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### Development of a Premarital Counseling Seminar for Pastors and Church Workers in the Euro-Asia Division

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ABSTRACT

DEVELOPMENT OF A PREMARITAL COUNSELING SEMINAR  
FOR PASTORS AND CHURCH WORKERS  
IN THE EURO-ASIA DIVISION

by

Elena Zhigankova

Adviser: H. Peter Swanson

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Project

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

TITLE: DEVELOPMENT OF A PREMARITAL COUNSELING SEMINAR  
FOR PASTORS AND CHURCH WORKERS IN THE EURO-ASIA  
DIVISION

Name of researcher: Elena Zhigankova

Name and degree of faculty adviser: H. Peter Swanson, Ph.D.

Date completed: August 2008

Problem

According to the 1984 Annual Council policy, Seventh-day Adventist ministers are to provide premarital guidance to couples requesting marriage. Where possible, this preparation of the couple should consist of several counseling sessions conducted by the minister who is to perform the service or by another qualified individual. Despite its obvious importance, this policy has not been seriously considered or implemented in Russia.

## Description

The process of designing a Premarital Counseling Seminar for pastors and other church workers in the Euro-Asia Division of Seventh-day Adventists is presented. The seminar content is intended to introduce pastors to their responsibilities as premarital counselors and to train them to function properly in this new role. The seminar is not intended to produce professional counselors, but to prepare pastors to minister more effectively to those who are contemplating marriage.

The selection and arrangement of the seminar topics and the teaching methods reflect the needs of contemporary Russian society and are adapted to the educational level and general experience of the ministers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Russia.

## Conclusions

Theological reflections about marriage and the biblical principles that apply to marital harmony are included in the seminar. The examination of available resources and the literature on premarital counseling enabled the author to select and adapt materials to the particular needs of pastors and people in the Russian context.

The experience of developing the Premarital Counseling Seminar confirmed to the author the importance and potential benefits of premarital preparation and strengthened her resolve to make the seminar readily available to pastors in the Euro-Asia Division of Seventh-day Adventists.

Andrews University  
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

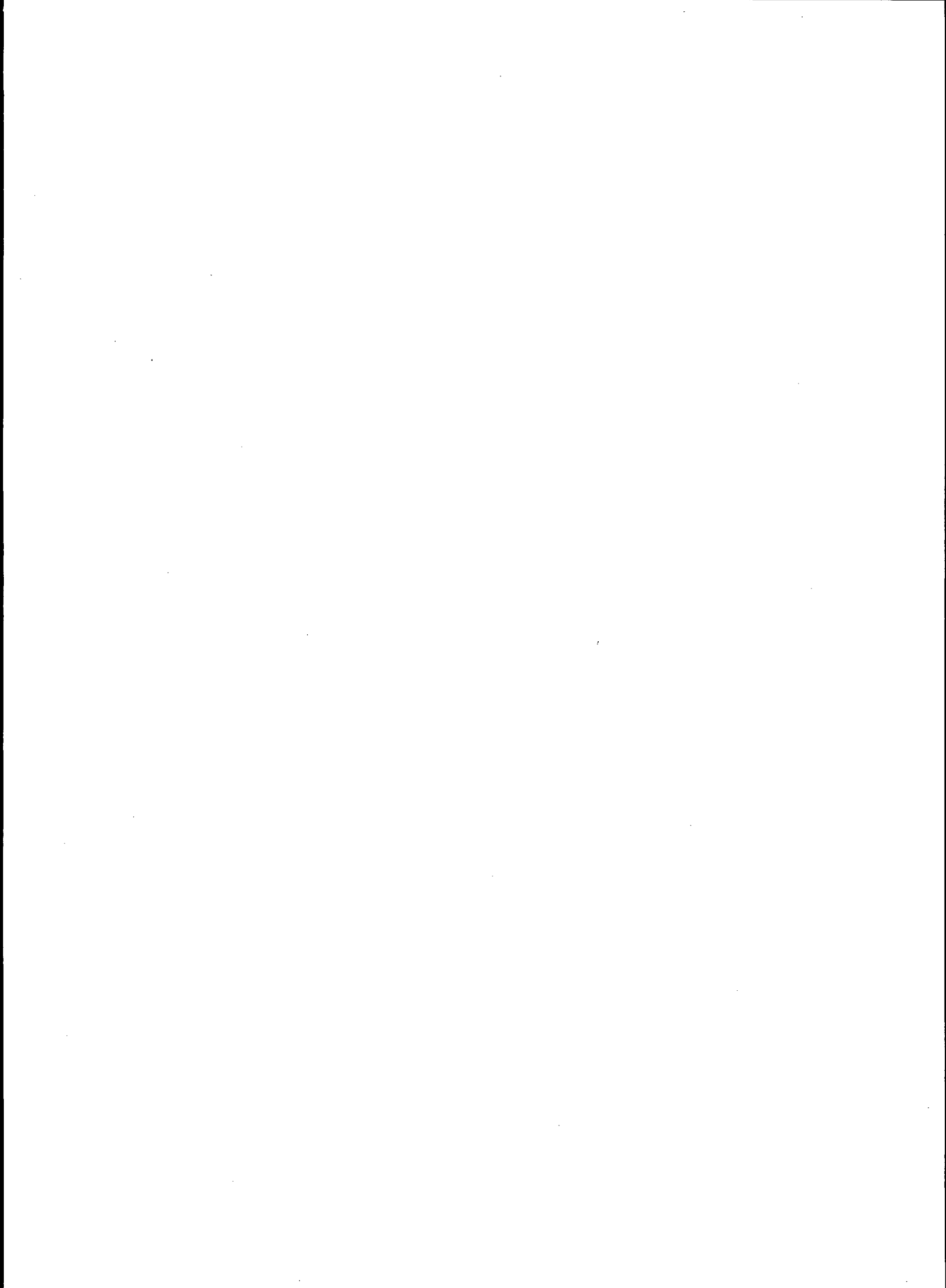
DEVELOPMENT OF A PREMARITAL COUNSELING SEMINAR  
FOR PASTORS AND CHURCH WORKERS  
IN THE EURO-ASIA DIVISION

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

by  
Elena Zhigankova

August 2008

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Premarital counseling in its current form is a relatively new practice in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Attempts have been made in recent years to develop the needed policies and to prepare pastors to provide premarital counseling. In 1984, the Annual Council of the North American Division voted to adopt the plan for premarital education. According to the Committee Minutes, "Seventh-day Adventist ministers are to provide premarital guidance to couples requesting marriage."<sup>1</sup> A similar move was undertaken in the Euro-Asian Division in 1996.<sup>2</sup> However, only a limited number of related written sources were thereafter translated from English into the Russian language, and few constructive efforts have been implemented to equip and prepare pastors to perform premarital counseling as part of their pastoral duties.<sup>3</sup> Many pastors in the Euro-Asian Division still lack formal degrees, and the issues of the premarital counseling remain outside of their scope of attention.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists (Washington, DC), Minutes of Meetings of the North American Division Committee, 18 October 1984, 55.

<sup>2</sup>Annual Council of the Euro-Asian Division (Moscow), November 1996, 18.

<sup>3</sup>In the course of the last ten years the seminars on the marital relationship were randomly offered in the Moscow Conference and the Priokski Mission. The ministers in other parts of the Euro-Asian Division did not have a chance to participate. Seminars on the premarital relationship and training seminars for pastors as counselors have not been available in Euro-Asian Division.

<sup>4</sup>The course offered by Zaoski University is only available for the enrolled students and deals

In recent years, pastors in post-Soviet society have been mostly busy with evangelistic outreach programs. Currently the church growth rate in Russia is decreasing, as compared to only a few years ago. At the same time the divorce rate is increasing. The current ratio of divorces to marriages in Russia is as high as 8 out of 10 in some places.<sup>5</sup> The number of dysfunctional families within the Church is approaching that of the overall society. Thus, it seems expedient for pastors to pay more attention to their pastorate, and there is an urgent need to equip ministers with the tools and knowledge needed for this important task.

### **Statement of the Problem**

During the 1984 Annual Council, a policy was adopted by the North American Division which relates to ministers in the Adventist Church and Premarital Education. According to this policy, Seventh-day Adventist ministers are to provide premarital guidance to couples requesting marriage. Where possible, this premarital preparation of the couple should consist of several counseling sessions conducted by the minister performing the service or by another qualified individual. The General Conference Home and Family Service has also prepared a program on marriage education including study guides, cassettes, background reading material, tests and other pertinent information.<sup>6</sup>

In the Euro-Asian Division this policy has never been consistently implemented. One must look at the situation in the Euro-Asian Division in order to identify what should

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primarily with marital issues. The formal seminary training does not include a course on premarital counseling.

<sup>5</sup>Divorce Rates, [www.DivorceMagazine.com](http://www.DivorceMagazine.com) (accessed October 2007). For more information see chapter 3, pp. 39-40.

<sup>6</sup>North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists (Washington, DC), Minutes of Meetings of the North American Division Committee, 15 January 1984, 55.

be done in order to put premarital counseling into practice efficiently there. This project seeks to design and implement a Premarital Counseling Seminar for ministers of that region.

### **Purpose of the Project**

The purpose of this project is to develop a sixteen-hour Training Seminar, a basic instructional program in premarital counseling for the pastors in the Euro-Asian Division, and to provide pastors with an overview of the basic principles involved in pre-marriage counseling for use in the church. It is not intended for use in clinical settings. The goal is to improve participants' skills and increase their ability to help couples in marriage preparation.

### **Justification of the Study**

Due to decades of persecution during the former Soviet regime and isolation from the free world-wide Adventist Church, the Russian Adventist Church today is far behind regarding knowledge and implementation of psychology and counseling. Psychology as a science was widely used by the communist regime in its fight against Christianity. Thus, the prevalent attitude of many pastors, church leaders, and lay members toward psychology has been negative. However, more and more pastors and church leaders understand that Christian psychology is a God-given tool to help people solve their problems.

Both Soviet education and propaganda emphasized the importance of the family as the central and undivided nucleus of society. Even though the divorce rate in the

Soviet Union was second only to that in the United States,<sup>7</sup> the divorce rate of Seventh-day Adventists in the Soviet Union remained comparatively low.<sup>8</sup> With the advent of Perestroika, the situation changed rapidly. The fresh wave of new converts filled the post-Soviet Adventist church with much excitement, but also with a number of new problems. During the 1990s and early 2000s, efforts were directed towards evangelism; thus, pastors were perceived as evangelists rather than shepherds.

Perestroika has certainly caused the Russian Adventist Church to resemble the North American Division with a divorce rate that is growing and following Russia's divorce trends. According to Barna, the divorce rate among protestant Christians varies from twenty-five to thirty-four percent.<sup>9</sup> When one considers the many dysfunctional homes in Russian society where children receive their earliest education, one cries out that the only insurance before marriage is a marital education program. Clearly, the children emerging from these homes do not have a positive model of parenting or family experience and therefore couples should be exposed to a good premarital program.

The author of this project has been engaged in teaching classes on family issues at Zaoski Theological Seminary, as well as at some schools affiliated with ZTS since 2000. The author met with many pastors and church workers enrolled in the Seminary courses and has had an opportunity to conduct productive discussions regarding common

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<sup>7</sup>The United States has one of the highest divorce rates in the world. In 1988, it was 4.8 per 1,000 persons compared with 3.3 in the Soviet Union, 3.1 in Canada, and 2.9 in the United Kingdom. The Library of Congress Country Studies, "CIA World Factbook," [http://www.photius.com/countries/soviet\\_union\\_former/society/soviet\\_union\\_former\\_society\\_marriage\\_divorce\\_a~11127.html](http://www.photius.com/countries/soviet_union_former/society/soviet_union_former_society_marriage_divorce_a~11127.html) (accessed May 2007).

<sup>8</sup>Unfortunately, there are no official statistics on the marriage-divorce rate in the SDA Church in Russia during the Soviet time.

<sup>9</sup>Barna Report, "Variation in Divorce Rates Among Christian Faith Groups," [http://www.religious\\_tolerance.org/chr\\_dira.htm](http://www.religious_tolerance.org/chr_dira.htm) (accessed October 2007).

problems that families face. From these observations, probably the most important appear to be a need for more informative and accurate resources in relation to the family relationship, and more professional training of ministers in Russia. Thus, there is an apparent need in Russia to develop an efficient workshop to help pastors get adequate training on the subject of premarital counseling.

### **Basic Assumptions**

Premarital education in the church is a necessity. Premarital counseling is a vital tool to secure healthier, long-lasting family relationships. The pastor-counselor must be properly trained and qualified for this ministry.

### **Delimitations and Limitations**

This project deals with premarital, not marital, counseling and is designed specifically for the Euro-Asia Division of the Adventist Church. Therefore, the problems addressed in this project, as well as the proposed solutions, may not always apply to conditions in other regions of the world. The weekend seminar will be limited to approximately sixteen hours of instruction.

The goal is to help pastors, Bible workers, elders, other church officers and their spouses to gain a better understanding of family life principles and to apply them to their own family relationships, and also to use the tools provided to complement their present ministries. The participants will be informed that the Seminar is not intended to train pastors and other attendees to be professional family counselors.

## **Methodology**

After an introduction, a brief history of premarital preparation will be presented. Current literature sources on the subject of premarital pastoral counseling will be reviewed. The history of the development of premarital counseling in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in general, and in Euro-Asia Division in particular, will be given and analyzed.

Biblical and theological foundations of the family and premarital counseling will be examined in chapter 2. The topics of the seminar will be related to current needs.

To complete the study, conclusions will be drawn and a 'Preparation for Marriage Bride's/Groom's Handbook' will be prepared.

## **Expectations from this Dissertation**

This project will help the author to advance teaching skills. The project will also help to educate pastors in the area of premarital Christian counseling and to prepare them for conducting counseling sessions. During the course of this seminar, pastors will learn to assist couples efficiently in marital preparation and help them to prevent some personal and family problems in the future.

This material could be used for conducting similar seminars in different parts of the Euro-Asian Division of the Adventist Church.



## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter briefly reviews the development of different approaches used in premarital preparation and makes reference to the most significant sources that shaped the evolving approaches. In addition, it briefly outlines the development of the traditional Christian methods of premarital counseling. At the end of the chapter, the development and current status of premarital counseling in the Seventh-day Adventist denomination is briefly examined.

#### **Early Religious or Clerical Approach**

Early in the development of the Christian Church, religious leaders and clergy became involved in preparing couples for marriage. Reflected in their writing, the early Church fathers were concerned with family issues. Tertullian (ca. 150-230), who is commonly known as the founder of Latin theology, contrasted the moral life of the Christian with that of the pagan in his ascetic writings. He was the first among Christian writers to focus on family issues as a separate topic. His works contain clear indications that the Church fathers paid attention to such matters.<sup>1</sup> In his Montanistic (or anti-

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<sup>1</sup>W. P. Le Saint, *Tertullian, Treatises on Marriage and Remarriage*, Series in Ancient Christian Writers 13 (Westminster, MD: Thames and Hudson, 1951), 70-108.

Catholic) writings, he argued against the restoration of the lapsed, flight in persecution, and approval of second marriage.<sup>2</sup> Here he proposes rather strict parameters for Christian family life. From this discussion one can learn about the stand the Early Church took on family matters.

As the Church entered into an alliance with the Roman Empire, it adapted to Roman laws on marriage. Initially, the wedding ceremony did not include the services of the clergy, but by A.D. 398, the Synod of Carthage assumed the use of a priestly benediction in the ceremony.<sup>3</sup> Still, permission to marry, and thus premarital consent, was given to the couples by either parents or close relatives. Parental authority to control the lives of unmarried children was unchallenged; however, later on, the Church began urging couples to seek permission to marry, not only from parents, but also from the bishop.<sup>4</sup> In the Middle Ages, the permission of the overlords was also required.

Augustine was one of the first to record an opinion about the Christian family in a new era of Christian history. His writings reflect the ascetic emphasis of the Church. Augustine could not see how a woman could be useful to a man apart from procreation.<sup>5</sup>

Pope Gregory the Great (590-604) warned spouses in one of his letters that any sexual act, even performed with the goal of procreation, was a sinful act. Thus, once

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>D. S. Raileg, *The Man-Woman Relationship in Christian Thought* (London: Elibron Classic, 1959), 61.

<sup>4</sup>Carle C. Zimmerman, *Family and Civilization* (New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1947), 581.

<sup>5</sup>U. Ranke-Heinemann, *Eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven. Women, Sexuality and the Catholic Church* (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 36.

again, marriage was viewed as a necessary evil.<sup>6</sup> This stance prevented church leaders from any serious discussion of family matters. Pope Innocent III (1198-1216) viewed marriage simply as a remedy against obsessive desire.<sup>7</sup> The role of a priest or a cleric in marital matters was reduced to conducting the wedding ceremony.<sup>8</sup> Some clergy began teaching people the meaning of the sacrament before they received it. With these educational patterns established with regard to different initiation rites, it was natural that the clergy should follow a similar process with marriage. The rite was considered as bringing a man and a woman into a new and different relationship with each other and with God.<sup>9</sup>

The situation underwent some changes under the religious influence of the Reformation. German reformer and former monk Martin Luther had to deal with many other former monks and nuns seeking marital relationships. Luther believed that human beings are commanded by God to order their lives on the basis of being created male and female. He was convinced that to fulfill this command means that they should live as husband and wife. The key text in this argument is Gen 2:18-24. Luther says that “these words teach us where man and woman come from, how they were given to one another, for what purpose a wife was created, and what kind of love there should be in the estate of marriage.”<sup>10</sup> Although Luther does not make marriage obligatory, he describes

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<sup>6</sup>E. Westermarsck, *The History of Human Marriage* (London: Elibron Classic, 2003), 21.

<sup>7</sup>G. Barraclough, *The Medieval Papacy* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1968), 74.

<sup>8</sup>By 1164, the Church had officially established marriage as a sacrament.

<sup>9</sup>J. A. Brundage, *Sex, Law and Marriage in the Middle Ages* (Aldershot, England: Variorum, 1993), 24-30.

<sup>10</sup>Martin Luther, “A Sermon on the Estate of Marriage (1519),” in *The Christian in Society*, ed.

monasticism as an inadequate response to sexual difference.<sup>11</sup> Luther deals with the matters of marriage mostly in his works written between 1519 and 1523, his early Reform period, but his arguments were collected and presented in a systematic way in his commentary on Genesis in the late 1530s.<sup>12</sup> Christopher Roberts states that “For Luther, it is in and through our bodies, as male and female, that human beings manifest their fellowship with God and one another in the church. The marriage of Adam and Eve is described by Luther as a prototypical instance of this fellowship.”<sup>13</sup>

Calvin also believed that marriage is preferable, to other possible human responses, to the fact God created two sexes. However, one can clearly discern some medieval connotations in Calvin’s treatment of marriage as God’s remedy for sin, for it gives a moderate sexual license that “keeps us from plunging into unbridled lust.”<sup>14</sup> Calvin asserted that both the original and redemptive purposes for marriage will become fulfilled and obsolete after the resurrection.<sup>15</sup> Yet, Calvin’s teaching on marriage is more elaborate than that of Luther. Christopher Roberts says:

“For Calvin, once a man and a woman are living within the order of marriage, forces are at work that homogenize the sexes and yet also reinforce their differences. On the one hand, marriage orients both sexes to God. In this respect, the two sexes are alike.

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James Atkinson (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), 44:8.

<sup>11</sup>Martin Luther, “Judgment of Martin Luther on Monastic Vows (1521/22),” in *The Christian in Society*, 44:262.

<sup>12</sup>Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis, Chapters 1-5*. Vol. 1 of *Luther’s Works* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1958).

<sup>13</sup>Christopher Roberts, *Creation and Covenant* (New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 128.

<sup>14</sup>John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 1:405.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, 2:1006.

On the other hand, marriage preserves and requires certain roles, sexually differentiated with respect to the opposite sex. In this perspective, the two sexes remain distinct.”<sup>16</sup>

Thus, Calvin makes a gesture toward the necessity of some sort of gender roles and duties within the marriage, but he stops short of offering either theological justification, or practical applications of what those roles might be.

Luther’s and Calvin’s followers did very little to expand on what their founders had started. The mainstream Reformation became mostly preoccupied with doctrinal issues, leaving little room for practical theology. Still, clergy at least began seeing couples prior to the wedding. The Age of Enlightenment elevated science and experience high above the religious dogmas, thus paving the way for the so-called scientific method. However, the pre-wedding sessions conducted by clergy prior to World War II still followed a certain instructional pattern: the Christian nature of marriage, the place of religion in the home, and the rehearsal of the wedding rite.

With this brief overview, it can be seen that although clergy were involved in some sort of pre-wedding sessions with couples long before secular counseling professionals were on the scene, the nature of these sessions was considerably different from what is seen today.

### **The Secular Approach to Premarital Counseling**

Secular specialists, who approached the issue first, from therapeutic, and later on, from psychological and educational perspectives, inaugurated a new era in premarital preparation, which eventually resulted in the development of the modern approach.

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<sup>16</sup>Roberts, 130.

## Therapeutic Approach

The first documented premarital intervention in recent history was probably made in 1924 when Ernest Groves taught the first course in preparation for family life at Boston University.<sup>17</sup> However, the first mention of premarital counseling as a significant process or a valuable service in building emotional and physical health came only in 1928 with an article in the *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*.<sup>18</sup> From that time until the mid 1950s, primary literature dealing with premarital counseling focused on the physician and the premarital physical examination. Only a passing interest in premarital preparation was found in the literature of the period.

Gradually, however, the emphasis shifted toward the mental health of the individuals, reflecting the growing influence of the Freudian understanding of human behavior and sexuality.<sup>19</sup> The classical therapeutic approach assumed that psychologically healthy individuals automatically have healthy marriages; thus, the goal of premarital preparation was seen as the assurance of the physical and mental health of the partners. References to the importance of the mental health of the partners increased in the 1950s and peaked significantly in the late 1960s. It was in the sixties that premarital preparation came to be seen as a form of psychotherapy, requisite for any quality of relationship in marriage. In 1961, Albert Ellis observed: "People obviously

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<sup>17</sup>W. C. Nicholas, *The AAMFT: Fifty Years of Marital and Family Therapy* (Washington, DC: American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy, 1992), 14.

<sup>18</sup>Robert Stahmann and William Hiebert, *Premarital and Remarital Counseling* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997), 5.

<sup>19</sup>Adaptations and changes to Freud's original theories have led to the development of several schools of psychoanalysis and have had massive implications for the numerous resources in marital issues.

come for premarital counseling because they have problems. They are often best helped by some form of marital counseling which not only presents a solution to their present circumstances, but also goes to the root of their basic problem-creating disturbances. In other words, they need some type of psychotherapy."<sup>20</sup>

Aaron Rutledge proposed that a "realistic sense of self-identity is the cornerstone of the marital structure."<sup>21</sup> From his background as a psychotherapist, Rutledge approached premarital preparation as therapy, first, for the individual candidates for marriage, and only later, in a less intense way, for the "couple" formed by the individual "patients." He pointed out that "much of the success of a marriage arrives ready-made in the structure of the two personalities."<sup>22</sup> Rutledge assumed that premarital preparation would be given under the direction of a trained psychotherapist.<sup>23</sup>

#### Shift Toward the Educational Approach

While the therapeutic approach emphasized healing, an alternative approach has been emerging with a strong emphasis on providing partners with essential information for their benefit.

Many writers began to see premarital counseling as primarily an educational and informational service. Oliver Butterfield pointed out that just as persons develop skills in social life, so they must develop skills in family life and in functioning well in the marital

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<sup>20</sup>Albert Ellis, *Creative Marriage* (New York: Institute of Rational Living, 1987), 249.

<sup>21</sup>Aaron Rutledge, *Premarital Counseling* (Cambridge, MA: Shenkman, 1966), 1.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>23</sup>For example, two hours for sixteen weeks, plus two hours per week for couple dialog as a minimum was prescribed. *Ibid.*, 6.

relationship. He indicated that "many young people were disappointed or develop problems in marriage because they brought to it very little in the way of useful skills or helpful attitudes."<sup>24</sup>

Abraham Stone and Lena Levine underscored the value and contrast between education and therapy in premarital preparation by observing: "An hour's discussion before marriage may be more valuable than weeks of counseling later after difficulties have arisen."<sup>25</sup>

Albert Ellis argued that a major cause of marital failure was ignorance about the nature of marriage itself. He observed that many people entering marriage do not have even the most elementary preparation for the demands that marriage makes on them. Ellis indicates that it is assumed that newlyweds will automatically know how to adapt themselves to it, when, in fact, this is not the case.<sup>26</sup>

Stewart called for premarital preparation so that couples may face marriage with more insight and awareness of its values, both interpersonally and religiously. His idea was to appraise emotional maturity and compatibility of the personalities. In moving toward a less therapeutic and more educational effort, he sought to "fill gaps and synthesize information."<sup>27</sup> "In one sense . . . it is teaching," he observed.<sup>28</sup> "We are taking

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<sup>24</sup>Oliver M. Butterfield, *Planning for Marriage* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1956), 14.

<sup>25</sup>Abraham Stone and Lena Levine, *The Premarital Consultation* (New York: Grune and Stratton, 1956), 45.

<sup>26</sup>Albert Ellis, "A Rational Approach to Premarital Counseling," *Psychological Reports*, 8 April 1961, 333-338.

