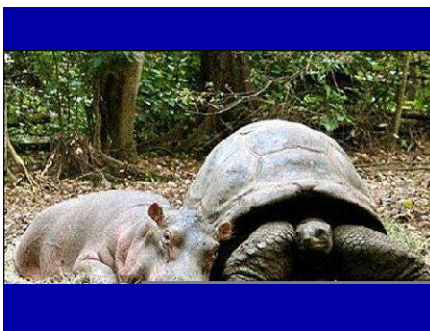
CK



God created us differently, so that we could both give **to** and **receive from** the other.

It requires both giving and receiving to be healthy.

A final illustration from the animal world of giving and receiving....



Nairobi (AFP) - A baby hippopotamus that survived the tsunami waves on the Kenyan coast has formed a strong bond with a giant male century old tortoise in an animal facility in the port city of Mombasa. The hippopotamus, nicknamed Owen and weighing about 650 pounds, was swept down Sabaki River into the Indian Ocean, and then forced back to

shore when the tsunami waves struck the Kenyan coast before the wildlife rangers rescued him.



Incredibly, the century old male tortoise seems to be very happy being a ‘mother’ After it was swept away and lost its mother, the hippo was traumatized and looked for a surrogate mother. They eat and sleep together and the hippo follows the tortoise exactly the way it followed its mother. If somebody approaches the tortoise, the hippo becomes aggressive, as if protecting its biological mother.



The hippo is less than a year old and by nature is a social creature that likes to stay with its mother for four years.



This is a real story that shows that our differences don't matter much when we need the comfort of another.



Different by Design

- Designed to Need
- Designed to Give

A photograph of a young man and woman hugging. The man is on the left, wearing a white sweater, and the woman is on the right, wearing a light blue sweater. They are both smiling and looking towards the camera. The background is dark with colorful bokeh lights, suggesting a festive or holiday setting.

“COMMUNICATION”

MK/CK

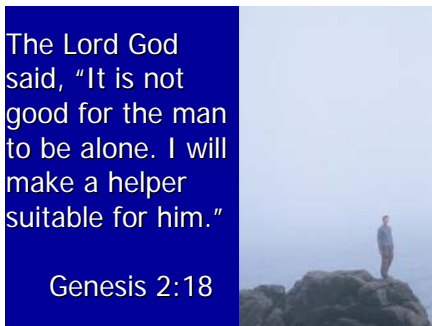
Ice Breakers: (Don't forget to collect Temperament Inventory)



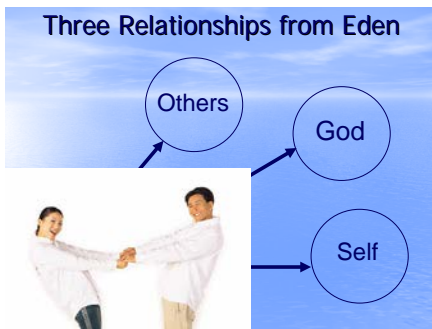
3. Did you learn anything about yourself that you're willing to share with the group from last week's assignments?

MK/CK Prayer

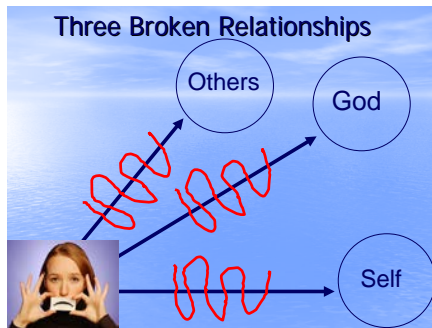
CK



Aloneness was not part of God's design for mankind. He created mankind for relationship & interaction with others. That's part of being in God's image.



In the Garden of Eden, we were created for a relationship with God, with people, and with ourselves.



MK

Unfortunately, part of the results of sin is loneliness, separation and broken relationships. Separation from God, separation from others and even separation from our true selves.



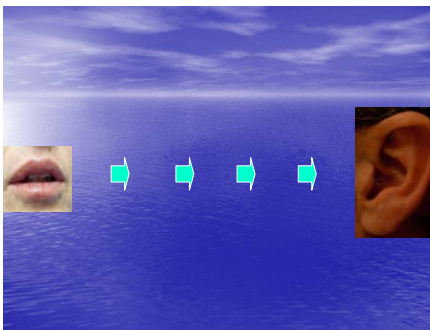
But, the purpose of the Gospel is to restore these broken relationships! So, the Gospel is not just about saving sinners out there... it is about healing our damaged relationship with people- especially the ones we are married to.

Communication

An essential part of that healing process to fulfill the Gospel is effective communication.



Communication is so basic to any relationship, especially marriage, We need to work on our skills in this area.



We often assume that if someone's lips are moving, communication is taking place. Not necessarily. It's a **TWO WAY STREET- giving & receiving of information.** But there is also a third element called **UNDERSTANDING.** We each need the other person not only to listen but to also **UNDERSTAND.**

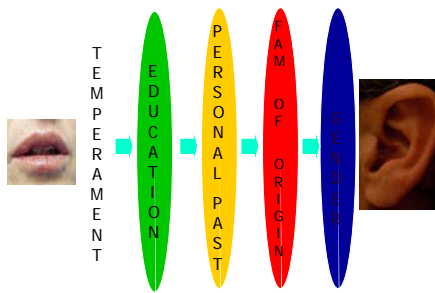


CK Illustration: Brianna

- Sub in sermon
- 6 in. Or 12 in.
- (Wondering when they were going to eat it.)

One word may have entirely different meaning to each person in the room.

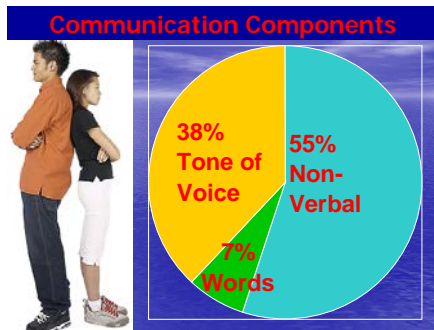
Processing thru her own filter, life experience & back ground.



MK

We all speak and hear thru many filters

- gender
- education
- personal past
- family of origin
- spiritual orientation
- self-worth
- birth order
- socioeconomic



CK Not only do we process thru our filters but there are various components of communication

“Communication Components”

EXPAND: Communicate in 3 major ways- see OH
(93% nonverbal!)

It would take Harvard & a computer to come up with this.

- We communicate in 700,000 ways beyond words.
- Ck media class: 250,000 facial expressions

Examples:

- tapping foot-twiddling thumbs-sigh
- looking around,” I’m listening”
- clearing throat
- shift in seat (describe board meeting)
- ”What’s wrong?” “NOTHING!” (Curl your toes)
- nonverbals shouting

Sometimes we hide behind the verbals.

-”I didn’t say that!”

-”I only said----”

Nonverbal communication often tells the truth about a persons true feelings.

“Actions often speak louder than words.”



MK

“LEVELS OF COMMUNICATION”

Non-verbals thru all levels of communication but especially pronounced in the deeper levels.

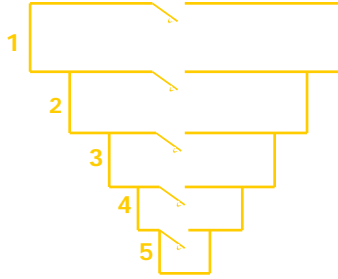
-The trouble comes when our verbal & non-verbals don’t match.

1. “How’s the weather up there?” “Hi! How ya doing?” “Fine.” (fib)
2. “Been cold & rainy, here.” “Joe is going to be gone this week-end.”
3. “I really think that we should put black plastic down in the flower bed. It will help to keep out the weeds.” “Clinton should have been impeached.”

