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### Pastoral Premarital Counseling in a Campus Ministry Setting- Wittenberg Lutheran Chapel, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, North Dakota

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Pastoral Premarital Counseling  
in a  
Campus Ministry Setting-  
Wittenberg Lutheran Chapel,  
University of North Dakota,  
Grand Forks, North Dakota

Lindsay Watkins

February 1, 1993

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Pastoral Premarital Counseling  
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DM - 996  
Major Applied Project

Lindsay Watkins

Dedicated to Peggy  
whose love and constant encouragement  
resulted in this  
Major Applied Project  
and  
Doctor of Ministry  
and  
to our two daughters,  
Hannah and Anne



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My sincere thanks to  
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for all of the support, guidance, effort, and time  
that he was so willing to give.

## ABSTRACT

The goal of this Major Applied Project was to submit, articulate, and elucidate at least ten specific objectives for pastoral premarital counseling in the campus ministry setting of Wittenberg Lutheran Chapel, the University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, North Dakota, and to present a process to achieve those objectives. Four components, a "Survey of Christian Married Adults," a "Survey of Christian Singles," a study of the Scriptural teachings regarding marriage, and a study of family therapy, psychological, and counseling resources furnished the specific objectives for pastoral premarital counseling. Thirteen specific objectives and a process to achieve those thirteen objectives resulted.

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## INTRODUCTION: MY PRESENT MINISTRY AND THE NEED FOR THIS PROJECT

My divine call is full-time Campus Pastor of Wittenberg Lutheran Chapel serving the University of North Dakota. I serve a university which is co-educational and state-supported with approximately 12,000 students. The University of North Dakota offers programs in 170 fields as well as 47 master's programs, 16 doctoral programs, a law school and a medical school. Wittenberg Chapel is the only full-time Missouri Synod campus ministry in the North Dakota District and one of four campus ministries (including the Roman Catholic, the ELCA, and the United Campus ministry) at the University of North Dakota. Our university has a huge population of Roman Catholic students and a large population of students of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The Missouri Synod student population is small; our mailing list consists of only 130 students. Worship attendance has grown from nine returning students of four years ago to an average of 65 currently on Sunday mornings, the high this year being 82. Numbers may not be huge, but our ministry has become an active, well-respected Christ-centered ministry on campus. While this first paragraph affords a general perspective of my present ministry, the next paragraph will be more specific. It will explain the reason that I have chosen this particular MAP.

My present calling involves a large amount of counseling, with requests for premarital counseling arising regularly. In fact, throughout the 13 years of my ministry (both parish and campus ministry), the Lord has opened door after door for me to minister to people through pastoral premarital counseling.

I have enjoyed each premarital counseling opportunity and value the privileges in this area that the Lord places before me. Premarital counseling affords me an opportunity to teach God's Word to students in a very practical area. It grants me an avenue to share Christ and His love and forgiveness with students and instruct them in Law and Gospel. It provides me the opportunity to get to know students personally as they discuss and contemplate their Christian faith. Such counseling provides an ambiance in which students open up, share and disclose their inner feelings. At times, it even opens a door to minister to people who previously have been resistant to God's Word. It is of particular interest to me that every premarital counseling session grants me the occasion to give theological reflection once again to God's Word on the subject of marriage.

In addition, couples have graciously expressed compliments and gratitude for the premarital counseling throughout my ministry, thus furnishing me with feedback and encouragement. For example, Ron and Linda thanked me for the opportunity to study some of the passages explaining the will of the Lord for husband and wife. Jan expressed appreciation for the opportunity to think through her faith in Christ once again. Lori stated that the Biblical studies in our premarital counseling were valuable in encouraging her Christian

faith. Naomi and Mike appreciated the preparation and effort given toward the wedding worship service. In particular, they thanked me for the teaching and discussions on the Lord's will for husband and the wife. Martin and Lisa thought the premarital counseling sessions beneficial in getting to know one another a bit better. KR, a new Christian, was thankful for the opportunity to consider Christ and His Word in her marriage. Amy expressed gratitude for the practical application of God's Word. Theresa and Jim thought the sessions very beneficial in considering God's directives to them in their marriage. In addition, they expressed gratitude for the orderly preparation for the wedding worship service. Shannon and Bob told me how they valued the opportunity to contemplate their Christian faith and apply it to their marriage. Joe and Paulette found valuable the consideration given within premarital sessions to the relationship with Paulette's children. Bob and Sarah benefited from the contemplation of their families of origin and, especially, the Biblical study of the Lord's Word regarding marriage.

All of the above feedback and more causes me to believe that the Lord has blessed my premarital counseling. In addition, I am encouraged to learn more and grow in this area of my pastoral ministry.

Even a circumstance which involved "negative" feedback served to affirm my belief that the Lord is blessing people through my premarital counseling. When I began to speak about Christ in one of the premarital sessions, Scott replied, "No need to talk about that anymore, Pastor! It's all been taken care of years ago. I have

been born again. I don't worry about those kinds of things anymore." That "negative" comment opened the door within the session for a thorough, practical contemplation of the Christian faith.

All of the aforementioned points of the previous paragraphs led me to select pastoral premarital counseling as the topic of my MAP. In particular, I desire to contemplate and refine specific objectives for pastoral premarital counseling in my campus ministry.

The experience of other pastors served as a catalyst for my study of pastoral premarital counseling. As I discussed my feelings and opinions on this topic with other pastors within circuit pastoral conferences, district pastoral conferences, and private conversations, I found that I was far from being alone in my concerns. Other pastors feel that pastoral premarital counseling is a subject that needs further study. Generally, they observed that they have found few works upon the subject. Like me, they do not feel they have defined for themselves the specific objectives of their premarital counseling. Finally, they too agree that they have not given consideration to a multitude of other objectives which could be met within their premarital counseling.

## LIFE ISSUES OF THOSE TO WHOM I MINISTER

What are the life issues being dealt with by those within my campus ministry? Faith issues are primary life issues included for young adults of college age: Separated from their family of origin, they are involved in a process which either reinforces or decreases the faith taught at home. Throughout their high school years, they enjoyed and practiced a personal faith. This personal faith was planted in Holy Baptism and nurtured through parental instruction, worship, catechism and the Lord's Supper. As they leave "Mom" and "Dad's" household, however, that personal faith seems to go through a different stage. This is a stage of reinforced faith or diminishing faith.

