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Pastoral Techniques in the Counseling of Young People Preparatory to Marriage

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PASTORAL TECHNIQUES
IN THE COUNSELING OF YOUNG PEOPLE
PREPARATORY TO MARRIAGE

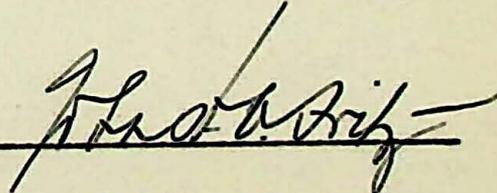
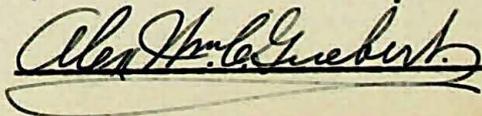
A Thesis Presented to
The Faculty of Concordia Seminary
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In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Bachelor of Divinity

by
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Approved by:

PASTORAL TECHNIQUES IN THE COUNSELING OF YOUNG PEOPLE

PREPARATORY TO MARRIAGE

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Introduction

This thesis is divided into two main parts. The first part is a review of some of the main techniques for counseling in general. In addition to loving God and people, it is important that the pastor know something about the principles of counseling, if he wants to be adequate in giving help by counseling. The second part concerns the Biblical and pastoral aspect of marriage. In the second part the counseling techniques are applied specifically to pre-marital counseling by the Christian pastor.

THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
FROM 1789 TO 1861

The history of the United States is a story of a people who have grown from a small colony to a great nation. It is a story of struggle and achievement, of freedom and independence. The early years were marked by the fight for the right to self-government, and the later years by the struggle for the rights of all citizens.

PART I

The first part of the history of the United States is the story of the early years, from 1789 to 1861. It is a story of the struggle for the right to self-government, and the struggle for the rights of all citizens. The early years were marked by the fight for the right to self-government, and the later years by the struggle for the rights of all citizens.

The second part of the history of the United States is the story of the middle years, from 1861 to 1890. It is a story of the struggle for the rights of all citizens, and the struggle for the right to self-government. The middle years were marked by the fight for the rights of all citizens, and the later years by the struggle for the right to self-government.

The third part of the history of the United States is the story of the late years, from 1890 to 1914. It is a story of the struggle for the right to self-government, and the struggle for the rights of all citizens. The late years were marked by the fight for the right to self-government, and the later years by the struggle for the rights of all citizens.

PASTORAL TECHNIQUES IN THE COUNSELING OF YOUNG PEOPLE
PREPARATORY TO MARRIAGE

Warmth of interest in people and a sincere desire to be helpful, respect for the other person's feelings and his capacity to make his own plans, perceptive observation and sensitive understanding, and skill in counseling -- all are essential for good counseling and can be developed by thoughtful study and experience.¹

For a minister counseling becomes an art, and, indeed, almost a science, some of whose basic principles at least we are able to formulate and organize into the beginnings of a systematic body of knowledge.

THE ART OF COUNSELING

Probably everyone starting to counsel others wishes there were a list of rules he could follow, but, unfortunately, it is impossible to enumerate a complete list of infallible rules for all counseling, or even for any particular kind. Counseling takes place between human beings who are much too individualized to be reduced to a formula. To be sure,

1. Annette Garrett, Interviewing: Its Principles and Methods, p. 3.

there are certain psychological traits which characterize most people most of the time, and a skilled counselor will do well to keep some of the more important of these in mind. There are characteristic modes of human action and reaction, and awareness of them tends to increase the satisfactoriness of one's relationships with others. Counseling involves a closer and subtler relation between human beings than may at first be recognized, and skill in conducting this relationship can be increased through knowledge of the fundamental factors involved.

Some people fear that self-conscious study of the principles of counseling may detract from the warm friendliness and real interest in other individuals which are so essential for the successful practice of the art. There is certainly no necessity for this to be the case. An informed person need not be unfriendly. One need not be ignorant of human psychology to love human beings. Indeed the opposite is often true. There are few things so frustrating as to love someone but not know how to give the help he desperately needs; and contrariwise, to be able to help those we love increases our affection for them.

Warm human interest does sometimes vanish from counseling, and when that happens it becomes a monotonous, mechanical sort of thing that is relatively valueless. But the cause of this, when it occurs, is not knowledge of the rich interplay of one human mind with another, but the ignorance that

regards counseling as a routine affair of asking set questions and recording answers. If this were all there were to counseling, a phonograph with a recording device would serve the purpose far better. But with proper understanding of even some of the intricacies of human personality and of the effective give and take between two complex human beings, our attention and warm interest are aroused in increasing measure, and the process becomes anything but routine.

Counseling is an art, a skilled technique which can be improved and eventually perfected primarily through continued practice. But mere practice alone is not enough. Skills can be developed to their fullest potentialities only when practice is accompanied by knowledge about counseling and self-conscious study of our own practice. Knowledge of the theory underlying counseling gives us certain material in the light of which we can critically examine our present techniques and discern ways in which they can be improved.²

The obvious fact about counseling is that it involves communication between two people. It might be called professional conversation. Special problems confront both counselor and counselee. We begin to obtain some notion of the complexities involved if we recall some of the feelings we ourselves have had while on the way to be interviewed. Perhaps we were seeking to borrow money, were consulting a doctor or a lawyer, or were applying for a job. We may have

2. Garrett, op. cit., pp. 7-8.

felt some fear at the prospect of talking with an unknown person and of revealing our needs to him. We may have been uncertain as to just what about ourselves we might have to tell, fearful that he might wish to know more than we were willing to relate, might not understand us, or might not grant our request.

On the other hand, when we first begin to counsel, some of the worries that might plague us are the following: Would we say the right things to put our client at his ease? Would we be able to draw him out? What would we do if he didn't talk, and if he did, would we be sure to select the significant facts in his remarks and behavior?

For an interview to be successful, the diverse fears of both counselor and counselee must be allayed, and the diverse desires of both must be met. Rapport must be established between the two, a relationship that will enable the person being counseled (or helped) to reveal the essential facts of his situation and that will enable the counselor to be most effective in helping him.³

There are certain basic facts about the nature of human beings with which every interviewer should be familiar. The different motives of interviewers will lead to different uses of such knowledge. The salesman, dominated by the profit motive, will use his knowledge of human psychology to increase his sales; the propagandist, whether his motives

3. Garrett, op. cit., p. 9.

are good or bad, will use his knowledge to increase the infectiousness of his ideas. It is assumed that the readers of this thesis will be motivated by the desire to be of service to their fellow human beings and will use their knowledge of human nature to that end.

UNDERSTANDING HUMAN NATURE

Human Motivation: If we knew all, we would doubtless understand all. Bizarre behavior, like more usual behavior, has its causes, but sometimes they are deeply hidden. In dealing with others it is seldom possible or essential to understand fully the causes of their actions. It is essential, however, to realize that their behavior is motivated. Its source may lie hidden in the depths of their personalities where neither they nor we can readily discover it. In a complex personality, with its many interconnected causal chains, the factors underlying a given bit of behavior are usually many and varied. A single cause cannot be isolated, and to attempt to force the individual to name one is to demand the impossible. He will be forced to resort to an inadequate rationalization.

The recognition that much human motivation is unconscious will enable the counselor to be more tolerant, less condemnatory, and thus better able to help his client effectively. Instead of becoming impatient with rationalizations, he will realize that motives which the client disguises even to himself are probably sources of deep and painful anxiety to him.