<sup>27</sup>C. Steward, *Minister as Marriage Counselor* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1961), 50.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, 52.



the position that the minister is dealing here with the education of a couple regarding marriage and family relations and not specific problems as in counseling.”<sup>29</sup> He saw the leader’s role as that of a catalyst or mid-wife through the use of person-centered teaching. Stewart distinguished between “normal” and “abnormal” couples approaching marriage and placed some limits on the educational process when abnormal factors were present.

Rutledge, who originally was a proponent of a therapeutic approach toward premarital preparation, made a notable transition toward an educational approach. He postulated that people must have obtained a reasonable amount of adult growth in order to carry their share of various responsibilities of marriage. Rutledge identified three basic factors in preparing for marriage: (1) discovery of selfhood, (2) continued growth as an individual, and (3) possession of communication and problem-solving skills. He spoke of the premarital process as opening up these three areas of life for the young couple and projecting the couple into the future, enabling them to foresee the kinds of problems and the many challenges that awaited them in the marriage. Rutledge argued that if all clinicians devoted one-fourth of their time to premarital counseling, they could make a better impact on the health of the country than through all of their remaining therapeutic activities.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>Aaron Rutledge, *A Systematic Approach to Premarital Counseling in Counseling for Premarital Arts Campus* (Cambridge, MA: Shenkman, 1968), 36, quoted in Roger H. Ferris, “Premarital Preparation: An Educational Content Design for Seventh-day Adventists in the USA” (EdD dissertation, Andrews University, 1985), 27.

Prevention by the educational approach—"the dissemination of known information and skills"<sup>31</sup>—was promoted by Christenson. He separated marriage into four major areas: (1) the situational setting (families of origin, sociological factors), (2) the personalities of the partners, (3) interpersonal relationships, and (4) the use of preventive programs. He then subdivided the premarital preparation approaches into educational, clinical, legal, religious, and community resources that the couple may choose to use. Awareness of these options was to be achieved through formal efforts at education in preparation for marriage.

An educational approach was clearly formulated by Backland<sup>32</sup> who saw the goal of education as establishing family as its own support system. This type of "intervention" is first educational and then, only incidentally, therapeutic. The educational approach is focused on teaching the family to recognize its strengths, to recognize dysfunctional behavior, and to develop basic communication and problem-solving skills.<sup>33</sup> The contrast between the therapeutic and the educational emerges when so viewed, although the jargon used often seems counterproductive and blurs the distinctions.

Peter Shiller pointed out that premarital counseling must "be based on the patient's goals and expectations from marriage, her self-image and life-style, her concept of the image of her partner and his life-style, and her perception of the interaction of the

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<sup>31</sup>H. Christenson, *Hand Book of Marriage and the Family* (Chicago: Rand-McNally, 1964), 3.

<sup>32</sup>C. Backland, "An Educational Model of Family Consultation," *Journal of Marriage and Family Counseling* 6 (1977): 53.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, 54.

two in relationship to each others' expectations."<sup>34</sup>

Note that there is a "patient," a pathology, and a healer implicit in Shiller's comment, although she insisted that individuals are healthy unless diagnosed otherwise. Much of the literature of that time period uses the term "patient" or "client." Such use implies a therapeutic, rather than educational, conceptualization of the premarital-preparation process even for "normal" people. Yet Shiller declared that in premarital preparation, the "counselor" should take the somewhat paradoxical stance that the "patient" is normal unless otherwise diagnosed by a psychiatrist. Shiller also advocated separate premarital preparation for each partner and only conjoint interviews "if carefully planned"—a throwback to the psychoanalytic therapeutic ideas of Freud and counseling theories of the 1950-1965 period.<sup>35</sup>

Robert Carkhuff supported the idea of training as the preferred mode of "treatment." Skills taught, he believed, would enable the clients to "train themselves." The "therapist" becomes effective through his relationship with the client in this client-centered, behavior-modification approach.<sup>36</sup> David Mace challenged marriage counselors to move out of the remedial routine and focus their energies on marriage preparation and marriage enrichment.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>P. Shiller, "Premarital and Marriage Counseling," *Gynecology and Obstetrics* 51 (1977): 9.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>36</sup>R. Carhuff, "Training as a Preferred Mode of Treatment," *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 3 (1971): 125.

<sup>37</sup>D. Mace, "Education and Preparation for Marriage: New Approaches," *Pastoral Psychology* 23-24 (Fall 1975): 13.

Howard Clinebell was an exponent of the human-potentials approach which assumes that most people have the ability to create a productive marital relationship and only need to be made aware of those abilities through education. Clinebell reported a transition in his work from "a diagnostic, treatment approach [a pathology model] to a human development, positive potentials approach."<sup>38</sup> The focus changes from a "what's wrong" to a "what's right and what's possible" [an educational model] focus. This, he asserted, is a shift from a "rescue and repair" to a "prevention" model that stresses "responsible action."<sup>39</sup> Education, thus, is considered to be the basic tool.

In general, the educational approach was more accepted by clergy counselors who had seen it as their duty to inform the partners about certain moral aspects of the marriage, adopted from the religious sources.

### The Emergence of Modern Premarital Counseling

A clear distinction between the "medical" model and the "educational" model is offered by B. Gurney, G. Stollack, and L. Gurney. The medical model is defined as involving therapy applied to a person by a practitioner to cure an illness or eliminate symptoms. Therapy deals with exceptional persons, not the average person. The therapist's role is self-limiting, in that amelioration of the problem eliminates the need for the therapist. In contrast, the educational model draws on learning theory and seeks to "teach personal and interpersonal attitudes and skills which the learner can then apply to solve present and future psychological and relationship problems and to enhance his

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<sup>38</sup>H. Clinebell, *Growth Counseling for Marriage Enrichment: Pre-Marriage and Early Years* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 1.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 2.

overall satisfaction with life.”<sup>40</sup> Words, information, and knowledge are deliberately omitted from the definition because they are seen as the *tools* of education and not an end in themselves.

Education, as David Mace saw it, is enrichment to improve the quality of relationships. Education assesses the current relationship, what the marital pair wants from the relationship, and what tools and skills are needed for success; then it sets out to provide the couple with those skills, along with an on-going, reliable support base.

Three major approaches to premarital preparation were noted by Mace: (1) the “facts of life” or imparting of information, (2) counseling on specific problems or questions identified by the couple, and (3) facilitation of the couple’s evaluation of self, each other, and their relationship.<sup>41</sup>

Mace distinguished between the purpose of premarital preparation and family-life education. He felt strongly that many of the cognitive topics, such as money management, home establishment, and so on, were really the purpose of family life education in formal learning settings. Premarital preparation focus, as he saw it, should be on the current relationship and not the distant future. Mace suggested that the purposes of this type of premarital preparation are best achieved by paired husband-wife facilitators who “model” the skills to the preparing couples.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>B. Gurney, G. Stollack, and L. Gurney, “The Practicing Psychologist as Educator: An Alternative to the Medical Practitioner Model,” *Pastoral Psychology* (Summer 1971): 277.

<sup>41</sup>D. Mace, *Getting Ready for Marriage* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972), 43.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, 45.

Claude A. Guldner saw premarital preparation and marriage enrichment as providing skills by information, resources, learning context, tools, and facilitators at each point in the developmental cycle. He observed that if such counseling is to be effective as a preventive measure, it must be designed to provide processes and skills that are applicable to the varied problems which emerge in the course of a marriage. It must provide tools that couples use on their own. These tools must be sufficiently free from context focus so that they can be generalized to any area of the marital relationship."<sup>43</sup>

Norman Wright's view summarizes quite well the emerging new purposes of premarital preparation during the 1970s. He identified five components: (1) screening, (2) instruction, (3) creation of relationships between the counselor and the couple to meet future needs, (4) correction of attitudes and beliefs about marriage, and (5) the insistence of the church for the preparation experience (not a call for help by the couple).<sup>44</sup>

Thus, the modern approach is more comprehensive and characterized by the development and use of a variety of different techniques and tools. Scott Roskley introduced the term "skills of spousing."<sup>45</sup> These skills enable the couple in the premarital period to exchange clear pictures of what each partner expects in the marriage and equips them to meet partner expectations adequately.

Although Terrance D. Olson used the term "marriage education" in describing the process of premarital preparation, it is obvious that for him, marriage education is not a

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<sup>43</sup>Claude A. Guldner, "Marriage Preparation and Marriage Enrichment: The Preventive Approach," *PP* 25 (1977): 253.

<sup>44</sup>Norman Wright, *Premarital Counseling* (Chicago: Moody, 1977), 37-45.

<sup>45</sup>Scott Roskley, "Till Death or Divorce Do Us Apart," *Loma Linda University Scope*, January-February 1980, 14-18.

goal in itself, as it appears to be in the case of traditional supporters of the educational approach.<sup>46</sup> Olson makes basic assumptions explicitly linking theory and practice through rehearsal and application of certain principles taught. Joan Druckman suggested using the inventory of premarital conflict to "assess and diagnose interaction styles and to develop treatment strategies."<sup>47</sup> Thomas Milton puts it this way: "Education begins with a need for information and uses information, demonstration and participation while counseling begins at the threat of dissolution and uses rescue and rehabilitation techniques."<sup>48</sup> Thus premarital preparation specifies, demonstrates, applies, and practices skills and insights.

The modern approach toward premarital counseling also redefines the role of a counselor as a facilitator rather than an educator. As early as in 1976, Wright saw premarital preparation as a time to establish an ongoing relationship between the couple and their facilitator.<sup>49</sup> The presence of the counselor, in his understanding, provides immediate feedback and is supposed to lead to post-marital openness and successful negotiation of differences. In a similar way, Thomas Milton defines counseling as a cross between therapy and education of the prospective marital pair.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>Terrance D. Olson, "Marriage Education: An Illustration of the Process," *FP* 14 (Winter 1980): 27-32.

<sup>47</sup>Joan Druckman, David Fournier, and David Olson, "Effectiveness of Various Premarital Preparation Programs," in *A Report to the Research Supporter* (Grand Rapids, MI: Education for Marriage, 1979), 73.

<sup>48</sup>Mace, "Education and Preparation for Marriage," 16.

<sup>49</sup>Norman Wright, "The Church and Premarital Counseling," *Marriage and Family Resource Newsletter*, October-November 1976, 1-13.

<sup>50</sup>Thomas Milton, "Preparation for Marriage: An Analysis and Critique of Marriage Preparation Programs," in *Marriage Studies: Reflection in Canon Law and Theology*, ed. Tomas Doyle (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), 1-24.

Another trend in modern premarital counseling could be characterized as the preventive approach. Premarital counseling invites the onset of disillusionment—the realization of unrealistic expectations. Premarital preparation, then, seeks to create a livable reality. Mace contrasted counseling, which often starts at the threat of disillusion and moves toward rescue and rehabilitation, with the enrichment-education approach that uses information, demonstration, and participation. Enrichment in marriage or premarital preparation is defined as “the improvement of relationship by the development of its appropriate inner resources.”<sup>51</sup> It shifts from the remedial to the preventive concept of facilitating positive growth. In the process, the couple must confront the causes of dysfunction and replace these with growth toward full function.

Premarital counseling in recent times has also been increasingly approached primarily as a systematic method of helping functional and psychologically healthy persons to enhance and enrich a growing relationship, and only secondarily, to treat pathological cases. Robert Lewis and Graham Spanier, family researchers writing in 1979, identified premarital predictors of two important marital dimensions: quality and stability.<sup>52</sup> Marital quality was defined as the subjective evaluation of the marital relationship (i.e., satisfaction and happiness), while marital stability identified the legal state of the marriage (i.e., the couple had not separated or divorced).

More recent research has validated, clarified, and expanded Lewis’ and Spanier’s findings about marital quality and stability. In their 1994 review of fifty years of research,

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<sup>51</sup>David Mace, “Marriage and Family Enrichment—New Field?” *FC* 28 (July 1979): 409-419.

<sup>52</sup>R. A. Lewis and G. V. Spanier, “Theorizing about the Quality and Stability in Marriage,” in *Contemporary Theories about the Family*, ed. W. R. Burr, R. Hill, and I. F. Hill (Old Tappan, NJ: Macmillan, 1979), 1:259-267.



Jeffry Larson and Tomas Holman concluded that there are three major premarital predictors of later marital quality and stability: (1) the couple's background and contextual factors (i.e., family of origin, socio-cultural factors and current contexts); (2) individual traits and behaviors that can influence the couple's relationship (i.e., emotional health, self esteem, physical health, and interpersonal skills); and (3) the couple's interactional process (like the interpersonal similarity of values, attitudes and beliefs, premarital sex and childbirth, and communication skills).<sup>53</sup>

Consequently, premarital counseling and related educational programs have been developed, aiming to help couples identify specific factors about themselves or relationships that relate to later marital quality and stability and, if needed, help them strengthen or change specific traits, behaviors, or ways of interacting.

In summary, it appears from the literature reviewed that premarital preparation has evolved from a simple rite toward the pathology model of psychology-medicine, later expanded to include various educational and learning approaches, and now is centered on using all these historical factors, having developed techniques to aid the process of relationship enrichment and realization of growth potential inherent in the participating couple.

### **Clergy and Premarital Counseling in the Twentieth Century**

At different times, clergy counseling was dependent on various approaches or on a blend of approaches. It has, in addition, religious and spiritual exhortation, which

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<sup>53</sup>J. Larson and T. Holman, "Premarital Predictors of Marital Quality and Stability," *FR* 43 (1994): 228-237.

makes clergy counseling a separate category. The goal of pastoral counseling is to enhance the couple's premarital relationship so as to continue its development into a satisfactory and stable marital relationship. With developments in the general field of psychology in the 1940s and 1950s came a number of advances in the field of practical theology. Several pioneering members of the clergy had become interested in psychology as a way of expanding and understanding the nature of ministry. They initiated a movement that is generally recognized by the name of pastoral counseling. In the beginning, pastoral counseling developed "a heavy bias toward the pathological orientation and the medical model."<sup>54</sup> Thus, it is clear that pastoral counseling was heavily dependant on secular developments. This can be clearly seen in an address given by Robert Laidlow, a psychiatrist in the field of marital therapy. Speaking at a professional meeting in 1948 and discussing the role of clergy in premarital counseling, Laidlow indicated that their task was to serve as screening agents and to assess the health of the couples who planned to marry.<sup>55</sup>

The role of the minister as a screening agent became more pronounced in the literature of pastoral counseling and specifically of premarital counseling in the 1950s and 1960s. In 1953, Paul Johnson, a pastoral counseling pioneer, indicated that he saw the pastor as being responsible for a marriage's continuing growth.<sup>56</sup> Charles Stewart, another early author on counseling in the parish setting, saw the role of the pastor as that

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<sup>54</sup>Paul E. Johnson, *Psychology of Pastoral Care* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1984), 32.

<sup>55</sup>Stahmann and Hiebert, 11.

<sup>56</sup>Johnson, 27.

of examining a couple's maturity and emotional readiness for marriage.<sup>57</sup> Aaron Rutledge, director of the first marriage counseling program at Merrill Palmer Institute of Detroit, Michigan, also saw the role of clergy and of secular counselors as that of examining a couple's emotional readiness for marriage.

The shift of seminary education and the new emphasis on pastoral counseling in general brought an entirely new dimension to the clergy's role. Now the task was not simply to rehearse the wedding and instruct the couple about the Christian nature of marriage, but also to assess the couple's preparedness for marriage. This accompanied a parallel development – an increasing divorce rate. The belief that a couple who had been thoroughly examined would not be susceptible to divorce gave the clergy the ultimate responsibility for determining the outcome of the marriage.

### **Twenty-First Century Approach**

Early in the twenty-first century, premarital counseling is characterized by the continuation of the latest educational (couple communication program, relationship enhancement) and preventive (premarital relationship enhancement and prevention) trends. The preventive trend is ever expanding, focusing on the areas previously known to marital counseling. For instance, James Wilson suggests dealing at length with financial issues in a preventive way.<sup>58</sup> In a similar manner, Susan Morris recommends

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<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 29.

<sup>58</sup>J. Wilson, *Let's Talk About Money Before You Tie the Knot: A Manual for Premarital Financial Counseling* (Chicago: Exlibris, 2006), 34.

that issues of domestic violence be addressed.<sup>59</sup> Jeff VanCoetham discusses the many concerns such as conflict resolution, communication, the roles of men and women in contemporary society, and other modern-day issues.<sup>60</sup>

Another current tendency in premarital counseling is remarriage. The majority of families in the North America are stepfamilies from second or third marriages.<sup>61</sup> Les Parrott deals in a preventive way with the key issues that stepfamilies are most likely to face.<sup>62</sup> A number of recent books dealing with premarital counseling refer to counseling for remarriage.<sup>63</sup>

The Christian voice in the area of premarital counseling remains strong. It becomes increasingly clear, especially in view of gender issues, that a nonreligious approach overlooks the fundamental need for the individuals in the relationship to recognize the role that traditional religious values play in the couple's interaction.<sup>64</sup> Helping partners establish those values and recognize their importance should be

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<sup>59</sup>Susan Morris, *Opening the Door: A Pastor's Guide to Addressing Domestic Violence in Premarital Counseling* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 65.

<sup>60</sup>Jeff VanCoetham, *Living Together: A Guide to Counseling Unmarried Couples* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007), 43-45.

<sup>61</sup>Bruce Chadwick and Tim Heaton, *Statistical Handbook on the American Family* (New York: ORYX, 1999), 37.

<sup>62</sup>Les Parrott, *Saving Your Second Marriage Before It Starts: Nine Questions to Ask Before and After You Remarry, Workbook for Men* (New York: Association, 2004), 35-39.

<sup>63</sup>Jack Schaap, *Preparing for Marriage: A Personal Session on Premarital Counseling* (Chicago: Moody, 2004); John Cobles, *Before You Say Your Vows: Premarital Counseling: A Guide for Couples and Counselors* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 2005).

<sup>64</sup>Scott Stanley and others, "Community-Based Premarital Prevention: Clergy and Lay Leaders on the Front Lines," *FR* 50 (2001): 68.

considered in preparing couples for improving their communication and conflict resolution skills.<sup>65</sup>

The efficacy of a premarital education programs has been evaluated by different studies. Christine McGeorge and Thomas Carlson, for instance, collected data from twenty-nine heterosexual couples, placed in one of three conditions: (1) premarital education in a group format, (2) premarital education as an individual couple, or (3) the comparison group (no premarital education). The goal of the 8-week intervention was to improve couples' readiness and preparation for marriage as measured by the *Prepare-M*. The findings suggested that the educational program achieved its stated goal.<sup>66</sup>

Julie Wong's study evaluates the effectiveness of a Christian church-based marriage preparation course. Nine couples completed pre- and post course measures including the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Test, Primary Communication Inventory, 5-item LovePower Questionnaire (LPQ), 7-item Dyadic Adjustment Scale, Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS), and a measure of topical knowledge. The Hunt Assessment of Marital Program Outcome was also completed at the end of the course. Results indicate various significant improvements on the Religious Well-Being subscale of the SWBS, topical knowledge, and the LPQ.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>Blaine Fower, "The Limits of a Technical Concept of a Good Marriage: Exploring the Role of Virtue in Communication Skills," *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy* 27, no. 2 (2006): 327-340.

<sup>66</sup>Christine McGeorge and Thomas Stone, "Premarital Education: an Assessment of Program Efficacy" in *Contemporary Family Therapy an International Journal*, 27 (2006): 165-190.

<sup>67</sup>Julie Wong, "Evaluation of a Church-based Marriage Preparation Course: A Preliminary Study," *Dissertation Abstracts International: Section B: The Sciences and Engineering*, vol. 65(7-B) (2005): 3735.

## Development of Testing and Measurement Instruments

The modern approach to premarital counseling includes the use of tests and measurement instruments to evaluate, clarify, and predict.

In the literature surveyed, tests are designed and used for three main purposes: first, to predict future success; second, to identify potential problems or issues to be worked on; and third, as the means of stimulating discussion.

Predictive tests began with E. Burgess and L. Cottrell's *Marriage Prediction Schedule*.<sup>68</sup> Daniel Fuller attempted to construct a *Family Knowledge Test* and succeeded only in predicting that high scores were positively correlated to the academic ability of college freshmen. Predictive instruments have been validated with subjective self-reports, and researchers report problems in predictive stability as a result.<sup>69</sup>

The *Inventory of Premarital Conflict* is an alternative to self-report measures and consists of a series of situations presented to and discussed by the couple while an observer scores style and skill in arriving at consensus. It identifies problem areas and also serves as a stimulus to couple interaction.<sup>70</sup>

The *Marriage Climate Analysis* (MCA) and the *Marriage Expectation Inventory* (MEI) are related. The MCA is an open-ended-sentence exercise completed privately by

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<sup>68</sup>E. Burgess and L. Cottrell, *Predicting Success or Failure in Marriage* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1939), 36.

<sup>69</sup>Daniel R. Fuller, "Construction of Family Knowledge Test in the Relationship of Selected Factors to the Test Scores" (PhD dissertation, University of Arkansas, 1967), 34.

<sup>70</sup>David Fournier, "The Inventory of Premarital Conflict (IPMC) Observation Strategy in Premarital Counseling" (paper presented at the Arizona State University Conference on Family Observation, Behavioral Assessment, Beverly Hills, CA, 1980).

each.<sup>71</sup> The counselor analyzes the paired responses and goes over the responses with the couple while acting as a facilitator to bring about relationship growth and change. The MEI is a computer-assisted analysis of the MCA.<sup>72</sup> Both are diagnostic and discussion stimulators.

The *Premarital Awareness Inventory* is a tool to expedite the awareness of areas needing discussion in a couple's relationship. The seventy-five-item survey is not a statistically based resource but a subject-rated priority list used now by some sixty thousand couples. Its author calls it a "practical tool." Velander mentioned that pastors using the inventory report an increased number of decisions not to marry arrived at by the couples on their own, not from some "outside" authority's advice.<sup>73</sup>

The *Premarital Inventory* (PMI)<sup>74</sup> is widely used in Catholic premarital preparation programs. It is not a statistically predictive test but serves as a discussion stimulator. The scores are a percentage of the agreement between male and female respondent views. Thomas Milton noted that the PMI was used, then discarded, by *Education for Marriage, Inc.*, because it was seen to be biased toward the expectations of the clergy for whose use it had been developed.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>71</sup>Patrick McDonald and Charles Cleveland, *Marriage Climate Analysis* (Saluda, NC: Family Life Publications, 1977).

<sup>72</sup>Patrick McDonald and Claudette McDonald, *Marriage Expectation Inventory* (Saluda, NC: Family Life, 1979).

<sup>73</sup>P. Velander, *The Premarriage Awareness Inventory* (Cannon Falls, MN: Sheperd's Staff, 1979), 19.

<sup>74</sup>Charles Burnett, Jamie Egolf, and Gerald Sullivan, *The Premarital Inventory* (Casper, WY: Bess Associates, 1975).

<sup>75</sup>Milton, 23.

Extensive work was done in the development of the *Prepare-Enrich Inventories*.<sup>76</sup> *Prepare* is not predictive but rather a growth stimulator for use by professionals. Items identify specific interpersonal processes that become problematic for many couples. *Prepare* includes an idealistic distortion-corrective scale. Three basic areas are postulated: Intrapersonal, Interpersonal, and External. A fifteen to twenty page computer printout is available to counselors. The *Prepare* inventories are available only to trained clinical/pastoral counselors. Mace noted that *Prepare* without feedback is rated by couples using it to be as effective in preparation for marriage as is *Prepare* plus group or private supervised interaction.<sup>77</sup>

*Prepare-Enrich* is a pre-marital program which has been distilled from the longer *Prepare for Marriage* and *Marriage Enrichment*. It has three inventories: *Prepare for Marriage*; *Prepare-MC* (Marriage with Children); *Enrich Your Marriage*.<sup>78</sup>

All three inventories contain similar content categories and each inventory has 125 items specifically directed to each section. According to the *Counselor's Manual*, "each inventory is intended to provide a comprehensive picture of relevant issues for premarital or married couples."<sup>79</sup>

The Counselor's Manual suggests seven invaluable reasons for Prepare-Enrich.

1. It will increase the couple's awareness of areas of weakness.

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<sup>76</sup>David Fournier, David Olson, and Joan Druckman, "Assessing Marital and Premarital Relationships: The Prepare-Enrich Inventories," in *A Sourcebook in Marriage and Family Assessment*, ed. E. Filsinger (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1980).

<sup>77</sup>Mace, "Education and Preparation for Marriage: New Approaches," 14.

<sup>78</sup>Prepare Enrich Inventory, [http://www.prepare-enrich.com/about\\_us](http://www.prepare-enrich.com/about_us) (accessed September 2006).

<sup>79</sup>David H. Olson, David G. Fournier, and Joan M. Druckman, *Prepare-Enrich Counselor's Manual* (Minneapolis, MN: Prepare-Enrich, 1982), 1.



2. It will create stimulation for couple's discussion.
3. The couple will receive a profile of important relationship issues.
4. The couple will understand the value of open and honest communication.
5. The couple will develop skills which will serve as preventative tools in strengthening their relationship.
6. Prepare-MC will help a couple to discuss issues relating to existing children.
7. Enrich is a premarriage tool.<sup>80</sup>

For clergy and counselors there are four values:

1. The diagnostic profile provides instant information for the facilitator.
2. Because of its clinical value, the facilitator is able to gain greater insights as he analyzes the couple.
3. The counselor is therefore able to give effective advice to relevant issues.
4. Prepare-Enrich is designed to help identify strengths and weaknesses in the relationship.<sup>81</sup>

In general, all the tools and measurement instruments, including *Prepare-Enrich*, were designed to help identify strengths and weaknesses in the relationship, some of them are intended primarily for diagnostics, and some combine diagnostics with either counseling or therapy. Many of those tools are now being used not only by the professional clinical psychiatrists or counselors, but also by the clergy.