In Handbook of Adult Religious Education, Nancy Foltz explains: "The three psychological issues unique to young adulthood are independence, identity, and intimacy."<sup>1</sup> In the areas of independence and identity, Foltz elucidates that it is essential for the young adults "to separate themselves from their families of origin, a sometimes trying task for both parents and young adults, and to establish themselves in society with their own identity."<sup>2</sup> Young adulthood, Foltz relates, also involves "the achievement of (an)

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<sup>1</sup>Nancy Foltz, Handbook of Adult Religious Education (Birmingham, Alabama: Religious Education Press, 1986), 59.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 60.



intimate relationship with another."<sup>3</sup> In that area, Foltz expounds, "This ability to achieve intimacy with another while still maintaining a personal identity and independence is probably the most significant indication of maturity in young adulthood."<sup>4</sup> The issues of independence, identity, and intimacy are life issues for those to whom I minister at Wittenberg Lutheran Chapel.

In my campus ministry, I have found Foltz's remarks regarding intimacy as a life issue within this age group to be beneficial. Based on my experiences, I would submit that young adults between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four often focus on the primary life issues of relationships, preparation for marriage, and marriage itself. Within my four years of campus ministry here at the University of North Dakota, I have witnessed young adults form close dating relationships with members of the opposite sex. I have also seen many of those dating relationships proceed toward marriage. Therefore, this MAP concerns itself with the life issues of relationships and intimacy, especially preparation for marriage and marriage itself. Faith issues will also be included.

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

## HOW WILL THIS MAJOR APPLIED PROJECT BE OF ASSISTANCE TO MY MINISTRY?

This MAP will be of tremendous help to my campus ministry. This MAP will be of benefit to any ministry, campus or parish, that I may serve in the future.

Within my present ministry as campus pastor, I am called upon to accomplish a significant amount of premarital counseling for weddings at which I officiate. In addition, as a campus pastor I am often called upon to accomplish the premarital counseling for other pastors who will officiate at the wedding yet who are not in close proximity to the college couple prior to the wedding. This MAP is intended to delineate for me specific objectives and process for the pastoral premarital counseling which I will accomplish in the future. This MAP currently prompts me to give serious and assiduous consideration to my present premarital counseling. It requires necessary order and organization for that premarital counseling which in turn increases my confidence and competence in this aspect of my ministry. I thank my Lord for these blessings.

Inherent within this MAP is my thorough study of marriage itself, of the family, of relationships, of communication, of sexuality, and above all, of the Scriptural teachings regarding marriage. My MAP study within all of these areas has increased my understanding of married couples and the family. My study has enhanced my

ability to work with premarital and marital couples and with families. It has also improved my preaching and teaching to married couples, premarital couples, and families. For similar reasons, this MAP will assist me within another specific charge of my Ministry, namely within my marital counseling.

I predict secondary benefits to the ministry of Wittenberg Lutheran Chapel as well. Since I am a campus pastor and work almost exclusively with young adults, I have the privilege and opportunity to minister through divine services, Bible studies, counseling, and personal conversations to a number of engaged couples as well as newly married couples. This MAP will assist me in understanding and applying God's Word to the engaged couple and to the newly married couple. It will also assist me in marital counseling.

I believe there to be another secondary benefit to this MAP. This MAP has increased my knowledge and elevated my awareness of strengths and problems within marriage and the family. Application can be made to my preaching, teaching, and counseling in this regard. Benefits also apply to any ministry, campus or parish, that I would serve in the future.

## METHODOLOGY

What are the goals of this MAP? What is the methodology? The first goal of this MAP is to submit, articulate and elucidate at least ten specific objectives for pastoral premarital counseling in my campus ministry setting of Wittenberg Lutheran Chapel, the University of North Dakota, Grand Forks. The second goal of this MAP is to present an explanation of a process which would achieve the aforementioned ten objectives. The methodology involves the four components which are detailed in the following paragraphs.

The first two components which furnish a portion of the ten specific objectives are two surveys, a "Survey Of Christian Singles" and a "Survey Of Christian Married Adults." Information for the development of the ten objectives was gathered through the use of these two surveys.

I wrote a "Survey Of Christian Singles" that was administered to forty-five single adults in my ministry. Forty-five represents the average number of single adults worshipping with us any Sunday morning. I announced and explained the survey following divine services on two Sunday mornings when our attendance was larger than usual, hoping for at least forty-five respondents. I also announced and explained the survey following midweek communion vespers and Bible studies for two weeks. As a result, forty-five single adults took a survey.

Survey questions originated from my experience as a campus and parish pastor. The "Survey Of Christian Singles" listed seventeen topics, requesting the respondent to check any topic that she or he would consider relevant and beneficial for pastoral premarital counseling. The survey also requested the respondent to note the three topics that she or he would consider the most significant for premarital counseling. Opportunity was given within the survey for the respondent to write down any other topic for premarital counseling not included in the list of seventeen. Please see Appendix A for the "Survey of Christian Singles."

Participants were given the option of returning the survey by mail (I offered to provide a stamped envelope addressed to the Chapel) or handing the folded survey to me personally. Those that handed the folded survey to me were assured that the survey would be placed randomly in a folder that contained all other surveys and their anonymity would be protected. Twenty-six of the forty-five (58%) returned the survey.

I developed a "Survey Of Christian Married Adults." The average number of married adults who worship with us on Sunday mornings is twenty, so I administered the survey to twenty married adults. The questions within this survey for married adults were precisely the same questions addressed to the single adults in their survey. This was done in order to compare the answers concerning premarital counseling of those who are married and "speak from experience" with those who are not married and respond from

present expectations. Please see Appendix B for the "Survey Of Christian Married Adults."

The "Survey Of Christian Married Adults" was distributed by me in exactly the same manner that I had distributed the "Survey of Christian Singles." People were also given the option to return the survey by mail or to hand it to me personally. Married adults were assured of their anonymity as were the single adults. Fourteen out of twenty (70%) responded to the "Survey Of Christian Married Adults."