Many couples don’t get past level 3.

4. (Both words & nonverbals) Illustrate:”How are you?”
“Fine”(sigh) Intended to portray a definite feeling.
5. Dialog: Tying on bike rack? Mk red wind breaker.
(Listen & report nonverbals)

#5 is the area of self disclosure & where we become naked & unashamed- which is God’s ideal spoken of in Gen. 2:25.



Imagine a house with 5 rooms...

MK/CK “5 Rooms” (Discuss)

What are some of the BARRIERS to Beginning deep communication?

(Discuss with group)

-Lack of time (takes time)

(Peeling off layers of an artichoke to reach the very core.)

Dialog: Using date to prep for CFM?

-Lack of privacy (restaurant, parsonage, kids)

-Lack of trust (Takes time to regain after it has been lost.)

-don't feel safe (Self disclosure used against or reminded of.)

-fear of rejection

-I'm all I've got

-feelings of shame, humiliation

-You may not like me when you see who I really am.

-lack of honesty

(Dialog: I put up walls when I don't want to be honest.)

-Hard to be honest if I don't feel safe.

-day to day chores

-denial

-fear of response

3 Parts to an "I" message:



1. A statement of how the unacceptable behavior makes you feel.
2. A non-blameful description of your mate's behavior.
3. State the effect of the behavior on you.

CK Here are some helpful tools for Meaningful Communication:

“I” Message: read thru

-own my own feelings(take responsibility)

-no attack of blame (We’ll use all of our energy defending self)

“You always” “You never” “You make me so mad”



“I feel angry when you whistle for me because I feel disrespected.”

MK Another tool is called the “Floor”

(See Speaker/Listener Technique on the internet)

The Speaker/Listener Technique slows the conversation down so that we can really hear each other. At this point we are not trying to solve the issue or “fix” the problem- but we are trying to thoroughly understand the other. Once we understand, the problem sometimes ceases to exist or can be solved easily.

CK

This is sometimes called “Feedback” Did the listener get the message that was sent?

-Dialog? Cell phone (early on)

-worry about Dr. (push vs. encouraging)

We need a couple to volunteer to stack blocks for us. 2 identical sets, sit on the floor facing away from each other. See if one can duplicate what the other builds.



(First couple: No feedback- debrief with couple and group)

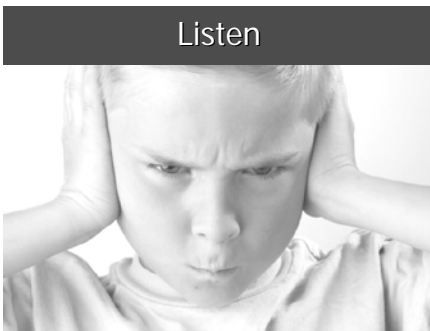
(2nd couple: Confirms message- debrief with couple and group)

MK

For the next few minutes, we're going to look at M/F communication styles.



80% - 20% (Best friend / husband opposite)
Cheryl & I typical- no right or wrong



LISTEN



CK Female

- expressive when they listen
 - O's, mmmmm, really, wow
 - expressive body language (nodding, shaking head)
- Problem
 - He thinks that she is agreeing
 - She is saying, "I hear you." "I'm listening."



MK Male

- listens in silence "The great stone face"
- very little verbal or body language response
- Problem
 - She thinks he doesn't care or not listening
 - no response, (unnerving)
 - He does, he's just wired differently



TALKING

Little girls play

- play house, talk to dolls, each other

Little boys play

- play with trucks
- noises (vroom!, Urch! Crash!)
- cow boys & Indians



[VISUAL: 2 BOTTLES]

CK Female

- Women use 3x's the # of words per day than men
- 30,000
- more flowery speech patterns (& gestures)
- appear to over state

MK Male

- Men use roughly 1/3 the # of words than women
- She wonders why he won't talk
- nothing more to give/say cup of words empty
- He has low key speech patterns (& gestures)
- appears non-caring but not usually the case...
- (Listens to her flowery speeches with few words or in silence)

STUDY:

- done on little boys/girls in a room- video taped
- girls: talked eye to eye
- boys: side ways / side by side



CK Female

Rapport talk

- Connects by talking & (when emotionally connected I reach out & touch)
- chatting over lunch
- trouble talk to connect
- doesn't matter the subject
- Visits-mk wants me there



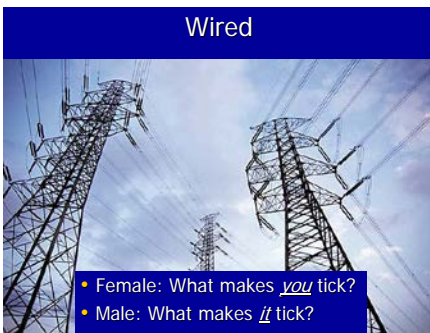
MK Male

Report talk

- talk about what he is doing
- Connects by doing (Connect by touch-doing)
- fishing, hunting
- Visits-man up showing mk what he has done
- boys- backpacking etc. (Nathan)

CK M/F **(DIALOG?)** Women tries to connect by trouble talk he thinks

- If you talk about it
- it must be a crisis
- fix it



Female

- feelings/relationships (wired for relationship)
- What makes you tick? {girls on a trip in a car- music, relationships}

MK Male

- doing/accomplishing {Guys talking about building climbing wall}
- what makes it tick? {Ben buying car}



SOCIAL CONDITIONING

CK Female

- encouraged to share feelings/ talk
- falls, "Are you hurt?" Kiss

MK Male

- taught to suppress
- "Big boys don't cry."(Come on buck O!)
- "Get up! Your not hurt!"
- wimp, woos (below the belt)



We spoke of this last week.



CK Female

- Female brain has more connectors between the 2 hemispheres.
- (Super hi-way)

- designed for relationships
- right brain oriented
 - communicates feelings/emotions
 - longs for richer message from him
 - Wants to know how he feels about things.
 - He probably doesn't know & doesn't want to know
 - introspective



MK Male

- Male brain has relatively fewer connectors.
- (one way street)
 - designed for problem solving
 - left brain oriented
 - communicates facts
 - reason oriented
 - logical, linear
 - bored by introspection
 - mk- "I can't take to much. Small doses."
 - Hard work!
 - Entering into my world. (Give him credit!)

-BRAIN DIFFERENCES: Not about "intelligence" but the way we process



AWARENESS

CK Female

- expanded awareness (see everything & the goal)
- like a floodlight

MK Male

- focused awareness
 - oblivious to other things
- like a spotlight (see nothing but the goal)

Illustration

CK Female Shopping

- Touching/looking/talking (browse/ graze)
- Wears him out

MK Male Shopping

- In/out (Tag it/ bag it/ drag it)

How does EXPANDED/FOCUSED awareness affect communication?

CK Female

- often speaks to find her point
- talking helps me organize my thoughts. Take it out & look at it.
 - sort out feelings
 - that's why we need to trouble talk

MK Male

- doesn't generally speak until he is ready to make a point
- trouble talk means something needs fixing!

MK/CK

GROUP ACTIVITY !

Men/Women in 2 groups: (1 sheet of paper per group)

Brain storm: (Make a list)

Imagine spending the day together with just the guys/gals

- What sounds like a good day?
- What would it look like?
- At the end of the day, "What a cool day. Satisfying."