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<sup>80</sup>Ibid., 3.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid.

## A Brief History and the Current Status of Premarital Counseling in the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination

The history of premarital education in the Seventh-day Adventist Church is relatively brief. However, it generally reflects the Church's growing interest in premarital education.

### Premarital Counseling in the World-Wide Seventh-day Adventist Denomination

Votaw's was the earliest of three articles appearing in *Ministry*, the Adventist journal for pastors. Votaw reported on his "invariable rule to spend at least half-an-hour with the prospective bride and groom."<sup>82</sup> In a brief article, he reported his surprise at the favorable response and adds, "Some later brought friends to be talked to as you did to us."<sup>83</sup> The reported content of the half-hour encounter consisted of Bible instruction about marriage, values, and morals.

The second *Ministry* article was entitled "Premarital Interviews" by Clifford Reeves. The author suggested that when a pastor is asked to marry a couple, he "can discreetly suggest he is available for talks."<sup>84</sup> Participation is voluntary. The content is divided with pastoral responsibility focused on exhortation and discussion of a "good book on marriage." Reeves assigns, by referral to a physician, the discussion of "intimate physical aspects of marriage" and adds that only he can best "assess the physical fitness

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<sup>82</sup>H. H. Votaw, "Ministerial Responsibility Connected with the Marriage Ceremony," *Ministry*, February 1936, 10.

<sup>83</sup>*Ibid.*, 22

<sup>84</sup>Clifford Reeves, "Premarital Interviews," *Ministry*, November 1955, 15.

for marriage and sexual relationships.”<sup>85</sup> The suggested pattern for pastors is two interviews, two weeks apart. “The sessions begin with prayer, scripture texts, and discussion of some of the matters in suggested books.”<sup>86</sup> He outlines six philosophical points in a homily for the second session and addresses two key issues: money and in-laws. Pastors are challenged to equip themselves for doing premarital preparation by reading and study.

The third article was written by Dr. Colin D. Standish for *Ministry* magazine in March of 1976. Dr. Standish, the then president of Columbia Union College, entitled the article, “The Pastor and Premarital Counseling.” In this article, Standish emphasized the importance of the minister in spending a considerable amount of time guiding and counseling the couple for marriage. He even made an analogy between marriage and baptism: “The preparation of young people for marriage should be as strongly undertaking as the preparation for baptism.”<sup>87</sup> Standish was concerned about many college students who were getting married during their college years. He also showed a similar concern regarding the lack of premarital counseling. In suggesting that ministers should be much more diligent in preparing couples for the second most important decision in their lives, Standish offered ten “guidelines,” six of which focused on the spiritual aspects of the couple/God relationship. These, he postulates, are the basic foundations of a good marriage. The home has the basic responsibility for premarital preparation, but pastors are also responsible. In fact, “if he has been careless or negligent

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<sup>85</sup>Ibid., 18.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid.

<sup>87</sup>Colin Standish, “Pastor and Premarital Counseling,” *Ministry*, March 1976, 18.

... he stands partially responsible, at least, for any of the domestic problems that subsequently arise in that marriage.”<sup>88</sup> His suggestion was to introduce the couple to the book *The Adventist Home*. In this article, the only references cited were *The Adventist Home*, *Messages to Young People*, and the Bible.

Ronald Spalding noted the work of his father, Arthur W. Spalding, who from 1922-1942 worked with the Adventist General Conference Home Commission.<sup>89</sup> Spalding had a concern for premarital preparation and wrote a pamphlet entitled, *Makers of the Home*. Much of his work focused on child development, but he also attempted premarital preparation. In 1938, he completed a premarital bibliography for the denomination youth department, but it was rejected and not published. His son observed that the lack of response in the church about premarital preparation troubled his father. The Home Commission published study guides each year for personal study and group discussions. In 1927, the topic was adolescence and was added to the five-year cycle of study guides. Co-authored by Spalding and Belle Wood-Comstock, the topics included age for marriage, seeking counsel, business preparation for marriage, educational requirements for marriage, same religious faith in marriage, ethics of courtship, lover's quarrels, self-control, and health requirements for marriage. This appears to be the initial significant Adventist effort at premarital preparation or family life education.

Ronald Spalding reported that his father offered a course in “Social Relations to Youth” which was largely premarital preparation at Union College in 1936 and at

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<sup>88</sup>Ibid., 20.

<sup>89</sup>Arthur Spalding, Andrews University Family Life Workshop, Berrien Springs, MI, interview, Berrien Springs, MI, September 13, 1977.

Madison College from 1944 to 1945. Some tension within the church leadership seems obvious since the material on premarital preparation was not published in *Ministry* magazine despite a twenty-year span in development time.

Charles Crider and Robert Kistler studied the Adventist family from a sociological perspective. They discovered that "in the area of divorce Adventists are consistent with the rest of society."<sup>90</sup> They statistically quantified areas of major conflict in Adventist marriages and observed that these revolve around spousal relationships. After summarizing respondent comments, they observed, "There is a real need in the Seventh-day Adventist Church for more active efforts to strengthen family life and homes in the church."<sup>91</sup> Strangely, the authors omitted a specific mention of premarital preparation in their list of recommendations, but suggested school classes that approach family life (and thereby marriage) as early as in junior academy (grades 9 and 10).

Another name to be mentioned in connection with premarital and marital counseling is John Youngberg. John Youngberg and his wife Millie developed and conducted numerous seminars in the area of family life, approaching family matters from the spiritual point of view. In 1994, he issued a well-known book, *Rebuilding the Family Altar: Meeting End-time Challenges*. The book has also been translated into the Russian language.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>90</sup>Charles C. Crider and Robert C. Kistler, *The Seventh-day Adventist Family: An Empirical Study* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 1979), 194.

<sup>91</sup>*Ibid.*, 241.

<sup>92</sup>John Youngberg, "Marriage Commitment Seminar: A Complete How to Guide" (Marriage and Family Commitment Seminars, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI, 1993); "Family Seminar: Teacher's Manual" (Keene, TX: Revelation Seminars, 1990); "Family Life Workshop" (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 1976); *Rebuilding the Family Altar: Meeting End-time Challenges* (Miami, FL: Inter-American Publishing Association, 1994).

were made. In 1985, the revised edition was published as *Preparing for Marriage*.<sup>97</sup> The "Preparing for Marriage Inventory" was expanded to include family of origin material and also preparation for remarriage.

In 1975, Don and Sue Murray, both Assistant Professors at Andrews University, decided to use their marriage as a basis for ministry to engaged couples. They started a weekend program called *Adventist Engaged Encounter* (AEE) in the spring of 1978 at Andrews University.

The program was experiential in nature, including a minimum of six hours of team presentation time along with three hours of individual reflection time and three hours of shared dialogue time for each couple.

AEE had five main goals:

To encourage a healthy look at one's relationship

To provide a structure that promotes spiritual decision-making and commitment

To provide a model for communication and conflict resolution

To provide a forum for a couple to look realistically at their own expectations

To promote a greater level of acceptance, trust and confidence among couples.<sup>98</sup>

AEE was not intended to take the place of premarital education, but to augment premarital education by enriching the engaged couple. The Murrays suggested that the Encounter be followed with the premarital education program.

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<sup>97</sup>R. Flowers, ed., *Preparing for Marriage* (Washington, DC: Home and Family Service, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1985).

<sup>98</sup>Cassimy, 62-64.

During the weekend, the couple was taught coping skills, communication skills, commitment, and acceptance. The couple also learned how to commit themselves to growth after the wedding. Conflict resolution skills and other basic skills often taken for granted by engaged couples were emphasized.

#### General Conference Committee Actions

In the General Conference Council Meeting in 1978, the members identified the need to develop a worldwide program for premarital education. The following action was recorded:

To authorize as a pilot program until Annual Council 1979 a program of premarital education for couples to be married by Seventh-day Adventist pastors. The General Conference Home and Family Service has sponsored the development of this program of premarital education designed to be used by the pastor officiating at the wedding or by his designate. The program includes cassettes, background reading material, tests, outlines of subject matter and suggested special topics, and it is initially available through the Home and Family Service of the General Conference.<sup>99</sup>

Another action taken by the North American Division during the 1984 Annual Council relates to ministers in the Adventist Church and Premarital Education. The committee voted to adopt the plan for premarital education, where the ministers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church were to provide premarital guidance to the couples requesting to be married:

Where possible, this premarital preparation of the couple should consist of several counseling sessions conducted by the minister who is to perform the service or by another qualified individual. For a suggested method of approach to such premarital guidance, as well as material to share with couples for self study in instances where personal pastoral guidance is not possible, the General Conference Home and Family

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<sup>99</sup>General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (Washington, DC), Minutes of Meetings of Annual Council Committee, October 1978, meeting of 12 October 1978.

Service has prepared Marriage Education, a program, which includes study guides, cassettes, background reading material, tests and other pertinent information.<sup>100</sup>

Thus, it became the official policy of the General Conference for Seventh-day Adventist ministers to provide premarital education. We now look at the situation in the Euro-Asian Division in order to identify what should be done in order to implement this policy effectively there.

#### Premarital Counseling in the Euro-Asia Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

Premarital education was not offered to Adventists in Euro-Asia until the mid-nineties.<sup>101</sup> Most marriages in the church in the Soviet Union have traditionally been between Adventists born into the denomination. Church members were expected to maintain traditional Adventist values, including family ties. The church offered only some basic moral guidelines in regard to marriage. Psychology as a science was widely used by the communist regime in its fight against Christianity, leaving many pastors, church leaders, and lay members with a negative attitude toward the use of psychology.

Based on the writings of Ellen G. White, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Euro-Asian division emphasized the sacredness of marriage and parents' responsibilities toward their children. With the inauguration of *Perestrojka*, a fresh wave of new converts filled the post-Soviet Adventist Church with much excitement, but also with some new problems. Although there are no statistics available on contemporary Seventh-day

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<sup>100</sup>North American Division, Minutes of Meetings, 18 October 1984, 55.

<sup>101</sup>In 1994, Zaoski Theological Seminary introduced a thirty-hours-course on family matters. The seminars on marital issues have been randomly offered in the late nineties in the territory of the Moscow conference and the Priokski mission.



Adventist families in Euro-Asian Division, national statistics reveal that most contemporary families lack good marital role models; the majority of families are blended families, many homes are parented by single individuals—a mother, a father or a grandparent.<sup>102</sup>

Unlike the North American Division, the Euro-Asian Division has not yet seriously explored a response to these new challenges. The majority of pastors are not properly trained, and although a premarital counseling course is required at Zaokski Theological Seminary (ZTS), most pastors lack formal seminary training. Thus, the general response of the Church was to translate and publish literature dealing with the marital issues.<sup>103</sup> The Family and Health departments at local Conferences occasionally conduct seminars that focus on family matters and on the education of children. The area of premarital counseling is typically not included.

Recently, however, marital issues and related topics have been used in the course of conducting evangelistic meetings in the Euro-Asia Division. Galina Stele, Womens' Ministry Coordinator for the Euro-Asia Division, conducted a number of 'family issues' seminars, including two major satellite evangelistic campaigns, targeting the entire Euro-Asian Division.<sup>104</sup> The author of this project also had an opportunity to use the seminar

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<sup>102</sup>The number of women in their thirties significantly exceeds the number of men. The number of single-parent families is constantly growing. More than 700,000 Russian children have no parents to care for them; one-third of them eventually end up in orphanages. More than 50,000 children run away from home every year. Unicef, "Demographic Statistics," [www.unicef.org/infobycountry/russia\\_statistics.htm](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/russia_statistics.htm) (accessed November 2007).

<sup>103</sup>See the review of the published sources in the following chapter (pp. 43-45).

<sup>104</sup>2007 Kiev's program with Peter Kulakov, and 2006 Nizhnij Novgorod's program with Arthur Stele.

on family life as an outreach tool in the course of the recent evangelistic outreach in Karaganda, Kazakhstan.<sup>105</sup>

### The Current Demographic Situation in Russia and in the Former Soviet Union Republics

Divorce statistics as percentages of marriages in the former Soviet Union Republics in 2006, according to the *Divorce Magazine*, are as follows: for Belorussia, Russian Federation 65, Ukraine 63, Moldova 52, Kazakhstan 39, Kyrgyzstan 25, Armenia 18, Azerbaijan 15, Georgia 12, and Uzbekistan 12.<sup>106</sup> The tendency is clearly seen here: percentage of divorces is much higher in western countries and lower in the East.

The current ratio of divorces to marriages in Russia, especially in big cities such as Moscow and St. Petersburg, is eight to ten. Fewer children are being born. There were 36 million children in Russia in 1989; currently there are only 26.3 million children. The number of families with no children is constantly increasing. Families are also becoming smaller—sixty-five percent of parents have only one child, 28 percent have two children, and only seven percent have three or more children.<sup>107</sup>

According to sociologists, a divorced woman with a child has little chance of getting married again. There are few available men because the mortality rate of men of working age is extremely high. The life expectancy of females as a percentage of males

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<sup>105</sup> August 2007.

<sup>106</sup> Divorce Rates, [www.DivorceMagazine.com](http://www.DivorceMagazine.com) (accessed October 2007).

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

for 2005 is 122.<sup>108</sup> Life expectancy for both males and females decreased since 1970 from 70 to 65 years.<sup>109</sup>

Western cultural trends are having a significant impact on the Russian family. People tend to marry at an older age, many couples do not get officially married at all, greater numbers of people prefer having several marriages in the course of their lives, the birth of the first child is postponed for many years, and fewer children are being born. These Western trends, combined with poverty, lack of social protection, poor health care, alcoholism, and problems with housing, are causing families to collapse.

The recent survey of the *Levada-Center*<sup>110</sup> demonstrated that family problems in the Russian Federation are partly related to poor social care. Most Russians, even the wealthy ones, are afraid of becoming poor. According to a public opinion poll, even if the family has a decent income, if one of the spouses gets sick, they end up in poverty. A second child in the family indicates not only the family's stable income, but also its confidence about a stable future. The majority of Russians, however, do not have this confidence.

*Levada* reports the alarming fact that Russia is "one of the few middle-income countries in the world where life expectancy is falling."<sup>111</sup> Poor diet and alcohol consumption have long blighted Russian lives, reducing the estimates of current life

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<sup>108</sup>Unicef, "Demographic Statistics."

<sup>109</sup>Ibid.

<sup>110</sup>Levada Center, <http://www.eu-russiacentre.org/assets/files/EU-RC%20Levada%20Research%20Commentary.pdf> (accessed October 2007).

<sup>111</sup>Ibid.

expectancy for women to sixty-six, and an even more catastrophic fifty-eight for men. Life expectancy in Russia is twelve years lower than in the United States, which is a startling gap for a fellow member of the G8 club of industrialized nations.<sup>112</sup>

Since 1992, the Russian population has fallen by six million people, and if current low birth and high death trends continue, the country will lose approximately eighteen million people by 2025, the report said. That means the population could drop from the 142 million recorded in the 2002 census to 124 million, which would mean that roughly twice the population of the United Kingdom would be living in a country that covers one-eighth of the world's land mass.<sup>113</sup>

The Deputy Minister of Health and Social Development of Russia, Vladimir Starodubtsev, said that Russia's population has decreased by nine million over the last ten years.<sup>114</sup> Moreover, depopulation has affected virtually all of Russia. According to conservative estimates, the Russian population is decreasing by about 700-800,000 each year (other reports show that the figure is 1.2 million a year). Since 1992, the death rate among Russians has exceeded the birth rate and the difference has been increasing since then, -0.2 according to UNICEF statistics.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>112</sup>Ibid.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid.

<sup>114</sup>Department of Health and Social Development, "Statistics," [www.directrix.ru](http://www.directrix.ru) (accessed October 2007).

<sup>115</sup>Unicef, "Demographic Statistics."

The male death rate in Russia is one of the highest in the world. Thirty percent of the deceased are men of working years.<sup>116</sup> The main causes of death are alcoholism, cancer, accidents, and poisonings. Deaths from abuse of alcohol in Russia skyrocketed 3.5 times over the past five years. The suicide rate exceeds Central European statistics by 2.5 times among males and 1.5 times among females.<sup>117</sup> In Russia, there are twice as many deaths in traffic accidents as there are in European states. The summary result of the above factors is that out of today's generation of sixteen-year-olds, only fifty-four percent will live until they reach their retirement age.

In 1998, for the first time, the number of retirees in Russia exceeded the number of children and juveniles under sixteen by 110,000. By January 1, 2004, this number had grown to 4.2 million. At the time of writing the number of children under fourteen is 2.5 times lower than the number of retirees (10.6 and 27.2 million accordingly). According to predictions, the number of retirees would significantly increase in the year 2006 and by 2016, retired persons will comprise twenty-five percent of the Russian population.<sup>118</sup>

The above data demonstrate a frightening decline in the Russian population and call for immediate action. Pastors and Bible workers should at least be aware of these alarming trends. This awareness would encourage pastors and congregations together to face the situation and to work toward solutions. Although it is not very likely that the pastors could significantly amend these social problems, they need to be aware of the

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<sup>116</sup>Ibid.

<sup>117</sup>Ibid.

<sup>118</sup>Levada Center.

general situation and be able to relate this awareness to the local community. As a matter of fact, these alarming statistics could potentially open many doors for local congregations that seek to contribute to Russian society. A Christian perspective on family issues could become an answer to the problems facing both local communities and congregations. Family seminars are powerful tools that could be implemented both by secular institutions and by the church in order to prevent escalation of the problems referred to above. Pastors can make local communities aware that the Church does have something to address the escalating social problems. The congregations, where biblical principles of family relationship are promoted, can serve as models to the society and attract people by the example of solid and healthy families. Providing pastors and church workers with the tools needed for family counseling is therefore absolutely necessary and is consistent with the aspirations of modern Russian society.

#### Available Literature on Premarital Counseling in the Russian Language

During the Soviet period, only a few typewritten translations of some of the E. G. White compilations on marriage and family were available in Russia. Unlike the North-American Division, the Euro-Asian Division has not yet seriously explored a response to the challenges facing families. Premarital and marital counseling remains a rather rare practice in Russia. In more recent times, the Church in Russia attempted to provide basic moral guidelines in regard to marriage. A number of books were published, mostly translations from English. These have been used by those pastors and Bible workers who believe in premarital and marital counseling.

One of the first books translated and published in Russia on the subject of family life from a Christian perspective was the book of Willard Harley, *His Needs, Her Needs*.<sup>119</sup> The book was published by the Baptist denomination. The first book on marital issues published by the Adventist Church in Russia was Ellen White's *Adventist Home* (1996).<sup>120</sup> It was soon followed by a book by Norman Wright and Wes Roberts *Before You Say I Do*.<sup>121</sup> In 1999, the Adventist Publishing House, Source of Life, started publishing books by Nancy Van Pelt. The first in that series was *We've Only Just Begun: A Guide to Successful Courtship*.<sup>122</sup> Eventually, other books by the same author were issued.<sup>123</sup> In 1995 John Youngberg's book *Rebuilding the Family Altar: Meeting the End Time Challenges* was published and translated.<sup>124</sup>

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Russia has also been using books on marriage published by other denominations, such as the books by Henry Cloud and John

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<sup>119</sup>Виллард Харли, *Законы Семейной Жизни* [His Needs, Her Needs] (Москва: Протестант, 1992).

<sup>120</sup>Елена Уайт, *Христианский Дом* [The Adventist Home] (Источник жизни, 1996). In 2004, a popular version of *The Adventist Home* was published: Елена Уайт, *Секреты Счастливой Семьи* (Заокский: Источник жизни, 2004).

<sup>121</sup>Вэс Робертс, Норман Райт, *Прежде Чем Ты Скажешь Да* [Before You Say I Do] (Заокский: Источник жизни, 1997).

<sup>122</sup>Ненси Ван Пелт, *Мы Только Начинаем* (Заокский: Источник жизни, 1999).

<sup>123</sup>Nancy Van Pelt, "To Have and to Hold: A Guide to Successful Marriage" has been published by the Adventist publishing house *Найти и Удержать*, 2001; George Reid, and Nancy Van Pelt, *С Этого Дня и Дальше* [From This Day Forward: Blueprint for Family Happiness] (Заокский: Источник жизни, 2004); and Nancy Van Pelt, *Разумная Любовь* [Smart Love: A Field Guide for Single Adults] (2006).

<sup>124</sup>Джон Янгберг, *Восстановление Семейного Очага* (Заокский: Источник Жизни, 1995).

Townsend, *Boundaries in Marriage*,<sup>125</sup> and *Boundaries in Dating*.<sup>126</sup> Gary Chapman's book *Five Love Languages*,<sup>127</sup> Gary Smalley's, *If Only He Knew: What No Woman Can Resist*,<sup>128</sup> Norman Wright's, *Communication Is a Key to Your Marriage*,<sup>129</sup> Len McMillan's, *Putting Up with Mister Right*,<sup>130</sup> and others have also been used. The general trend during those years was to provide popular literature that could be used independently by individuals and families, without the help of a counselor.

However, when the immediate need had been met, another trend began to develop: literature for the training of counselors appeared. In 2005, Gary Collins' book *Christian Counseling*<sup>131</sup> was published. It was followed by a number of other books, most of them by Russian authors.<sup>132</sup> With the exception of Gary Collins' book, this literature is published by secular publishers, and reflects humanistic perspectives and values that are also prevalent in the highly secularized, modern Russian society.

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<sup>125</sup> Генри Клауд, Джон Таусенд, *Брак—Где Проходит Граница* [Boundaries in Marriage] (Москва: Триада, 2001).

<sup>126</sup> Генри Клауд, Джон Таусенд, *Свидания – Нужны ли Границы* [Boundaries in Dating] (Москва: Триада, 2001).

<sup>127</sup> Гэри Чепмен, *Пять Языков Любви* [Five Love Languages] (СПб.: Библия для всех, 2000).

<sup>128</sup> Гари Смолей, *Если Бы Он Только Знал* [If Only He Knew] (Москва: Триада, 2000).

<sup>129</sup> Норман Райт, *Общение - Ключ к Вашему Браку* [Communication Is a Key to Your Marriage] (Москва: Мирт, 2002).

<sup>130</sup> Лен Макмиллан, *Как Ужиться с Мужчиной* [Putting Up with Mister Right] (Заокский: Христианская служба семьи и здоровья, 2002).

<sup>131</sup> Гари Коллинз, *Душепопечительство* [Christian Counseling] (Москва: Мирт, 2005).

<sup>132</sup> Диля Еникеева, *Тернистый Путь Любви* (Москва: АСК, 2007); Сальвадор Минухин, Чарльз Фишман, *Техники Семейной Терапии* (Москва, Класс, 2006); Кнулина Н.А. Зритнева Е.И. *Семьеведение* (Санкт-Петербург: Владос, 2006); Слепкова В.И. Харвест, *Психология Семьи* (Москва: Роспен, 2006); Дружинин В.Н. *Психология семьи* (Санкт-Петербург: Питер, 2005); Целуйко В.М., *Психология Современной Семьи* (Санкт-Петербург: Владос, 2006).



## **Conclusions**

Valuable premarital resources and techniques have been developed to assist couples in building up strong families. It is the duty of a pastor-counselor to be well equipped in order to conduct the counseling sessions efficiently and to be able to aid couples in resolving conflicts and other issues.

The literature on premarital counseling published in Russia by secular publishers lacks a Christian perspective. The literature published by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Euro-Asian Division deals primarily with family issues. However, premarital counseling in church ministry has not been promoted. At the same time, the situation with family matters in Russia and in the territory of the former Soviet Union Republics calls for immediate attention. Thus, there is a definite need to develop a Seminar for pastors that would be biblically grounded, suitable for modern Russian society, and based on current literature and effective modern approaches.

CHAPTER III  
TOWARD A THEOLOGY OF MARRIAGE AND  
MARRIAGE PREPARATION

The most immediate concern for pastors involved in premarital and marital counseling is an understanding of the biblical perspective of marriage. When the theological foundations of marriage are accurately articulated in their proper perspective, the nature of marriage is more clearly understood, and the chances of building a strong Christian family significantly increase.

The purpose of this chapter is to reflect on the biblical principles and reasons for marriage, as well as to define the role of the pastor in presenting the biblical perspective of marriage. The contribution of the Spirit of Prophecy concerning premarital preparation will also be evaluated.

**The Definition of Marriage**

The Bible provides a concise definition when it states, "Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife and they become one flesh" (Gen 2:24). A man and a woman are joined together to become a blessing to one another. "One in purpose, one in pursuit of goals, and one harmonious unit is God's desire for us."<sup>1</sup> "And

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<sup>1</sup>Elliot Osborne, "Development of a Coping Mechanism Seminar for Single Parents Within a Seventh-day Adventist Context" (DMin dissertation, Andrews University, 1989), 22.

the Lord God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him'" (Gen 2:18). It was God who made the observation that man should not be alone and He took the initiative in dealing with his aloneness. So God created a mate suitable for the man.

The Bible also states that man must leave his parents and cleave to his wife so they can become one flesh. He is no longer attached to his parents; instead, he is attached to his wife. Oneness is a total commitment of the man and the woman. "As the couple share themselves intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually they become as one. This oneness that God intends is between man and wife and excludes a third person."<sup>2</sup> This initiative by God is so important that it must not be broken by any initiative of men. So Jesus said in His word, "What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matt 19:6).