I tabulated the results of the "Survey Of Christian Singles" as well as the results of the "Survey of Christian Married Adults." Computing the results of each survey individually, I recorded the results of the singles survey upon one paper and the married adults survey upon another paper. "Other topics" suggested by the singles were recorded as well as the three topics that they considered to be most significant for premarital counseling. "Other topics" submitted by the married adults and the three topics considered to be the most significant were also tabulated.

The results of both surveys, components one and two of this MAP, were then used to develop specific objectives for pastoral premarital counseling. Topics chosen by at least 51% of the married and single adults formed the basis for the specific objectives.

The third component of this MAP was my study of the scriptural teachings regarding marriage. This study embraced researching the scriptural texts that deal with marriage. I studied relevant texts linguistically, exegetically, and systematically. I then

applied this information to premarital counseling. Specifically, the information was used to develop additional objectives for pastoral premarital counseling.

This third component of the MAP is presented in two different sections. The first section is entitled "What Are The Scriptural Teachings Regarding Marriage?" That section delineates the findings of my study of Scripture. The results of this third component will also be presented within each section which submits a specific objective of pastoral premarital counseling. For example, "This objective follows from these specific scriptural teachings regarding marriage."

The fourth component is my study of family therapy resources, psychological resources, and counseling resources. My research was very specific, targeting theories and conclusions which could pertain to the married couple in general and to premarital counseling in particular. Subsequently, I formulated additional specific objectives for pastoral premarital counseling. These findings and quotes from the resources will be detailed within the section of this MAP that deals with each specific premarital counseling objective.

## WHAT ARE THE SCRIPTURAL TEACHINGS REGARDING MARRIAGE?

The third component of my MAP was a study of the scriptural teachings regarding marriage. This chapter presents the results of that study.

### *Marriage Is An Institution of God*

Genesis 2:18, 21-24 reads:

Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.' ...So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh at that place. And the Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. And the man 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.' For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.<sup>5</sup>

From this passage of Scripture, the reader learns that the Lord God is the One who noted that "it is not good for the man to be alone." He is the One who made the "helper suitable for man." It is God who caused the "deep sleep to fall upon the man." It is God who took one of Adam's ribs and "fashioned" from that rib a woman.

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<sup>5</sup>Genesis 2:18, 21-24, NASB



Keil and Delitzsch, in their Commentary On The Old Testament, are helpful here. They write, "The word *batah* is worthy of note: From the rib of the man God builds the female."<sup>6</sup> God "built" the woman. The woman is God's design and creation. In addition to creating the woman, it is also God who brings the woman to the man for holy matrimony. All of this is God's building, His work, and His creation.

God's work and creation continues because He wills that "a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife."<sup>7</sup> It is His design and purpose that the two "shall become one flesh."<sup>8</sup> That which seems to be an impossible contradiction in terms, two people becoming one flesh, is willed and accomplished by God. He creates the two and makes them one flesh. This is His origin, His design, His gift. Man is God's creation; woman is the creation of God; and so is marriage. God created marriage and His hand of blessing rests upon it. Marriage is the institution of God.

The Lutheran Confessions affirm that marriage is a divine estate. Luther, in his "Large Catechism," professes, "Therefore he (God) also wishes us to honor, maintain, and cherish it (marriage) as

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<sup>6</sup>C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, Commentary On The Old Testament, vol. 1, The Pentateuch (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), 90.

<sup>7</sup>Gen. 2:24, NASB.

<sup>8</sup>Gen. 2:24, NASB.

a divine and blessed estate. Significantly he established it as the first of all institutions."<sup>9</sup>

Professor Edward W. A. Koehler, in his classic doctrinal work, A Summary Of Christian Doctrine, explains, "God instituted matrimony when in the garden of Eden He made a wife for man, brought her to him, and blessed their union to be one flesh."<sup>10</sup> Professors Armin Schuetze and Irwin Habeck write: "It must be recognized that marriage is an institution of God and not a sociological development. God instituted marriage, pronounced a blessing on it, and protects it in the Sixth Commandment."<sup>11</sup> The September 1981 Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of our Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, entitled Human Sexuality: A Theological Perspective, very simply and lucidly states, "The earthly estate of marriage is a divine institution."<sup>12</sup>

Our Savior reiterates the teaching that marriage is a divine institution, "What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."<sup>13</sup> The New Evangelical Translation reads, "Therefore, let

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<sup>9</sup>Martin Luther, "The Large Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther," in The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, ed. Theodore G. Tappert, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 393.

<sup>10</sup>Edward W. A. Koehler, A Summary Of Christian Doctrine (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1939), 284, 285.

<sup>11</sup>Armin W. Schuetze and Irwin J. Habeck, The Shepherd Under Christ: A Textbook for Pastoral Theology (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House, 1974), 268, 269.

<sup>12</sup>Human Sexuality: A Theological Perspective (St. Louis, Missouri: A Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod as prepared by its Social Concerns Committee, September 1981), 10.

<sup>13</sup>Matt. 19:6, NASB.

no one separate what God has joined together."<sup>14</sup> It is God who has "joined together" husband and wife. The Greek verb used in the verse is *sunezeugen*. It consists of a compound of *zeugnumi* which translates as "connect" or "join" with the prefix *sun* which translates as "with."<sup>15</sup> In its entirety, the verb translates into "to join with," "to join together," "to connect with," or "to connect together." God has "joined together" husband and wife; God has "connected together" husband and wife. Matthew 19:6 is emphatic in declaring that husband and wife are "joined together" in marriage by God. Professors Schuetze and Habeck comment upon this passage, "It is not only the man and woman who through their vows established the bond, but it is God who joined them together in marriage."<sup>16</sup>

### *Marriage Is To Be A Lifelong Institution*

The Lord teaches in His Word that marriage is to be a lifelong institution. He says, "For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh."<sup>17</sup> The man and woman are now "one flesh" in marriage. The

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<sup>14</sup>Matt. 19:6, NET.

<sup>15</sup>William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon Of The New Testament And Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), 337, 789.

<sup>16</sup>Schuetze and Habeck, 286.

<sup>17</sup>Gen. 2:24, NASB.

concept of "one flesh" precludes the notion of divorce. Not only is the action of divorce precluded; the very idea, notion, or thought of divorce is antithetic to the "one flesh" truth of marriage.