Unconscious motivation is much more common than we ordinarily recognize in our attempt to understand people. We seek too often for intellectual grounds for behavior rather than for psychological causes rooted in feelings and emotions. "Drives" are emotional affairs, and actions controlled by them have their source in feeling rather than in intellect. A person who apparently likes, but really dislikes, another "forgets" a luncheon engagement with him, and in extenuation pleads a busy day. A man fired from a job because of incompetence "explains" that the work was too heavy for him. Why a client says certain things and leaves others unsaid, why a child with a high I. Q. flunks in school, why a wife who effusively protests her love for her husband continually belittles him, are questions whose answers are to be sought not in intellectual but emotional terms. Explanations such as, "He's deceitful," "He's lazy," "She's just being modest about him," are obviously inadequate. Yet for many people such remarks conclude the discussion and block any real understanding.

Objective and Subjective Facts

Every situation has its objective and subjective aspects. A man loses his job. That is an objective fact. His feelings about this event constitute a subjective fact. But every person who has any sort of illness has accompanying it certain feelings about the illness. There are variations in the physical aspects of tuberculosis, but there are many more variations in human reactions to that disease. So we

could run the gamut of human experiences and note that every objective experience -- marriage, hunger, getting a job, leaving one's children in a day nursery -- has its accompanying subjective counterpart of emotional attitudes.⁴ Experience and skill lead to more and more awareness of this inter-relationship.

Social workers from whom ministers can learn points in counseling, sometimes contrast what they call the "reality situation" of a client with his emotional problems. This separation is unfortunate because it sometimes leads us to operate as if these two areas were mutually exclusive. The implication is that the emotional components of the situation are not real, whereas, of course, they certainly are real to the person experiencing them. The way one feels about a situation is as much a fact as the situation itself. To avoid such erroneous implications, we shall, in this discussion, speak instead of the objective aspects and the subjective aspects of a client's situation. Both are always present.

In seeking to help people even in very simple situations we need to listen not only to their objective requests but also the undertones which reveal their feelings and give us clues as to, perhaps, even more serious objective situations not overtly revealed. A man's frequent absences from work may indicate neither unreliability nor laziness but may be due to worry about his wife's illness or to anxiety about

4. Garrett, op. cit., p. 13.

pressing debts. In either case the underlying subjective factor, worry, is caused by an objective situation which may not be apparent at once to a personnel manager or a pastor.

Knowledge of subjective factors may be necessary to make possible the formulation of objective plans with some probability that they will be carried out. A worker at the Travelers Aid desk, returning runaway Mary to her mother in the Middle West, knows that unless she talks to Mary long enough to find out her subjective attitude toward returning home, Mary may get off the bus at the next stop and foil the worker's plan for her safe return.⁵

Moral Pigeonholing

In addition to recognizing the difference between objective and subjective facts, the counselor should recognize the futility and even danger involved in passing judgment too soon on people's attitudes. Although a mile may seem short to you, to tell a woman who has laboriously walked that distance that she shouldn't feel tired is useless, to say the least. To tell an emotionally upset person that he should be calm may succeed only in erecting a barrier against further expression of his difficulties.

Although we can judge statements about objectively verifiable matters to be true or false, we are not similarly justified in passing judgments on subjective attitudes. Of two people waiting in line, one may sincerely feel the delay

5. Garrett, op. cit., p. 14.

to be an imposition, while the other with equal sincerity may regard it as a matter of course. The requirements for eligibility for relief in a given social agency may be objectively fixed, but to one client they may seem to involve an unwarranted intrusion into his personal affairs, while to another they may seem to represent only wise, business-like investigation. One pregnant wife may regard army regulations on leaves as thoroughly exasperating, another as reasonably lenient. One applicant for a job may feel that the interviewer is nosing into his private affairs, another, confronted by the same inquiries, may wonder why more information is not desired. Not the passing of judgment as to the rightness or wrongness of such diverse attitudes but the understanding of their causes should be the aim of the counselor for only the latter will be helpful to him in dealing with the situation.

It is essential for a counselor to refrain from trying to impose his own moral judgments upon his clients. They should be allowed to discuss their feelings about pertinent matters without fear of condemnation. Knowledge of the flux of social attitudes on styles of clothing, for instance, will tend to make an interviewer less absolute in his judgments of behavior. It would often be desirable if he could refrain from making such judgments about his clients until he has all the facts, but -- since counselors, too, are human -- he may find this wisdom unattainable and discover that he does have strong feelings of condemnation toward some of

their attitudes or behavior. Even where this is the case, however, the good counselor will learn quickly that any expression of such feelings, to soon, blocks the progress of the interview. If his interest is genuinely centered in the client, he will learn to keep his own feelings in the background, out of harm's way.

Wisdom will warn the counselor also against hasty generalizations. He may tend not to trust in any matter a client who lies about his income and may regard as unreliable in other respects as well a youth who lies about his age in order to get a job. This all-or-none attitude permeates everyday thinking. People are regarded as all good or all bad, situations as completely right or thoroughly wrong. Such rigid classifications must be avoided by the counselor who wishes to understand his client. He must recognize that there are shades and variations of rightness and wrongness in human beings. A person who lies about one subject may not lie at all about another. He may be so in need of a job that he'll prevaricate no end to get one, but he may be scrupulously honest about financial matters. People who have fallen into "bad" modes of behavior in one field may be unusually "upright" in others.

It is much more important to understand him, and to seek the causes of his behavior, even when it is anti-social, than it is to grow indignant about it.

Conflicting Pulls

From birth on we have to make one choice after another. Some choices are relatively easy. In other cases we want very much to have our cake and eat it too. When forced to decide, we do so with much hesitation and often look back on our selection with some misgiving, wondering if we have really chosen wisely. The student who gives up his fraternity fellowship party to study for an important examination feels the pull of the party very strongly while he tries to study. Sometimes the pull is so strong he reverses his choice and goes to the party, only then to feel the "voice of conscience" striving in vain to pull him back to his work.

Although some of us make up our minds more easily than others, we all experience many conflicting interests, desires, and emotions. The harboring of such conflicting feelings is technically known as ambivalence. An understanding of this concept is essential to anyone who is attempting to work successfully with people.

One common manifestation of ambivalence occurs in the areas of dependence and independence. Children want to grow up and have the privileges of adults -- to smoke cigarettes, to stay up late, and so on. At the same time they want to remain children -- to play all day and to be free from responsibilities. This often carries into adulthood so that even with chronological maturity many infantile desires continue to operate. Child food fads persist unchecked by

*

adult knowledge. A man may marry primarily (though perhaps unconsciously) for mothering. It is only when the satisfactions of fulfilling adult responsibilities and obtaining adult privileges outweigh the desire for childhood pleasures that the individual grows up emotionally. All of us need to be loved, but for some of us this causes conflict. We fear that accepting love will entail losing some of our cherished independence.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COUNSELOR AND COUNSELEE

Parents are often amused at the enthusiasm of their young son shows for his school teacher. He reports her comments on the weather, imitates her mannerisms, wants to take her gifts, is delighted if she asks him to clean the blackboard for her after school, and so on. Another parent whose child has the same teacher may not understand why he seems negativistic toward all the teacher's suggestions, and seems to go out of his way to annoy and irritate the teacher. Similarly adults themselves, when they stop to think about it, find that their rather strong attachments or antagonisms for certain people seem unjustified by any conscious knowledge they have of the other's nature. Such positive and negative feelings toward those we come in contact with are, of course, universal phenomena.

For many a client it is a unique experience to talk with someone who, instead of criticizing or admonishing, listens with non-judgmental understanding. This relationship with a

person who does not ask anything for himself personally but focuses his interest entirely on the client and yet refrains from imposing advice or control too soon is a very satisfying one. The discovery of these characteristics in the counselor, accompanied as it is by the absence of closer knowledge of the counselor's personality with its inevitable personal whims and foibles, leads the client to idealize him. The client's feelings are unchecked by personal knowledge of the counselor which might dilute them. He thus endows the counselor with the ideal characteristics one is always searching for, quite independently of whether or not the counselor actually is such an ideal person.