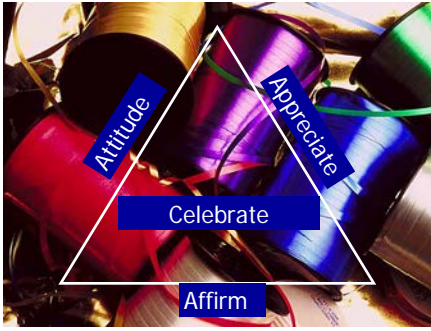
List: (List ideas)

Report: (Report to the whole group)

Notice how different we are...

OK So What!

How will we act differently with all of this knowledge?



Look across:

CHOOSE to Change our:

- ATTITUDE:** -View each other thru heaven's glasses
 -Value our differences because they are God given.
 -See our differences as complimentary rather than competitive

CHOOSE to APPRECIATE:

- Women:** -Recognize & appreciate that he connects by doing and says I love you by doing.
 -Remember, "Actions speak louder than words."
 -This week-end is a stretch! An act of love!

 -Choose to DO things that he would appreciate.
 (Mk likes me to work with or watch him do projects. Just be there)

- Men:** -Recognize & appreciate her ideas & verbal abilities
 -Stretch by choosing to speak rather than grunt.
 -Choose to value her verbal communication
 -Learn to speak in language that is meaningful to her.

CHOOSE to AFFIRM:

- Women:** -Affirm his attempts to communicate feelings
 (Don't mock his attempts at vulnerability. Shut down & clam up)
 -understand that it is hard work
 -we ask him everyday to enter our world where we are comfortable.
 -give him credit

- Men:** -Affirm her attempts to connect by doing things you enjoy.
 -She is entering your world because she loves you.
 -give her credit

Rather than being frustrated by our differences, see them as complimentary.

CHOOSE to CELEBRATE our God given differences that make us whole.
Celebrate our differences

{ Complimentary } -Differences enrich & round us out

MK/CK PRAYER

ASSIGNMENTS

APPENDIX E

SAMPLE ASSIGNMENT FOR COUPLE DISCUSSION

CHANGING NEGATIVE PATTERNS

1. In a few words, describe a negative relational dance that you sometimes get into with your spouse.
2. List 3 choices that you personally can make that could establish a new dance step.
3. Pick one of the four negative relationship patterns that you would like to see personal improvement & growth. _____.
(Escalation, Invalidation, Negative-Interpretation, Stonewalling)
4. What have you learned in the magnetic seminar or reading assignments that will help your choice to grow in that area?
5. What is one choice that you would be willing to make in order to help you maintain your connection with Jesus Christ?

SAMPLE COUPLE DISCUSSION ASSIGNMENT: THE WAY IT WAS...

Early in life we develop expectations about various roles and responsibilities. Most are learned but many are influenced by genetics. Since each relationship is unique, what “works” for each couple will vary. Answer the following questions to get a base-line for where you began your relationship.

During the first 18 years of your life, who usually did the following household duties?

Chore or Activity	Father	Mother	Children	Other
1. Meal Preparation				
2. Meal Cleanup				
3. Cleaning the Car				
4. Lawn Mowing				
5. Gardening or Other Yard Work				
6. Laundry				
7. Family Worship				
8. Car Maintenance				
9. Splitting Wood				
10. General Household Cleaning				
11. General Childcare				
12. Sick Childcare				
13. Providing Household Income				
14. Garbage to Dump				
15. General Home Maintenance				
16. Grocery Shopping				
17. Drive Child to school, games, work				
18. Farming Style Chores				
19. Recreation				
20. Driving for Family Trips				
21. Locking the Doors at Night				
22. Major House Renovation				
23. Paying Bills				
24. Automobile Purchase				
25. Major Tool and Appliance Shopping				

SAMPLE COUPLE DISCUSSION ASSIGNMENT: THE WAY IT IS...

The “way it was” in our home of origin, generally impacts the way we do things currently.

Who usually does the following household duties now?

Chore or Activity	Father	Mother	Children	Other
1. Meal Preparation				
2. Meal Cleanup				
3. Cleaning the Car				
4. Lawn Mowing				
5. Gardening or Other Yard Work				
6. Laundry				
7. Family Worship				
8. Car Maintenance				
9. Splitting Wood				
10. General Household Cleaning				
11. General Childcare				
12. Sick Childcare				
13. Providing Household Income				
14. Garbage to Dump				
15. General Home Maintenance				
16. Grocery Shopping				
17. Drive Child to school, games, work				
18. Farming Style Chores				
19. Recreation				
20. Driving for Family Trips				
21. Locking the Doors at Night				
22. Major House Renovation				
23. Paying Bills				
24. Automobile Purchase				
25. Major Tool and Appliance Shopping				

SAMPLE SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY: CREATING NEW DANCES STEPS

- Old Dance “#1”:
He: Hurry and make my lunch!
She: Make it yourself
He: I work to pay for the food; the least you can do is fix it!
She: Like, taking care of the kids isn't work!?
- New Dance #1a
He: Hurry and make my lunch!
She:
He: I work to pay for the food; the least you can do is fix it!
She:
- New Dance #1a
He: Hurry and make my lunch!
She: Make it yourself
He:
She:
- Old Dance “2”:
She: Did you get the rent paid on time?
He: That's your job
She: You were supposed to do it.
He: No, you were
She: Did you get it done?
He: No, and I'm not going to...
She: (Muttering) Great, Just great...
- New Dance #2a
She: Did you get the rent paid on time?
He:
She: You were supposed to do it.
He:
She:
- New Dance #2b
She: Did you get the rent paid on time?
He: That's your job
She:
He:
- Old Dance “3”:
She: (in tears). My boss did a hatchet job on the evaluation I turned in.
He: I don't think he was hard on you. I'd be happy for one that good.
She: It really upset me!
He: You're just overreacting forget it.
- New Dance #3a
She: (in tears). My boss did a hatchet job on the evaluation I turned in.
He:
She: It really upset me!
He:
- New Dance #3b
She: (in tears). My boss did a hatchet job on the evaluation I turned in.
He: I don't think he was hard on you. I'd be happy for one that good.
She: It really upset me!
He:

IDEAS FOR SAVING MONEY

- Reduce eating out
- Make lunches
- Buy in bulk
- Take fewer joy rides
- Play board games or other fun things at home
- Nature walks
- Reduce temperature in house
- Download movies
- Borrow books, magazines, movies from library
- Share magazines
- Exchange books
- Swap child care
- Use hand me down clothing (Especially for small children)
- Flea market/ garage sales
- Thrift shops / goodwill
- Shop at Community Service
- Barter labor
- Don't buy consumer goods
- Lower expectations
- Garden
- Sales
- Grocery shop on a full stomach
- Increase insulation in home
- Can, freeze, dry own food
- Sew own cloths
- Mend cloths
- Find alternative food sources
- Do own repairs
- Team vacation (go with other couples)
- House swap for vacation
- Walking versus driving
- Diet/ Exercise (cut health care costs)
- Change/rotate own tires
- Change own oil
- Use coupons
- Do own manicure / pedicure
- Do own hair color
- Wear sweater rather than increase heat
- Wife or relative cut hair
- Dollar Store
- Send kids to Community College
- Make home made cards / gifts
- Sell stuff on e-bay
- Hang wet cloths outside rather than use dryer

- Take Shorter showers
- Shop at Wal-Mart
- Glean: apples, potatoes
- Share use of big ticket items
- Car pool
- Rent large tools
- Wear it out
- Improvise
- Do without
- Choose low cost hobby
- Use long distance calling card
- Dream up inexpensive dates

SAMPLE COUPLE DEVOTIONAL READING ASSIGNMENT

I Corinthians 13: 4-7

Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous, love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth.