C.S. Lewis ponders the teaching that marriage is for life and alludes to the "one flesh" actuality. He writes, "Christianity teaches that marriage is for life. ...They [different Christian Churches] are all agreed that it [divorce] is more like having both your legs cut off than it is like dissolving a business partnership or even deserting a regiment."<sup>18</sup>

Christ, in answering the Pharisees who tested Him, reiterates the teaching that marriage is to be lifelong,

Have you not read, that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh'? Consequently they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."<sup>19</sup>

Jesus emphasizes that the man and woman "are no longer two, but one flesh."<sup>20</sup> "God has joined [them] together."<sup>21</sup> Therefore, because of God's joining them together, people may not separate the married couple; people are not to divide what God has joined together. Separating the married couple would be antithetical to God's work.

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<sup>18</sup>C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity (Great Britain: Collins Press, 1952), 93.

<sup>19</sup>Matt. 19:4-6, NASB.

<sup>20</sup>Matt. 19:6, NASB.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

The Lutheran Confessions speak of this truth regarding divorce as well. Martin Luther, in his "Large Catechism," declares, "In the New Testament married people are forbidden to be divorced."<sup>22</sup>

The Commission on Theology and Church Relations of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod published a Report in November of 1987 entitled Divorce and Remarriage: An Exegetical Study. Within the Report, the CTCR explains,

The principle "What God has joined together let not man put asunder" holds true according to the Scriptures "from the beginning," when the Creator "made them male and female" (Gen. 1:27) and said, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh" (Gen. 2:24). At a time when divorce was commonplace and legitimized even on Biblical grounds (Deuteronomy 24), Jesus taught "but from the beginning it was not so" (Matt. 19:8).<sup>23</sup>

Later in the document, the CTCR provides this clarification,

The Lord's response to current attitudes toward divorce and remarriage was grounded not only in the commandment "You shall not commit adultery," but also in the will of the Creator that those who are joined in the one flesh union of marriage must not separate what God has joined together.<sup>24</sup>

Dr. Edward G. Dobson writes in his book What The Bible Really Says About Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage, "In Luke 16:18 we find the general teaching of Jesus that presents God's ideal: one man,

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<sup>22</sup>Luther, "Large Catechism," 406.

<sup>23</sup>Divorce and Remarriage: An Exegetical Study (St. Louis, Missouri: A Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, November 1987), 7.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, 18.

one woman, for one lifetime. Jesus said, 'Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.'"<sup>25</sup>

Schuetze and Habeck explain the same concept,

God has reserved for himself the right to dissolve the marriage bond. God dissolves the marriage bond when he intervenes through death. A woman, Paul points out, is bound to her husband as long as he lives. Upon his death she is loosed from that bond and is free to marry again. Taking another husband then does not make her an adulteress (Ro. 7:2f). ...The same is, of course, true of the man if his wife dies. Scripture refers to only this one manner by which God dissolves a marriage. Any dissolution of a marriage bond during the life of both husband and wife comes about through man's sin. In some way sin is always involved in a divorce.<sup>26</sup>

### *Marriage Is A Relationship Between A Man And A Woman*

Paul is clear that marriage is a relationship between a man and a woman in his inspired dissertation on marriage recorded in Ephesians 5. Marriage involves, according to his explanation, a "husband" and a "wife." In fact, it involves a "man" cleaving to "his

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<sup>25</sup>Edward G. Dobson, What The Bible Really Says About Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1986), 55, 56.

<sup>26</sup>Schuetze and Habeck, 286, 287.

wife" and the two becoming "one flesh."<sup>27</sup> The examples in the Old Testament of marriage all involve a man and a woman.

The homosexual marriages which are legal in other countries today and which are being suggested by certain sectors of our own country, especially by certain individuals within the university milieu, are contradictory to God's will and antithetical to the Lord's institution of marriage. This point needs to be emphasized and explained. On the University of North Dakota Campus, there are some who continually debate the validity of and desire the legality of same sex marriages. Even now one of the student associations is sponsoring a lecture by a male body builder and a male model who are legally married and have residence in France.

### *The Relationship And Companionship Between Husband And Wife*

Scriptural teachings on marriage also manifest that the Lord has given marriage for the blessing of relationship and companionship between the husband and the wife. The Lord states: "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him."<sup>28</sup> Since "it is not good for the man to be alone," the Lord created woman and instituted the "one flesh" relationship of marriage. The Lord gave to the man a companion, a lifelong companion with whom he would have an intimate relationship.

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<sup>27</sup>Eph. 5:22ff., NASB.

<sup>28</sup>Gen. 2:18, NASB.

The Commission on Theology and Church Relations' Report entitled Human Sexuality: A Theological Perspective states,

God therefore provides the woman as helpmeet. This means not primarily one who will help the man as an assistant in his work. Rather, the woman is a helping being, in which, as soon as he sees it, he may recognize himself. She is the mirror in which the man will come to know himself as man. The man and woman have been created toward fellowship, and neither can come to know the self rightly apart from the other. The woman is given to the man in order that neither of them may be alone, that together they may know themselves in relation to one who is other self.<sup>29</sup>

Marriage is given by the Lord for the blessing of relationship: "the man and woman have been created toward fellowship."<sup>30</sup> Marriage is the Lord's gift for the purpose of companionship: "the woman is given to the man in order that neither of them may be alone."<sup>31</sup>

C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch describe the relationship and companionship of the marital estate with the following words, "The woman was created, not of dust of the earth, but from a rib of Adam, because she was formed for an inseparable unity and fellowship of life with the man."<sup>32</sup> The words "inseparable unity" and "fellowship of life" connote a deep, intimate relationship and companionship.

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<sup>29</sup>Human Sexuality: A Theological Perspective, 14.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup>Keil and Delitzsch, 89.