What does this unity or oneness imply? Ellen G. White writes about the necessity of consecrating "soul, body, and spirit to God."<sup>3</sup> The oneness with God, as well as the oneness in marriage, involves this threefold pattern. Kenneth Morris defines Christian marriage as a lifelong union of a man and a woman with the complete sharing of body, mind and spirit as it is set forth in the Bible. It is for the purpose of mutual fellowship, encouragement, and understanding; for the procreation (if it may be) of children and their physical and spiritual nurture, for the safeguarding and benefit of society."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>David H. White, "Development of the Participant's Manual for a Divorce Recovery Seminar" (DMin dissertation, Andrews University, 1986), 11.

<sup>3</sup>Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1898), 827.

<sup>4</sup>Kenneth Morris, *Marriage Counseling: A Manual for Ministers* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1965), 9.

However, there is another dimension to this unity – a vertical one. Ellen G. White, writing about God’s plan for married couples, states that “their safety depended upon keeping pure, and preserving their unity with each other and with God.”<sup>5</sup> Genuine marital unity is impossible without the commitment of both spouses to Jesus Christ. Ellen G. White describes marital unity as having both human and divine dimensions:

The happiness and prosperity of the marriage relation depends upon the unity of the parties; but between the believer and the unbeliever there is a radical difference of tastes, inclinations, and purposes. They are serving two masters, between whom there can be no concord. However pure and correct one's principles may be, the influence of an unbelieving companion will have a tendency to lead away from God. . . . The Lord’s direction is, “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers” (2 Cor 6:14, 17, 18).<sup>6</sup>

Although the Apostle Paul allows, as an exception, the marital union between a believer and a nonbeliever, he approaches it as a dynamic process aimed at the salvation of the unbeliever and eventually at the oneness of both spouses with Christ: “For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?” (1 Cor 7:16). Thus, faith in Jesus Christ and personal relationship with Him are absolutely necessary for a Christian marriage. Norman Wright affirms,

A Christian marriage is a total commitment of two people to the person of Jesus Christ and to one another. It is a commitment in which there is no holding back of anything. Marriage is a pledge of mutual fidelity; it is a partnership of mutual subordination. A Christian Marriage is similar to a solvent, a freeing up of the man and woman to be themselves and become all that God intends for them to become. Marriage is a refining process that God will use to have us develop into the man or woman He wants us to become.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Ellen G. White, “The Apostasy of Solomon: His Idolatry and Dissipation,” *HR* 13 (May 1878): 141.

<sup>6</sup>Ellen G. White, *Conflict and Courage* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1970), 57. Ellen G. White’s views on preparation for marriage are more fully developed in a subsequent section.

<sup>7</sup>Wright, *Premarital Counseling*, 87.

It was instituted by God because it was to serve as a blessing for humanity. "That which the eternal Father Himself had pronounced good was the law of highest blessing and development for man."<sup>8</sup>

Now that we have a brief sketch of biblical and theological definitions of marriage before us, we can begin to appreciate the far-reaching implications of this sacred institution and the part that the pastor and the church should play in helping and supporting marriages.

### **Biblical Principles of Marriage**

When we consider the nature of marriage, we need to examine the biblical principles of marriage. The Bible is clear that marriage is God's plan for the human race. When God completed His creation, He expressed His satisfaction by declaring that "it is very good" (Gen 1:31). Part of the goodness was the establishment of the institution of marriage (Gen 2:24).

### **Marriage Established by God**

The biblical basis for the theological understanding of the responsibilities in marriage comes from the creation narratives in the opening chapters of Genesis. Only humankind is created in the image of God. Only humankind is made totally by God, not separated or brought forth from something else. Only human sexuality is designed, not only for the purpose of procreation, but to reflect the intimacy of relationship evident among the three persons of the Godhead.<sup>9</sup> When God brought and paraded all the animals

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 341.

<sup>9</sup>Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), 15.

before Adam, it was His way of suggesting to Adam that he was different. When they passed by in pairs, Adam would certainly identify his aloneness. He was without a companion. It was then that God declared, "It is not good for man to be alone. I will make him a helper fit for him" (Gen 2:18, RSV). God's first purpose, therefore, was companionship. Andreas J. Köstenberger notes, that "the biblical text gives no indication that Adam himself was even conscious of being alone or discontent in his singleness. Rather, God is shown to take the initiative in fashioning a compatible human companion for the man."<sup>10</sup>

Michael G. Lawler observes:

This fact alone, that God names male and female together *adam* (that is, earthling or humankind), founds the equality of man and woman as human beings, whatever their distinction in functions. It establishes them as "bone of bone and flesh of flesh" (Genesis 2:23), and enables them "therefore" to marry and to become "one body" (Genesis 2:24).<sup>11</sup>

Thus, the Bible asserts, that sexuality, marriage, and fertility are all good, because they are the good gifts of the Creator (Gen 1:31). In fact, God himself conducted the "first pre-marital counseling session" and officiated at the first wedding ceremony in the Garden (Gen 1:28). Because of God's involvement in this process, marriage has been identified as a divine institution (Gen 2:22).

### Marriage as a Covenant

The relationship that God instituted for Adam and Eve was to become a model for humanity. In the books of Proverbs (2:17) and Malachi (2:14), God speaks of the

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<sup>10</sup>Andreas J. Köstenberger, *God, Marriage, and Family* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 35.

<sup>11</sup>Michael G. Lawler, "Marriage in the Bible" in *Perspective on Marriage*, ed. Kieran Scott and Michael Warren (New York, Oxford: Oxford University, 1993), 11.

marriage affiliation as a covenant. An important factor contributing to the alarming rise of divorce among Christians is the growing acceptance of the view of marriage as a social contract governed by the laws of the land rather than a sacred covenant regulated by the higher moral law of God.

Marriage in the Old Testament is called to mirror the relationship of love and grace which God chose to enter into with his people Israel. In the New Testament it is likened to the relationship of Jesus Christ with all his beloved followers. David W.

Torrance observes,

According to Scripture, God through his Holy Spirit unites us with the Person of Christ so that we actually share in the life of Christ, are clothed with Christ and are made, however inadequately, to reflect him. He places our marriage within the covenant so that our marriage, in Christ, is made to share in and, in some way, to reflect Christ and the grace and beauty of his covenant relationship with his people. Through his Holy Spirit it is grounded on and sealed by and within his covenant.<sup>12</sup>

The Apostle Paul, writing to the Church in Ephesus, says, "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. . . .

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her" (Eph 5:21). For Paul, Christian marriage takes place only within the covenant.

To appreciate the biblical view of marriage as a sacred covenant, it is helpful to distinguish between a contract and a covenant. Paul Palmer offers helpful clarification of the difference between the two:

Contracts engage the services of people; covenants engage persons. Contracts are made for stipulated period of time; covenants are forever. Contracts can be broken, with material loss to the contracting parties, covenants cannot be broken, but if violated, they result in personal loss and broken hearts. Contracts are witnessed by

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<sup>12</sup>David W. Torrance, "Marriage in the Light of Holy Scripture," in *God, Family, and Sexuality*, ed. David W. Torrance (Carberry: Handsel, 1997), 33.

people with the state as guarantor, covenants are witnessed by God with God a guarantor.<sup>13</sup>

Howard Eyrich observes that “when a man takes a wife and a woman takes a husband, they voluntarily commit themselves to each other and enter this covenant relationship before God with all its rights, privileges, and responsibilities.”<sup>14</sup>

### Marriage After the Fall

The first marriage was perfect, complete, and lacked nothing. It met the needs of mankind. However, universal experience reveals that marriage is fraught with difficulties. Already the first sin had as its first consequence the rupture of the original communion between people and God, and between man and woman. Further history affirms the poignant story in Genesis attesting to the havoc wrought in the sexual relationship as a result of our disobedience to God. Male and female differences, rather than complementing one another and bringing about communion, are often a cause of great tension and division. Sexual attraction itself, originally given by God to be the power to love as He loves, tends to be—because of sin—a desire for self-gratification at the expense of others.<sup>15</sup>

Nevertheless, God’s ideal for marriage as articulated in Gen 1-2 continued to set the standard for responsibilities and roles of husbands and wives in the subsequent

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<sup>13</sup>Paul E. Palmer “Christian Marriage Contract or Covenant?” *Theological Studies* 33, no. 4 (December 1972): 639.

<sup>14</sup>Howard Eyrich, “A Premarital Counseling Manual” (DMin project, Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, 1987), 2.

<sup>15</sup>Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1949), 5:365.



history of humanity.<sup>16</sup> Based on the foundational treatment of Gen 1-2, subsequent chapters of the Old Testament provide information on the roles and responsibilities of husbands and wives toward God and toward each other. While the reality often fell short of the ideal, this does not alter the fact that the standards that were in place for Old Testament couples and believers were grounded in the pre-Fall ideal.<sup>17</sup> The Hebrew Scripture provides a survey of Israel's history in historical and prophetic books. This history witnessed numerous ways in which God's creation ideal for marriage was compromised, including instances of polygamy, divorce, adultery, homosexuality, and sterility.<sup>18</sup>

The New Testament builds on and further elaborates the Old Testament teaching on marriage while cohering with the divine ideal of marriage presented in the book of Genesis. Jesus' major pronouncement on the subject of marriage was made in Matt 19. The Lord reaffirmed God's ideal of monogamous, lifelong, and heterosexual marriage, with reference to both fundamental Old Testament and New Testament texts on the subject (Gen 1:27; Matt 19:4-6). This makes clear that Jesus did not view marriage as a mere social institution or convention. Rather, according to Jesus, marriage is a sacred bond between a man and a woman instituted by and entered into before God.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Henry A. Bowman, *A Christian Interpretation of Marriage* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), 14.

<sup>17</sup>Ellen White, *The Adventist Home* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1980), 25-28.

<sup>18</sup>Michael Mitterauer and Reinhard Sieder, *The European Family* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1988), 3-24.

<sup>19</sup>Ellen White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1909), 365.

## The Permanency of Marriage

From both the Old and New Testaments, it is clear that marriage is to be permanent. The writer of the book of beginnings wrote, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and cleave to his wife and they shall become one flesh" (Gen 2:24). Then Matthew, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, recorded the words of Jesus who recalled the Genesis passage and added for our edification, "What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder" (Matt 19:6). This is a clear indication from both Testaments that God intended marriages to be permanent. When the marriage vows are being taken, the phrase "till death do us part" is included.<sup>20</sup> This is surely a reminder to all candidates for marriage that the desired state of marriage is for life; it is permanent.

In addition, Paul, writing to the Corinthian church, emphasized that God's ideal is that "the wife should not separate from her husband" (1 Cor 7:10). However, if there has to be any kind of separation, "she should remain single or else be reconciled to her husband" (1 Cor 7:11). Paul continued his counsel to the husband. His counsel is consistent with all biblical counsel in regard to marriage: "The husband should not divorce his wife" (1 Cor 7:11).

David W. Torrance affirms,

The essence of marriage, however, is deeper, more comprehensive and more lasting than is possible by what normally is understood as the love of husband and wife, and more than the couple's own will and endeavour. It consists in the call of God and depends on a couple's God-given faithfulness to that call. That which forms the basis of Christian marriage and that which deepens a couple's love the one for the other in all the changing circumstances of life together is God's continued call and a couple's recognition of the continuing call and their God-given faithfulness to it.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>*Seventh-day Adventist Manual for Ministers* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1977), 143.

<sup>21</sup>Torrance, "Marriage in the Light of Holy Scripture," 36.

The Gospels of Matthew and Mark both record an incident where Jesus was being tested by the Pharisees. "Master, is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?" The Pharisees knew the law; they knew what Moses had said, but they wanted to see if Jesus would contradict Moses so they could accuse Him.

Jesus' answer directed their minds back to the beginning when God made His declaration about a man leaving, cleaving, and becoming one flesh (Gen 2:24). He highlighted God's ideal that any two who were joined by God should never be separated. The Pharisees had not completed their testing and now decided to see if Jesus would contradict Moses, their forefather and prophet. So they asked Him this trick question, "Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to put her away?" (Matt 19:7). The Pharisees were hoping that Jesus would try to nullify what Moses did in order to lay some charge on Him. Jesus counteracted their intent by telling them Moses' only reason for allowing a divorce, "For your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so" (Matt 19:8). Jesus reminded them of God's ideal for the marriage. God wanted every marriage to be permanent. Moses, in Deut 24:1, allowed for divorce, but that did not intimate divine sanction of divorce. David W. Torrance says:

What is primarily at issue in this passage is the forbidding of the remarriage of a divorced woman to her first husband if she has subsequently married and been divorced or widowed. Moses says that if a woman has been divorced from a first and then second husband, or that second husband dies, she may not return and be remarried to her first husband. 'That would be detestable in the eyes of the Lord.' That is to say, this passage does not specifically authorize divorce and neither does any other passage in the Old Testament.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>David W. Torrance, "Divorce: Theological and Pastoral Considerations," in *God, Family, and Sexuality*, ed. David W. Torrance (Carberry, Scotland: Handsel, 1997), 109.

In speaking on the subject of marriage, Ellen G. White states that it “links the destinies of the two individuals with bonds which naught but the hand of death should sever.”<sup>23</sup>

### Marriage and Singleness

At the same time, Jesus considered singleness to be a kingdom gift for the select few (Matt 19:11-12). The apostle Paul also strongly affirmed marriages and sought to strengthen them. When writing to Corinth, he defended marriage against those who elevated singleness as a superior state that allowed for greater spirituality (1 Cor 7:2-5). When writing to Timothy in Ephesus, he defended marriage against those “who forbid marriage” (1 Tim 4:3). According to Paul, marriage is not an alternative lifestyle to celibacy or homosexuality. God intended that the man and the woman would enhance each other.

Celibacy is a special gift given to those with extraordinary assignments (1 Cor 7:7). At the same time the realities of life oftentimes challenge people with the issue of singleness. David C. Searle makes the following comment:

In today’s society, it is vital that the single person works hard at maintaining purity of mind. Every thought must be brought into captivity and be obedient to Christ. Every one of us fails many times in this way, but we must remember that there is grace to cleanse and forgive each moment of each day, and we must never abandon the fight to keep our hearts pure, as Christ is pure.

We must remember the example of Jesus Christ. He shared a home and was welcomed into the bosom of many families. Let Christ be the pattern for those who, for

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<sup>23</sup>Ellen White, *The Adventist Home*, 34.

whatever reason, find themselves living as singles.<sup>24</sup>

### Understanding Responsibilities in Marriage

Originally, there was harmony between the sexes. From the beginning, the differentiation of humankind as man and woman was part of the creative intention of God. "This further illustrates that God intended equality and mutuality between the sexes."<sup>25</sup>

Scripture asserts that the husband was to love and cherish his wife and to treat her with respect and dignity (Gen 1:27-28; 2:24). Ellen G. White refers to Adam also as "the father and representative of the whole human family,"<sup>26</sup> who, under God, "was to stand at the head of the earthly family, to maintain the principles of the heavenly family."<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, Eve was to share fully Adam's headship of God's created order.<sup>28</sup> Also, according to the Bible, a husband was to provide his wife with all the necessities.<sup>29</sup>

In a similar way, the responsibilities of wives toward their husbands are also outlined in the Old Testament. First, the wife was to present her husband with children. One should not ignore the fact that people in ancient times married in order to have

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<sup>24</sup>David C. Searle, "Singleness," in *God, Family, and Sexuality*, ed. David W. Torrance (Carberry, Scotland: Handsel, 1997), 107.

<sup>25</sup>Elisabeth Tetlow and Louis Tetlow, *Partners in Service* (New York, London: University Press of America, 1983), 44.

<sup>26</sup>Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1922), 48.

<sup>27</sup>Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Teachers, Parents, and Students* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1913), 33.

<sup>28</sup>"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." Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 50.

<sup>29</sup>This responsibility, which included providing peace, permanence, and security, was given after the fall (Exod 21:10; Ruth 1:9).

children (Gen 30: 1, 23). God designed marriage for procreation. Through sexual contact they were to be “fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” (Gen 1:28). Second, wives were to manage their household, including such duties as cooking, clothing the family, tending the garden (Prov 31). And although those activities were not limited exclusively to women (Gen 18:1-8; 19:3), the general division of labor was along those lines. Third, the woman was to keep God’s original purpose for creating her and to provide companionship for her husband (Gen 2:18), to be his confidante and trusted friend (Mal 2:14).

Finally, there was one more responsibility shared both by husbands and wives – their mutual sexual responsibility. Sexual intimacy is suggested in Gen 2:24 when it refers to becoming one flesh. A detailed biblical study of sexual intimacy reveals that sexual intimacy is to be confined to marriage. Jay E. Adams writes, that “for the two to become one flesh means that the two enter into a relationship so close, so intimate, that this new unity can be referred to as becoming ‘one person.’”<sup>30</sup> On the basis of the notion that God established marriage, including the physical union of husband and wife, the Old Testament in general, and the Song of Solomon in particular, celebrates the beauty of marital love including its intimate sexual expression. Elisabeth Tetlow and Louis Tetlow assert: “God created humankind male and female in the divine image and likeness. Man and woman were created simultaneously. They were equal in origin, in nature and in dominion over the non-human creatures of the earth. Not separately, but together, did man and woman image their Creator.”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Jay E. Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), 132.

<sup>31</sup>Tetlow and Tetlow; *Ibid.*

After the Fall, the Old Testament history records numerous violations of God-given responsibilities. But those violations neither encouraged, nor affirmed, the deviations from God's original plan. While the historical books of the Hebrew Scripture bear witness to the increasing deterioration of the observance of God's plan for marriage, God's ideal is upheld in the wisdom literature. The book of Proverbs, for instance, concludes with a poem extolling the virtues of the outstanding wife.<sup>32</sup> In His turn, God presents himself as a model husband for Israel, the husband who loves his wife, and who continuously provides for all her needs (Isa 54:5).

The New Testament does not deviate from God's original plan for husbands and wives. To husbands, Paul declares: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Eph 5:25). He also affirms man's role as a provider: "If any man have not care of his own, and especially of those of his house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (1 Tim 5:8).

For women, Paul affirmed the central role of "childbearing," as well as their domestic and familial duties (1 Tim 2:15). Some other important New Testament passages concerning the roles of husband and wife are Col 3:18, 1 Cor 11:3, Eph 5:23 and 1 Pet 3:1-7. Paul writes, for instance, that "the head of a woman is her husband" (1 Cor 11:3) and that "the husband is the head of the wife" (Eph 5:23), affirming, as it seems, the husband's authority over his wife. These passages are also known as the "household codes," since they summarize the duties of the household members.

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<sup>32</sup>A pastor, in premarital education, can assign this passage for consideration. Here are only two representative verses: (1) "she looks after her household" (Prov 31:27), and (2) "she opens her mouth with wisdom and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue" (Prov 31:26).

Traditionally, these texts (as well as Gen 3:16) have been understood to mean that husbands have "authority over" their wives. Recently, however, this approach has been challenged, especially by liberal feminists, who insist that Paul was not teaching that man "has authority over" his wife, but rather that he is her "source" and consequently he must please her in everything.<sup>33</sup> This interpretation has been used to reject any form of husbands' headship and wives' submission. Liberal feminism presents Pauline theology, together with Old Testament teachings, as time-bound, culturally conditioned, male-centered and anti-feminist in nature. The final authority for this trend is a socio-cultural interpretation of Scripture.<sup>34</sup> Another approach, demonstrated oftentimes by evangelical feminism, does not dismiss those passages as irrelevant, but attempts to reinterpret them in terms of partnership positions.<sup>35</sup> More conservative Christians, however, maintain that the Bible teaches that God has established functional role distinctions between men and women, husbands and wives. These distinctions do not imply superiority or inferiority but complementarity.<sup>36</sup>

This project deals with the practical issues, not the theological debates. However, based on the observations from the first two chapters of Genesis, one might conclude that the relationship between man and woman in Creation were equal. This position is also

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<sup>33</sup>Richard Boldrey and Joyce Boldrey, *Chauvinist or Feminist? Paul's View of Women* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1976).

<sup>34</sup>Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty, *All We're Meant to Be: A Biblical Approach to Women's Liberation* (Waco, TX: Word, 1975).

<sup>35</sup>Berkeley Mickelsen and Alvera Mickelsen, "Does Male Dominance Tarnish Our Translations?" *Christianity Today*, October 5, 1979, 23.

<sup>36</sup>Samuele Bacchiocchi writes, "The Biblical view of marital roles . . . derives not from ancient patriarchal culture but from divine revelation. The acceptance of such a view provides the only solid foundation for a marriage covenant." Samuele Bacchiocchi, *The Marriage Covenant* (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 1991), 122.



supported by Ellen G. White, who writes: "Eve was created from a rib taken from the side of Adam, signifying that she was not to control him as the head, nor to be trampled under his feet as an inferior, but to stand by his side as an equal, to be loved and protected by him."<sup>37</sup> After the Fall, however, according to Gen 3:16, the relationship between the man and the woman was changed. Adam was given a servant headship position toward his wife. Ellen G. White states: "After Eve's sin, as she was first in transgression, the Lord told her that Adam should rule over her. She was to be in subjection to her husband, and this was a part of the curse."<sup>38</sup> We also agree with Richard M. Davidson who writes: "Our conclusion is straightforward and unambiguous: the New Testament writers remain faithful to the Old Testament pattern established in the Garden of Eden. Just as in Genesis 3, the headship/submission principle was established for husband-wife relationship, so the New Testament passages affirm this ordering of roles."<sup>39</sup>

Her role by no means made the woman a slave and/or prevented her from voicing her opinion.<sup>40</sup> On the contrary, her new position was to inspire her husband to be more thoughtful and kind toward her. Paul states: "Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord" (Eph 5:22). However, in the previous verse he says that both husband and wife

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<sup>37</sup>Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 46.

<sup>38</sup>Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 3:484.

<sup>39</sup>Richard Davidson, "Headship, Submission, and Equality in Scripture," in *Women in Ministry*, ed. Nancy Vyhmeister (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 1998), 280. In the same article, the author states, "In the divine revelation throughout the rest of the Old Testament and New Testament witness, servant headship and voluntary submission on the part of husband and wife, respectively, are affirmed, but these are never broadened to the covenant community in such a way as to prohibit women from taking positions of leadership, including headship positions over men." *Ibid.*, 284.

<sup>40</sup>Leo Perdue, "The Israelite and Early Jewish Family: Summary and Conclusions," in Leo G. Perdue and Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Families in Ancient Israel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 168.

were “subject to one another out of reverence for Christ” (Eph 5:21). If one tries to study the biblical teaching on the marital roles strictly on the horizontal level, from the perspective of the relationship between males and females, it would be a futile endeavor. As it has been noted above, God’s plan for marriage, for the relationship between a man and a woman within the confines of the family, included not only the horizontal, complementary relationship to one another, but also a vertical relationship—subordination to God. Without this dimension, it is impossible to establish a true Christian family. Jesus Christ is working on every Christian man and woman aiming to restore in them the image of God. It is also Christ’s work to restore the image of God in oneness of man and woman in every Christian family.

Paul’s teaching on marriage is given its fullest expression in the letter to the Ephesians. At the very outset, he set marriage within the larger framework of God’s plan of bringing “all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ” (Eph 1:10, NIV). Just as Christ is the head over every human and heavenly authority, so the husband was put in charge over his wife (5:22-24). This was done by “the Father from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named” (3:14-15). This headship, according to Paul, implies both the wife’s submission to her husband’s authority and the husband’s loving, sacrificial devotion to his wife.

One of the primary concerns of the Christian counselor is to make sure that both husband and wife have their personal relationship with Jesus Christ. It is impossible to apply the biblical teaching on marriage without that relationship. Jesus encourages us with His words: “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible” (Matt 19:26). As people surrender their lives to the grace of redemption, it is truly possible to

know the joy and freedom that come from living and loving according to our true dignity as men and women made in the image and likeness of God. It is truly possible for men and women, husbands and wives, to experience restoration of proper balance and mutual self-giving in their relationship. The biblical responsibilities given to a husband and a wife will be both exercised and accepted in a Christian family. One should remember that restoration is not an event, but a process, and there will be no complete restoration until the Second coming of Jesus Christ. When it happens and people "rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven" (Mark 12:25). Until that time, a Christian husband is to exercise servant headship toward his wife, to provide for the household and to fulfill other God-given responsibilities. At the same time a Christian wife is to accept her husband's role, and in turn to assume the responsibilities outlined in the Bible for a God-fearing woman. As they begin a new life together, a husband and a wife will bring richness and wholeness to their lives if they accept and implement God's plan outlined in the Bible.

### **The Role of the Pastor in Premarital Education**

The Bible reveals that God Himself provided the very first "premarital counseling session." As a matter of fact, the very first words that the Lord addressed to the newly created couple were the words on premarital education: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it" (Gen. 1:27-28, KJV). This instruction even precedes instruction dealing with such important aspect of human life as nutrition. In a similar way, chapter 2 describes the directions given immediately upon the creation of the woman: "Therefore

shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (v. 24). Up to these days, those words remain foundational for every premarital counseling session.

### The Pastor as a Shepherd

Because the first couple sinned and fell, their relationship to God and to each other was severely affected (Gen 3:10, 16, 17). Therefore, all subsequent marriages are comprised of the joining of two imperfect individuals. Since even the perfect couple needed some pre-nuptial nurturing, every imperfect couple needs counseling even more. The direct communication with God after the Fall ceased, and today we are not to expect God to instruct every couple the way he instructed Adam and Eve.