New American Standard Bible

Love is patient and kind; it is not jealous or conceited or proud; love is not ill-mannered or selfish or irritable; love does not keep a record of wrongs; love is not happy with evil but is happy with the truth. Love never gives up; and its faith, hope, and patience never fail.

Today's English Version

Love is kind and patient, never jealous, boastful, proud, or rude. Love isn't selfish or quick tempered. It doesn't keep a record of wrongs that others do. Love rejoices in the truth, but not in evil. Love is always supportive, loyal, hopeful, and trusting. Love never fails.

Contemporary English Version

Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Revised Standard Version

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices in the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

New International Version

Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

New King James Version

Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

King James Version

Love is always patient and kind; it is never jealous; love is never boastful or conceited; it is never rude or selfish; it does not take offense, and is not resentful. Love takes no pleasure in other people's sins but delights in the truth; it is always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope, and to endure whatever comes. Love does not come to an end.

The Jerusalem Bible

Love endures long and is kind; love is not jealous; love is not out for display; it is not conceited or unmannerly it is neither self-seeking nor irritable, nor does it take account of a wrong that is suffered. It takes no pleasure in injustice but sides happily with truth. It bears everything in silence, has unquenchable faith, hopes under all circumstances, endures without limit.

Modern Language

Love never gives up. Love cares more for others than for self. Love doesn't want what it doesn't have. Love doesn't strut. Doesn't have a swelled head. Doesn't force itself on others. Isn't always "me first," Doesn't fly off the handle, Doesn't keep score of the sins of others, Doesn't revel when others grovel. Takes pleasure in the flowering of truth, Puts up with anything, Trusts God always, Always looks for the best, Never looks back, But keeps going to the end.

The Message

Love is very patient and kind, never jealous or envious, never boastful or proud, never haughty or selfish or rude. Love does not demand its own way. It is not irritable or grouchy. It does not hold grudges and will hardly even notice when others do it wrong. It is never glad about injustice, but rejoices whenever truth wins out. If you love someone you will be loyal to him not matter what the cost. You will always believe in him always expect the best of him, and always stand your ground in defending him.

The Living Bible

This love of which I speak is slow to lose patience—it looks for a way of being constructive. It is not possessive: it is neither anxious to impress nor does it cherish inflated ideas of its own importance. Love has good manners and does not pursue selfish advantage. It is not touchy. It does not keep account of evil or gloat over the wickedness of other people. On the contrary, it shares the joy of those who live by the truth. Love knows no limit to its endurance, no end to its trust, no fading of its hope; it can outlast anything. Love never fails.

J. B. Phillips, Revised Edition

Love endures long and is patient and kind; love never is envious nor boils over with jealousy; is not boastful or vainglorious, does not display itself haughtily. It is not conceited—arrogant and inflated with pride; it is not rude (unmannerly), and does not act unbecomingly. Love [God's love in us] does not insist on its own rights or its own way, for it is not self-seeking; it is not touchy or fretful or resentful; it takes not account of the evil done to it—pays not attention to a suffered wrong. It does not rejoice at injustice and unrighteousness, but rejoices when right and truth prevail. Love bears up under anything and everything that comes, is ever ready to believe the best of every person, its hopes are fadeless under all circumstances and it endures everything [without weakening]

The Amplified Bible

APPENDIX F

SAMPLE OUTSIDE READING RESOURCE

Parenting (and “Grandparenting”) without Provoking

“Parenting without provoking” explores principles that encourage growth in healthy parenting and reduces provoking. This paper will examine many ways that we may be provoking our children to anger- even if it is inadvertently doing so.

Two verses in the New Testament provide a succinct but powerful method to parent our children successfully. Many of the issues that we struggle with regarding being effective parents, are addressed in these verses. We will explore some of their implications in this paper on “Parenting without Provoking”.

The first text is Ephesians 6:4. The KJV says it this way: “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord”. The NIV carries a slightly different flavor by saying: “Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord”. The Living Bible is also helpful: “And now a word to you parents. Don’t keep on scolding and nagging your children, making them angry and resentful. Rather, bring them up with the loving discipline the Lord himself approves, with suggestions and godly advice”.

The second text is found in Colossians 3:21. Again in three different versions it says: “Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged”. “Father’s do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged”. And, “Fathers, don’t scold your children so much that they become discouraged and quit trying”.

The Bible is challenging us as parents to not provoke, exasperate, scold and nag our children. When we as parents exhibit these attitudes, words or actions, they tend to anger, discourage and embitter our children. These attitudes, words and actions pop out in the feeling of the moment but they end up creating the opposite affect in our children then what we really want. This can set up an unhealthy cycle that is not so different then what happens between children as they interact with one another. Children tend to use many bad practices in order to survive or even to try and get the upper hand among their peers or in their family. These methods of survival usually include one or more of what could be called big “C’s” of conflict: Comparing, Controlling, Castigating and Chiding.

“Comparing” can be as simple as “my dad is stronger than your dad”.

“Controlling” manifests itself in bullying and domineering as well as in other more subtle ways. “Castigating” are ‘put-downs’ that can degenerate into an all out attack that can question anything from a person’s birth origins to their mental capacity. “Chiding” is the attitude of egging the other guy on in order to get him to fall apart and show his weakness.

The temptation is almost overpowering to resort to the things we learned as children. When the battle gets thick- even though we are presently adults and lo and behold, we are now the parent, we can oh so quickly fall into using one or more of these “C’s” of conflict! Why? First, we typically parent the way we were parented- and none of us had perfect parents. Second, we too easily drop into child mode when we get into a tough situation. We bite before we are bitten. We try to get on top of the situation before the other person does, however, that other person is now our child! In the process, we

can end up provoking our child, either mildly or dramatically. A glaring and painful example of a parent in child mode is the story of the way Tom Sanford was parented.

Tom was two years old when his father lashed him to a tree with a chain and a dog collar fastened around his neck. Somehow he had wandered out of the yard and was now being accused by his father of trying to run away from home. Later in life, Tom recalled that, the experience was the first of many times he remembered being told by his father that he hated his 'guts'. Tom grew up under the abusive hand of a father who used rage to manipulate and control his children. Tom regularly went to school with red eyes and swollen lips from beatings at home. And worse than the beatings was the verbal and emotional abuse. Over and over he was told that he was "worthless", a "dummy" and a "pantywaist". (Wounded Healer- Tom Sanford Story)

Ephesians 6:4 admonishes us as fathers not to provoke our children to anger. We no doubt are a bit horrified at a story like this and would probably all agree that Tom's father failed miserably at the task outlined in the Bible. But what about less obvious ways we can provoke our children? Many times we may not even be aware of things we do that create anger in our children. For example, I provoked my child to anger by being too timid to discuss healthy sexuality and failing to be vulnerable with my own journey to manhood. How do I know it provoked him to anger? He told me after he became an adult. Rather than parent him in this area, I left him to flounder, to try and figure things out on his own! I parented the same way that I had been parented. But by God's grace I am choosing to learn new parenting patterns.

The stories in the Bible demonstrate that those parents of long ago, were very human. They needed God's grace and forgiveness just as we do today. They sometimes provoked their children to anger, even with the best of intentions.

Let's take a look at the story of David and Absalom to see if we can find a few things that might have gone wrong in the parenting process. We want to especially notice possible reasons how David's children were provoked. We'll pick up the story in 2 Samuel 13 just after Amnon, one of David's sons forced his half sister Tamar who also happened to be Absalom's full sister. Vs. 21: "But when king David heard of all these things, he was very wroth". Was it reasonable for David to be angry? It would seem so. One of his boys had just done an awful thing to his sister. What did David do with his anger? It appears that David did nothing. Two years later, Absalom took things into his own hands by setting up a get together with all the sons of David. Notice Vs. 23-27.