Edward G. Dobson stresses the word "companionship" in answering the question, "What then is marriage?" Dobson writes,

Marriage is a covenant of companionship. ...Jay Adams, a prominent Christian counselor, has said, "A companion is one with whom you are intimately united in thoughts, goals, plans, and efforts." It is the same idea as becoming "one flesh." In Ezekiel and Ruth we have the only two passages in Scripture that refer to a marriage ceremony, or more correctly, the engagement ceremony. "Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: Yes, I swear unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine" (Ezekiel 16:8). This passage portrays the groom coming and covering the bride with his garments as an indication that he is going to take her under his wing, protect her, and meet her needs. Marriage is a husband and wife making a covenant to live together as companions until death parts them.<sup>33</sup>

The Holy Spirit gave Paul the following words:

So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body. For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh.<sup>34</sup>

Marriage is intended to be a relationship of husband and wife nourishing one another and cherishing one another.

The Greek word *ektrephei* is translated by the New American Standard Bible as "nourishes."<sup>35</sup> The New Evangelical Translation

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<sup>33</sup>Dobson, 29, 30.

<sup>34</sup>Eph. 5:28-31, NASB.

<sup>35</sup>Eph. 5:29, NASB.

utilizes the word "feeds" to translate the same word.<sup>36</sup> Louw and Nida in their Greek-English Lexicon Of The New Testament Based On Semantic Domains explain that the root word *ektrepho* translates as "to provide food for, with the implication of a considerable period of time and the food being adequate nourishment - to provide food for, to give food to someone to eat."<sup>37</sup> Marriage is a relationship in which husband and wife provide for one another, are concerned about one another, care for one another. The immediate context specifies that "husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies."<sup>38</sup> I have applied these words to both husband and wife in their loving and dealing with one another.

The second Greek word of particular interest to our subject within this passage is *thalpo*. Arndt and Gingrich translate *thalpo* as "literally, keep warm; figuratively, cherish, comfort."<sup>39</sup> Husband and wife cherish one another as one flesh. They comfort one another in the midst of the stresses, distresses, heartaches, hurts, and difficulties that life in this sinful world can bring. In marriage, they keep one another warm; they protect one another from the outside elements, specifically the outside elements of other sinners. They protect one another from the outside elements of the unbelieving world and of Satan.

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<sup>36</sup>Eph. 5:29, NET.

<sup>37</sup>Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, eds. Greek-English Lexicon Of The New Testament Based On Semantic Domains, vol. 1 Introduction (New York, New York: United Bible Societies, 1988), 249.

<sup>38</sup>Eph. 5:28, NASB.

<sup>39</sup>Arndt and Gingrich, 351.

Paul was inspired to write in the Book of Ephesians,

For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her; that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless.<sup>40</sup>

The relationship of Christ to the Church is presented as a model for the relationship of husband to wife. As Christ is the head of the Church, so the husband is to be the head of the wife. Christ's headship consists of love and self-sacrifice; even so the husband's headship is to consist of love and self-sacrifice. Christ is constantly giving to the Church and forgiving the Church; such is the paradigm for the husband's actions toward his spouse. Christ would never treat the Church in a hateful manner. He would never deal with the Church from a selfish, self-centered point of view. Once again, the relationship of husband toward wife in marriage should be no different. The Church, in faith, voluntarily submits itself to Christ; the Church is not coerced into doing so. The wife, following that paradigm, voluntarily submits herself to her husband; she is not forced to do so.

The relationship of Christ with the Church is one of love. It is a trust relationship of openness and genuineness. It is a relationship of support that builds the Church up as well as upholds and supports

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<sup>40</sup>Eph. 5:23-27, NASB.

the Church. This paradigm stands for marriage and for the relationship of husband and wife.

Christ is a blessing to the Church. Following that example, husband and wife are blessings to one another. Jesus protects the Church. Husband and wife protect one another within their relationship. The relationship of Christ and the Church is an open system, reaching out and sharing with others. The relationship of wife and husband is also an open system in the sense that it reaches out and shares with others.

*The Lord Gives Commands, Directions,, And Guidelines Regarding Marriage*

Since marriage is an institution of God, His Word gives commands, direction and guidelines regarding marriage. A statement from John Fritz's Pastoral Theology is beneficial in this area. Fritz writes,

The Scriptures give explicit rules and directions to be observed in reference to entering upon marriage, living in marriage, and severing the marriage bond. ...When Christ was approached with questions concerning marriage, Matt. 5:31, 32; 19:3, He did not direct His questioners to take their case to the civil courts, as He did when He was asked in reference to the dividing of an inheritance, Luke 12:14, but gave explicit instructions on the basis of the Scriptural record of the institution of marriage. Likewise Paul, 1 Cor. 7.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>John H.C. Fritz, Pastoral Theology: A Handbook Of Scriptural Principles (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1932), 161.

The "Apology Of The Augsburg Confession" repeats that the Lord in His Word gives definite commands regarding marriage. The "Apology" makes reference to "the works that God commands, like the tasks of one's calling, the administration of public affairs, the administration of the household, married life, and the rearing of children."<sup>42</sup>

*Marriage Is For Life In This World*

In Matthew, the Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection of the dead, approach our Lord to question him about the resurrection. Their specific question deals with marriage and the resurrection.<sup>43</sup> Jesus answers them, "For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven."<sup>44</sup> Martin Franzmann writes, "The Sadducees attributed to Jesus the Pharisees' conception of the life of the world to come as merely a more splendid continuation of this present life. Jesus rejects this conception."<sup>45</sup> Eternal life and heaven do not involve a

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<sup>42</sup>"Apology Of The Augsburg Confession," in The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, ed. Theodore G. Tappert, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 219.

<sup>43</sup>Matt. 22:23-28, NASB.

<sup>44</sup>Matt. 22:30, NASB.

<sup>45</sup>Martin Franzmann, Concordia Bible with Notes (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1971), 58.

"splendid continuation of this present life" when it comes to marriage. Jesus lucidly answers the Sadducees, stressing that marriage is an institution of this world; marriage does not occur nor continue in heaven and eternal life. Professors Schuetze and Habeck articulate, "Marriage, or matrimony, is an institution established for mankind as part of life in this world."<sup>46</sup>

*Children Are A Benediction That The Lord Grants Unto Marriage*

At the time of creation, the Lord gives a command to husband and wife, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it."<sup>47</sup> This Word of the Lord stands as a blessing (i.e., a promise of blessing) and a command for marriage today. Children are a benediction which the Lord ordinarily grants to marriage.