The development of excessive negative or positive feelings by the client is often alarming to the counselor who may be unaware of having done anything to arouse such feelings. A counselor tends to want his clients to like him, but sometimes in his eagerness to achieve this end he unwittingly encourages more dependency than he had realized was potentially present. A counselor should realize that the development of an emotional rapport, positive or negative, between the client and himself is not abnormal but inevitable, and that he should direct his attention not to eliminating this relationship but to controlling its nature and intensity. He must guard against misleading the client into an overly dependent relationship through appearing too personally friendly or appearing to promise too much, but on

the other hand he must not lean over backward in avoiding this danger and make the client feel that he is an unresponsive and unsympathetic listener.

The Counselor's Attitudes

The importance of the counselor's attitudes will have become clear by now. It is impossible to discuss the counselee's attitudes and the conduct of an interview without commenting of the counselor's attitudes at every point. All the things said about understanding human beings apply also the counselor, for he too is a human being, with unconscious as well as conscious motivation, ambivalence, prejudices, and objective and subjective reasons for his behavior. He brings to his relationship with the counselee his own predetermined attitudes, which may profoundly affect that relationship. He has a natural tendency to impute to others his own feelings and may thus seriously misunderstand his client's situation and problem. If he is unable to bear frustration or poverty, he may find it difficult to comprehend his client's toleration of it. A counselor who finds it difficult to reveal himself to others may decide that a client should not be "probed," when as a matter of fact the client wants nothing so much as to be helped to talk. We now discuss two of the many specific respects in which the counselor needs to be particularly aware of his own feelings in order to be able to help the client satisfactorily.

When a counselor first learns that he should be non-judgmental, should not become angry, should not become dependent upon the counselee's affection and response, he tries to suppress his feelings, and as a result he tends to become artificial and stilted in his responses. It would be better to recognize the existence of such feelings and learn to control their expression, for these feelings are not unnatural but merely inappropriate in the professional situation. If a counselor is aware that he is becoming angry, he is then in a position to regulate his own feelings better than if he denies to himself that he has such feelings. Control of feelings rather than absence of feelings on the part of the minister is the goal here. *

In the training of the individual certain standards of behavior are inevitably imposed, first by parents and later by society, and in society, by the church especially. It is natural that the individual in learning to condemn his own unacceptable behavior should include in his condemnation similar behavior on the part of others. If, for example, he has learned to be neat, he tends to abhor slovenliness in others. The counselor must learn to counteract this perfectly natural tendency to condemn all behavior that conflicts with his own standards. Toward almost every problem that a client brings, the counselor has developed an attitude of approval or disapproval based on his own experiences, and he tends to assume that this attitude represents the norm. As *

his professional training and experience grows he recognizes that there is a wide range of individual variation in human responses to a given situation. This may lead him to try to accept all such behavior, to carefully refrain from evaluating it. But this clearly is an extremely limited understanding of the concept of acceptance, involving as it does only an arid non-judgmental impartiality. Real acceptance is primarily acceptance of the feelings given expression by behavior and does not necessarily involve acceptance of unsocial behavior at all. Real acceptance involves positive and active understanding of these feelings and not merely a negative and passive refusal to pass judgment.

A merely negative attitude of not passing judgment on a client's unusual behavior is often interpreted by him as a condoning of that behavior, a repudiation of the standard he himself accepts but has failed to live up to. He tends then either to reject the counselor as an unfit guide or at the other extreme to continue and increase his undesirable behavior, thus trying out the counselor to see how far he can go in his nonconformity.

PURPOSES OF COUNSELING

The method of conducting an interview will be influenced to a considerable extent by the purpose of that interview. As we have already noted, some interviews are directed primarily to obtaining information, some primarily to giving

help, but most involve a combination of the two. The aim is to obtain knowledge of the problem to be solved and sufficient understanding of the person troubled and of the situation so that the problem can be solved effectively. Whether these two functions of understanding and helping are combined in one counselor or divided among several, like the pastor and the physician, will modify the detail of the method used but not their essentials.

One early caution is worth noting. The counselor is sometimes so anxious to help that he rushes ahead without first obtaining a sound understanding of the situation. The first and basic purpose of counseling is to obtain understanding of the problem, of the situation, and of the client who has come for help.

Another caution to be kept in mind throughout is that although the counselor should be clearly aware of his purposes it is not always wise to seek to realize them by direct action. Even where considerable information is desired, it is often best obtained by encouraging the client to talk freely of his problem rather than by asking such pointed questions as, "Were you fired from your 'last job?'" People are sensitive about their personal life, family skeletons, poverty, past mistakes, and so on, and early flat-footed inquiry may only alienate a client and cause him to erect protective barriers against what may well seem to him unwarranted intrusion. Once convinced of the counselor's

sensitive understanding, of his desire to know not out of wanton curiosity but only in order to help, and of the confidential nature of the relationship, the client will welcome an opportunity to talk about things which earlier he would have suppressed.

Most people who come seeking help or advice are considerably troubled by their problem, as is evidenced by the fact that their anxieties have risen to such a pitch as to drive them to take the step of seeking this consultation. This anxiety may make it difficult for them to see their problem distinctly or state it clearly. Very often their problem will be so involved that they are unable to come anywhere near locating the root of the trouble. A man who comes in to register for a job may really need medical attention. People who complain to their pastor about the behavior of their children may be at fault themselves, etc.

An inexperienced counselor will always keep in mind the possibility that his client is suffering from some trouble more difficult than he realizes or is able to state. He will endeavor by various methods to put his client at ease, to stimulate him to talk relatively freely about his problem, and to help him to organize his own confused thoughts and feelings about his difficulties. Sometimes talking about the situation to a sympathetic listener will itself lead to a satisfactory conclusion. The client's thoughts may thus be organized so clearly that he sees him-

self what action he should take. His fears and hesitations may be removed and he may be encouraged to take whatever action is necessary. More often, perhaps, just talking is not enough and help of other sorts will be required.

HOW TO COUNSEL

Although the most skillful counseling gives the appearance of being a smooth and spontaneous interchange between the counselor and the counselee, the skill thus revealed is obtained only through careful study and years of practice. The counselor must become conscious of the various subtleties in counseling before he can absorb them into his spontaneous responses. First recognized in theory, they later become so much a part of the counselor's skill that they are utilized naturally at each step without conscious notice. We hear much of the intuitive skill of the trained counselor. But back of such skill lies much study of the various processes and inter-relationships involved in counseling.

Observation

In one sense all that we shall say about counseling might well come under the head of observation. It goes almost without saying that we should observe what the interviewee says. It is less obvious to remark that we should note equally what he does not say, what significant gaps

there are in his story. We should note also such things as bodily tensions, blushing, excitability and dejection, because they supplement, and sometimes even belie, the picture given by the client's words.

Out of all the things to be observed, each counselor will mark only a relatively small number. His selection will be determined by his own observational equipment as limited by his interests, prejudices, attitudes, and training.

That we cannot take for granted that our observation of an individual is accurate is initially a blow to our self-confidence. It is a blow, however, that may help to break down any preconceived ideas about our infallibility and pave the way to self-scrutiny and the development of a more observant capacity to size up situations as they really are. When a counselor realizes that a client's point of reference seems like the reasonable one to him, it becomes clear that it is important to attempt to understand how the situation looks from the client's viewpoint and why that seems to him to be the only correct way of looking at things.