In Scripture, however, the pastor is compared to a shepherd (1 Pet 5:2). The shepherd's sole responsibility is the safety and comfort of all of the sheep. It is a great honor to be a shepherd, because God compares himself with a good shepherd. In Isaiah, the prophet records, "He will feed his flock like a shepherd, he will gather the lambs in his arms, he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young" (Isa 40:11, RSV). This figure of God and His people is to become a model for the pastor and his spiritual flock. Since marriage is a permanent institution, a covenant, and a lifelong relationship which God designed, the pastor should be held responsible for educating his congregation about matters relating to premarital education. The pastor must assure his congregation that God's desire is that both husband and wife find "a good thing" (Prov 18:22).

When Paul addressed the leaders in Ephesus, he said, "Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the

church of God which he obtained with the blood of His own Son" (Acts 20:28, RSV).

The Bible is clear that one of the pastor's responsibilities is the caring and nurturing of the sheep, especially the young sheep. Howard Eyrich states, "Does not such shepherding require the pastor to be involved in premarital counseling?"<sup>41</sup> Premarital education is a time when bonding can occur between the shepherd and two special sheep. As Norman Wright puts it, "Premarital counseling is one of the most important opportunities for ministry."<sup>42</sup>

Not only will the shepherd build a bonding relationship during the premarital experience, but "the rapport established now will make it easier to be involved in the excitement of the couple's marriage in years ahead."<sup>43</sup>

In the context of the shepherd and the sheep, the pastor provides correction for the couple, "correction of faulty information concerning marriage relationship, the communication process, finances, in-laws, sex, and so on."<sup>44</sup> Premarital education may be the only forum for a couple to receive this corrective. As the sheep respond positively to the shepherd's voice, so too will the couple respond to the pastor. "Couples will look forward to each session as an unique learning experience and value it highly."<sup>45</sup> Eyrich states, "This encounter of seven to twelve hours can lay a foundation for the continual building of productive life by the couple."<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>Eyrich, "A Premarital Counseling Manual," 8.

<sup>42</sup>Wright, *Premarital Counseling*, 45.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, 38-39.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>46</sup>Eyrich, "A Premarital Counseling Manual," 10.

Pastors can save invaluable time in their future ministry, but they must be willing to invest those several hours in a premarital program. Eyrich's conclusion gives support to this when he states, "My personal experience in marital counseling has convinced me that the average pastor could add untold hours to his future ministry through a proper program of such counseling."<sup>47</sup>

### Spirit of Prophecy Support for Premarital Preparation

Nowhere in the writings of Ellen G. White is there a program suggested for premarital education. In fact, the words premarital counseling, premarital education, marriage education, premarital preparation, and other synonyms are absent from the *Index to the Writings* of Ellen G. White. However, E. G. White had much to say about marriage. The book, *The Adventist Home*, is devoted to marriage and the home. The books *Messages to Young People* and *The Ministry of Healing* also have complete sections devoted to marriage and marriage preparation.

What E. G. White writes about marriage strongly supports an intentional premarital program for the church. She says, "If those who are contemplating marriage would not have miserable, unhappy reflections after marriage, they must make it a subject of serious, earnest reflection now."<sup>48</sup> In warning those who were thinking about marriage, she wrote, "Examine carefully to see if your married life would be happy or inharmonious and wretched."<sup>49</sup> This is the goal of premarital education: to help couples focus on their choices. Many times a couple would be affirmed by their discovery, or in

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<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 11.

<sup>48</sup>Ellen White, *The Adventist Home*, 43.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 45.

some cases, rediscovery, or in other cases, the couple would have a change of mind. She made it even clearer when she said to “weigh every sentiment, and watch every development of character in the one with whom you think to link your life destiny.”<sup>50</sup>

Although the counsel which Ellen White gave in regard to premarital education was written many decades ago, her counsels sound very contemporary. Without good premarital preparation, many couples make wrong choices and set sail on troubled waters. Her words describe them well: “Many are sailing in a dangerous harbor. They need “a pilot,” but they scorn to accept the much needed help, feeling that they are competent to guide their own bark, and not realizing that it is about to strike a hidden rock that may cause them to make shipwreck of faith and happiness.”<sup>51</sup>

Could the situation be different if the pastor were involved with the process of premarital education?

Many couples are misinformed regarding the requirements of a Christian home. Ellen White’s ideal is that “a truly Christian home is that of peace and restfulness. Such an example will not be without effect.”<sup>52</sup> In another paragraph, she states that “the happiness and prosperity of the married life depend upon the unity of the parties.”<sup>53</sup>

Premarital education prepares the couples to deal with finances. Ellen G. White advises families to become financially independent. “To desire to bear your own weight and not to eat the bread of dependence is right.”<sup>54</sup> She criticizes extravagance, those who

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<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 46.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 70-71.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 450.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., 84.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 374.

are spendthrifts, and families living beyond their means. "You ought to be careful that your expenses do not exceed your income. Bind about your wants."<sup>55</sup>

Budgeting, which is a part of almost every premarital program, is given much attention in the writings of Ellen G. White. She stressed the importance of living within one's income and avoiding debt like a plague when she wrote, "Many, very many, have not so educated themselves that they can keep their expenditures within the limit of their income. They do not learn to adapt themselves to circumstances, and they borrow and borrow again and again and become overwhelmed in debt, and consequently they become discouraged and disheartened."<sup>56</sup>

Other topics covered in the book *The Adventist Home* that are taught in premarital education are as follows:<sup>57</sup>

1. Choosing the Life Partner (43-70)
2. Factors That Make for Success or Failure in Marriage (79-94)
3. The New Home (131-148)
4. The Successful Family (177-204)
5. Father—The House-Band (211-224)
6. Mother—Queen of the Household (231-273)
7. Children (159-172)

There is definitely much that can be said about Ellen White's counsel in regard to premarital education, although it was not identified as such. It is significant to observe

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 375.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 374.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 43-273.



that most of the topics found in a typical premarital program appear in Ellen G. White's book, *Messages to Young People*. For example, the topics under Courtship and Marriage are the following:

1. True Love
2. Wrong Forms of Courtship
3. Engagement with Unbelievers
4. Need of Counsel and Guidance
5. Premature Marriage
6. Marriages, Wise and Unwise
7. Marrying and Giving in Marriage
8. Responsibilities of Marriage
9. Good Judgment and Self-Control in Marriage.<sup>58</sup>

The above list of topics is comparable to any modern-day agenda of a premarital educator. Ellen G. White emphasized preparation in the language of her day, and although her vocabulary does not contain the buzzwords of the twenty-first century, the message is the same—seek counsel; no hurried marriages; listen to the voices of reason; prepare for marriage; get instruction; marriage is honorable; marriage is permanent, so prepare for this life-long experience.

### **Conclusions**

The Scriptures begin with the creation of man and woman in the image and likeness of God and conclude with a vision of the “wedding feast of the Lamb.” Scripture

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<sup>58</sup>Ellen White, *Messages to Young People* (Nashville: Southern, 1952), 21-355.

speaks throughout of marriage and its 'mystery,' its institution and the meaning God has given it. Throughout the Old Testament, God's love for his people is described as the love of a husband for his bride. In the New Testament, Christ embodies this love. He comes as the Heavenly Bridegroom to unite himself indissolubly to his Bride, the Church.

Marriage, then, is not a peripheral issue in the Christian life. It finds itself right at the heart of the Christian mystery and, by means of its grand analogy, serves to illuminate it. Marriage is pictured in the Bible as the single most important relationship in this life other than the relationship with God. He gave marriage to the human race as a demonstration of His divine love. Marriage is God's gift to mankind, a place where two people can have a special love relationship. The Lord Himself personally oversees marriage.

The couple preparing for marriage should be counseled as to their responsibilities in the new union, understanding that this partnership involves total commitment in every aspect of life. They must be guided so as not to have unrealistic expectations of each other in all aspects of marriage. The Bible provides certain principles that couples need to contextualize, however, to conditions in the twenty-first century. In most of our nuclear homes, both husband and wife are income earners. Therefore couples need to discuss in premarital preparation such issues as the roles of husband and wife in the family.

The Bible does not contain a plain list of responsibilities for husbands and wives, and there are many new and challenging situations that couples will find in the twenty-first century that were never explicitly addressed in the Scripture. Nevertheless, it is possible to infer some of the major responsibilities from various portions of the Scripture

that constitute the principles for marital responsibilities at any given time of history. The biblical principles concerning marriage should become the foundation for any Christian premarital and marital counseling session.

## CHAPTER IV

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

This project seeks to design and implement a Premarital Counseling Seminar for pastors and other church workers in the Euro-Asia Division. The project material will be used primarily for the purposes of introducing pastors to their responsibilities as premarital counselors and in training pastors to be able to function properly in this new role. It is not designed to prepare professional counselors for clinical practice, but to introduce pastors to the basic responsibilities of premarital counselors.

#### **Methodology**

The choice and the arrangement of the Seminar's topics, as well as the teaching methods applied, reflect the needs of contemporary Russian society, as well as the amount of time available for the Seminar.<sup>1</sup> Other issues, such as the educational level and general experience of the ministers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Russia, have also been considered.

One of the challenges in developing this Seminar was to limit the number of learning goals. The goals have been chosen based on the analysis of the situation in contemporary Russian society and in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Euro-Asia

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<sup>1</sup>Due to the practical considerations of immense distances between churches, the seminar has been designed as a weekend, intensive workshop.

Division. An attempted transition from a socialist to a democratic society raised numerous challenges that put extra pressure on an already weakened institution of marriage. The majority of current members in the Russian Seventh-day Adventist Church are new converts and have no solid knowledge of the Word of God. Thus, certain religious, spiritual, as well as practical and ethical issues related to marriage and family should be presented to the couples as they are going through the process of counseling.

The current practices in premarital counseling will be explored and discussed during the course of the Seminar. PowerPoint presentations and lectures will be given and time for discussion provided. Handouts with a detailed outline of each topic and PowerPoint slides will be provided. Different teaching methods will be employed for different types of learners. Assignments and reading materials will be given after each session. Resources and teaching strategies may be further developed and included in a training manual for participants.

### **Choice of Topics for the Seminar**

The choice of the Seminar's topics reflects the common issues that contemporary families are most likely to face. Although the differences between Russia and the Western countries are still considerable, both societies share many fundamental things. The dynamics of life in the Euro-Asia Division is such that challenges, problems, and expectations of Russian society become increasingly similar to those of the Western world. The main contribution of the Seminar, then, is not an extensive contextualization, but rather a watchful implementation of the developed methods and principles evident in the influence of the Western hemisphere for the territory of the Euro-Asia Division. The innovative character of this work for the Euro-Asia community is mainly manifested in

the implementation of spiritual and biblical components. This is in contrast to the traditional approach in Russia which would be to present the same or similar topics from an entirely secular perspective. Decades of atheistic propaganda and the ineffective nature of the predominant religion have interfered with the development of a Bible-centered approach to the practical issues of life. Books that have been translated do not typically include information about premarital counseling. The books dealing with marital issues that have been translated lack an elementary knowledge of life in the Euro-Asian Division. The Seminar's topics, on the other hand, are specifically adjusted to the current needs of Russian society. Since the differences of certain aspects of life are found in cultural, financial, and social variations, wherever it is applicable, the Seminar's outline emphasizes the specifics of each particular topic and seeks to approach it from a local, rather than universal, perspective.

The topics of the Seminar are presented in the order that they appear during the session.

#### 1. The Role of the Pastor as Counselor and the Importance of Premarital Counseling

The Seminar is designed for pastors and professional workers who are currently involved in providing premarital counseling, or who are considering adopting this responsibility. The Seminar is designed to provide pastors with the necessary resources and guidelines to conduct the counseling sessions. As professionals engaged in the practice of premarital and marital counseling, pastors in the former Soviet Republics are keenly aware of the lack of definitive resources concerning premarital counseling. During the course of this introductory session, the participants will be introduced to their roles as

premarital and marital counselors. The Seminar attempts to include theoretical and conceptual topics as well as a spiritual approach to the premarital counseling process itself.

## 2. Practical and Ethical Issues in Counseling and Premarital Counseling

The counselors often deal with people's individual backgrounds, conflicts, finances, leisure and recreational interests, role expectations, sexuality and affection, fun and friendship, and numerous decision-making goals and expectations. These are delicate issues and should be approached with sensitivity. Pastors should be aware of the ethical issues involved in counseling. The learning goal of the second session is to discuss ethical questions in the area of premarital and marital counseling. Such issues as tactfulness and confidentiality will be presented and practiced in small groups.

## 3. Benefits of Marriage Preparation and the Use of the Bride's and Groom's Handbook

During the course of this session, pastors will learn about the efficacy of premarital counseling. It is through counseling that people learn many things about their potential spouses that they would never even have thought about. According to Dr. Jason Carroll and Dr. William J. Doherty, couples who participate in premarital programs experience a thirty percent increase in marital success over those who do not.<sup>2</sup> They report improved communication, better conflict management skills, higher dedication to their mate, greater emphasis on the positive aspects of a relationship, and an improved overall quality of relationship. These benefits appear to hold for six months to three years

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<sup>2</sup>John M. Gottman and Nan Silver, *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work* (New York: Crown, 1999), 13.

after the program is over. The benefits also extend to couples who enter marriage such with greater risks as coming from homes with divorced parents or high levels of conflict.<sup>3</sup>

Pastors will also be presented with statistics that show how preparation for marriage can help prevent divorce.<sup>4</sup> Sometimes this prevention comes from strengthening the quality of the relationship. Pastors will be instructed to motivate the couples to discuss carefully the issues that are raised. During premarital counseling red flags may be raised indicating that the marriage may be ill advised.

Discussion of topics like household chores, in-laws, employment, and sexual relations helps couples identify one another's expectations. It also helps couples discover areas of disagreement before they get married. Sometimes these discussions uncover information that a future spouse is involved in behavior that could be destructive to the marriage relationship—critical information to know *before* marriage.

The Bride's and Groom's Handbook will be introduced to the participants.

#### 4. God's Original Plan for the Family

During this session, pastors will be given general guidelines on the subject of the biblical perspective of marriage and the family. There is a definite need for pastors to be able to communicate this truth to the couples. An important factor contributing to the alarming escalation of divorce among Christians in Russia is society's growing acceptance of marriage as a social contract governed by the laws of the land rather than as a sacred covenant regulated by the higher moral law of God. Marriage is no longer

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 13.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 15.



seen by many people as a sacred covenant, witnessed and guaranteed by God Himself, but rather, as a social contract that can be easily terminated. It is very important for pastors to remind couples that the biblical view of marriage is a sacred, life-long covenant.

In order to help pastors achieve this goal, the Seminar presents the marriage relationship as set deep within creation itself. Communicating this view to the couples can help young Christians resist the social trend to consider divorce as an easy solution to their marital problems. Each new marriage in the church should have a solid biblical foundation. Pastors will be encouraged to present marriage as a covenant, rather than a contract.

#### 5. Values, Religion, Spirituality

Most marital conflicts could be resolved if the husband and wife enjoyed a healthy relationship with God. Thus, the Seminar encourages pastors and professional workers in their counseling sessions to focus on the importance of values, religion, and spirituality in the family. In the contemporary Russian church, a majority of church members are newcomers—they joined the church during the last ten to fifteen years. Many families, thus, lack established Christian traditions and values. It is also common in the Adventist church in Russia for Adventist young ladies to be married to Christians from other denominations or nonbelievers because of the scarcity of young men in the Adventist church. Spiritual and religious differences between spouses could be an area of potential marital conflicts. If one or both partners lose or do not have a relationship with God, then the possibility of resolving conflicts is greatly reduced because they are no longer able to bring their problems together before the Lord to seek His help. The

Seminar focuses on these realities in order to help pastors and professional workers take full advantage of their partnership with God. These issues of mixed couples will be addressed in one of the sessions during the Seminar.

#### 6. Family Background and Dating History

Another important issue for those taking premarital counseling sessions in contemporary Russian society is the exploration of family background and dating history. The previous, socialist model of society stressed the equality of all people. However, contemporary reality is marked with extreme diversities of people's backgrounds. People are still in transition in reevaluating society in terms of diversity rather than uniformity. Thus, while such things as family background are important in Western society, they seem to be crucial in Russia.

The Seminar will focus on exploration of the family background. Pastors will direct couples toward better mutual understanding by means of openly discussing family history, and the expectations and approach to family role modeling. Along with lectures and discussions, role playing in pairs will be employed.

#### 7. Relationships with In-Laws

Relationships with in-laws play an essential role in shaping the destinies of couples in contemporary Russia. The majority of newly married couples cannot afford an apartment of their own and have to live with their in-laws, which puts extra pressure on newly-formed families. Thus, it is crucial to consider this topic at the premarital counseling sessions.

The guidelines for couples' relations to their in-laws will be provided during the course of this lecture. The main facts about in-law tensions and ways of

resolving them will also be presented. Principles to be followed by couples in their relationships with their in-laws will be suggested.

#### 8. Differences between Men and Women

Another topic deserving special attention is an understanding of the differences between men and women. One learning goal of this session is to explore essential mental, psychological, and physiological differences between men and women. The majority of Russian young people grew up in dysfunctional families, which prevented them from a proper understanding of the role of husbands and wives. Differences and equality will be emphasized during the course of this session.

An important learning goal of the session is to help pastors learn what role these differences play both for emerging conflicts and for the couple's growth toward greater intimacy. The practical goal of this session is to know the differences between men and women, and to be able to use this knowledge in conflict management and in helping couples grow in their relationships. This session is also important because it lays a foundation for the following sessions.

#### 9. Marital Expectations and Needs

The majority of Russian young people have a vague picture of marital expectations and needs. Unrealistic pictures provided by the entertainment industry have created a distorted image of family relationships. These distortions, together with the lack of popular literature on the topic, present a serious challenge for families that know little or nothing of a healthy marital relationship. Participants in the Seminar will gain a good understanding of the different marital needs of men and women and will be able to share this information with those they counsel. A workshop on the priorities of needs is

provided. Differences in the needs between women and men based on their physiological and psychological differentiation will be discussed. Five basic marital needs of men and women will be discovered and studied.<sup>5</sup>

#### 10. Marital Role Relationships

Marriage counselors often point to “role conflicts” as a major cause for the break-up of marriages.<sup>6</sup> This topic is of special importance for modern families. Modern society rapidly changes the roles traditionally played by men and women in the confines of a family. This subject is closely related to the topic of God’s original plan for the family, and the traditional biblical understanding of the role of the man and the woman in the family will be discussed. Thus, one learning goal of this session is to present the traditional biblical understanding of role relationships within a family. Another goal is to present different perspectives or reflections on the biblical teaching. Finally, the implementation of biblical principles in the twenty-first century setting will be discussed.

#### 11. Family Dynamics

Family dynamics and stages of marriage are other areas that should receive a certain amount of attention during the course of the counseling sessions. Having no pattern to relate to, young people have little, if any, understanding of family dynamics. Thus, young people have only a distorted view regarding their marriage and this creates a fertile ground for conflicts and disappointments. The goal of this session is to help pastors enlighten couples on family dynamics, and to assist young people to have some

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<sup>5</sup>Willard Harley, *His Needs, Her Needs* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2001); Gary Roseberg, and Barbara Roseberg, *Five Love Needs of Man and Woman* (New York: Association, 2004).

<sup>6</sup>Wright, *Premarital Counseling*, 202.

realistic perceptions of future family life. The stages of marriage in the human lifespan will be discussed. The Seminar focuses on four main phases: dreams, disappointment, discovery, deep insight. It is expected that the pastors will be able to help couples look at their life as a big project and see the big picture of their marriage.

## 12. Sexuality

Sexuality in marriage presents another important topic to be addressed during the counseling sessions. For young people in Russia, the meetings with the pastor-counselor could be the only place where they can learn about the Christian view on human sexuality. Sexuality is one of the most important dimensions of healthy marital intimacy. Healthy sexual intimacy includes a sexual frequency that is mutually satisfying, sexual activities that both partners enjoy, and an open dialog about sex. Pastors should be well aware of differences between men's and women's sexuality in order to help couples overcome some of their difficulties. Thus, the first goal of this session is to raise this awareness. Also, the benefits of waiting until marriage for sexual intimacy should be promoted by the counselors. The Seminar presents pastors with tactful tools for doing this.

## 13. Family Finances

Family finances is another major challenge in modern Russian society. With the advent of the market economy, credit cards, and the gradual loss of such traditional benefits as free education and free medical treatment in Russian society, many families find themselves in a troublesome financial situation. Assuming new responsibilities, including those of financial matters, is a challenge for young people. The majority of them come to married life totally unprepared. Thus, from the very beginning, many

marriages suffer severely and even break down due to a lack of understanding of the principles of family finances.<sup>7</sup>

The goal of this session is, first, to present a Christian view on finances and stewardship, and second, to help couples work on their family budget.

#### 14. Interpersonal Communications

Interpersonal communications present another challenge for young people around the globe. Good interpersonal communication is the means of resolving many problems. Understanding each other's needs, addressing and resolving problems or conflicts in marriage, knowing each other better—all these are hardly possible without proper communication skills. The pastor-counselor should place a special emphasis on this aspect of family relationships.

The Seminar teaches pastors the importance of proper communication for family relationships and provides a workshop to practice communication skills.

#### 15. Problem-Solving and Conflict-Resolution Skills

Good communication is the foundation of problem-solving and conflict resolution. It is impossible for two people to solve their problems when each feels criticized, disliked, or unappreciated by the other. When couples learn the techniques presented at the premarital counseling sessions, they are less likely to fall into destructive communication patterns that harm marriages. Thus, one of the goals of this session is to teach pastors those skills and to communicate them to the couples.

Pastors should also learn that conflict in marriage is not necessarily a bad or a sinful thing. The determinative factor is how the conflict is handled. If a conflict is used

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<sup>7</sup>Wilson, 12-19.

constructively to enhance communication and deepen understanding, then it can strengthen and solidify a marriage covenant.

Another important goal of this session is to deal with the issue of anger management. Anger experts say that anger develops more often in marriages and with children than in any other human relationship.<sup>8</sup> Sometimes anger turns violent, resulting in emotional and physical abuse of those whom God expects us to love and serve. It is a task of the premarital counselor to teach young people to restore their emotional connections. Proper control of anger reduces the risk of violence toward others as well as physiological harm to oneself. In contemporary Russian society that is often characterized by violence and aggression, anger management skills are crucial for healthy family relationships, and thus should be addressed by the premarital counselor. This session will help pastors/counselors to understand that anger is a choice. While we may have a tendency to become angry, it is not wise or correct to give in and simply say, "That's just the way I am, and there's nothing I can do about it." People are not forced to lose their temper against their will. Habit may make our responses seem almost involuntary, but we really do choose our responses.

### **Teaching Methods**

Different methods of teaching will be employed in the course of the Seminar to address different types of learners.<sup>9</sup> Visual learners learn mostly through seeing. These learners need to see the teacher's body language and facial expression to understand fully

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<sup>8</sup>Chadwick and Heaton, 32-37.

<sup>9</sup>Patricia Cross. *Adults Learners: Increasing Participation and Facilitating Learning* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass, 1998), 16-29.

the content of a lesson. They tend to prefer sitting at the front of the classroom to avoid visual obstructions. They may think in pictures and learn best from visual displays including diagrams, illustrated text books, overhead transparencies, slides, videos, flipcharts and hand-outs. During a lecture or classroom discussion, visual learners often prefer to take detailed notes to absorb the information. To meet the needs of this group of learners, PowerPoint presentations will be used during the course of lectures. Several different clips from movies and documentaries will be used in the Seminar. Different diagrams and charts will be presented to illustrate different topics.

Auditory/analytic learners are those who learn through listening and reading. Handouts with detailed outlines will be given for each session; additional reading will be giving during and following the Seminar.

Tactile/kinesthetic learners learn through moving, doing and touching. They learn best through a hands-on approach, actively exploring the physical world around them. They may find it hard to sit still for long periods and may become distracted by their need for activity and exploration. They enjoy interaction with other people. Discussions and small groups will be employed during each session to make the Seminar more effective.

Lectures and small discussion groups will also be employed in class sessions. Students will participate in role-playing. Different tests and inventories on a variety of subjects will be administered. Additional readings will be assigned during the Seminar. Students will have to do additional homework and reading after the classroom experience.



## **Using the Bride's and Groom's Handbooks**

The Bride's and Groom's Handbook (see appendix) is designed to help pastors perform premarital counseling more efficiently. The Bride's and Groom's Handbook is a collection of different tests, exercises, training sessions, and information related to premarital counseling. It also includes a list of literature recommended for deeper studies in the area of premarital counseling. The Handbook is prepared in such a way that, along with the information, it also provides some space for notes and for answers to the questions. The Handbook is a useful resource both for couples and for counselors.

### **Suggested Seminar Schedule**

The Seminar will consist of a 16-hour weekend session. This arrangement provides adequate time to cover the material, and also gives people attending this Seminar the time needed for different activities assigned during the course of the sessions.

Friday evening: 4:30-5:00 p.m. –registration

Seminar begins the same night: 5:30-9:00 p.m.

1. The Role of the Pastor and the Professional Worker as a Counselor and the Importance of Premarital Counseling

2. Practical and Ethical Issues in Counseling and Premarital Counseling

3. Benefits of Marriage Preparation and the Use of the Bride's and Groom's Handbooks

Saturday afternoon: 2:00-5:00 p.m.

4. God's Original Plan for the Family.

5. Values, Religion, Spirituality in the Family.

Dinner break: 5:00-6:00 p.m.

Saturday evening: 6:00-9:00 p.m.

6. Family Background.

7. Relationships with In-laws.

8. Differences between Men and Women

Sunday morning: 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

9. Marital Expectations and Needs.

10. Marital Role Relationship

11. Family Dynamics

Lunch break 12:00-1:00 p.m.