"And it came to pass after two full years, that Absalom had sheepshearers in Baalhazor, which is beside Ephraim: and Absalom invited all the king's sons". Absalom proceeded to ask his father David, if all his brothers could go with him to a big family get-together and party. David said he didn't want to go but at Absalom's insistence, he allowed all of his sons to go- even Amnon, although that took even more begging on Absalom's part. Of course, it was just a plot to reap revenge on Amnon. Absalom had him killed and then fled for fear of David. Vs. 37: "But Absalom fled, and went to Talmai, the son of Ammihud king of Geshur. And David mourned for his son every day. So Absalom fled, and went to Geshur, and was there three years".

David loved his children but he seemed impotent to keep his sons disciplined, Absalom went on to attempt a coup. David almost lost his life at the hand of this spoiled

son. But why? What went wrong? David had been such a spiritual and dynamic leader. Why was there such dysfunction in his family and anger in Absalom?

Spend some time together with your family with the worksheet- “How David Provoked Absalom” to explore this further.

Some of things we’ve learned so far that provoke anger in our children are:

- Anger begets anger
- Overindulging a child (no backbone)
- Lack of Discipline
- Parent in “child mode”
- Failure to protect...
- Scolding, Nagging, Exasperating
- Keeping silent when we should speak

If you are like most parents, you’ve done most or all of these things in your parenting but there is hope because God’s grace is for us in spite of ourselves. God will teach us a better way if we will seek to learn at His feet. He works mightily in His church and the smallest unit of that church is the church in the family. His promise to us is: “Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen”.

Ephesians 3:20 & 21.

There are many parenting myths that get passed around. A myth is something that we believe but it is not true. Here are just a few of these “untrue” ideas:

1. Parenting is easy

2. We will parent differently than our parents did
3. Only bad parents provoke their children
4. Each child should be parented the same
5. Parents shouldn't confess wrongs to their children
6. Praise and Affirmation will spoil our children
7. Adults speak, kids listen
8. Parents fighting in front of the children is good
9. All parental fights should be settled out of the children's hearing
10. Telling the children right and wrong is more important than living it
11. Children usually don't value their parent's opinion
12. Being a buddy to our children is the best parenting style
13. Divorce has little impact on older children
14. Admitting faults as a parent generally lowers child's respect for them
15. Children usually express gratitude for parental sacrifices made for them
16. Discipline is the same as punishment
17. Children always resent boundaries
18. The quality of parent's relationship has little impact on effective parenting
19. The parent is always right
20. Kids want the possessions we give them more than they want us.

How many of the myths that are listed here have implications for provoking our children? Most and possibly all of them! Part of the secret to effective parenting is challenging and rejecting those myths that are actually contrary to the values and principles that God gives to us. Social science and child psychology are extremely helpful in understanding how families interact and what makes children tick. We would do well to study these areas. Most parenting suggestions made by experts in these areas are very helpful. However, any practice that would contradict what the God, the creator of children says should be rejected.

The first human relationship that God established was the one between husband and wife. Children, at least in God's design, are born as the visible evidence of the expression of that love that takes place between them. Ideally it is a love that is self-less, sacrificial, and self-giving.

Returning to our text from Ephesians 6:4: “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord”. The word “nurture” implies “training and education”. It also means discipline that includes appropriate love-based punishment. That discipline, however, is not so much about obtaining correct actions as it is to teach the child to *Self*-discipline. It is about character development more than behavior. It comes from the self-giving attitude of the parents who are not so concerned about themselves, but rather what is best for each other and the child- especially in the long term. Self-giving. Self-sacrificing. Preferring the other first. Romans 12:10 says: “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another”.

The best modeling of this self-giving love is in what the child sees going on between mom and dad. The child is part of both parents. Early on in particular, the parents stand in the place of God to the child. When there is division, conflict and self-serving between mom and dad, it is confusing. It tears the child’s personhood apart. It provokes the child to anger. It also creates a twisted view of God and of love. Nurturing and admonishing becomes many times more difficult for parents who are at odds with one another. Many of the challenges of parenting would be resolved if couples spent time and energy maintaining and growing their marriage!

It is interesting that the counsel to “not provoke” our children comes on the tail end of a passage that begins by telling us to submit to each other. Ephesians 5:21 “Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God”. Mutual submission is at the core of love and is especially needed in a sinful, self-centered world. Between

“submitting” in 5:21 “and “not provoking” in 6:4, moms and dads are admonished to love, give and submit to each other as Christ loved, submitted and gave.

Favoritism can easily provoke. The Bible story of Jacob and Esau is a good example of that error of judgment by parents. It is interesting and significant that Jacob parented in the same way that he was parented, but it worked no better with his children. Why do you think we have such a hard time not repeating our parents’ mistakes, even if we recognize what they are?

Spend some time together with your family with the worksheet- “Provoking in the Jacob story” to explore this further.

Denying our faults as parents, provokes our children. It is hard to admit our faults and errors to each other, even as adults, but it seems especially difficult to admit them to our children. After all, we are supposed to have it all together. We are the authority. We are 20 or 30 years more experienced than they are. They must respect me and they won’t if they know who I am. And besides, if we stand in the place of God, we might give the wrong picture of God, because he certainly never makes a mistake!

There are some serious flaws in the reasoning that says we shouldn’t admit our faults. First, our children are not blind to our faults. To admit to them what they already can see, is only to be honest and encourage them to be honest as well. Second, they will tend to respect us more, not less, when we are humble and forthright about our own mistakes. Third, since we do stand in the place of God, it is critical that we share with our children when we have given an inaccurate picture of Him. Fourth, God himself tells us it is appropriate to do so. James 5:16 says: Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man

availeth much. Our children are included in the “one another” of this verse. Fifth, to deny our faults to our children is another way to provoke them to anger. It effectively says one thing and lives another. Hypocrisy, almost as much as anything angers our children and it can easily lead them to reject our God.

Showing a lack of respect to a child may seem like a small thing but in reality, this can easily provoke children to anger. My wife and I allowed our boys many freedoms because we had established mutual trust. During their high school years when they were home for the summer, we asked them to always call and let us know if they were going to be late coming home- just so we wouldn't worry. One summer evening, my wife and I came home to face two boys who were angry with us because we hadn't called them to let them know we were going to be much later than expected. We were the parent, why should we report home to our children? It's a matter of respect. We should show to our children the same respect that we expect from them.

Showing respect means we treat our children as fully human. There was a teacher who was not particularly popular during my academy years. Lack of respect may be the reason. I remember a comment he made that implied that adults were “people” but the students were just “kids”. He wasn't joking either. Children may be young but they are fully as valuable and deserving of our respect as any other person. They are equal heirs of the kingdom and they deserve to be carefully listened too.

James 2:1-4 says: My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a

good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?

Do you think this verse has an application to our children? In what ways? Are there ways in which the “respect” for a parent is different than the “respect” for the child? It is probably well to remember that *God* has no “grandchildren”, only sons and daughters.

Another way in which parents can provoke their children is either by abdicating their role as parent, or worse, by expecting the child to parent them. In the first case, they may wish so much to be a “friend” of their child that they refuse to draw boundaries or set limits. They want to be accepted as one of the gang. This may work well on a particular day, but over the long haul it creates anger and uncertainty in the child. In the second case, the parent has not grown up in some area of their life. For instance, dad can get angry and shout and stomp but the son must never raise his voice. Without saying so, the parent is expecting the child to be mature in that area while they can still throw a fit.