Many times a client finds in the counselor the first person in his experience who can listen understandingly and yet not intrude upon his feelings or attempt to redirect his behavior. This experience for the client is sometimes surprisingly satisfying.

Listening

One type of observation occurs through listening. This is one of the fundamental operations of counseling, and it goes without saying that a good counselor is a good listener. But what constitutes a good listener? One who frequently interrupts to say what he would have done under similar circumstances is not a good listener, but neither is he who sits like a bump on a log. Absence of response may easily seem to the talker to reflect absence of interest. Everyone knows from his own experience in telling a story that people like a listener who indicates by brief relevant comments or questions that he has grasped the essential points of one's tale, and who adds illuminating comments on certain significant features of one's account that had not been stressed and might well have been overlooked by an inattentive listener. This attention to important details that had not been emphasized gives the story teller the stimulating feeling that the listener not only wants to, but does, understand to an unusual degree what he is trying to say.

A common error of an inexperienced counselor is to be embarrassed by silences and to feel that he must fill them with questions or comments. A decent respect for silences is often more helpful.

There is, however, a danger in allowing the client undirected expression of his feelings. His need to talk may not be occasional but constant, and if the counselor encourages

too much release of feeling, areas may be opened up with which both counselor and client are unequipped to cope. In general, catharsis through talking is more effective the more the disturbing feeling is related to a fairly recent experience, and it becomes of dubious value the more the feeling is due to long repressed experiences. If a difficult situation may be immediately aired, the danger of its being pushed from consciousness but remaining an active source of anxiety is lessened.

Listening Before Talking or "Begin Where the Client Is"

The first step in an interview is to help the interviewee relax and feel fairly comfortable. Naturally this is difficult to accomplish unless the counselor himself is relaxed. Sometimes the client can quickly be put at ease by letting him state his purpose in coming, sometimes by giving him a brief account of why he was asked to come.

Even when our primary interest in a given interview is to obtain the answers to a set of questions, we can profit much from letting the client talk rather freely at first.

Where suggestions are to be made by the counselor it is even more important to let the client express himself first. Sometimes he will even suggest the course of action that the counselor intends to advise. In other cases the client may reveal a deep-seated hostility to the suggestion about to be made, and in this case the counselor is warned to proceed with caution and to attempt to discover and remove the

emotional causes back of the hostility before proposing his plan.

Another advantage in letting the interviewee talk first is that it tends to counteract any preconceived ideas about him which the counselor may have allowed himself to entertain. It gives the counselor the immense advantage of being able to see the situation and the client's problem from the client's point of view.

Questioning

The method of the individual interview is the method of friendliness, the method of asking questions in order to understand and be of assistance.

The working of the question is often of less importance than the manner and tone of voice in which it is put. The counselor's safe-guard here is really to be interested in understanding and aiding. Then his manner and tone are very likely to reflect that interest.

Questioners who are beginning to find out about the influence of unconscious desires and emotions on human behavior come to enjoy so much the discovery of some hidden motive or influence that they cannot resist letting the client know that they see through him.

A similar error consists in becoming so interested in the mysterious realms of the unconscious that the counselor probes his client unnecessarily, to satisfy his interest in the esoteric.

A good general rule is to question for only one of two purposes, to obtain specifically needed information, and to direct the client's conversation from fruitless to fruitful channels. Included in the latter would be questions that encourage him to talk in relevant areas where he finds the going difficult, and remarks such as "I don't quite understand," which will help him to elaborate more fully.

In general, leading rather than pointed questions, and questions that cannot be answered by a brief "yes" or "no" are to be preferred.

A questioner should of course try to adjust his pace to that of his client. To ask him to reveal confidences before we have won his confidence is to court defeat.

In general, we seem to get further by being encouraging and sympathetic, by leading the client to talk freely, than by trying to drag information out of him by belaboring him with questions.

Closely added to questions are the comments of the counselor. Sometimes the only difference between the two lies in the speaker's inflection. In general, the counselor should comment only for purposes similar to those for which he asks questions - to reassure or encourage the interviewee, to lead him on to discuss further relevant matters, and so on.

There is a great difference between expressing a meaning and communicating a meaning. Since the latter is the aim of the counselor he must devote considerable care to his manner of expression.

It is not enough that all the words used by the counselor be understood. It is important also that they be understood as they were meant.

Answering Personal Questions

Counselors are frequently troubled by the personal questions clients ask them. If we can judge correctly the reasons back of such questions, the appropriate response will often be indicated. Reasons for asking personal questions.

1. Client wants to be polite or thinks it is the social thing to do.
2. Client has natural curiosity about the person to whom he is telling so much.
3. May indicate the beginning of the establishment of that closer relationship between the counselor and counselee which is desired.

In most instances a frank, brief, truthful answer to a personal question is desirable, followed by an immediate redirection of the client's attention to himself.

At other times a counselor becomes involved in a personal questions because he has failed to grasp their significance. Often such queries are not really personal but constitute the client's way of introducing a problem of his own which he would like to have discussed.

Sometimes a counselor deliberately introduces his own

personal interests into the discussion. Their dangers outweigh their possible value. With the introduction of the counselor's personal opinions and feelings, the relationship may leave the professional level and become a social give and take, or worse, an argument.

Counselors sometimes fall into the error of trying to win their clients' approval by praising the attractiveness of their clothes, the exquisiteness of an Italian woman's crochet, etc.

Leadership or Direction

From all that has been said thus far it may seem as if the counselor assumes very little activity and direction, since so much stress has been put upon leaving the client free to express himself in his own way. Actually, however, the skilled counselor does assume leadership throughout. He consciously decides to allow the client to express himself. He knows the function and policy of his church or agency. He knows, in general, the areas in which he may be of service to the client. And with these things in mind, he guides the conversation along paths that enable him to determine whether or not he is going to be able to help the client, and if so, in what respects. He first directs his questions along the lines of allowing the interviewee to express his need in sufficient detail so that he may understand him better and know whether he will be able to help

or whether he will need later to refer the case to someone else. He unobtrusively directs the interview throughout, deciding when to listen, when to talk, what to observe, and so on. With the over-talkative person who is inclined to ramble, or the person whose mind tends to wander, he gently but sympathetically leads the interviewee back and redirects him through leading questions to a discussion of the immediate situation.

The question of what material is relevant is not as simple as it might seem.

Frequently people who ask advice really don't need it. What they need is assistance in freeing themselves from some of the confusions in which they have become bogged down -- additional information that will throw light on their situation, and encouragement to come to a decision of their own.

There are times when it is helpful to give a bit of advice to the client who demands it in order to test out his ability to use it, to challenge the mobilization of his energies so that both he and the counselor may see more clearly whether he is able to profit from suggestions.

If a pastor who is asked for advice gives it because, perhaps, he fears that if he did not his prestige with the client would be threatened, he is really failing to utilize the client's own resourcefulness.

It is still more difficult to know when, if ever a

counselor should ^{in matters not essential} go so far as to try to persuade a client to a course of action which he is reluctant to adopt but which seems to the worker clearly indicated. There is a distinction between persuading people against their will and generously offering them concrete help.

Where possible it is of course desirable not to appear to exercise authority but to lead the client to take for himself whatever steps are necessary. In general the things people do for themselves have more meaning for them.

We must allow people a large measure of self-determination.

It is possible to give so little direction that the client profits not at all and is not even helped to know what help is available.