Children are a benediction that the Lord grants unto husband and wife in marriage. Psalm 127:3 asserts, "Behold, children are a gift of the Lord; the fruit of the womb is a reward."<sup>48</sup> Husband and wife receive this "gift" of children from the Lord. As Jacob encounters Esau in their famous meeting, Esau questions him, "Who are these with you?" Jacob asserts: "The children whom God has graciously given your servant."<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>Schuetze and Habeck, 268.

<sup>47</sup>Gen. 1:28, NASB.

<sup>48</sup>Ps. 127:3, NASB.

<sup>49</sup>Gen. 33:5, NASB.

Even in the midst of his fear of Esau, Jacob replies with the assertion that God has granted him these children. Children were the gift of God to Jacob; children are the gift of God to husband and wife today. Joseph visits and speaks with his ailing and aging father Jacob. Jacob sees Joseph's sons and asks him, "Who are these?" Joseph replies to his father, "They are my sons, whom God has given me here."<sup>50</sup> It was God Who had given Joseph his sons.

I use the word "ordinarily" when speaking of the Lord's benediction regarding marriage. There are times when, in the wisdom of the Lord which surpasses our understanding, the Lord does not grant the blessing of children unto a married couple. I worked with a couple in my campus ministry who were not able to have children. After doing much work with an adoption agency, meeting regularly with the adoption counselors and undergoing a thorough screening, the Lord by His grace granted that Sally became pregnant. They were blessed with the birth of a little boy.

On the other hand, I worked with Adam and Annette. Adam and Annette are not able to have children. They have completed the preliminary work and await the arrival of an adopted son or daughter through a Christian adoption agency.

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<sup>50</sup>Gen. 48:8,9, NASB.

*The Lord Grants That Marriage Is A Help To Sinful Men And Women*

There is one more point to be considered within this section of scriptural teachings regarding marriage. The Lord has granted that marriage would be a help or assistance to sinful men and women. There is a natural love or attraction which man has toward woman and woman has toward man. This is a gift of God. However, the fall into sin has corrupted this gift of God, this natural love or attraction, into a lust. Therefore, the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write, "It is good for a man not to touch a woman. To avoid sexual sins, let each man have his own wife and each woman her own husband."<sup>51</sup>

Marriage, by the Lord's benediction and gift, is an aid or support for men and women today to "avoid sexual sins." Our Lutheran Confessions state,

For the natural desire of one sex for the other is an ordinance of God, and therefore it is a right; otherwise, why would both sexes have been created? As we said, we are not talking about sinful lust but about the desire which is called 'natural love,' which lust did not remove from nature but only inflamed. Now it needs a remedy even more, and marriage is necessary for a remedy as well as for procreation. This is so clear and firm as to be irrefutable.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>1 Cor. 7: 1,2, NET.

<sup>52</sup>"Apology Of The Augsburg Confession," 241.



### **THE OBJECTIVES**

This section of the MAP will submit, articulate, and elucidate the specific objectives for pastoral premarital counseling in my campus ministry. The Lord blessed in that thirteen specific objectives resulted from this MAP:

1. Pastoral premarital counseling should instruct the couple regarding Christ their Savior and regarding their salvation.
2. Premarital counseling should educate the couple in terms of the Lord's will for marriage, the Lord's will for the husband, and the Lord's will for the wife.
3. There is an intercessory goal of pastoral premarital counseling, the pastor praying for and with the couple during counseling sessions.
4. In the area of prayer, there is also an educational goal; the pastor teaches the couple to pray.
5. Pastoral premarital counseling should promote and enhance the couple's communication skills.
6. Premarital counseling should teach the couple about the Christian wedding worship service and work with the couple on their wedding worship service.
7. Pastoral premarital counseling should explore and further the couple's understanding of their families of origin. This is

intended for the purpose of assisting the couple in differentiating from those families of origin as well as for establishing a clear boundary around the couple.

8. Pastoral premarital counseling should educate the couple regarding the family life cycle in order to facilitate the couple's transition, as well as the transition of the family of origin members, into this next stage of the family life cycle.
9. Pastoral premarital counseling should educate the couple regarding sibling position for the purpose of the couple giving further consideration to their own sibling positions and to the impact that their own sibling positions may have upon their marriage and new family.
10. Pastoral premarital counseling should educate the couple regarding family rules, explore the family rules which existed within the couple's families of origin, and assist the couple in establishing family rules within their new family.
11. Pastoral premarital counseling should explore the couple's negotiation skills and assist the couple in advancing those skills in their relationship, when advancement is necessary and desired by the couple.
12. Pastoral premarital counseling should discuss with the couple the topic of human sexuality.
13. Premarital counseling establishes or improves the pastoral relationship between the couple and the pastor.

Four components, a scriptural study, a "Survey of Christian Married Adults," a "Survey of Christian Singles," and a study of family therapy, psychological, and counseling resources furnished these thirteen objectives. The results of the scriptural study, the two surveys, and the study of family therapy, psychological, and counseling resources that supported each objective will also be presented.

**Objective #1:**

**Pastoral premarital counseling should instruct the couple regarding Christ their Savior and regarding their salvation.**

**Results of the Scriptural Study**

The first objective for premarital counseling is grounded on scriptural study. It applies our Lord's general commission to proclaim the Gospel to all creation, specifically to the pastoral task of premarital counseling.

Scripture clearly informs us that, as Christians, we are to be teaching others about Christ and salvation. The passages which follow within the next paragraph attest to that. We are to proclaim the Gospel. That is our commission as the holy Christian Church. Premarital counseling can be an avenue through which the Christian Church proclaims the Gospel and teaches others, specifically premarital couples, about Christ and salvation.

In Matthew, we read, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."<sup>53</sup> First Peter 2:9 informs us, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession,

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<sup>53</sup> Mark 16:15, NASB.

that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."<sup>54</sup>

Pastoral premarital counseling is a superb opportunity to make disciples, teach all that the Lord has commanded, and proclaim His excellencies. The pastor who avails himself of this avenue to instruct a premarital couple regarding Christ their Savior and salvation does so in sincere love and concern for their marriage as well as their souls. The pastor desires not only that the woman and man have a happy and blessed marriage, but also that the two believe in Christ as their Savior and enjoy His forgiveness and eternal life.