Sunday afternoon: 1:00-8:00 p.m.

12. Sexuality within the Marriage

13. Family Finances

14. Interpersonal Communications

15. Conflict Resolution and Anger Management (2 hours)

### **Outline of the Sessions**

**Session one:** The Role of the Pastor as a Counselor and the Importance of  
Premarital Counseling

1. Getting Acquainted: Introducing the Seminar's presenter and participants (10-15 min.).

2. The importance of premarital counseling and the role of the pastor as a counselor: PowerPoint presentation, lecture (40 min.).

Additional reading: Brian Craig, *Premarital Counseling*, chapter 1, Брайон Крейг, *Добрачное Консультирование* (Russian translation)<sup>10</sup>

**Session two:** Practical and Ethical Issues in Counseling and Premarital Counseling; Confidentiality

1. PowerPoint presentation on the topic, lecture (30 min.).
2. Questions and answers (15 min.).
3. Assignment: Work in small groups on a case of confidentiality in premarital counseling (15 min); report to the entire group (15 min.).

**Session three:** Benefits of Marriage Preparation and the Use of the Bride's and Groom's Handbook

1. PowerPoint presentation on the efficiency of premarital counseling (15 min.).
2. Introducing the Bride's and Groom's Handbook (15 min.) (See Appendix for the content of Handbook). Each Seminar participant should obtain the handbook since it will be used during the Seminar to work on different topics.
3. Use of the Handbook in premarital counseling (30 min.).

**Session four:** God's Original Plan for the Family

1. Assignment: Work in small groups, finding texts in the Bible about marriage and family. Sharing findings with the group, comments (15 min.).
2. Marriage as a covenant: difference between covenant and contract.

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<sup>10</sup>The additional reading is given to students in order to deepen their understanding of the given subject. Due to the intense format of the Seminar, the students are allowed to do the reading after the completion of the Seminar.

3. Gen 2:24 – Examine three components of the marriage covenant in Gen 2:24: leaving, cleaving, and becoming one flesh. PowerPoint presentation (45 min.).

Additional reading for this session: 1. Samuele Bacciocchi, *The Marriage Covenant*, chapters 1 and 2, (Russian translation). 2. Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home* 45-49, 80, 99-100 (Russian translation).

**Session five: Values, Religion, Spirituality**

1. The importance of faith in the family; Christ as the Center of family life. The session deals with a personal relationship with God and family devotions. PowerPoint presentation (30 min.).

2. Working with a spirituality profile (See Bride's or Groom's Handbook) (15 min.).

3. Assignment: Work in small groups on cases with mixed-belief couples and believer-unbeliever couples. (role playing could be suggested as an alternative) (15 min.).

Additional reading: Ellen White, *The Adventist Home*, pp. 179, 119-120, 317.

**Session six: Family Background**

1. An exploration of the couples' individual family backgrounds: PowerPoint presentation (30 min.).

2. Assignment: Role playing in pairs: working with the Family Background Inventory from Bride's and Groom's Handbook (30 min.).

Additional reading: Brian Craig, *Premarital Counseling*, chapter 1.

**Session seven: Relationship With the In-laws**

1. Watching parts of the movie "Monster-in-law" (20 min.).

2. Dealing with in-laws: PowerPoint presentation (40 min.).

**Session eight: Different but Equal**

1. Differences between men and women: physical, emotional, cognitive, psychological differences: PowerPoint presentation (45 min.).

2. Questions and answers (15 min.).

Additional reading for this session: Gary Smalley, *If Only He Knew: What No Woman Can Resist*; Gary Smalley, *For Better or for Best: A Valuable Guide to Knowing, Understanding, and Loving Your Husband*. (Russian translation)

**Session nine: Marital Expectations and Needs**

1. Assignment: Every participant is to choose 5 to 8 of the most important needs from a list of 20. Rank order the list of 5 to 8 of the most important needs for men and women based on individual answers. Later on, the list will be compared with a typical list of priorities.

2. Differences in needs between men and women based on their physiological and psychological differentiation: Five basic needs of men and women. PowerPoint presentation (45 min.).

**Session ten: Marital Role Relationship**

1. Role relationship in contemporary Christian families: traditional and non-traditional approach. PowerPoint presentation (40 min.).

2. Inventory of Values in Marriage (See appendix for the content). Working individually. Sharing with others in a small group (15-20 min.).

**Session eleven: Family Dynamics**

1. Stages of marriage across the human lifespan. Nuclear family stages. Four main stages: dreams, disappointment, discovery, deep insight. PowerPoint presentation (45 min.).

2. Question and answers (15 min.).

**Session twelve: Sexuality in the Family**

1. Differences in men's and women's sexuality (30 min). Handouts.

2. Benefits of abstaining from sex until marriage: the Christian perspective (30 min.).

**Session thirteen: Family Finances**

1. The Christian view on finances. PowerPoint presentation (45 min.).

2. Working on a family budget (15 min). See suggestions in Bride's or Groom's Handbook. Individually – sharing in small groups.

Additional reading: Brian Craig, *Premarital Counseling*, chapter 7 (Russian translation).

**Session fourteen: Interpersonal Communication in the Family**

1. The importance of proper communication for family relationships. PowerPoint presentation (45 min.).

2. Communication exercise in pairs. Problem-solving exercise (15 min.).

Suggested additional reading: Norman Wright, *Communication is the Key to Your Marriage*, chapters 3, 4, 5 (Russian translation).

**Session fifteen: Conflict Resolution and Anger Management (2 hours)**

1. The nature of a conflict and general principles in conflict resolution.

PowerPoint presentation (45 min.).

2. Exercise in conflict resolution (15 min.).

3. How to handle anger. PowerPoint presentation (45 min).

4. Exercise in anger management (15 min).

Suggested additional reading: Norman Wright, *Communication is the Key to Your Marriage*, chapters 6, 7, 9, 10.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the twenty-first century many people make careful preparation for life's significant events. However, what our society has labeled as most important—marriage, family life, and child rearing—is given insufficient formal attention. Marriages, however, require skills which do not come naturally. Skills are learned. If a couple is not taught these skills before marriage, it is very difficult to 'unlearn' bad habits after marriage.

Christian premarital counseling, offered through the local church, is an effective tool to create a strong Christian family. The church's strength rests upon strong families because, as Kenneth Morris states, "the family is an integral part of its (the Church's) structure."<sup>1</sup> We also agree that "many defections from the Church's standards of behavior come out of 'sick' marriages."<sup>2</sup> Married couples have a better chance of succeeding if they have been through an adequate, proven, and tested premarital program. Norman Wright summed up the potential outcome of couples who are not exposed to a preparation program when he said, "Too many couples today are committing marital suicide because of lack of preparation."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Kenneth Morris, 3.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 4.

<sup>3</sup>Wright, *Premarital Counseling*, 39.



Pastors and counselors ought to teach couples the truth about marriage from the perspective of the Bible. The foundation for the doctrine of marriage can be traced back to the Book of Genesis. "Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being" (Gen 2:7). Later, Eve was brought to life from the rib of Adam, and Adam said: "This, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man. Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh" (Gen 2:23-24).

Christian premarital counseling prepares a couple seeking marriage to enter into a relationship based upon sacrificial love for one another, and to place the needs of others before the needs of self. The Christian couple is encouraged to invite Jesus Christ to be not only a personal Savior, but also the third cord spoken of in Eccl 4:12. Jesus becomes an integral partner in the marriage. In times of marital difficulty due to conflict, hurt feelings, financial struggles, or even more serious problems such as infidelity, God calls each spouse within a Christian marriage to repentance and a renewed commitment to the marriage. God's Word teaches that marriage is a covenant between a man and a woman that is intended to last for life. Christian marriage is based upon an unconditional commitment that takes the classic marriage vow "till death do us part" very seriously.

One of the duties of a pastor as a premarital educator is to disarm the couple of their romantic obsession. An average couple at the premarital stage experiences only the romanticism of love and hardly ever the hard realities. Such a couple must be helped so that love with all its joys and sorrows, pleasures and pain, richness and poverty, successes and failures can be encountered in some ways during the premarital process. The couple's

plans for marriage and expectations, hopes, and dreams for the future must be placed into the proper perspective. Preparation helps the couple to focus, and in some cases, refocus, so they can come to grips with the realities of married life.

Preparation sensitizes couples contemplating marriage to the falseness of the notion that good marriages evolve. It helps them to prepare for a successful marriage. Romance is appropriate in marriage, but it is not sufficient to equip them for the difficult days ahead. Therefore it is the pastor's responsibility to prepare couples to face marital realities. This can be accomplished to a great degree through a premarital program.

Premarital education does not train couples to eliminate all their difficulties, conflicts and problems. Rather, it prepares the couples to (1) identify an existing problem, (2) admit that there is a problem, and (3) decide together on an amicable way of resolving the challenge. The *Pastor's Manual* affirms this fact: "The danger to a marriage does not lie so much in the disagreements as in the way in which they are met and handled."<sup>4</sup>

Pastors and attendees will also benefit directly from the Seminar, because the issues that the Seminar deals with relate to every family. The attendees are not simply reminded of some general principles of family life, but also receive practical skills in communication, conflict resolution and other areas of family life. Pastors and Bible workers can be successful in their work with other people only if there is peace and harmony in their own families. The Apostle Paul says, that one of the qualities of the faithful overseer is to be "one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house,

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 24.

how will he take care of the church of God?)” (1 Tim 3:4-5). It is highly recommended that spouses of the pastors and Bible workers participate in the Seminars to learn the much-needed skills for their own families’ benefit. Also, in many instances, the influence of the pastor’s wife in family matters in congregations may be more extensive and effective than that of the pastor’s.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church recognizes the importance of premarital counseling for the health of the church and church families. That is why the church has been holding premarital counseling for more than ten years as a requirement for members who have decided to get married. A number of books dealing with this particular issue have been translated from English into the Russian language. However, few constructive efforts have been made to equip and prepare pastors to perform premarital counseling as part of their pastoral duties. It is believed that this Seminar will prepare pastors in the Euro-Asian Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to adopt the role of the premarital and marital counselor and to help young couples to establish strong Christian homes.

It is also believed that, as they are guided by the great principles of the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy, pastors can begin to give prominence to premarital preparation from the pulpit and in other formal forums. They can also introduce this topic in less formal settings like visitation, group discussions, and question-and-answer periods. This is a sure way of informing the old of, and introducing the young to, the importance of premarital preparation. Pastors can certainly help in further promoting this project.

As I was working on designing the Seminar, I experienced a growing sense of my call as a Church educator in the area of premarital and marital counseling. The Seminar is

a fruit of my reflections on the needs and the challenges of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Russia, and also of my reflections on where my qualification and expertise fit. A sense of need has gradually grown into a sense of call. Thus, first of all, I gained an assurance in my call to conduct the designed Seminar.

I have also been reassured about the effectiveness of premarital and marital counseling, that is guided by the great principles of the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy.

The material of the Seminar will be an invaluable resource for my ministry, because it is the first Seminar in Euro-Asian Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church that sets up a goal of training ministers to function as Christian counselors.

The material of the Seminar is also adapted to meet the real needs of the congregations. The material presently available to ministers in the Euro-Asian Division in the area of premarital and marital counseling is simply a translation of some books popular in North America. They do not always fit the local pattern. This project, on the other hand, presents a contextualized approach. Both the topics of the Seminar and their content were adjusted to the context of ministry in the Euro-Asian Division.

One of the goals of the Seminar is to help ministers to realize how many problems can be prevented by rather simple means. If this goal is reached, pastors can certainly help in further promoting this project, so its value will be multiplied by the effort of the ministers. It is my hope that pastors will soon begin to give prominence to premarital preparation from the pulpit and in other formal forums.

As I worked on this Seminar, I also experienced a personal growth toward Christian maturity and a need for further growth. The Seminar is designed to be presented

over and over again, and now I see my role, not only as a presenter, but also as a promoter of the presented principles.

My most alarming discoveries in the course of my work on the Seminar were the disquieting statistics on marital issues and the dramatic decline of the population in modern day Russia. This discovery has helped me to focus my goals, and to commit myself to my calling. The work on the Seminar enriched me both intellectually and spiritually, providing the goal, the material, and the guiding principles for my ministry.

The Seminar contributes to a scholarly understanding of premarital and marital counseling in a Church setting as another attempt to contextualize material developed in one culture for the needs of the other. This Seminar is another example of how the principles derived from Scripture can be universally applied to different cultural contexts.

Upon completion of this project, I am planning to implement the developed Seminar in Euro-Asia Division. In September 2008, I will be conducting the Seminar for the students and faculty of Zaoksky Theological Seminary, Russia. That will be a field test for the project. The questions and the feedback received from attendees will be used for further revisions of the Seminar material. A comprehensive evaluation questionnaire, based on the Zaoksky Theological Seminary's evaluation form for teachers and lecturers, will be used to collect data. The attendees will be encouraged to indicate which particular topics, in their estimation, deserve deeper consideration.

In the future, I am planning on further improvements to The Bride and Groom Handbook, providing some additional material, charts, and illustrations in preparation for publication. Another important avenue for the continuation of this project is to prepare a Seminar for pastors with a focus on married couples.

## APPENDIX

### **Introduction to the Premarital Bride's and Groom's Handbook**

This Handbook is designed to make premarital counseling more efficient, and to be used by the bride and groom in a premarital counseling course. The Handbook is also to be used by pastors/counselors. It will help facilitate the gathering of necessary information about the bride and groom. The tasks and additional readings that the Handbook provides will supply the bride and groom with the needed knowledge in the area of family relationships, thus making counseling more efficient. Since most of the assignments are given to the bride and groom as homework, the pastor/counselor saves time for the counseling sessions. The tasks offered in the Handbook are to help young people consider seriously the different aspects of marital life and to approach realistically such important things as family finances, roles, communication, conflict resolution, understanding each others needs, etc. The Handbook will help young people to get to know each other better and to consider more seriously the decision of establishing a family union. In the future, the Handbook will include pictures, illustrations, and quotations. For the bride and groom, the Handbook may become more than a textbook as the years go by; it will remind them of their covenant and stimulate the desire to perfect their relationship.

The Handbook will also be used by the Instructor at a Seminar for pastors. One of the sessions will specifically deal with the use of the Handbook in the premarital counseling course. Certain tests and assignments from the Handbook will be given to the participants of the Seminar sessions to assist in the learning process.

## Premarital Counseling

### Bride's/Groom's Handbook

Bride's  
name \_\_\_\_\_

Groom's  
name \_\_\_\_\_

Pastor/counselor's  
name \_\_\_\_\_

Date of  
engagement \_\_\_\_\_

Date of  
wedding \_\_\_\_\_

### Foreword

Dear Bride! Dear Groom! You are about to enter into a union with your beloved. Marriage is an amazing gift that God provided for men and women. We must realize that such a gift requires a careful and prayerful attitude, as well as wisdom and preparation. If you have opened this book, you are serious about accepting this gift. Also you have done the right thing by turning to your pastor for premarital counseling. This book will help you to benefit more from these sessions. In this book you will find different tests, assignments, exercises and information related to establishing a family. You will also find a list of recommended resources that will help further deepen your understanding of marriage, and to establish a healthy and strong family. Feel free to write in your handbook as you answer the tests, complete the exercises, or simply reflect and make notes. It will be a wonderful experience for you when, after the passage of time, you open your handbook and remember this wonderful time that you spent preparing for marriage. May the Lord richly bless you as you prepare to make this decisive step in your life!

## Family Background Information

This information page will help your counselor to gather necessary information for successful premarital counseling. Please answer all the questions.

Name:

Address:

Telephone number:

Age:

Nationality:

Education:

Occupation:

Work record:

What is your present state of health?

Religious affiliation:

Home church:

Date of baptism:

How often do you attend church?

Family of origin information:

Mother:

Mother's age:

Occupation

Father:

Father's age:

Occupation:

Marital status of your parents:

Where did you live with your family?



What is your appraisal of the happiness of your parent's marriage?

Describe the attitude of your parents toward your marriage:

What is your attitude toward your future parents-in-law?

How many siblings do you have?

Please indicate their names and ages:

What kind of relationship did you have with your siblings?

In my family I was \_\_\_eldest, \_\_\_second, \_\_\_middle, \_\_\_youngest, \_\_\_the only child.

With whom in your family did you have the closest relationship?

Are your Grandparents still living?

How big is your extended family?

Do you keep close contact with them or not?

Where did you live with your family?

How many times did your family move from the time you were 6?

How was the feeling of love and affection expressed in your family?

How were finances managed in your family?

What kind of relationship did you have with your mother and father when you were a child?

	Mother	Father
Strong affection	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mild affection	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No affection	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strong aggression	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mild aggression	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No aggression	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

What is your appraisal of the happiness of your parent's marriage during your childhood/adolescence?

- They were divorced and did not live together
- They lived together, but had a lot of conflicts
- They lived together but were quite unhappy
- They lived together and were quite happy
- They lived together and had a tender and happy relationship

What was your upbringing?

- Abusive
- Strict
- Positive; I felt good about my upbringing
- Inconsistent; I was often confused about their expectations
- I did not have any discipline;
- I felt suppressed and lonely

What is your level of independence from your parents now?

- Dependent
- Somewhat dependent
- Relatively independent
- Completely independent

### History of Relationship

Where did you meet your fiancé(e)?

How long have you known your fiancé(e)?

How long have you been dating?

Date of engagement:

Have you set a date for a wedding? If yes, please indicate:

Date of wedding:

Place of wedding:

Where do you plan to live after the wedding?

What is your attitude toward having children?

How many children would you like to have?

How positive are you that you have made the right decision about your marriage?

- Very Positive
- Positive
- I have some doubts
- I have serious doubts

What is the reaction of your parents and friends?

- |               | Parents                  | Friends                  |
|---------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Very positive | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Positive      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Neutral       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Negative      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Very negative | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

What is your favorite activity besides school or work (sports, crafts, music, reading...)?

Do you and your fiancé(e) engage in interests and activities together?

Is there any interest vital to you in which your fiancé(e) does not engage?

Please indicate in what activities you and your fiancé(e) engage and how often?

Often with a group	Often two of us	Sometimes with a group	Sometimes two of us	Once
--------------------	-----------------	------------------------	---------------------	------

- |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Concerts/Theaters        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Restaurants              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Picnics/nature walks     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Recreation               | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Shopping                 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Visiting family          | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Visiting friends         | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Picnics' with friends    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Holidays                 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Parks                    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Church/church activities | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Have you dated seriously before?  
Never dated  
One to three other relationships  
Four to five relationships  
More than five relationships  
Have you been engaged previously?  
Have you been married previously and now  
divorced/widowed

How can you describe your understanding of sexuality and sexual relationships?

Superior   
Adequate   
Inadequate   
Lack of understanding

What most influenced your preparation for marriage?

We talked a lot about this with my fiancé(e).   
I asked advice from my parents.   
My friends influenced my decision.   
Books that I read about sex, relationships, communication.   
How many have you read?

### **Marriage Expectations**

Why did you decide to get married?

What are your expectations of this marriage?

Please list all your goals and expectations of your marriage.

Please take your time to complete the marriage compatibility test by Анна  
Митрофанова (Anna Mitrofanova), provided by the counselor. Do not confer  
with your fiancé(e) on any of the questions from the test.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Анна Митрофанова, *Личная Жизнь как Совместный Проект* [Personal Life Together Project] (Санкт-Петербург: Питер, 2003).

Please complete the Cruise-Blichington Temperament Inventory as assigned by your pastor/counselor. The results of these assignments will be discussed at the next counseling session with your pastor/counselor.

### Falling In Love

#### Differences Between Immature Love and Mature Love<sup>2</sup>

##### Immature Love

##### Mature Love

1. Love is born at first sight and will conquer all.	1. Love is a developing relationship and deepens with realistically shared experiences.
2. Love demands exclusive attention and devotion and it is jealous of outsiders.	2. Love is built upon self-acceptance and is shared unselfishly with others.
3. Love is characterized by exploitation and direct need of gratification.	3. Love seeks to aid and strengthen the loved one without striving for recompense.
4. Love built upon physical attraction and sexual gratification. Sex often dominates relationship.	4. Love includes sexual satisfaction, but not the exclusion of sharing in other areas of life.
5. Love is romanticized. The couple does not face reality or is frightened by it.	5. Love enhances reality and makes the partner more complete and adequate person.
6. Love is static and egocentric. Change is sought in the partner in order to satisfy one's own needs and desires.	6. Love is a growing and developing reality. Love expands to include the growth and creativity of the loved one.
7. Love is irresponsible and fails to consider the future consequences of today's actions	7. Love is responsible and gladly accepts the consequences of mutual involvement.

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<sup>2</sup>Robert K. Kelley, *Courtship, Marriage and the Family* (New York: Harcourt, Bruce & World, 1969), 213-213.

### The Romantic Fallacy<sup>3</sup>

First, romance results in such distortions of personality that after marriage the two people can never fulfill the roles that they expect of each other. Second, romance so idealizes marriage, and even sex, that when the day-to-day experiences of marriage are encountered there must be disillusionment involved. Third, the romantic complex is so short-sighted that the pre-marital relationship is conducted almost entirely on the emotional level and consequently such problems as temperamental or value differences, religious or cultural, or health problems are never considered. Fourth, romance develops such a false ecstasy that there is implied in courtship a promise of a kind of happiness which could never be maintained during the realities of married life. Fifth, romance is such an escape from the negative aspects of personality to the extent that their repression obscures the real person. Later in marriage these negative factors in marital adjustment are bound to appear, and they do so in far greater detail and far more importantly simply because they were not evident earlier. Sixth, people engrossed in romance seem to be prohibited from wise planning for the basic needs of the future even to the extent of failing to discuss the significant problems of early marriage.

It is difficult to know how pervasive the romantic fallacy really is. I suspect that it creates the greatest havoc with high school seniors or that half of the population who are married before they are twenty years old. Nevertheless, even in a college or young adult population, one constantly finds as a final criterion for marriage the question of being in love. This is due to the distortion of the meaning of a true companionship in marriage by the press, by the magazines, and by cultural impact upon the last few generations. The

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<sup>3</sup>Lyle B. Gangsei, *Manual for Group Pre-Marital Counseling* (New York Association Press, 1971), 56-57.

result is that more serious and sober aspects of marital choice and marital expectations are not only neglected but sometimes ridiculed.

**Questions for discussion:** What do you think about above passage? What positive things would you name about a romance? Can romance be kept in marriage?

**Suggested reading:**

Nancy Van Pelt, Ван Пелт, Ненси. *Мы Только Начинаем* [We've Only Just Begun: a Guide to Successful Courtship] (Заокский: Источник жизни, 1999).

Nancy Van Pelt, Ван Пелт, Ненси. *Разумная Любовь* [Smart Love: a Field Guide for Single Adults] (Заокский: Источник жизни, 2006).

Henry Cloud, John Townsend, Клауд, Генри, Джон Таусенд, *Брак – Где Проходит Граница* [Boundaries in Marriage] (Москва: Триада, 2001).

Henry Cloud, John Townsend, Клауд, Генри, Джон Таусенд, *Свидания – Нужны ли Границы* [Boundaries in Dating] (Москва: Триада, 2001).

**Description of Love**

1 Cor 13:1-8 (NLT)

“If I make use of the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am like sounding brass, or a loud-tongued bell. And if I have a prophet's power, and have knowledge of all secret things; and if I have all faith, by which mountains may be moved from their place, but have not love, I am nothing. And if I give all my goods to the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it is of no profit to me. Love is never tired of waiting; love is kind; love has no envy; love has no high opinion of itself, love has no pride; Love's ways are ever fair, it takes no thought for itself; it is not quickly made angry, it takes no account of evil; It takes no pleasure in wrongdoing, but has joy in what is true; Love has the power of undergoing all things, having faith in all things,

hoping all things. Though the prophet's word may come to an end, tongues come to nothing, and knowledge has no more value, love has no end.”

Please give your own definition of love:

### **Examining Engagement<sup>4</sup>**

How exciting to be engaged! What are the purposes of engagement? Most assume it is a time to plan the wedding. Years ago, it was necessary to allow time to prepare the woman's trousseau. Now, “some couples defeat the purpose of the engagement period by concentrating so exclusively on the wedding plans that they make little progress toward really knowing each other... The wedding itself looms so important in their minds that they lose sight of the purpose for the engagement.”

There are several basic goals for the relationship. Engagement is:

- (1) an opportunity to see the fiancé(e) in everyday situations over a period of time.
- (2) an opportunity to become better acquainted with each other's family;
- (3) an opportunity to create an amorous monogamy in which “old flames” and rivals are eliminated;
- (4) an opportunity to discuss the realities of marriage: especially, parenthood, money, responsibilities;
- (5) an opportunity for insight into each others responsiveness;
- (6) an opportunity to arrange financial affairs and gradually assume the economic burdens of marriage;

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<sup>4</sup>Based on Evelin Duvall and Reuben Hill, *Being Married* (Boston: D. C. Heath, 1960), 122.



(7) an opportunity to test the roles of husband and wife and to learn some of the roles through decision making;

(8) an opportunity to stabilize the relationship.

### **When an Engagement Should Be Broken?<sup>5</sup>**

Occasionally engagements should be broken. That is always a painful decision. Sometimes, in the course of premarital counseling, it becomes obvious that a proposed marriage cannot possibly succeed.

Engagements should never be taken lightly. In a day of such high divorce rates, it is natural that there are second thoughts. Rather than dismiss them or disguise them, confront them honestly.