I Corinthians 13:11 speaks clearly to us as parents when it says: When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

The Bible instructs us as parents to “Not Provoke” our children to anger. We have looked at ways that we can provoke our children- many times ignorantly. Like other counsel from God, we will not bat “1,000”. We will make mistakes because of our own background, because we have a sinful nature, and because we are parenting children who also have a sinful nature and who push our skills and patience to the edge or even beyond the edge! However, the more we learn, the more we practice what we learn, and

most of all, the more we plead for God's love and God's wisdom, the more effective we become. Nobody said parenting would be easy but the rewards for the effort are best expressed in the words of Christ when He says to parents: Well done good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of the Lord.

How David provoked Absalom

1. List two or three things that you see in the story of Absalom from 2 Samuel 13:21-39 that might provoke anger in Absalom toward his father.

2. The following took place in David's family after his sin with Bathsheba. Notice the commentary on this in PP 723-31:

There was a great change in David himself. He was broken in spirit by the consciousness of his sin and its far-reaching results. He felt humbled in the eyes of his subjects. His influence was weakened. His authority in his own household, his claim to respect and obedience from his sons, was weakened. A sense of his guilt kept him silent when he should have condemned sin; it made his arm feeble to execute justice in his house. His evil example exerted its influence upon his sons, and God would not interpose to prevent the result. He would permit things to take their natural course, and thus David was severely chastised.

The shameful crime of Amnon, the first-born, was permitted by David to pass unpunished and unrebuked. The law pronounced death upon the adulterer, and the unnatural crime of Amnon made him doubly guilty. But David, self-condemned for his own sin, failed to bring the offender to justice. For two full years Absalom, the natural protector of the sister so foully wronged, concealed his purpose of revenge, but only to strike more surely at the last. At a feast of the king's sons the drunken, incestuous Amnon was slain by his brother's command.

Like other sons of David, Amnon had been left to selfish indulgence. He had sought to gratify every thought of his heart, regardless of the requirements of God.

3. Also notice a short statement regarding the attempted coup by Absalom.

Yet the king, blinded by affection for his son, suspected nothing.

4. List possible additional ways that David provoked Absalom and his other children to anger from the above paragraphs.

Provoking in the Jacob story

1. Read the following verses, list ways you see the parents provoking the children.

Gen. 25: 28: And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob.

Gen. 27:6-13: And Rebekah spake unto Jacob her son, saying, Behold, I heard thy father speak unto Esau thy brother, saying, Bring me venison, and make me savoury meat, that I may eat, and bless thee before the LORD before my death. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to that which I command thee. Go now to the flock, and fetch me from thence two good kids of the goats; and I will make them savoury meat for thy father, such as he loveth: And thou shalt bring it to thy father, that he may eat, and that he may bless thee before his death. And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man: My father peradventure will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver; and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing. And his mother said unto him, Upon me be thy curse, my son: only obey my voice, and go fetch me them.

2. How did Jacob continue the problem of provoking in his children?

Gen. 37:4-5: And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him. And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more.

Gen. 37:20: Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams.

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APPENDIX G

SAMPLE ICEBREAKERS

SAMPLE ICEBREAKER: COMMUNICATION

Hu's On First

by James Sherman

We take you now to the Oval Office...

Bush: Condi, nice to see you. What`s happening?

Rice: Sir, I have the report here about the new leader of China.

Bush: Great, lay it on me.

Rice: Hu is the new leader of China.

Bush: That`s what I want to know.

Rice: That`s what I am telling you.

Bush: That`s what I am asking you. Who is the new leader of China?

Rice: Yes.

Bush: I mean the fellow`s name.

Rice: Hu.

Bush: The guy in China.

Rice: Hu.

Bush: The new leader of China.

Rice: Hu.

Bush: The Chinaman!

Rice: Hu is leading China.

Bush: Now whaddya asking me for?

Rice: I'm telling you, Hu is leading China.

Bush: Well, I'm asking you. Who is leading China?

Rice: That's the man's name.

Bush: That's who's name?

Rice: Yes.

Bush: Will you or will you not tell me the name of the new leader of China?

Rice: Yes Sir.

Bush: Yasser? Yasser Arafat is in China? I thought he was in the Middle East.

Rice: That's correct.

Bush: Then who is in China?

Rice: Yes Sir.

Bush: Yasser?

Rice: No Sir.

Bush: Look, Condi. I need to know the name of the new leader of China. Get me the Secretary General of the U.N. on the Phone.

Rice: Kofi?

Bush: No, thanks.

Rice: You want Kofi?

Bush: No.

Rice: You don't want Kofi?

Bush: No. But now that you mention it. I could use a glass of milk. And then get me the U.N.!

Rice: Yes Sir.

Bush: Not Yasser! The guy at the U.N.!

Rice: Kofi?

Bush: Milk! Will you please make the call?

Rice: And call who?

Bush: Who is the guy at the U.N.?

Rice: Hu is the guy in China!

Bush: Will you stay out of China!

Rice: Yes Sir.

Bush: And stay out of the Middle East!!! Just get me the guy at the U.N.!

Rice: Kofi?

Bush: All right! With cream and two sugars. Now get on the phone.

(Condoleezza Rice picks up the phone)

Rice: Rice, here.

Bush: Rice? Good idea. And a couple of egg rolls, too. Maybe we should send some to the guy in China. And in the Middle East.

Related Links:

- [Who's on First](#) - the Original starring Abbott & Costello

SAMPLE ICEBREAKER: THE SLEIGH RIDE

A boy, a girl and a custard pie make an awful good combination. If it hadn't been for me and my sled, and Aunt Phoebe starting over to the boarding house to carry the professor a custard pie, it never would have happened.

Aunt Phoebe's Paw's sister, and she ain't married and pa says she's been 29 years old for the last 10 years. And the professor ain't married either, and folks says he just can't get up spunk enough to ask anybody.

But I guess aunt Phoebe kept hoping her custard pies would encourage him and I hope so too cause she lives with us. And she's got 2 tempers, one for company and one for every day.

And she's all the time tellin ma "why in the world don't you make that boy, Biff, do something instead of throwin away his time in play."

"Why don't you make him read his Christmas "LIFE OF GEORGE WASHINGTON" or anything, keep him from sleddin down that hill all the time?"

Say I've got a dandy double ripper sled and our house is right to the top of the hill.

Talk about greased lightning. Phew! You should see the way that sled scoots down there. It's just as dangerous as a locomotive and I've rigged up a cradle cow catcher to keep from killin folks.

And last week was bright moon nights and slidin outta sight. Of course there was drawbacks, cause pa and ma had gone away and they'd left Aunt Phoebe home to run things and believe me!!! She sure tried to run em.

You know what she did? She sent me upstairs every night with the life of George Washington, to learn of his noble example before I went to bed.

But I never told her that I slipped out of the window and went slidin instead; cause I didn't want to hurt her feelings.

But the other night after I had slid down that hill 50 times, AND HAD hauled my sled up ready for the 51st; I heard a conniption fit-ball, saying...

"Stop! You run right young rascal! Stop! I'll have you arrested!"

And when I turned around there was Aunt Phoebe a-glarin at me with a shawl over her head and a custard pie in the flat of her hand she was carryin for the professor.

"What are you doing with my nephew's sled?"

She said, "what-why, Biff Perkins is that you?"

And a course I said yes because what was the use of my denyin it.

"You march yourself to that house right this minute, the idea of you sneakin out here behindt of me.

When you know if there's one thing in this world I disapprove of it's just sliding down hill. Just wait till your father comes home young man, see if I don't

"Aunt Phoebe" I said "your shoe's untied....."