### *Results of the Two Surveys*

The results of the "Survey Of Christian Married Adults" support my first objective of instructing the couple regarding Christ and salvation. Of the 12 married adults who returned the survey, eleven, or 92%, indicated that the topic "What Does It Mean To Live Your Life 'By Faith' In Christ?" is a topic that they would consider "relevant and beneficial for pastoral premarital counseling." Three of the twelve, or 25%, chose this topic as one of the three topics that they considered most significant for premarital counseling.

The results of the "Survey Of Christian Singles" also support this objective of pastoral premarital counseling. Eighteen of the twenty-six singles, or 69%, indicated that a topic they considered

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<sup>54</sup>1 Pet. 2:9, NASB.

relevant and beneficial for pastoral premarital counseling is, "What does it mean to live your life 'by faith' in Christ?" Five of the twenty-six, or 19%, chose this topic as one of the three that they deemed "most significant for premarital counseling."

*Results from the Study of Family Therapy, Psychological, and Counseling Resources*

This first objective for pastoral premarital counseling regarding Christ and salvation is supported, in a general way, by one particular source. Dr. W. Robert Beavers, Clinical Director of the Southwest Family Institute as well as Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Texas Health Science Center in Dallas, Texas, writes, "Healthy marital partners also have meaning that transcends their own skin and the boundaries of their family members. It may be provided by conventional religion or by a passionate cause...."<sup>55</sup>

Christ and His salvation provides for the married couple "meaning that transcends their own skin and the boundaries of their family members."<sup>56</sup> The teaching about Christ and salvation provides meaning, foundation, purpose, and direction for the lives of a married couple and for their marriage. Premarital counseling which instructs the couple regarding Christ their Savior and their salvation

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<sup>55</sup> W. Robert Beavers, Successful Marriage: A Family Systems Approach To Couples Therapy (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1985), 75.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

is working toward the health of the marital partners as well as the health of their marriage.

**Objective #2:**

**Premarital counseling should educate the couple in terms of the Lord's will for marriage, the Lord's will for the husband, and the Lord's will for the wife.**

**Results of the Scriptural Study**

The second objective of pastoral premarital counseling is again grounded in my study of scriptural teachings on marriage. As I studied the Lord's Word on marriage, I became convinced of two things. In the first place, God's Word presents the Lord's will for marriage as well as the Lord's will for the husband and the wife. I also became convinced that the Christian Church in general, and Wittenberg Lutheran Chapel specifically, should proclaim this Word and will to husbands and wives today.

God instructs us in His Word regarding His will for marriage and for husband and wife. See page 16 of this paper dealing with Genesis 2:24. See also page 17 of the paper dealing with Matthew 19:6. Both passages state the Lord's desire and directive regarding marriage.

The Lord furnishes us the Sixth Commandment which expresses His directive regarding marriage. He commands, "You shall not commit adultery."<sup>57</sup> Christ gives directives pertaining to

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<sup>57</sup>Ex. 20:14, NASB.



marriage in the following declaration: "I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the cause of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery."<sup>58</sup>

In Genesis 2:18, the Lord elaborates upon His purposes and plans for husband and wife. The reader is directed to page 20 of this MAP. Here we read in God's Word that it is the Lord's design for marriage that the wife would be a "helper" for the husband.<sup>59</sup>

Paul writes, "Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body."<sup>60</sup> The Holy Spirit, within this passage in Ephesians, describes His will for the wife as well as for the husband. The design of our Lord for husband and wife is further described in the subsequent two verses in Ephesians 5, "But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her."<sup>61</sup> Additional explanation of our Lord's will is provided a few verses later within the same chapter, "Let each individual among you also love his own wife even as himself; and let the wife see to it that she respect her husband."<sup>62</sup> My intention in noting these passages is

<sup>58</sup>Matt. 5:32, NASB.

<sup>59</sup>Gen. 2:18, NASB.

<sup>60</sup>Eph. 5:22, 23, NASB.

<sup>61</sup>Eph. 5:24, 25, NASB.

<sup>62</sup>Eph. 5:33, NASB.

to cite scriptural examples which clarify that God in His Word proclaims His will for marriage and for husband and wife.

The Christian Church is to proclaim the Lord's Word. Jeremiah 23:28 states, "He who has my word, let him speak My word faithfully."<sup>63</sup> Ephesians 4:11 informs us that as Christians, we are to "[speak] the truth in love."<sup>64</sup>

Our Wittenberg Lutheran Chapel Ministry is meant to proclaim the Lord's Word. We are to teach all things that the Lord has commanded.<sup>65</sup> Pastoral premarital counseling provides an avenue through which the Lord's Word pertaining to marriage can be taught to premarital couples.

### *Results of the Married Adults Survey*

The answers submitted by those who returned the "Survey Of Christian Married Adults" support having an objective for pastoral premarital counseling which involves education of the couple in the Lord's will for marriage, the Lord's will for the husband, and the Lord's will for the wife. Of the twelve married adults who returned the survey, twelve, or 100%, indicated that "The Lord's Word About Marriage" would be a topic they would consider "relevant and beneficial for pastoral premarital counseling." Additionally, 100% of

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<sup>63</sup>Jer. 23:28, NKJV.

<sup>64</sup>Eph. 4:11, NASB.

<sup>65</sup>Matt. 28:20, NKJV.

the respondents marked "The Lord's Word About Husbands," "The Lord's Word About Wives," and "The Lord's Word Regarding Divorce" as topics that they deemed "relevant and beneficial for pastoral premarital counseling."

Seven respondents, or 58%, chose "The Lord's Word About Marriage" as one of the three topics that they judged to be "the most significant topics for premarital counseling." Two out of twelve married adults, or 17%, favored "The Lord's Word About Husbands" as one of the three topics that they regarded to be one of the most significant topics. Two respondents (17%) selected "The Lord's Word About Wives" and "The Lord's Word Regarding Divorce" as one of the three most significant topics.

One hundred percent indicated that "The Couple's Worship Life" was a topic that they believed "relevant and beneficial for pastoral premarital counseling." Of the twelve, two (17%) chose "The Couple's Worship Life" as one of the three "most significant topics for premarital counseling."