Interpretation

The counselor's first aim, as we have said repeatedly, is to understand as fully as possible his client's problem. To do this successfully he must interpret the many clues to the underlying situation which the client presents through his behavior and conversation. Rarely is the client sufficiently self-conscious to know and be able to give a straightforward account of the real factors that lie at the base of his difficulty. The counselor must discover these for himself by going beneath the surface of his client's remarks and understanding their more than superficial significance. Just as a physician must look beyond the symptoms,

say, fever or a bad cough, to the cause of his patient's illness, say, pneumonia or tuberculosis, so the counselor must look for the underlying anxiety or fear which is symptomatically indicated by hostility or dependency or chronic invalidism.

The experienced counselor will constantly be framing hypotheses as to the basic factors in the case confronting him, test these, reject most of them, tentatively retain others, seek further confirmation and so on.

For a counselor to interpret for himself is essential. For him to pass his interpretations on to the client directly is usually inadvisable. The client must arrive at his own conclusions at his own pace. He must come to recognize the existence of such feelings himself with sufficient conviction so that he can voluntarily acknowledge their presence.

Once a counselor realizes the existence of such underlying factors he can often help his client to a recognition of them through discreet questions and comments, which include some element of interpretation.

In general, by encouraging a client to elaborate more fully, the counselor helps him see for himself the relationships between the various things he has said. Often interpretation consists in opening lines of communication between two previously isolated compartments of thought.

In a few cases where a secure relationship has been established between client and counselor, we may wisely

proffer a more direct interpretation. A sense of proper timing is important for a counselor. Often what cannot be said earlier, should be said later.

Very often it is unnecessary ever to bring to a client's clear consciousness truths about himself of which the counselor has become fully aware. It is important to remember that a counselor's goal is seldom if ever ^{in one interview} to achieve a complete personality change in the client. As a result of changes in little ways and of slight modifications of attitude, people often come to be able to make their own decisions and work out their most pressing problems without having become consciously aware of the many factors that the counselor may see in the situation.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR IN COUNSELING

Association of Ideas

The phenomenon of free association is well known to the lay public. It has been publicized by William James under the name of "stream of consciousness" and by such fictional writers as James Joyce and Ernest Hemingway. It is worth while to be aware of its operation both in the client and in the counselor. When the client mentions something such as lying, divorce, a grandmother, there may be started in the counselor a stream of association which has little to do with the client's feelings about these things. The counselor needs to recognize his own associations, because otherwise

they may operate unconsciously. That is, he may read into the client's problem feelings that he has but that the client may not have. On the other hand, if he listens for the client's own free association, he will gain many helpful clues about the things he is discussing. A father may be telling about his son's running away, and, instead of continuing logically in this discussion of his son, he may begin telling about his own early runaway escapades, indicating that to him his son's behavior is not a separate episode but is entangled with his own feelings carried over from childhood.

Shift in Conversation

It is frequently difficult to understand why a client suddenly changes the topic of conversation. The reason often becomes apparent through study of what he was previously saying and the topic he begins to discuss. The shift may be an indication that he was telling too much and desires not to reveal himself further.

Recurrent References

Similar to repetition is the situation when the client "talks in circles." He talks freely enough, but does not move forward. Such circularity presents a stumbling block to a counselor. When we have become aware that such an impasse has been reached, it is necessary to devise ways of inserting something new into the ritual, thus breaking up

the circle and transforming it into a spiral.

Concealed Meaning

It is essential for the counselor to accustom himself to listening to what his client means as well as to what he says.

ESSENTIAL CONDITIONS OF GOOD COUNSELING

Physical Setting

It is desirable that a counselor should have time between interviews or during the day to think over each interview quietly and note any significant aspects of it. Though efficiency is important, it cannot be measured by the number of interviews conducted within a given period. In the long run, the greatest efficiency will be achieved by giving the client during the interview comfortable surroundings, undivided attention, and ample time to express himself.

Recording

If a counselor can set aside a few minutes immediately after each interview for jotting down full notes concerning it, he will be saved the necessity of making many notes during the course of the interview itself. There are usually certain factual things -- names, addresses, dates, ages, places of previous residence or employment, and so on -- which are normally written down as soon as they are mentioned.

Foremost among counseling problems which come to the pastor are those couples who are to be married. To be sure, many seek the pastor's help for the ceremony of marriage, with little thought of more than a conference about the ritual itself. To go further into a discussion of some of the factors that make for a successful marriage calls for tact and judgment. But some people are so poorly prepared for marriage that some pastors, and the writer of this thesis, feel the clergy must assume major responsibility in the field if the church is not to fail its people in the area of the home.

For the sake of clarity we present a Christian definition of marriage with the Biblical bases for it.

Marriage is a divine institution providing for the mating of one man and one woman in a loving union for life, established and maintained by their mutual consent, for companionship, mutual care and assistance, for legitimate sexual intercourse and for the procreation of children. Marriage serves as a curb not only to the licentiousness of sexual desires, but also to various other depraved inclinations by affording incentives to habits of industry and economy, sobriety, stability and good fellowship among people.

Let us take each statement of this definition of marriage and consider some of the Words of God upon which we

base this definition of marriage.

Marriage is a divine institution.

Gen. 2,18.21-24: And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. (21-24) And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept. And He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof. And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made He a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

Matt. 19,4-6: And He (Jesus) answered and said unto them, Have ye not read that He which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother and shall cleave to his wife. And they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What, therefore, God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

Because God instituted marriage, "marriage is honorable in all." (Heb. 13,4)

Marriage, as God instituted it, provides for the mating

of one man and one woman.

Gen. 2,24: Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh.

Matt. 19,4-6: And He answered and said unto them, Have ye not read that He which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh.

Rom. 7,2: For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth. But if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband.

1 Cor. 7,39: The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth. But if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.

1 Cor. 7,2ff: ...Let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband....

Marriage is a loving union for life.

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Gen. 2,24: Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh.

Matt. 19,6: Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What, therefore, God hath joined together let not man put asunder.

Marriage, humanly speaking, is established and maintained by the mutual consent of the man and woman who are wedded.

Gen. 2,22ff; And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made He a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

Gen. 24,58: And they called Rebekah, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go.

1 Cor. 7,12.13: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him.

1 Cor. 7,39: The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth. But if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.

Marriage was instituted by God for the purpose of having the man and the woman give each other companionship, mutual care and assistance.

Gen. 2,18.20: And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone. I will make him an help meet for him. (20) But for Adam there was not found an help meet for him.

Eph. 5,28.29: So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church.

Eph. 5,33: Let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself. And the wife see that she reverence her husband.

Eph. 5,22-25: Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.

Col. 3,19: Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.

1 Pet. 3,7: Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered.

Marriage was instituted by God for the purpose of having legitimate sexual intercourse.

Gen. 2,24: Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife. And they shall be one flesh.

Matt. 19,5.6: And they twain shall be one flesh. Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh.

Eph. 5,31: For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.

1 Cor. 7,2-5: Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence; and likewise the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband. And likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.

1 Peter 3,7: Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered.

Marriage was instituted by God to provide for the pro-creation of children.

Gen. 1,27,28: 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. And have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

Psalms 127,3,5: Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is His reward. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.

Speaking of God's blessings upon the man who fears the Lord, the Psalmist says, Psalms 128,3,4: Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table. Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord.

1 Tim. 5,14: I will, therefore, that the younger women marry, bear children....

Marriage serves as a curb not only to the licentiousness of sexual desires....

1 Cor. 7,2-5: Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence, and likewise also the wife unto the husband.

The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband. And likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer. And come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.

...But also to various other depraved inclinations by affording incentives to habits of industry and economy, sobriety, stability and good fellowship among people.

1 Tim. 5,8: But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.

Psalm 127,4.5: As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man, so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.

Psalm 128,2.3: For thou shalt eat the labor of thine hands. Happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee. Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house; Thy children like olive plants round about thy table.