Orville Evans said, "A lot of marriages are not made in heaven but in desperation!" Remember—there are several things worse than being single; for example, being married to the wrong person. Andrae Wells Miller wrote of her engagement: I thought back to the scene five years earlier in which I had accepted a marriage proposal. As I replayed it, I was now wise and mature enough to see that I could have said "no" and avoided all this pain. But as it turned out, that first mistake was followed by more and more, and now here I was ... a divorcee, scared, angry, proud, hurt, lonely ... and exhausted.

If you, like Andrae Miller, are "walking into pain"—going ahead with a marriage ignoring warning signals and the disapproval of friends and family—tackle this matter head-on—NOW!

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<sup>5</sup>Harold Smith, *More Than "I Do": A Pastoral Resource Book for Premarital Counseling* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1983), 11-15.

Why should an engagement be broken? Duvall and Hill acknowledge six factors:

Recognition of fundamental feelings of alienation arising out of more intimate realities of the engagement—not just doubts and misgivings.

Recognition of strong feelings of incompatibility.

Recognition that the engagement was made originally under pressure from relatives or circumstances.

Recognition that the main reason for refraining from breaking the engagement is the fear of embarrassment.

Recognition that either of the parties is overly dependent emotionally on parents and too immature to share the rigors of marriage.

Recognition of changes to the economic future due to a serious accident or health breakdown or similar disaster affecting the ability to earn a living and carry on the functions of parenthood.<sup>6</sup>

A seventh could be added:

Recognition that the engagement and marriage is not God's will. God is committed to the very best for you. "This is the will of God," Paul wrote, "that each of you know how to take a wife for himself in holiness and honor" (1 Thess 4:4, RSV).

The Lord will probably not knock you down or declare martial law to keep you from marrying someone. He will, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, speak to you. For example, He could not lead you into a marriage with an unbeliever for His will cannot be contrary to His Word (2 Cor 6:14-16). Nor are there asterisks for special cases.

The great theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer insisted that it becomes God's will when you come to the altar. The testimony of thousands of pastors and millions of divorced

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<sup>6</sup>Duvall and Hill, 131.

people (some of whom rejected the advice of others) says it is easy to be wrong when you are in love. To say that marriage should be entered into "advisedly" is to say "within the framework of good advice." What are your friends saying or not saying about your engagement?

In any engagement, there is risk; engagement is not marriage. Justine Knight studied divorced Christians and asked, at what point in time they discovered that all was not well in their relationship. One in five responded, "Before the marriage." When asked why they married, many noted, "Plans were made and we thought it would work out."

It would be tragic for you to ignore any feelings of uncertainty. Now is the time to deal with them.

### **Guidelines for Decision**

1. *Distinguish between pre-marital and pre-ceremonial jitters.* Because so many weddings are intricately staged "mini-productions," is it any wonder that people get nervous?

Some of the jitters are an escape valve and need to be seen as such. Martin Parsons raises four tests of jitters:

Has the couple chosen each other in calmer moments?

Has the couple known love and companionship?

Are the couple devout believers?

Are they conscious of God's guidance in their lives which has brought them to this point?<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Martin Parson, *Marriage Preparation, Library of Pastoral Care* (London: SPSK, 1967), 104.

If so, then the jitters are probably pre-ceremonial. Relax. This reality of memory-block and fatigue is what keeps the photographers snapping pictures—to jar your memory.

2. *Consider postponing the wedding.* How long should an engagement be? Duvall and Hill reply, “Long enough.” They also suggest, “The engagement is the best preview of the marriage pattern for any given couple.”<sup>8</sup>

Too much can be crowded into an engagement, leaving the couple fatigued and exhausted. If you want the big (really BIG) church wedding, allow plenty of time and assistance (and money).

But if there are doubts, delay the wedding date *even* if it means inconvenience to some people or that some cannot attend or participate. The wedding should be one of the most significant events in your life and it should be based on your schedule, not Aunt Hilda's or some soloist's schedule.

*Don't threaten or manipulate.* Some people are accustomed to “kiss and make-up” habits in their relationship; others have “on-again, off-again” engagements. They battle to gain concessions or certain advantages.

*Don't be intimidated by threats.* “I'll kill myself ... I'll join the French Foreign Legion ... if you don't marry me!” Before you cave in, consider the advice of Duvall and Hill, “Threats of vengeance or of suicide exhibit a type of neuroticism that would be highly undesirable in a marriage partner and *are ample reasons in themselves* for breaking an engagement.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Duvall and Hill, 133.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 131.

*Reject the relationship, not the person.* It's extremely difficult to distinguish between the two. You are not rejecting the person, *but the relationship* with that person.

*Communicate.* Don't ask the pastor or someone else to break the engagement for you. The other person has a right to know why the engagement is being broken. Ignore the tendency to go for the jugular. Some people put all the blame on the other person, when in actuality it often is internal. "I'm not ready for marriage" is a tough admission. To return a ring, or ask for its return, without some explanation is too much of a burden to put onto someone who loves you.

*Be honest.* Christians need to be forthright in their words, speaking the truth in love (Eph 4:15). You do not have to wound or be tacky. Your fiancé(e) will heal faster if he/she knows precisely why the engagement ended. The reasoning may be painful and difficult to accept, but it is not so much *what* we say as how we say it that wounds.

Admittedly, the first response may be anger or denial, but in time the other party, too, may admit misgivings. And no small numbers have thanked the Lord for a broken engagement.

8. *Don't prolong the decision.* We've all heard about the groom who did not show up at the church. The bride and her family and friends were devastated. It is much easier to break an engagement early than to wait until the last minute. When you realize there are difficulties, that is the time to confront them honestly. Don't assume things will get better; the pressure or tension only increases.

9. *Allow yourself to grieve.* Your loss may be just as painful as divorce or death. Remember that there are stages of grief:

- a denial—"This isn't really happening!"
- b anger—"How could he/she do this to me?"

- c. negotiation—"I'll change."
- d. acceptance—"This is happening."
- e. growth—"I'm a better person because of this."

Millions of individuals have grown through broken engagements. Time heals in ways that the wise words of a thousand friends cannot. God wants to share your grief. Keep in mind that the grief of a broken engagement is *nothing* compared to the sorrow experienced in a disastrous marriage.

10. *Recognize your vulnerability.* After a broken engagement, you are going to be vulnerable. Some vow, "I'll never trust another man/woman!" But those words are more motivated by hurt or anger than rational thought. Someone may suddenly appear in your life—to take away all your pain.

A lot of rebounders form relationships based on their mutual rejections. After a broken engagement, you are just as vulnerable to making another mistake.

Give yourself plenty of time to heal. It is okay to grieve.

It is difficult to break an engagement because you are dousing a beautiful dream. It takes a tremendous act of courage to do so. But if the Holy Spirit makes you aware of deficiencies in a relationship, you should be grateful. Some of the differences can be eliminated through counseling. Others would threaten your very life, sanity, and happiness. Do not be concerned about losing face.

Years ago, a broken engagement was considered a "breach of contract" and one could be sued for damages. Fortunately, those days are behind us. Human reaction can be unpredictable—as was the woman who plotted to get even with the guy who broke her engagement. On the day he married another girl, the first woman attended the wedding.

As his bride came down the aisle of the church, the women to whom the groom had been engaged threw a bottle of jet black ink on the bride!

As Christians we are urged to enter into marriage “after earnest prayer.” That is wise counsel as you examine your relationship and move to the long-awaited wedding day!

### **Definition of Marriage**

There are five definitions of marriage given by different authors:

1. Christian Marriage is a total commitment of two people to the person of Jesus Christ and to one another. It is a commitment in which there is no holding back of anything. Marriage is a pledge of mutual fidelity; it is a partnership of mutual subordination. A Christian Marriage is similar to a solvent, a freeing up of the man and woman to be themselves and become all that God intends for them to become. —Norman Wright.<sup>10</sup>

2. Christian marriage is a lifelong covenant between man and woman established by God. Within the confines of this relationship love increases, understanding grows, privileges of family life bring pleasure and responsibilities shared. —Brien Craig.<sup>11</sup>

3. One new life existent in two persons. —Dwight Small.<sup>12</sup>

4. Marriage does not demand perfection. But it must be given a priority. It is an institution for sinners. No one else need apply. But it finds its fullest glory when sinners

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<sup>10</sup>Wright, *Premarital Counseling*. 28.

<sup>11</sup>Крейг, Брайон. *Добрачное Консультирование* [Premarital Counseling] (Заокский, Издательство ЗАУ, 2004).

<sup>12</sup>Harold Smith, 7.

see it as God's way of leading us through His ultimate curriculum of love and righteousness. —David Hubbard.<sup>13</sup>

5. Marriage is a covenant of responsible love, a fellowship of repentance and forgiveness. —Wayne Oates.<sup>14</sup>

From the 5 definitions of Christian marriage given above, choose the one you like the most and the one that appealed to you the least. Give reasons.

Please give your own definition of Christian marriage.

### **Contract or Covenant?**

Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh." Gen 2:24. This foundational statement about marriage is repeated five times in the Bible (Matt 19:5; Mark 10:7-8; 1 Cor 6-16; Eph 5:31). This description of the nature of marriage in the Bible, as consisting of leaving, cleaving and becoming one flesh (Gen 2:24), reveals the biblical understanding of marriage as covenant relationship.

To appreciate the biblical view of marriage as a sacred covenant, it is helpful to distinguish between a contract and a covenant. Paul E. Palmer offers helpful clarification of the difference between the two: "Contracts engage the services of people; covenants engage persons. Contracts are made for a stipulated period of time: covenants are forever. Contracts can be broken, with material loss to the contracting parties, covenants cannot be broken, but if violated, they result in personal loss and broken hearts... Contracts are

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<sup>13</sup>Wright, *Premarital Counseling*, 87.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 88.



witnessed by people with the state as guarantor, covenants are witnessed by God with God as guarantor.”<sup>15</sup>

### **Why is this a time for you to marry?**

Make a list of ten indications why this is the time of your life to marry.

Your fiancé(e) should make his/her own list too. After making these lists the two of you should share these lists and talk about them. Remember that when you share your thoughts in this area, you are sharing your value system. You are saying, “These values are important to me!”

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

### **Why is He Mr. Right? Why is She Ms. Right?**

In the following list remember you are speaking to your future spouse. In some of these reasons you will be saying, “I want to marry you because of who you are as a

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<sup>15</sup>Palmer, 639.

person. I never want you to change that person. I want you always to be the person I married.”

List twelve reasons why you want to marry this man/woman.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.
- 11.
- 12.

If one of two marriages fails, mine will be:

\_\_\_\_\_ The one that makes it!

\_\_\_\_\_ The one that doesn't make it.

Why we will be different?

Why will your marriage be different? Why will your marriage not end in divorce?

Spend some time reviewing the following situations that may influence your marriage, then ask your future spouse to review the questionnaire. Share your reactions.

Which of the following would threaten your marriage? How would you respond if these items happened?

prolonged illness of myself  
prolonged illness of future spouse  
death of parent  
escalating responsibilities in a family business  
major weight gain  
an affair  
a parent moving in with you  
a call to full-time Christian service  
birth of physically/emotionally handicapped child  
infertility  
major financial reverse  
wife earning more money  
loss of job  
physical handicap of a mate  
a major relocation <sup>16</sup>

### **Dealing With In-Laws**

The following suggestion by Landis and Landis could provide guidelines for couples in relation to their in-laws<sup>17</sup>:

1. Treat your in-laws with the same consideration and respect that you give to friends who are not in-laws.

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<sup>16</sup>Harold Smith, 68.

<sup>17</sup>Judson T. Landis and Mary G. Landis, *Personal Adjustment, Marriage and Family Living* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1966), 239.

2. When in-laws take an interest in your life and give advice, do just as you would if any friend gave advice: if it is good, follow it; if it is not good, accept it graciously and then ignore it.

3. Remember that many times when the in-laws appear to be too concerned with your affairs, they are not trying to interfere in your life but are sincerely interested in your welfare.

4. Look for the good points in your in-laws.

5. When you visit your in-laws, make the visits reasonably short.

6. When visiting in-laws, be as thoughtful, courteous, and helpful as you are when you are visiting other friends.

7. Accept your in-laws as they are; remember that they would probably like to make changes in you, too.

8. Mothers-in-law have been close to their children before marriage; give them time to find new interests in life.

9. Go into marriage with a positive attitude toward your in-laws— you believe it is a good family to marry into and you intend to enjoy your new family.

10. Give advice to your in-laws only if they ask for it; even then, use self-restraint.

11. Discuss the faults of your spouse only with him/her, not with your family.

12. Do not quote your family or hold them up as models to your spouse.

13. Remember that it takes at least two people to create an in-law problem. No one person is ever entirely to blame.

For a married couple to handle relationships with parents and in-laws on a positive basis, they need to:

1. Be mindful of the fact that family ties are normal, necessary, and important and that a brusque rejection of them can only bring unhappiness to all;
2. Make the process of separating themselves gradual rather than abrupt;
3. Accept the spouse's concern for his/her parental family;
4. Accept the fact that parents cannot automatically stop being interested in, and concerned about, their children just because the latter get married, and that parental help can sometimes be a wonderful thing to have;
5. Present a united front to any attempt by parents or in-laws to interfere; firmness is more effective than hostility.

#### **Principles to Follow With In-Laws**

1. No in-law interference can damage a sound marriage. In-laws cannot drive a wedge between husband and wife who stand firm together.
2. The policy to adopt is to make it clear that you want to be friendly and you want to work for harmony between the generations, but you will not tolerate unwarranted interference in your marriage. This must be made clear with no compromise.
3. A confrontation or discussion should be followed up by sincere and genuine attempts to be friendly and conciliatory. You can behave lovingly towards them even if you do not feel loving, and the action tends to promote the feeling. It will help and encourage your spouse if you make a real effort in this direction. Experience shows that this policy can, in time, achieve a surprising degree of success.
4. If you and your in-laws really have very little in common, short visits from time to time are best.

5. Remember family ties cannot be broken, and they last throughout a lifetime. Even if your relationships with your in-laws are not as they should be right now, a time may come when you may need their help or they may need yours.<sup>18</sup>

### **God's Word: Wait Until Marriage<sup>19</sup>**

Both adultery (sexual intercourse between a married man and woman not his wife, or between a married woman and a man not her husband) and fornication (sexual intercourse between any two people not married to each other) are condemned in Scripture.

Adultery is expressly prohibited in the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:14) and condemned in many other passages in the Old Testament. (See Gen 20:3; Prov 6:32-33; Jer 5: 7-8.)

Jesus repeated the commandment prohibiting adultery (Mark 10:19) and even added that looking upon a woman to lust after her amounts to adultery with her in one's heart (Matt 5:27-28). He condemned both adultery and fornication in Mark 7:20-23. (See also Mark 10:11-12).

One of the few "essentials" that the apostles felt necessary to touch upon in their letter to the Antioch Christians was that they abstain from fornication (Acts 15:28-29).

Paul speaks out strongly against sex outside of marriage in many of his letters. For example:

a. 1 Corinthians 6:9-20. Paul warns us that those who continue to practice fornication or adultery "shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (v. 9-10). He adds that

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 238-239.

<sup>19</sup>Wright, *Premarital Counseling*, 213-215.

“our bodies are not for sexual immorality, but for the Lord” (v. 13). Indeed, our bodies are “members of Christ” (v. 15) and “temples of the Holy Spirit” who is in us (v. 19). Accordingly, we are to glorify God in our bodies (v. 20) by fleeing sexual immorality (v.18).

b. Galatians 5:19-21. Sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, and carousing are all included in Paul's list of the “deeds of the flesh,” the doers of which “shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” We are to display the fruit of the Holy Spirit, which includes love, patience, faithfulness, and self-control (v. 22-23).

c. Ephesians 5:3-12. Paul urges the Ephesian Christians not to let sexual immorality or impurity “even be named” among them (v. 3). Moreover, they are not to participate in the “unfruitful deeds of darkness,” and they are to expose and reprove them (v. 11).

d. See also Rom 13:9, 1 Cor 5:9-11; 10:8; 2 Cor 12:21, Col 3:5-7; 1 Thess 4:1-8; 2 Tim 2:22.

5. Other New Testament authors were equally emphatic in their condemnation of sex outside of marriage: Heb 13:4; Jas 2:11; 2 Pet 2:9-16; Jude 7; Rev 2:20-22; 9:21.

A biblical figure who “fled” from sexual immorality is Joseph (see Gen 39:7-12). His master's wife asked him repeatedly, day after day, to lie with her, but Joseph refused each time: “How then could I do this great evil, and sin against God?” (v. 9). One day when he was doing his work around the house, she caught him by his garment and asked him again. Understanding the seriousness of this temptation, Joseph “left his garment in her hand and fled, and went outside” (v. 12).

## Benefits of Waiting until Marriage<sup>20</sup>

A. No guilt. God tells us to wait until marriage. Not waiting will create guilt that will hamper your relationship with Him, with your sexual partner, and with everyone else. By waiting you can know, because God says so, that Jesus Christ smiles on your marriage bed.

B. No fear. Waiting insures that you will never have to be afraid, not even to the extent of one fleeting thought, of having to build a marriage on an unexpected pregnancy.

C. No comparison. Waiting insures that you will never fall into the devastating trap of comparing your spouse's sexual performance with that of a previous sexual partner.

D. Spiritual growth. On the positive side, waiting will help you subject your physical drives to the lordship of Christ, and thereby develop your self-control—an important aspect of the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Also, if you get married and are later separated temporarily (e.g., for a business trip), then this discipline early in your relationship will give both of you confidence and trust in each other during that time of separation.

E. Greater joy. Waiting insures that there will be something saved for your marriage relationship, for that first night and for the many nights thereafter. The anticipation of the fulfillment of your relationship in sexual union is exciting. Do not spoil it by jumping the gun.

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 216.



## How Far Shall We Go Before Marriage?<sup>21</sup>

Given our conviction to refrain from sexual intercourse until marriage, the question remains: How far shall we go, short of sexual intercourse, before marriage?

A. The answer to this question depends upon how far along you are in your relationship together (first date or engaged) and upon your abilities to withstand the very strong temptation to have sexual intercourse.

B. However, a general principle which we feel applies to everyone is the following: That which has its natural end in sexual intercourse should be held to your wedding night.

1. This means, at the very least, that heavy petting, direct stimulation of each other's sexual organs, and mutual masturbation should be out. Do not build up your sexual drives and desires to the point of no return, lest your physical relationship become a source of frustration, rather than of joy, for you.

2. This also means that you should not engage in any physical activity which will build up the other person's sexual drives to the point of no return. In the context of a different problem, that of eating certain types of food, Paul puts forth the general exhortation that we not do anything which causes our brother (or sister) to stumble (see Rom 12:13, 21). Thus, both persons must be sensitive to each other and must place the other's spiritual health ahead of their own desire for physical fulfillment now. When in doubt, don't! For "whatever is not from faith is sin" (Rom 14:23). Pray, alone and together, about your physical relationship. If you can not visualize Jesus Christ smiling at the two of you, the Holy Spirit may be urging you to pull back the reins a little, for the sake of your love for the Lord and for each other.

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 215.

C. This does not mean that the two of you are not going to relate physically before marriage, nor does it mean that your sexual drives will not increase as you do relate physically. And it certainly does not mean that you will not want to go to bed with each other. But it does mean that the two of you will make Jesus Christ the Lord of your sexual life and that you are going to wait for the green light from Him.

### **Sexuality and Family Planning<sup>22</sup>**

Do you agree or disagree with the following? (Circle your answer)

Key: SD = Strongly disagree, D= Disagree, NS= Not sure, A= Agree,

SA=Strongly Agree

Sex in marriage is a beautiful thing over which God commissions angels to preside.

SD D NS A SA

Sex is appropriate on Sabbath.

SD D NS A SA

Either partner may initiate sexual intimacy.

SD D NS A SA

Each partner should experience orgasm for sex to be satisfactory.

SD D NS A SA

Where did you get your earliest information about sex?

Indicate your level of comfort with the following: (Check the appropriate column)

Your physical relationship so far

The amount of demonstration of affection so far

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<sup>22</sup>Cassimy, 130.

Your present knowledge of sex

Your ability to communicate with your fiancé(e) about the role sex should have  
now

Your ability to communicate with your fiancé(e) about the role sex will have  
when you are married

Your fiancé(e)'s friendships with those of the opposite sex

Who generally takes the initiative in the demonstration of affection?

Will you use contraceptives? Yes No Uncertain

Do you plan to have children? Yes No Uncertain

How does your future wife/husband feel about your plans for children?

How many children would be ideal for you?

When do you plan for your first child to be born?

Your second? \_\_\_\_\_ Other?

Complete the following to include your beliefs and feelings:

Abortion is...

### **Inventory of Values in Marriage<sup>23</sup>**

This inventory lists some value statements about the major areas of married living. Of necessity, the list is not all inclusive. Do not discuss this with your fiancé(e) until after you have filled it out.

First, examine the list and check (x) **every** statement that describes how you want a part of your marriage to function. If you cannot find statements which describe your

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<sup>23</sup>David Rolfe, *Marriage Preparation Manual* (New York: Paulist Press, 1975), 47.

exact preference, choose those which are closest to the value you hold. Choose as many as reflects your values.

Second, reread the items you choose, and pick out (by searching the statement number) the ten which are the most important in box A, the number of the second most important in box B. Continue this process with the remaining 8 statements.

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When you finish, compare your list with your fiancé(e)'s list. The more statements you both have selected for the top 10, the closer are your value expectations of marriage.

Allow yourself at least one hour to discuss what each similarity or difference means in terms of values that are felt and the behaviors that could indicate how the values will be lived on a day to day basis when you are a married couple.

1. It is the husband's responsibility to earn a living: the wife should not be employed.

2. It does not matter to me who is employed: both husband and wife can be wage earners.

3. It is the husband's job to manage the money since he earns it.

4. The wife should manage the money since she will have more time to do this.

5. The spouse best at managing will take care of our finances.

6. We have a good relationship because we do not need to ask verbally for affection or attention.

7. We almost always are very open and direct in saying exactly what we want, when we want it.

8. When we are angry, I'd rather have angry words; say what angers us and exactly how we feel.

9. When we are angry, it is better to keep quiet, cool down and not talk too much about it. Angry words damage love.

10. It is my responsibility to make some of the major decisions.

11. Sometimes it is good to do things independently of my spouse.

12. The husband is the head of the household, so he will make the final decisions on most of all things.

13. I appreciate our folks' giving us help and advice.

14. I feel it is important to keep a close relationship going with our families and to visit them quite often.

15. Somehow, I feel that it is not the man's place to vacuum, iron, scrub the toilet bowl, etc.

16. The husband will care for the yard and outside the house; the wife should clean and cook.

17. In our marriage we will both do household chores.

18. It is important to me that my spouse and I, not only share the same religious beliefs, but also that we live our faith in a similar way.

19. I will be happy if my spouse becomes more religious.

20. I do not mind if my spouse is much less interested in religion (and church membership) than I.

21. I prefer that we do not go to church.

22. Sexual intercourse is a very personal part of marriage, not one we talk about with each other.

23. A marital sexual relationship is improved by the couple using a variety of positions and techniques.

24. If our sex life is good, it will make the rest of the relationship good.

25. If our overall relationship is open and caring, than our sexual relationship is satisfying.

26. In our marriage, the wife will have the main responsibility for raising the children.

27. I feel that marriage without children can be as satisfying as marriage with children.

28. I believe that husband and wife should share equally in the day to day caring for children: disciplining, feeding, etc.

29. We will need to get away from our children and have time for just the two of us.

30. I want to limit the number of children we will have by using a specific method of family planning.

Suggested reading:

Gary Smalley, *"If only He Knew: What No Woman Can Resist,"* Гари Смолей, [Если бы Он Только Знал] (Москва: Триада, 2000).

Gary Smalley *"For Better or for Worse,"* Гари Смолей, [Самая Лучшая, Лучшие Всех] (Москва: Триада, 2003).

Len McMillan, *"Putting Up with Mister Right,"* Лен Макмиллан, [Как Ужиться с Мужчиной] (Заокский: Христианская служба семьи и здоровья, 2002).

## Spirituality in Marriage<sup>24</sup>

“The family that prays together stays together!” Billy Graham remarked that very few couples divorce who have a regular discipline of praying and studying the Word together. However, spirituality drifting can lead to marital drifting. Even couples that began with a Christian wedding (and not just a church wedding) can find themselves in spiritual and marital need. No marriage is immune from attack – and that includes yours! It takes discipline to make a marriage work. And you definitely need help from above to make it happen.

### Spiritual profile

How would you rate your spiritual growth since you met? Check the space that seems most accurate.

For you

for your fiancé(e)

Definite growth

Substantial growth

Slight growth

Status quo

Some decline

Significant decline

2. Many people “get more spiritual” during engagement, but then settle back into old habits. If you have marked some decline in your spirituality, or that of your fiancé(e), you need to question the wisdom of the engagement. God would not bring someone into your life who draws you away from Him.

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<sup>24</sup>Adapted from Harold Smith, 18-20.

3. Quite candidly, sometimes this spiritual distancing is not unrelated to the amount of sexual contact or affection in the relationship. Some levels of intimacy leave you feeling guilty or empty—but they keep recurring because they are pleasurable. The guilt becomes a barrier between you and the Lord—or more accurately, the pleasure does.

Admittedly, once certain levels of physical intimacy have been introduced into a relationship, it is difficult to settle for less. However, the Lord wants your wedding night to be a splendid memory—just as the Song of Solomon portrayed.