Aunt Phoebe your shoes untied...
AUNT PHOEBE YOUR SHOES UNTIED.”

“Dear me so tis” says she, placing the custard pie carefully down into the cradle cow catcher and sitting down on the sled.
“But all the shoes in this world ain’t gonna make me forget your conduct. As for your deceiving...
O my I can’t bend.
Biff Perkins tie that string.”

And of course I had to let go of the rope to do it and maybe I sorta stumbled over the sled too, cause you know a big growin boy is awful awkward with his feet.
Anyhow, the next thing I knew that double ripper had begun to move.

“Biff Perkins” said Aunt Phoebe, sitting up as straight as a stone image, “stop this sled at once!”

But I didn’t have a hold of the rope and the next minute it shot over a little bump and jerked up.

She yelled, “BIFF PERKIIINNNS!”

And I was scared because I thought sure Aunt Phoebe would have sense enough to roll off the thing... and there she was solid backwards on that mile wide toboggan slide a kickin to beat the band and with the custard pie in the cradle cow catcher and I just jumped on my little bobsled and I hurried after her because I didn’t have any idea where she was going to land.

And I says “Aunt Phoebe throw me the rope,
Throw me the rope Aunt Phoebe,
Aunt Phoebe THROW ME THE ROPE!”

And I made a grab for the rope and I grabbed her foot instead and most yanked her off the sled and she yelled, “Biff, Ohhhh!...”

And just about that time I saw the professor bringing his theological class home from lecture cross the road.

“Hi there CLEAR the track” I yelled “There’s a runaway sled comin!”

Says they. “Where?” says the professor fixin his glasses on.”

And before he more’n got the word out his mouth that cow catcher had struck him square and scooped him in and gone on down the hill with him all doubled up, his head down, an his feet stickin out.

And I’m gonna get a pattern on it.

“Where am I, I’m covered with blood” he yelled.

“Ah that’s the custard pie” says Aunt Phoebe to Professor Will.

I be deviled. And I thought maybe they would.

“Look out for that gully” I yelled “stick to the left” but the next minute that sled had shot over the bank.

And the professor and Aunt Phoebe had grappled together and they turned two somersaults in the air and they landed all in a heap in a snowdrift.

And I never saw it beat in a circus.

“My friends is here” said Aunt Phoebe.

“Where are they? Murder! Police!” howled the professor holding on to Aunt Phoebe like grim death, cause he’d lost his glasses. He didn’t know where he was at.

“Don’t leave me!” he said.

And SHE said “I never will, Oh professor” and plops her head down on his shoulder.

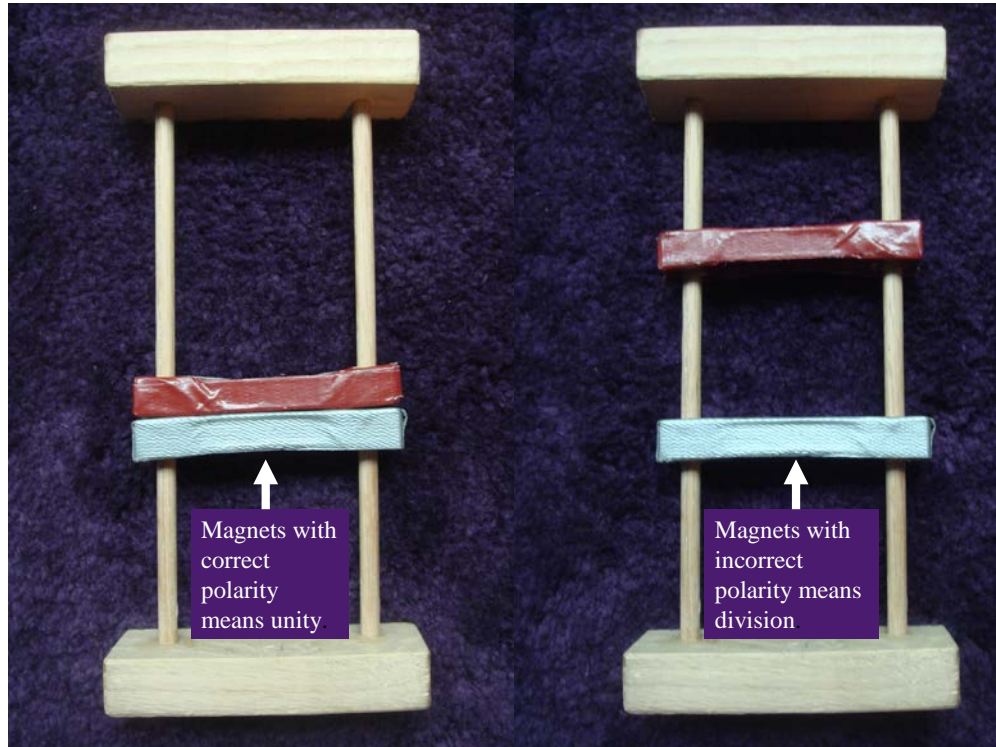
And THAT’S how he Proposed!

And say! What do you think? Aunt Phoebe is so tickled she’s been givin custard pies to all the neighbors ever since.

And I heard her telling Ms. Roberts over the fence the other day that there was nothing she enjoyed like seein Biff slide down hill. It was such an exhilarating and profitable exercise.....

APPENDIX H

SLIDING MAGNET AND FRIDGE MAGNET PROPS





FRIDGE MAGNET DETAIL


FRONT VIEW

REVERSE VIEW

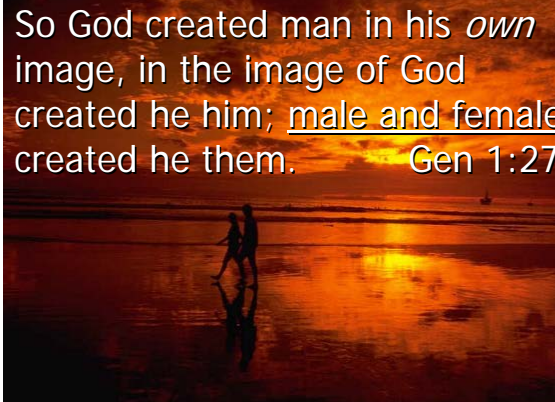

Session #1 Theme Magnet

<p>Magnetic Marriage:</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">Unity in Diversity</p>	<p>Magnetic Marriage:</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">Unity in Diversity</p>
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Session #1 Review

	<p>"<u>Expectations</u> affect <u>everything!</u>"</p> <p>➤ <i>Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life.</i></p> <p>Proverbs 13:12</p>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminate <u>unrealistic</u> Expectations • Learn the source of <u>your</u> Expectations • <u>Clear up</u> misconceptions • <u>Accept</u>, Lower or Raise Expectations • Marriage as a <u>Covenant</u> not contract • <u>Choose</u> God's expectations.
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Session #2 Review

<p>So God created man in his <i>own</i> image, in the image of God created he him; <u>male and female</u> created he them. Gen 1:27</p> 	 <p style="text-align: center; background-color: red; color: white; padding: 5px;">Designed to Need, Designed to Give!</p> <p style="background-color: blue; color: white; padding: 5px;">Understanding that men are strong and weak in areas where women are weak and strong could be the beginning of wisdom and the beginning of a happier and more fulfilling relationship between men & women.</p>
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Session #3 Review

The Lord God said,
 "It is **not good** for
 the man to be
alone. I will make
 a helper suitable
 for him."
 Genesis 2:18