The clergyman is in a strategic position in relation to the marriage problem, and many are carrying on counseling in the field. Ideally, the pastor should discuss the spiritual and emotional forces which go to make up a successful marriage, how God makes successful marriages, and refer the couple to a physician for information on the art of sexual happiness. Many pastors, particularly the younger clergy, serving in small communities, will not have a physician in the community who is well enough informed, or willing, to carry his part of this counseling problem. Rather than trying to carry the whole load himself the pastor should contact a physician in a larger town who is capable of doing

this work. Such a contact can be made through a pastor friend who will know the physicians in his community.

Secondly, where there is no doctor who is equipped to work well in the field of sex education, the pastor may cultivate an interest in the available doctors and urge them to assist in this type of counseling. No girl should be married, or no man either, without an examination, for many a distressing experience and ultimate unhappiness in the home may be avoided by a physician's counsel, as well as a pastor's. The pastor cannot urge such a physical examination too strongly.

Further, the pastor may put certain literature into the couple's hands when they come seeking his services for marriage. There are many books available. Some may be loaned, others given outright. Dr. Walter A. Maier's For Better Not For Worse may be recommended to the couple. For a shorter work on the subject, Foster Wood's little book, Harmony In Marriage may be given to the couple.⁶ For other books, the bibliography of this study may serve as a humble beginning for the pastor to evaluate and use at his discretion.

Premarital counseling should include a consideration of the couple's plans for their own home. If they plan to live with parents the pastor may question this decision. While such a question may be considered none of his business, still his tactful interest will be appreciated. No healthy,

6. Federal Council of Churches, New York. 50 cents.

normal couple will want to live their lives with their in-laws, but for some reason such may be the plan. The pastor's suggestions to the contrary may be sufficient to influence them to make another decision. He should not be insistent upon this point unless there is some real question already in the minds of the couple.

The pastor is called upon to marry many persons who are not members of his church and here the question should be raised about what plans they are making for a church home. The couple may not do anything about it at the time, but the thought will have been planted in their minds. When the pastor calls next on them, if they remain in that same town, or, especially, when children come to the couple, their interest in what God wants to do for them may awaken anew.

Clergymen should make an effort to follow up the couples they marry. This may be done through a personal call periodically and especially upon or near the date of their anniversary, or through a letter. Too often, ministers have married young people, pocketed their fee, and gone on their ways, accepting no further responsibility and failing to see a further opportunity to be of service to those who honor them by seeking their counsel upon one of the few really great experiences of their lives.

A Christian pastor should have a knowledge of the laws of the state in which he is to perform a marriage ceremony. He should, then, not only know the circumstances under which

he is permitted to officiate, but also whom, according to the laws of that particular state, he is permitted to unite in marriage.

A very interesting statistical fact is brought out in the study of Burgess and Cottrell regarding the relationship between regular church and Sunday-School attendance and marital happiness. Couples who never attend church show a decidedly lower percentage of good marital adjustment than those who attend twice a month or oftener. The authors also find that couples who had a religious marriage ceremony have a much higher proportion of marital happiness than those who made their vows before a justice of the peace.⁷

This is encouraging to all pastors; especially those who do much pre-marital and marital counseling. One of the pastor's big goals is, of course, to change attitudes and reaction patterns which may lead to trouble and are not Christian. The human heart cannot be truly changed unless the minister uses the Word of God, through which the Holy Spirit works. Dr. Clifford Kirkpatrick has pointed out "that few advisers are wise enough or sufficiently inspired with the knowledge of what should be, to mold personalities or marriage relationships to a predetermined pattern."⁸ Christian pastors can be among the few Kirkpatrick mentions.

It should be borne in mind that the minister's best contribution as a marriage counselor cannot be made when a

7. E. Burgess and L. Cottrell, Predicting Success or Failure in Marriage, p. 122 ff.

8. Annals of American Academy of Political and Social Sciences, Vol. 160, p. 183.

marriage already made is threatened. Even the most skillful handling of such a situation, necessary as it is, will be in the nature of a repair job. But if the minister has inspired his young people with a love for Christ and His Church, and intelligent appreciation of Christian values and attitudes, they will seek partners who share these views and beliefs with them. Then the pastor has helped to lay the foundation for a Christian family with its Spirit-inspired strength to weather disappointments, reverses, and even internal friction. In no other relationship of life is there such wide and constant opportunity to practice the Christian virtues of love, helpfulness and forgiveness as in marriage. Partners who can believe in Jesus Christ together, go to church together, pray and commune together, have taken a long step towards marital happiness.⁹

When two young people come to consult the pastor, they have in every case certain questions that they want to ask, and, in many cases, they have problems that they want to discuss. We must realize that these two young people have known each other for some time, even though it may be only a matter of weeks or months, and we must assume that they have discussed with each other the question of marriage and that they have also considered some of the problems that are involved in a marriage relationship. Even in the simplest associations and the happiest relationships, questions

9. Russell L. Dicks, Pastoral Work and Personal Counseling, p. 95.

arise and problems develop about which young men and young women are more or less concerned. They often would like to explore these with someone who can give them guidance and encourage them with counsel. It is wisest to begin with the questions that are upon the lips of the young man and the young woman and with the problems that to them are urgent and troublesome. In fact, the best procedure is to open the conference with a courteous and considerate inquiry. "Is there any question that you would like to ask me?" Or "Is there any problem that you would like to discuss with me?" One question naturally leads to another, and the statement and consideration of the immediate problem soon lead to a discussion of marriage itself and of family life.

The minister will want to impress upon the couple the sacredness of marriage and the sanctity of family life, as well as other aspects of marriage. But we must learn to postpone our own special interests until the proper time in the counseling process. Unless we do this, the young man and the young woman are likely to grow impatient and to say to themselves, "When will we have a chance to discuss the things that concern us most?" [Not until we have answered the questions they want to ask, not until we have discussed with them the problems that they think urgent, are they mentally prepared and emotionally ready to listen to our questions and to consider the spiritual things we know to be important to include in a pre-marital conference. Nothing, in truth,]

will alienate young people more quickly than a "lecture" in advance on the subject of marriage, forcing it upon them before they are ready for it.

The couple will probably want to inquire first of all about the marriage ceremony itself. Of what does the ceremony consist? Where can the service be held and at what hour? What will the service cost? How long will it take? These are all simple questions and easily answered, but to the young people they are very important. They will be relieved to know that the ceremony will not take too long and that the cost will be what they can afford. They will be happy to find that the ceremony can be performed in the minister's study or in the church, or in a home. The minister will do well if he tactfully points out to the couple that, while they will be married according to the Word of God and seek His blessing on their marriage, the house of God, the church, is a very fitting place to have the vows exchanged, even though there be only two witnesses or a few more people present. The choice of the place for the ceremony, however, is very much the prerogative of the bride and groom. The day and the hour can be fixed at the time they desire. The minister is at their service also in this area.

What interests them, too, are the order of the service and the arrangements that are necessary. Sometimes we hear such comments as these: "We wish the minister had told us just what questions he was going to ask and at what point

in the ceremony." "I wish the minister had told me when he was going to ask for the ring." "We would have understood the ceremony better if the minister had explained to us in advance the meaning of the different parts and the significance of the symbols." It is, therefore, always wise not only to outline to the young people the order of service and to rehearse the ceremony with them, but also to explain the ceremony to them in as much detail as possible. Indeed, the Christian ceremony of marriage might well form the basis of a discussion of marriage, the vows they are making to each other, God in their lives together and the living of their whole lives together with God. In addition, this procedure will often save moments of embarrassment both to them and to the minister who performs the ceremony when the actual wedding takes place.