4. *Am I comfortable with my fiancé(e)'s past? Is my fiancé(e) comfortable with mine?* “How much do I tell?” is a question faced by most couples. But there are no 1-2-3 rules. If you have open communication and a stable relationship, you can more easily discuss past romances. However, engagements are fragile. Sometimes one frank disclosure could be too much.

Everyone has a past. Thank God for those remarkable and assuring words of Paul, “If *anyone* is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” (2 Cor 5:17).

5. *Am I tithing? Is my fiancé(e)?* I did not ask if you *believe* in tithing, but whether you *practice* it. Tithing is not an option—even for newlyweds. Again, it is one of the spiritual disciplines that people “let slide.” With all the expense of the wedding and with the costs of setting up a household, it may be tough to tithe. But tithing is a good foundation on which to establish a home. And the Lord helps the 90 percent go further.

If you do not make a firm commitment now, those “tight” times will come when it will be seemingly expedient not to tithe, such as while scraping enough together to make



a down payment on your house, or when the income is temporarily reduced following the birth of a child.

*Can you easily ask for forgiveness? Can your fiancé(e)?*

When there has been a disagreement, who moves first to heal it? Has it been easy for you to seek forgiveness? Some people cover by saying, "If I hurt your feelings, I'm sorry," and imply, "but you shouldn't have gotten your feelings hurt in the first place!"

Others will respond, "Oh, I forgot you did (or said) such and such ... but while we're on the subject ..."

Married couples keep records of doing wrong. They look like the example below:

April 16. Had asked him twice to take out trash.

April 29. Sided with his mother against me.

May 5. Said he was "too tired" to visit mom and dad.

Paul wrote in his epic on love, "Love... keeps no record of wrong" (1 Cor 13:5).

Forgiveness is a decision, not a feeling or an emotion. Paul observed, bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against each other. Forgive as the Lord forgave you" (Col 3:13). Couples that forgive do not land in divorce courts.

Suggested reading: Ellen G. White, *Adventist Home*

Ellen G. White, *Messages to Young People*

Ellen G. White, *Mind, Character, Personality*

## Communication in Marriage<sup>25</sup>

How much time do you spend dreaming and talking about “when we get married”? Dreaming, anticipating, even longing are a normal part of the engagement period.

Some couples spend little or no time talking. When couples stop talking, they start drifting apart. Couples must be able to communicate; they must resist the many things in their relationships that sandpaper feelings: resentment, anger, sulking, etc.

What frustrates communication in marriage?

1. *Work.* Initially, both of you will probably be working. Some jobs are draining and time-consuming; others are boring, but equally draining. One or both of you will be coming home tired. It is easy not to communicate and easier for miscommunication. Sometimes, you will be sure you told him something; but he will insist you did not.

Or one person may assume his/her job is *more* demanding or may discount the other's fatigue.

And some of us carry work home, at least in thoughts or anxiety. Others choose to unload on more sympathetic ears where they work and have nothing more to say at home.

2. *Television.* You'd think that TV would be cheap entertainment—but it becomes divisive. You are together but you're not communicating or sharing any thing other than space. One groom I know called a television cable company and asked them to disconnect the service. He was surprised to receive a call from the vice-president of the company who assumed that the groom was disappointed by the service.

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 30-35.

“No,” the groom responded. “We just want more time together alone.” The vice-president informed the groom he was the first person ever to ask for the service to be discontinued for such a reason.

The term “forsaking all others” is part of your ceremony. Sometimes that means forsaking the habits of TV viewing.

3. *Fixation with sports.* We hear about sports-aholics and sports widows. A proper balance must be maintained. Is your fiancé “glued” to the TV set while games are on? Must he have a game on during meals? Does he stop talking every time sports scores are reported on the news? How many nights a week is he “with the guys”? It may be fun to sit in the stands cheering him on—but such obsession can get old, quickly. Especially if he *has* to win. You had better discuss this matter.

4. *Hobbies.* Hobbies can become a barrier, especially if the hobby interest is not shared. I once asked my friends Charlie and Martha how they stayed together so long and happily. By doing jigsaw puzzles, he reported. They sit and talk and work on the puzzle.

Sometimes, a person is obsessed with a hobby, spending far too much time—and money—on it. Some hobbies are extremely expensive. Do you talk about the hobby or plan mutual hobbies? Does the fiancé(e) overreact to questions on the matter or become defensive?

5. *The church.* For a couple that equates active church attendance and involvement with personal devotional life, even the church can become a communication barrier. We can get “weary in well-doing” and coast spiritually. Some churches perceive young couples as fresh recruits to be “put to work.” That is quite the opposite from the custom of the Jews, who gave a newly wed couple one year off from all responsibilities (including war) so that the groom could make his bride “happy” (Deut 24:5).

6. *The family* can become a barrier. Do you eat dinner with one set of parents every Sunday? If so, you'll miss some interesting experiences of entertaining in your own home. Are there certain topics you do not discuss with his/her family? How has your fiancé(e) reacted if or when you have disagreed with his/her family? or with him/her?

None of these things are "wrong," but they can contribute to communication breakdown.

Let's turn our attention to basic skills.

1. *Are you a good listener? Is your fiancé(e) a strong listener?* We report, "He never heard a word I said!" or more commonly, "In one ear and out the other." There is a difference between *hearing* and *listening*:

You *hear* with your ears;

You *listen* with your ears, eyes, and soul.

Some of us are equally sensitive to what was unsaid as to what was said. Often this skill is easier for women. Men tend to listen to the first words, anticipating what will follow: then they jump in and change the subject to their line of thought.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, "The first service that one owes to others consists of listening. Just as love to God begins with listening to His word, so the beginning of love for another is to listen to them."<sup>26</sup>

By the time you are ready to be married you should have enormous listening skills, but most of us are handicapped. Rudolph Grantham has suggested the following guidelines:<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (New York: Harper and Row, 1954), 97.

<sup>27</sup>Rudolf Grantham, *Lay Shepherding* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1980), 64-66.

a. *Concentrate on the speaker, not yourself* (after all, the speaker is possibly arousing similar feelings in you, but respond to what has actually been said to you).

b. *Discover the chief message or complaint.* Some barrage us with so many complaints we don't know where to start.

c. *Report what you hear them saying.* "Do I hear you saying ...?" Otherwise, you could go through the entire conversation on separate wavelengths.

d. *Respond to those messages that are most significant.* This is especially necessary when there are time restrictions or limitations.

e. *Ask for clarification or details.*

f. *Summarize the message.*

g. *Determine the goals or what they want from you.* How can I help you? Sometimes just listening is all they want.

h. *Discipline curiosity.* Your response becomes curiosity when it is based on your self-interest rather than a genuine interest in the person.

Listening is a skill that is not learned overnight. But it can be a commitment. One helpful start is to look at the speaker. In a marriage, touching or taking your mate into your arms can make a great deal of difference. You will not succeed by trying to listen to the evening news in one ear and a summary of your mate's day in the other.

2. *Do you have a good sense of humor? Does your fiancé(e)?* "There is a time for everything ... a time to weep and a time to laugh" (Eccl 3:1, 4). Many golden anniversary celebrants have commented on their ability to laugh: "Sometimes you won't know whether to laugh or cry." "A cheerful heart is good medicine" (Prov 17:22).

Many couples take themselves or their predicaments too seriously. You need to laugh *with* rather than *at*.

3. *Are you open to change and new ideas? Is your fiancé(e)?*

The one certainty facing any couple is change. Over the course of years, jobs, figures, houses, even memories, will change. How will you face those changes, particularly the painful ones?

4. Can you talk about "anything"? Can your fiancé(e)? Do you edit your responses or attitudes?

5. How do you handle conflict? How does your fiancé(e)?

Conflict is a reality in human relationships. We all have different approaches for handling conflicts. Yes there are those who seek to avoid differences at all cost. Sometimes that means the problem or attitude is driven underground where it is nourished by the smoldering embers of resentment.

Some deny differences. We can compare this process with submerging a ball under water: you can deny that you even have the ball, but the whole time the ball pushes up against your hand. If you loose control, the ball erupts, spraying water in all directions.

Couples can disagree agreeably without backbiting, name-calling, and denunciation. Fighting does not have to be nor should be a tool for settling differences.

How do you communicate emotions? Some people are proud of their emotional control. We often say: "Get hold of yourself." In this arena, our apprenticeship to parents is most evident. How did your family communicate?

Some people come to marriage in emotional starvation. Others are prisoners of emotions or experts in manipulating others emotionally. Some simply can threaten and change.

Some individuals have become locked in childhood repertoire of emotions, they never mature.

As a mate, you may have to give permission for your husband or wife to rediscover certain emotions. Now look over the following list of emotions. Place M (for me) and F for fiancé(e) in the appropriate responses. Be honest.

Which of the following techniques have been used in your relationship?

Never    At least once    frequently    habitually

Racial prejudice

Anger

Silence

Sulking

Hysteria

Whining

Baby-talk

Teasing

Depression

Crying

Intolerance

Hitting/slapping

Do any of these cause you extreme concern? Remember, these are habits, and habits can be broken.

Giving/receiving. Some families freely express their thoughts; other demonstrate their feelings. Some can easily express, "I love you." Others say it with flowers, with a note, or with a telephone call.

Don't keep your mate guessing. Couples need to affirm and remind. Sometimes that includes the tactile, or touch, as well as verbal. Women need to be held and so do men.

Too often, once a couple has had intercourse, they stop holding and cuddling. There is more to intimacy than sexual expressions. It is the small things that nourish a relationship.

### Styles of Communication in the Family of Origin

In our family we discussed freely and openly everything with everybody	1 2 3 4 5
My parents were always ready to listen to each other	1 2 3 4 5
At our home the atmosphere was always one of kindness and peace	1 2 3 4 5
We resolved our family conflicts as soon as we had any, even though we had disagreements.	1 2 3 4 5
My parents permitted or allowed us to freely communicate different emotions such as fear, anger, sadness...	1 2 3 4 5
In our family we encourage and inspired each other	1 2 3 4 5
Mother and father both had equal part in family discussions.	1 2 3 4 5
Everyone in our family could freely cry and get a support...	1 2 3 4 5
In our family were a lot of questions that we were not allowed to discuss	1 2 3 4 5
My parents did not listen to me and did not have any wish to listen to me.	1 2 3 4 5



Our home had a very heavy emotional atmosphere.	1 2 3 4 5
Conflicts were not resolved or dealt in such a way that tensions only were getting worse.	1 2 3 4 5
My parents tried to deny, hide or laugh at such emotions as fear, anger, sadness ...	1 2 3 4 5
In our family we were criticized, teased and were under psychological pressure and abuse.	1 2 3 4 5
Father did not speak much, all conversations were led by mother.	1 2 3 4 5
In our family nobody cried, we were discouraged to do so.	1 2 3 4 5

### **Family Communication Guidelines**

Job 19:2; Proverbs 18:21; 25:11; James 3:8-10; 1 Peter 3:10

1. Be a ready listener and do not answer until the other person has finished talking (Prov 18:13; Jas 1:19).
2. Be slow to speak. Think first. Do not be hasty in your words. Speak in such a way that the other person can understand and accept what you say (Prov 15:23, 28; 21:23; 29:20; Jas 1:19).
3. Speak the truth always, but do it in love. Do not exaggerate (Eph 4:15, 25; Col 3:9).
4. Do not use silence to frustrate the other person. Explain why you are hesitant to talk at this time.
5. Do not become involved in quarrels. It is possible to disagree without quarreling (Prov 17:14; 20:3; Rom 13:13; Eph 4:31).

6. Do not respond in anger. Use a soft and kind response (Prov 14:29, 15:1; 25:15; 29:11; Eph 4:26, 31).

7. When you are in the wrong, admit it and ask for forgiveness (Jas 5:16). When someone confesses to you, tell him you forgive him. Be sure it is forgotten and not brought up to the person (Prov 17:9; Eph 4:32; Col 3:13; 1 Pet 4:8).

8. Avoid nagging (Prov 10:19; 17:9).

9. Do not blame or criticize the other but restore him, encourage him, and edify him (Rom 14:13; Gal 6:1; 1 Thess 5:11). If someone verbally attacks, criticizes, or blames you, do not respond in the same manner (Rom 12:17, 21; 1 Pet 2:23; 3:9).

10. Try to understand the other person's opinion. Make allowances for differences. Be concerned about the interests (Phil 2:1-4; Eph 4:2).

Suggested reading:

Norman Wright, *Communication Key to Your Marriage* [Общение Ключ к Вашему Браку] (Regal Books, 1978).

Гери Чепмен, *Пять Языков Любви* [Five Love Languages] (Санкт-Петербург: Библия для всех, 2000).

Виллард Харли, *Законы Семейной Жизни* [His Needs, Her Needs] (Протестант, М., 1992).

### **Children**

Many couples plan on having children as soon as they get married. They simply go with the flow and don't think if they are ready to have children. And when the "blessed gift" arrives, they find out that they are poorly prepared for their new role as parents. The following questionnaire will help you to understand some challenges posed by the birth of a baby. Upon completing the questionnaire share the results with your bride (groom).

1. After marriage I am going to have a child:

Yes No I have not decided yet

2. I would like to have: 2 3 4 more than 4

3. I would like to wait till I have the first child:

a few months

a year

1-2 years

3-5 years

6-10 years

I do not want to have children.

4. Couple should wait until the time when they can afford to have children.

Agree Disagree Not sure

5. The father should be present during labor.

Agree Disagree Not sure

6. I think that birth control is the responsibility of

Husband Wife Both

7. In family planning, the best method of contraception for me is

Natural family planning (counting safe days)

Diaphragm

Contraceptive pills

Abortion

Vasectomy

Condoms

Hysterectomy

Interrupting intercourse

Foam, gel or cream

8. If we will have only girls or only boys my feelings will be:

Positive Negative Mixed Not sure

9. Fathers should be involved in child care:

very much moderately not much

10. Responsibility for child upbringing should be mostly:

father's

mother's

both

one who is babysitting

11. Children could be left with a babysitter (nanny):

often sometimes when necessary Never

12. If my spouse will treat the child unfairly or not right I will:

be quiet, but later will address this issue

interrupt right away

defend a child at any cost

leave everything as it is

other

13. In my opinion, a child's upbringing should be:

very strict moderate not strict

14. A husband and wife should take care more of themselves rather than of children.

Agree disagree Not sure

15. If we learned that we cannot have children I would:

remain childless

adopt a child

try every possible way to become a parent

### **Christian View on Finances**

“But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with many a pang. 1 Tim 6:9-10

While reading this passage many people think that Christianity prohibits being wealthy. This is not so. It is written in the Scripture that the source of evil is not money itself but passion for it. That is the point. Earning money is one thing and having passion for it is completely different.

Money should not rule over us: “You do not have money; therefore you will not buy this thing. You do not have money and you will not go anywhere for vacation. You do not have money, so you cannot get married”. Money should not impede our life, our destiny. The only one that can rule over us is God. We are God’s creatures, we are individuals. And money does not rule over us.

“For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil...” (1 Tim 6:9). Note it is not just money itself, but the love of it. As soon as money becomes an object to worship or to admire, it starts bringing evil.

Financial problems that can ruin your marriage:

Husband’s obsession with making money (by his work). When his wife tells him about it he gets mad at her and wonders: “What else do you need? You have got a house,

a car; a refrigerator, TV and video, and you have money.” He does not understand that heartfelt communication and a need for affection is much dearer than any luxurious car or a house.

Some women desire to be “number one” in everything. To be dressed better than any friends, to have more jewelry, etc. Naturally, everybody wants to be dressed well and stylish, but it has to be accompanied with inner beauty. People’s appearance has to fit their inner characteristics.

Difference of priorities in spouses’ life goals and interests. A husband thinks that money should be spent on a car, and a wife thinks that it must be spent on their child. Spouses have to take time to communicate with each other and to discuss their issues including financial ones. Families have to set up financial priorities.

Egoism. We all have our own ego. However, when we come to God, He helps us to get rid of it by teaching us first of all to satisfy the needs of other people, not only our own (Phil 2:4-5). If you trust each other in finances, you will trust each other in everything (Phil 2:3, 4).

The love of pleasures (Prov 21:17). The Bible says that people who love pleasure, sooner or later, will become poor. It does not mean that people can not have fun; it is even necessary, but we have to do it together with God.

Unhealthy desire of one of the spouses to get rich instantly (Prov 20:21). This desire drives people to careless actions (to gambling, inheritance hunting etc.). Fortune, gained or appropriated this way, cannot be blessed afterwards. A successful person is capable of earning his fortune himself; he knows how to achieve it. And if it happens that his fortune is lost, he knows the way to rise again (Prov 28:20, 22).

Miserliness of one of the spouses, i.e. extreme love of saving. Some people think that this is the way they are supposed to live, so they fear spending money that they have earned (Ps 48:11, 38:7). Your family does not have to starve or suffer from the lack of clothes.

Superfluous expenses. This is money that some people spend outside of their family: extramarital relationships, amusements, etc. (Prov 6:24-29). Both, adultery and wastefulness begin from flattery, from "the flattery of the tongue." So the moment you hear flattering speeches, flee from them. Far more than one family became poor and was finally destroyed because of adultery.

Debts that a family has because it does not live according the Word of God. If one of the spouses has a habit of borrowing money, problems are guaranteed (Prov 22:7). It is unwise to borrow money for everyday needs. Just trust God and if you are faithful in tithe and offerings, He will bless you. Christians should live in accordance with biblical financial principles. This will save families from many troubles.

Unreasonable attitudes towards money. This problem exists in every family where spouses do not establish a budget. You have to plan common interests, priorities, values and necessary expenses. This should be the basis for your family budget (Luke 14:28-30).

### **Family Finances**

Is money truly a reason for quarrels?

There is a part truth in this old saying: "When money problems come in through the door love flies out through the window."

Research specialists in family relations report that 60 percent of married couples have quarrels over money.<sup>28</sup> This indicates that right money handling is extremely important for the development of spousal relationships. A husband and a wife use two traditional weapons against each other: money, which is his possession, and sex, which is under her control. But neither guarantees a victory over the other. Relationship in a family cannot be bought for money. Specialists say that a wife loses her status of a woman if she does not consider the sexual needs of her husband.<sup>29</sup>

In reality, money is not the reason of spousal quarrels. Families seem to fight over money, but deeper, there are completely different reasons for disagreements:

*Authority.* Family consultants insist that in most cases quarrels over money is a disguised fight for authority.<sup>30</sup> Members of the family who control the money use it as means of putting pressure upon those who do not. Money can be a weapon which a husband uses to dominate his family and demonstrate that he is its head.

*Priorities.* He wants to buy a machine, she wants flowers. He wants to have a vehicle, she wants furniture. He wants to give money to the church; she wants to spend it on their children. Thus, not money but priorities cause tension when distributing the money.

*Parents.* It has been suggested that one third of interviewed couples say that their parents criticize their way of spending money.<sup>31</sup> A wife and a husband often bring their

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<sup>28</sup>Wilson, 17.

<sup>29</sup>Гари Смолей, *Если бы Он Только Знал* [If Only He Knew] (Москва: Триада, 2000), 32.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid, 34.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 36.



parents' model of managing money into their own family. Once the children have established their own family, they have to use their parents' experience carefully.

### **Principles of resource Management for Christian Married Couples**

We suggest six foundations for successful financial family management:

Trust God. Give God first place in everything that is related to your spiritual and financial life. "Honor the Lord with thy substance and with the first fruits of all thine increase" (Prov 3:9).

Understand, that money, that time and all your talents all are God's property. A Christian looks at them as gifts given from God, and he is ready to sacrifice them as an offering of worship. "The earth is Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein" (Ps 24:1).

Let God take the first place, and by this you will show that you love Him. You can give something away without having love, but you cannot love without giving. If you put God in first place, you trust Him to help you in anything else. 'But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus' (Phil 4:19).

Have respect for personal dignity. There are too many men who think that their masculinity and dignity can be measured by their ability to make money. Thus, their self-esteem abruptly goes down if their family's income decreases.

Money is important but it should not be the measurement of one's dignity. A Christian's self-respect is loftier than just money.

Strengthen your self-respect through creativity. Using tools can be effective only when they are used for work they were supposed to be used for. It is very difficult to hammer a nail with a screwdriver and to twist in a screw with a hammer, but if you use them according to their purpose, every tool can do its work successfully.

God created a perfect man. He is not a Creator of mistakes and failures. He has a good plan for your life and His plans are always realizable and successful. Ask Him to bring your life into accord with His plan, and you will have success. The only way that can lead to failure is your rejection of His plan for your life.

Strengthen your dignity through an understanding of salvation. Christ knows you better than anyone else on the earth. He knows your real value, and He says that you are so precious that even if you were the only person in the world, He would pay the highest price for you—His life. To doubt your value means to question His definition. Do not consider money to be the criterion of your self-esteem. Evaluate yourself in the light of Creation and Redemption.

Question the true value of money. People often are tempted to seek happiness in wealth, but Jesus said: “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions” (Luke 12:15).

Do not rely too much on the opinion that it would be better for you if you had more money. There is a trap in that because in practice it turns out that the more money you have the more you want to have. Ellen White uses a plain illustration: “Carrying an empty bowl is easy but to carry a brim-full bowl you need balance and special skills. Grief and disaster cause sorrow but the most dangerous for spiritual life thing is prosperity.”<sup>32</sup>

Avoid debts. The Bible says: “The borrower is servant to the lender” (Prov 22:7). This passage reveals that the grip of a debt is equal to the grip of slavery. In any of these situations you do not have a choice. Your debt gives to your creditor a right to control your life. We are Christians; therefore we cannot let anyone control our life except Christ.

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<sup>32</sup>Ellen White, *Prophets and Kings* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assoc., 1943), 60.

Set your goals. Discuss in your family what you need. There will be no peace in the family until its members are solid in what they need. Availability of sufficient money does not always mean the absence of quarrels. Many families fall out over money that was left after the satisfaction of all basic needs. For some reason one member of the family can think that they have to buy what he thinks is necessary, and that the desires of the rest are just whims. Though, each of us can sincerely think that a thing that we want to buy is a necessity and a thing that our spouse wants to buy is a passing fancy.

Christian understanding of happiness is to bring happiness to others. This principle can be put into practice best by sometimes making compromises and yielding, and coming to solid opinions about our goals in spending money. Some goals we determine as top-priorities. Everyday needs and debts that we have to pay before a certain date are included here. Long term goals are, for instance, satisfaction of the need of a house or a personal vehicle. Setting the goals determines what your money will be spent for instead of trying to recall what it was spent for when it is too late.

### Family Budget

Financial consultants always recommend having a family budget. When we speak about budgeting, we actually speak about setting goals. If you think that a detailed budget restricts your life style, then prepare a less detailed one - just a general plan of expenses. In this case, building detailed plans is advisable but for a short period of time. As a matter of fact, budgeting is the best means to know what your money is spent for, and to solve a problem of spending it rationally and not just emotionally. Budgeting can help you to see a picture of your financial state.

Making up your budget is a distribution of the money that is left after you returned your tithe to God. Most people can fulfill this point but are not able to restrain

themselves in other expenses. We suggest a system of envelopes as a means of solving the problem. First of all, when you get your money, take the sum that you need for covering fixed expenses. Put the money into envelopes marked as "Tithe," "Rent," etc. Then put the rest into envelopes for variable expenses: food, clothes, etc. To stay within determined limits of spending, you can cut down some of the expenses or put them away for a certain period of time. Observe the limits, and next time you will not spend more than is needed for reducing your expenses from the other envelopes.

### **How much would you have to pay for these?**

Please, put your guess price in both columns and let your fiancé(e) to do the same thing – compare your answers – discuss them. The idea of this quiz is simply to understand your mate's spending.

#### **For women**

1. A liter of motor oil
2. A set of brake pads
3. A pair of first-line tires
4. A set of four screwdrivers
5. A three meter aluminum step ladder
6. A four liter container of latex paint
7. A lawn mower
8. A bag of fertilizer for the lawn
9. A fiberglass fishing rod
10. A haircut
11. A medium priced pair of shoes
12. A man's raincoat
13. A pair of dress pants
14. Monthly utility bill
15. Two tickets to a football or hockey game

### **For men**

1. A whole chicken
2. 3 kilos of potatoes
3. A carton of milk (one liter)
4. A broom
5. A tablecloth
6. A set of kitchen knives
7. A big box of detergent
8. A set of eight water glasses
9. A fake fur coat
10. A pair of pantyhose
11. A dress for church
12. A pair of dress shoes
13. A permanent wave and haircut
14. A tube of lipstick
15. Face cream

### **Ellen White's Letter to Her Son Edson and His Bride**

October, 1870

My dear children:

.....

Live for the glory of God. Be tender, kind, and courteous to each other. The happiness of your life will consist in making God your trust, and in seeking to make each other happy. Practice self-control. It is so easy to speak thoughtlessly, words that grieve and wound. Do not venture to trifle with each other's feelings. Practice patience, encourage love, discipline yourself to guard every word and action, and study how you can be a blessing for each other.

Love is a delicate plant; rude blasts frequently bruise it if they do not uproot it entirely.

Never make a third person your confidant. Your private life is sacred; keep the barriers high, that no one may presume to intrude into the sacred circle. Be calm and tranquil, patient and forgiving.

A word more: do not speak a word in jest that shall injure or reflect upon the other. Never recount the mistakes, or errors, or faults of each other in the presence of a third person, or in company, be the circle ever so select. Live for God and for each other.

May the best of heaven's blessings rest upon you, my much-loved children. We pray for you every day.

Ellen G. White

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- Ван Пелт, Ненси. *Найти и Удержать* [To Have and to Hold: a Guide to Successful Marriage]. Заокский: Источник жизни, 2001.
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