- Communication: "Life blood" of relationships
- Gospel Purpose: Relationship Restoration
- We Speak and Hear through filters
- 93% "Tone of voice" & "Non-verbal"
- We communicate at 5 levels
- Important to use non-blaming "I" message
- Value of Speaker/Listener Technique
- M/F Communication Styles vary significantly
- Choose new Attitude: Appreciate & Affirm



Session #4 Review

I will praise thee; for I am fearfully
 and wonderfully made: marvellous
 are thy works; and that my soul
 knoweth right well. Psalm 139:14



Temperaments

Choleric..... "Action"

Sanguine..... "Talker"

Phlegmatic..... "Relaxed"

Melancholy.. "In Tune"



Session #5 Review

And they were both naked,
 the man and his wife, and
 were not ashamed. Gen. 2:25



Solomon's Sexuality Secrets

- Admiration
- Affirmation
- Attention
- Action
- Aroused
- Not Ashamed

Session #6 Review

Seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Matt. 6:33



Family Finance

1. Acknowledge God's Ownership
2. Value of Marriage
 - a. Money Types
 - b. Strength of Differences
3. Discover Hidden Issues
4. Manage Resources Wisely
 - a. Income – Outgo = Outcome
 - b. Tame the Budget Beast
 - c. Stretching the Dollar
 - d. Millionaire Mentality
 - e. Avoid Money Traps
 - f. Save and Invest
5. Choose Priorities Carefully
 - a. God, Family, Team, People




Session #7 Review

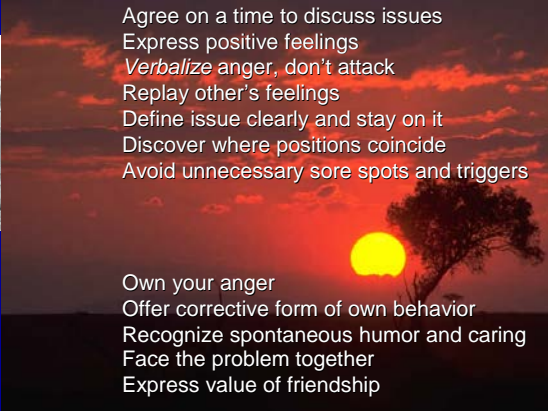
Mutual Respect/Accountability

Hot Anger

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath. James 1:19




Agree on a time to discuss issues
Express positive feelings
Verbalize anger, don't attack
Replay other's feelings
Define issue clearly and stay on it
Discover where positions coincide
Avoid unnecessary sore spots and triggers




Cold Anger

Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath. Ephesians 4:26



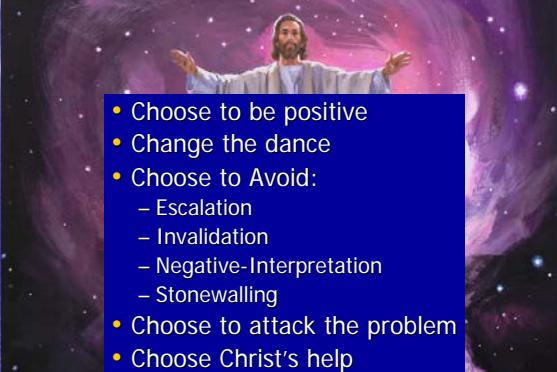
Own your anger
Offer corrective form of own behavior
Recognize spontaneous humor and caring
Face the problem together
Express value of friendship

Session #8 Review




A small rudder on a huge ship in the hands of a skilled captain sets a course in the face of the strongest winds. A word out of your mouth may seem of no account, but it can accomplish nearly anything—or destroy it! James 3:3-5

Choice Marriage



- Choose to be positive
- Change the dance
- Choose to Avoid:
 - Escalation
 - Invalidation
 - Negative-Interpretation
 - Stonewalling
- Choose to attack the problem
- Choose Christ's help


Session #9 Review



But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. James 3:17 NASB

Changing Negative Patterns

Choose:



- to Grow!
- to Garden Effectively
- to Study your spouse
- to be influenced by your spouse
- to Nurture Fondness & Admiration
- to Cherish and Value

Session #10 Review



Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor and evil speaking, be put away from you with all malice; and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, *Just as God in Christ also forgave you.*

Eph. 4:31&32

More Choices



- Choose to leave and cleave
- Choose to forgive
- Choose to accept forgiveness
- Choose God's grace
- Choose to break bad habits

Session #10 Commitment Card

By God's Grace I choose:	By God's Grace I choose:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To Value our "Differentness" 2. To Nurture Communication & Companionship 3. To Respect You & Be Personally Accountable 4. To Seek God First & Work as a Team 5. To Focus on the Positive 6. To Cherish & Hold You Gently 7. To Forgive & Be Forgiven 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To Value our "Differentness" 2. To Nurture Communication & Companionship 3. To Respect You & Be Personally Accountable 4. To Seek God First & Work as a Team 5. To Focus on the Positive 6. To Cherish & Hold You Gently 7. To Forgive & Be Forgiven
Signed:	Signed:

APPENDIX I

MARRIAGE STRENGTHENING RESOURCES

Marriage Enrichment

Mace, D. R., & Mace, V. (1978). *We can have better marriages if we really want them*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon.

Mace, D. R. (1982). *Close companions*. New York, NY: Continuum Publishing.

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APPENDIX J

MAGNETIC MARRIAGE- GUIDELINES

- 1. Attend consistently**
 - a. Seminar begins at 7:00 PM
 - b. You may attend on any of the following days:
 - i. Monday (Portland)
 - ii. Tuesday (Freeport)
 - iii. Wed. (Brunswick)

- 2. Share your own experience**
 - a. Avoid interrupting, analyzing, confronting, giving opinions, or prescribing solutions for another couple.

- 3. Respect your sacred circle**
 - a. Avoid sharing aspects of your relationship that would make your spouse uncomfortable.
 - b. Don't air dirty laundry.

- 4. Maintain Confidences**
 - a. Confidential items should stay that way.

- 5. Speak for yourself**
 - a. Do not assume that you know how the other person feels or thinks.

- 6. Respect the other's feelings as being valid**
 - a. Feelings are those of the individual.
 - b. Don't judge or tell them how they "should or shouldn't feel..."

- 7. Pray**
 - a. Pray for personal growth.
 - b. Pray for insights for your marriage.
 - c. Pray for the presenters.

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VITA

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Adult Work Experience

January 2005—Present- Executive Secretary, Trust Services Director, Family Ministries Co-Director with my wife

January 2002-December 2004—Family Ministries Co-Director, Pastor, Berlin, and Conway, New Hampshire churches

September 1998-December 2002—Pastor, Berlin, Conway, New Hampshire and Harrison, Maine churches

June 1994-September 1998—Pastor, Claremont, Washington, and West Lebanon, New Hampshire churches. Authored and constructed Sabbath Trail, Washington, NH

March 1993-June 1994—Pastor, Claremont and West Lebanon, New Hampshire churches

November 1988-March 1993—Pastor, Carthage, Dixfield, Farmington and Jay, Maine churches

November 1987-November 1988—Meals on wheels site supervisor, Casco, Maine

January 1987-October 1987—Personal Care attendant for man with CP, Hawaii

July 1984-November 1986—Associate Pastor, Caldwell, Idaho church

October 1982-July 1984—Pastor, Gooding and Jerome, Idaho churches

July 1979-June 1980—Pastoral Intern, Mountain Home, Idaho church

Summer 1978—Pastoral “Extern,” Baker, Oregon church

Educational Experience and Degrees

2010	Andrews University Seminary- DMin
1980-1982	Andrews University Seminary- MDiv
1973-1979	Walla Walla College- BA Theology