Another question that a couple may want to ask is expressed in this manner: "We do not know much about house-keeping. Where can we learn how to keep our home efficiently?" This, of course, means that the counselor must know where courses in home economics can be taken and what the cost and hours of instruction would be. The question opens the way to a discussion of the central place of the home in family life, what having a Christian home means, children and what the home should offer them in spiritual values and training.

Problems of a different character may come up. "We have not had the same education. Do you think this makes

much difference in marriage?" Young people who think of marriage in terms of loving comradeship are often concerned about the fact that one has no more than a high-school education and that the other is a college graduate. It is natural that they should think of the difference in educational advantages, and it is important to point out to them that the difference in education is of less significance than the difference in intellectual development and level of intelligence. They feel thankful to learn that if two people are within range of each other in intellect, it is not difficult to compensate for the differences in education.

Another question that recurs constantly is this: "We do not like the same things. We do not seem to have many interests in common. Is it possible for us to cultivate common interests?" The natural question to ask them in turn is, "What do you two young people talk about when you are together?" If they state quite frankly that they find it difficult to discover things to discuss, that they spend most of their time together in places of entertainment and pleasure or in company of other people, and that they are at a loss when they find themselves alone, then it is evident that something serious is wrong with their relationship. In order to discover just what is wrong it is frequently necessary to engage them in discussions and to watch their reactions both separately and in the presence of each other. Otherwise, it is exceedingly difficult to answer the question

that is troubling them.

It requires more than one brief interview to discover how much the young man and the young woman know and to outline to them what we believe is necessary in each particular case. But unless we are prepared to give this time to them and unless we have the knowledge and the patience that are necessary to cover the subject thoroughly, it is impossible to engage them in a consideration of the topics included in marriage counseling. And our spiritual ministry to the young couple will be greatly impaired at a time which is one of the most important of their whole lives. If it is impossible for the young couple to complete their preparation before their marriage takes place, they can arrange to do this after their honeymoon. The important thing is to help them realize the necessity for proper preparation and adequate equipment, in other words, the need for Christian foundations on which they can safely and securely build their married life, and make the important adjustments to each other in living.

Some topics that might be included in pre-marital counseling by the pastor are suggested by Sidney E. Goldstein.¹¹ We do not quote him exactly, or use his arrangement of the topics. Of course, in every case the pastor would not cover every topic listed. Some of the topics would be superfluous in the cases of normal, young couples. The

10. Sidney E. Goldstein, Marriage and Family Counseling, p.42.

11. Ibid., pp. 56-59.

pastor would have to use his discretion. It would be well, however, to check this or a similar list after the first interview. It is wise to keep in mind the things that help and hinder. Experience through the years will teach more.

I. Preparation

Ignorance and lack of proper preparation hinder marriage, whereas knowledge and adequate training and experience greatly help. The more men and women know about themselves and the other sex, about the meaning of marriage and the Christian foundations on which the family must rest, about homemaking and housekeeping, the less difficult it will be to solve the problems that marriage and family life always present.

II. Race, Religion, Nationality

Difference in race, religion or nationality hinders marriage, whereas likeness of racial origin, religious beliefs and national customs and practices aids in preserving peace. Men and woman cannot escape their life-long associations, their education, their group loyalties. Dissimilarity in attitudes and outlooks, latent prejudices, and active partisanship are always a handicap and a hazard. The ideal is that young men and women seek life partners among the members of their own church body.

God emphasized, in Old Testament Laws, that the Jews were not to marry into the idolatrous nations around them. One of the obvious reasons for these prohibitions in marriage

In the Old Testament times, a reason given by God Himself, was that, if the Jews would intermarry with people who worshipped idols, then the idol-worshipping wives or husbands (as the case happened to be) would draw away the spouses from worshipping the true God. In other words, difference in religion was a reason for not getting married. The dangers that lie in differences in religion between two married people are still present in modern times. Even the wise Solomon, with God given wisdom and faith, was drawn into idolatry by his unbelieving wives. (I Kings 11,4)

III. Standards and Ideals

Disagreement in moral standards and ethical ideals hinders marriage, whereas acceptance of the same code of conduct and the same ideals in life increases happiness. If the husband and the wife live in accordance with different codes, one high and the other low, comparatively, they not only come to disapprove of each other, they in time come to condemn each other's conduct and this ends in conflict and disruption in family life.

IV. Sincerity

Secrecy and insincerity always hinder marriage, whereas confidence and trust never fail to deepen happiness. If the husband and wife cannot confide in each other, if they cannot speak to each other in utter frankness, if they conceal from each other what they outwardly possess and inwardly are, they

cannot attain that oneness of mind, that elevation of heart, that intimate freedom and communion of spirit that is the most precious elements in the highest happiness. The couple's oneness in Christ includes all these and more.

V. Economic Security

Lack of earning power and very low income hinder marriage, whereas occupational ability, the necessary equipment, and economic security unquestionably assist. Economic insecurity due to incompetence, inexperience, unemployment, intermittent and uncertain income, is in itself a cause of trouble, and undoubtedly affects every favorable factor and also aggravates every adverse condition in marriage.

VI. Health

Physical weakness and psychological defects hinder marriage, whereas a healthy body and a sound mind aid in many ways. Ill health and physical infirmities make it difficult to meet the responsibilities and to bear the burdens. Mental aberrations and emotional instability make it difficult, sometimes impossible (depending upon the seriousness of the handicap), to cope with the complexities of marriage and family relationships.

VII. Temperament

Widedifference in temperament hinders marriage, whereas similarity of nature and disposition increases the prospects. Men and women who are temperamentally out of sympathy with

each other, whose coming together creates discord and conflict, will have great difficulty in trying to live in harmony. The power of faith in Christ and the Holy Spirit working in the man and the woman is the greatest power that will help in these cases.

VIII. Interests

Divergence of interests and activities hinders marriage, whereas community of interests and cooperation in enterprises encourage comradeship. The husband and wife who do not share each other's aims, objectives, ambitions, aspirations, who live on different planes and move in different orbits, lose contact with each other more and more, inevitably tend to drift apart and form other associations. If both are true Christians, they have the greatest power in heaven or on earth to draw them together - Christ living in them.

IX. Social Background

Disparity in social background and cultural development hinders marriage, whereas similarity in culture and social environment promotes understanding and concord. When the husband and wife come from different cultural levels, when one is uncouth in manner, coarse in speech, crude in taste, and the other is sensitive, cultivated, and refined, embarrassment and distress are their almost-constant companions.

X. Age

It is difficult to define the best age range for either the man or the woman. But it is clear that men and women below 20 are, as a rule, too immature to marry and that women over 30 and men over 35 find it increasingly difficult to make the adjustments that marriage demands. The best age range for women seems to be between 20 and 25 and for men between 25 and 30. The difference in age between the man and the woman is less important than the difference in development, spiritual, mental and emotional. It is true that if a woman today is 20 and the man 35, the woman will be 45 and the man 60 twenty-five years hence. But the man at 60 may not be more mature than the woman at 45.

XI. Childhood Home

Young men and women who come out of unhappy homes have less chance for happiness in their own marriage, whereas young men and women who come out of a harmonious and happy home have a greater chance. Unconsciously children breathe in the atmosphere that surrounds them and if the atmosphere is tainted with suspicion and hostility, they inhale the poison and may never eliminate it altogether from their system. Again, a Christ-centered marriage would be the most effective antidote for this poison.

XII. Children

In some women the maternal feeling is very strong and in some men the paternal feeling is of equal strength, though

it may not be as often expressed. This means adjustment and sympathy on the part of each partner. If both the man and the woman follow the Word of God concerning having children and the relationship of husband and wife, the adjustment can be made most satisfactorily. If the couple is physically unable to have children, or, as is deplorably true in too many married couples today, set themselves against having any children, it may be possible for them to reconcile themselves to a childless comradeship. But there is always something lacking in their lives. A couple that wilfully has no children, when they are able to have them, calls down the wrath of God upon their lives together. Children complete and consummate marriage.

If only today, in a peace-robbed world every one would regard the home with the sincere understanding of its relation to God instead of with mere sentimentality, with faith rather than emotions, the outlook for married couples after the present war would be much less clouded and threatening. If the home is built on faith in Christ; if the Savior is daily invited to be the unseen Guest in the family circle; if parents and children live their lives by the Holy Spirit's help and, as far as this is possible, in accordance with God's Word; if all Scripture-teachings concerning wedded life are trustingly followed, such faith and obedience bring Heaven's own promise for home blessing.

The happiest home, therefore, is the one that lives

'closest to Christ. It need not be large, architecturally attractive, nor must those who dwell within its walls be blessed with money, social position or university training. Christ to guide the family, to lead the children, to avert the dangers of too much prosperity and sustain the household in days of need, sorrow, and sickness, will bring a joy that neither money, culture, nor position can ever bestow.

The happiest home, we repeat, is the dwelling-place, be it ever so small, unnoticed, humble, in which Christ enters to say, "This day is salvation come to this house" (Luke 19,9) and remains daily to bless all the family. Let pessimists point to the number of broken homes and unhappy marriages. Through the Savior ours can be an inner joy that neither sickness, disaster, nor death can remove. Let modern social scientists urge their special theories for building the happy home -- family budgets, child psychology, parent training, sex information, domestic preparation -- we gladly accept whatever is not contrary to God's Word. But we insist that home happiness requires soul happiness and that above everything else we need the purifying presence of Christ, who promises, "Behold, I make all things new." (Rev. 21,5)

First of all we must understand that marriage is a gift of God and the family one of the Creator's greatest human blessings, since He instituted wedded life and continues to sustain the home.

We see from Genesis 2,24 that, coming from God, marriage

in itself must be holy. Only man's sin has brought unholliness into wedded life. In the beginning God, Who created male and female, made sex as a blessing. And it is only human transgression which mars this magnificent divine endowment

The man is the head of the house, -- the husband, according to passages above. But let this not be misinterpreted. The code of Christian marriage, far from degrading womanhood to an inferior, servile position, demands that a husband love his wife with the profound devotion demanded by the injunction: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the Church ! -- So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself" (Eph. 5,25.28). Surveying the extent of Christ's devotion to the Church, a love that remained constant until the bitter end on the cross, the Christian husband will be impelled to cherish his wife with a heart-deep affection, to minimize her weaknesses and faults, recognize and foster her accomplishments, perform the innumerable services of affection for her, provide for her, work for her, live for her, and if necessary, die for her. Whenever a God-fearing woman, thrilled by her husband's love, devotes her untiring, unselfish effort toward advancing his interests, not in a spirit of servility or overlordship but in cooperative companionship, this attitude and living will make life fuller and better for both husband and wife.

It is held in some quarters that parenthood should be avoided or families kept very small in order to preserve the mother's health. Women are said to enslave themselves and ruin their bodies by bringing babies into the world. But very often maternal health is improved through childbirth, and neither the Bible nor the Christian Church asks that children come so closely that a mother's health will be impaired.

Many great Americans and outstanding Christians have ascribed the persistence of their spiritual life to family prayers and the worship of Christ in the home circle. More important for us personally is the fact that we, too, can find blessings for ourselves in family worship.

The pastor could point out that Christ, worshipped and exalted in the family, brings us these glorious helps, which are set forth by Dr. Walter A Maier.¹²

1. The family altar elevates, enriches, and ennobles, as nothing else can, the relation between husband and wife, parents and children.

2. Because it points to the complete self-sacrifice and self-denial of Christ, the family altar not only tends to stifle selfishness, but also assists in promoting courtesy, generosity and forbearance.

3. When trouble arises and misunderstanding looms on the domestic horizon, common prayers create patience and peace.

12. The Happiest Home, p. 62.

4. Morning prayers guide each member of the family through the difficulties of the day, and their blessings strengthen us at work, in school, or at play.

5. Evening prayers bring light in darkness, protection in our weakness, and invoke the angels' watchfulness over us and ours.

6. Common prayers exert a blessed influence on guests who are sheltered within our walls.

7. Especially invaluable is the influence of home worship in emphasizing the blessedness of the Christian way of living to each child in the family.

8. By means of the family altar each individual is strengthened to withstand bravely life's adversities, to help build the home on that Rock against which all tempest will beat in vain.

9. Of practical importance in our trouble-marked day is the fact that prayer-filled homes assist mightily in re-enforcing the upbuilding righteousness which alone can exalt a nation.

10. If families are fervent in the faith, they have, even here on earth, a foretaste of the heavenly homeland and are strengthened by the assurance of reunion in the prepared place of the eternal mansions.

Because of these blessings, it ought to be self-evident that, when Christ is ours, we will not rest until He is worshipped in our household.

If the young couple ask, "We should like to start family devotions, but we do not know how. Will you help us?" they may be assured that no exceptional ability or technical preparations are required. Practical suggestions for the maintenance of the family altar may be reduced to these three:

1. Each devotion should embrace at least a portion of Scripture, a prayer by one of the family, or a prayer in unison, or both. If time, circumstances and talents permit, a few stanzas may be sung from the hymnal.
2. Scripture-reading should be taken from the Bible, while the devotional exercises and the prayers may be read from one of many good devotional books, calendars, or pamphlets. Basic in all prayers should be the petition for the forgiveness of sin and the gratitude and thanks for God's redeeming grace. The spontaneous prayer from the heart of husband or wife, mentioning the special, individual needs of the household, emphasizing the requests that crowd themselves into the family life, are, of course, particularly beneficial.
3. The devotional exercises should meet the understanding and the requirements of the younger members of the household, when they arrive and are old enough to understand.

Much depends upon regularity of worship. If the family altar is neglected one day, it is twice as easy to neglect it the second day.

Dr. Walter A. Maier¹³ gives the following ten points for Christian living in the family. These points may serve as a guide for a young pastor, especially, in helping young people on the road to wedded happiness.

1. Resolve to follow this rule: "Whatsoever ye do (in courtship and marriage) in word and deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus !"
2. Make Christ the Counselor in your wedding plans by invoking His help through prayer.
3. Promise God that every Sunday, with only those exceptions which necessity demands, will find you with your beloved one in church ! Attend Communion frequently !
4. From the first day of your wedded life, in sunshine and shadow, in health and sickness, in prosperity and poverty, make your home a Church of Christ where the Savior will be worshipped in the study of His Word and in prayer.
5. Keep Christ as the ennobling, uplifting, refining, selfishness-destroying power in your life, so that, instead of insisting upon rights, you live in and by the Spirit of the humble, self-giving Savior !
7. Resolve that problems and perplexities which may arise in your household will be decided not by the dictates of popular opinion and wide-spread practice but by the clear statement of God's Word !
8. Bring up the children whom God gives you in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and if His wisdom with-

¹³ -- op. cit., pp. 68 and 69

holds the blessing of parenthood from you, do not murmur !
Continue to trust Him !

9. As husband and wife do gladly whatever God's Word requires of you, not neglecting the home for outside attractions, personal pleasure, or gain.

10. Realize that your home will pass away and the family ties be broken ! Continually seek guidance from God, so that daily you can approach more closely to the heavenly homeland, where, united with "the whole family in heaven" and those of your loved ones who have died in the faith, you can see Jesus face to face and praise the Triune God throughout all eternity !

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