### *Results of the Single Adults Survey*

Answers submitted by the singles also supported this objective. Of the twenty-six respondents, twenty-five (96%) affirmed that "The Lord's Word About Marriage" would be a topic that they would regard as "relevant and beneficial for pastoral premarital counseling." Of the twenty-six, 14 (54%) selected "The Lord's Word About Marriage" as one of the three topics that they considered "the

most significant topics for premarital counseling." Nineteen single adults, or 73%, marked that "The Lord's Word About Husbands" would be a relevant and beneficial topic and seventeen, or 65%, designated "The Lord's Word About Wives" as relevant and beneficial for pastoral premarital counseling. In addition, two singles chose "The Lord's Word About Husbands" and "The Lord's Word About Wives" as one of the three topics that they supposed to be "the most significant for premarital counseling."

Of the twenty-six, nineteen (73%) deemed "The Lord's Word Regarding Divorce" as a relevant and beneficial topic for pastoral premarital counseling. Among the singles, five marked "The Lord's Word Regarding Divorce" as one of the three topics that were "most significant for premarital counseling."

Eighteen, or 69%, considered "The Couple's Worship Life" a relevant and beneficial topic for pastoral premarital counseling. Twelve, or 46%, indicated that "The Couple's Worship Life" was one of the three topics that they thought to be "most significant for premarital counseling."

I have devised a graph depicting this second objective as well as the other objectives of premarital counseling and the percentage of married and single adults that chose each objective. The graph follows the section of the MAP that identifies the thirteen objectives.

"Studying God's Word Together," "Giving To And Forgiving Each Other," and "Importance Of Fidelity" were three of the "Other Topics" added by the singles. Each of the three topics could be included within this objective and point toward educating the couple

regarding the Lord's will for marriage, the Lord's will for the husband, and the Lord's will for the wife.

*Results from the Study of Family Therapy, Psychology, and Counseling Resources*

Two resources, one from the field of family therapy and one from the field of psychology, advocate the pastoral premarital counseling objective of educating couples in terms of the Lord's will. Gary R. Collins, Professor of Psychology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois, offers seven goals for premarital counseling. One of the goals is,

Learning the Biblical Teaching about Marriage. The Bible contains a number of statements about marriage and the God-ordained roles of the husband and wife. The family is modeled after the relationship which Christ has with his church, and although no two marriages are alike (since people are so unique) each marriage should reflect the influence of Christ in the home. Scriptural passages such as 1 Corinthians 13; Ephesians 5:21-6:4; Colossians 3:16-21; 1 Corinthians 7 and 1 Peter 3:1-7 should be read, discussed, understood, and applied to the couple's relationship.<sup>66</sup>

Collins believes one goal of premarital counseling to be teaching the premarital couple the "Biblical teaching about marriage."<sup>67</sup> This, according to Collins, involves teaching the premarital couple the Biblical statements pertaining to marriage as well as the Biblical

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<sup>66</sup>Gary R. Collins, Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide (Waco, Texas: Word, Incorporated, 1980), 162.

<sup>67</sup>*Ibid.*

teaching pertaining specifically to husband and wife. The second objective of premarital counseling endeavors to accomplish that teaching.

W. Robert Beavers writes:

To accept the inevitable risks and losses of loving and being close, families and individuals appear to require a system of values and beliefs which transcend (go beyond) the limits of their experience and knowledge. With such transcendent beliefs and values, families and their members can view their particular reality, which may be painful, uncertain, and frightening, from a perspective that makes some sense of events and allows for hope. Without such beliefs and perspectives, families and individuals are vulnerable to hopelessness and despair.<sup>68</sup>

Premarital counseling that educates couples in terms of the Lord's will for marriage presents a "system of values and beliefs which transcend the limits of their experience and knowledge."<sup>69</sup> Teaching the Lord's will for the husband and for the wife imparts "transcendent beliefs and values."<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup>W. Robert Beavers, "Healthy, Midrange, and Severely Dysfunctional Families," in Normal Family Processes, ed. Froma Walsh (New York: The Guilford Press, a Division of Guilford Publications, 1982), 45.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid.

**Objective #3:**

**There is an intercessory goal of pastoral premarital counseling, the pastor praying for and with the couple during counseling sessions.**

**Results of the Scriptural Study**

As a result of my present study of the Scriptural teachings regarding marriage and my past study of God's Word in general, I posit this third objective of pastoral premarital counseling in the campus ministry setting. Pastoral premarital counseling in our campus ministry setting is to have an intercessory goal of praying for and praying with the couple during the counseling sessions. This is supported by the research of the Scriptural teachings on marriage as well as the Scriptural teachings on prayer.

The first observation that arose from my research is a conclusion that God's Word constantly enjoins us to pray to our Lord on behalf of others. Scriptural doctrine of the priesthood of believers, as delineated in 1 Peter 2:5, 1 Peter 2:9-10, and Exodus 19:6, teaches us that we are priests of God. Priests pray to God on behalf of other people; that is part of their "spiritual sacrifice."<sup>71</sup> In

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<sup>71</sup>1 Pet. 2:5, NASB.

spiritual sacrifice to the Lord, the pastor, therefore, makes use of premarital counseling to pray to God on behalf of the couple.

First Timothy 2:1 tells us, "Therefore I urge you, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people."<sup>72</sup> Following that inspired directive, prayer includes the premarital couple.

Ephesians 6:18 directs us, "At the same time pray in a spiritual way in every situation, using every kind of prayer and request. For the same reason be alert and keep at it continually as you pray for all the believers (saints)."<sup>73</sup> In Romans, we read the example of Paul who never failed to mention the Roman Christians in his prayers.<sup>74</sup> His example continues as he writes to the Christians in Ephesus, "I never stop thanking God for you as I remember you in my prayers."<sup>75</sup> His epistles grant additional examples of his praying for Philippian Christians, for Christians in Colossae, and for believers in Thessalonica.<sup>76</sup> These passages remind us that Christians are to be praying for others, especially for other believers. Following those Scriptures, the Christian church should utilize premarital counseling to pray for the engaged couple.

My second conclusion is that God's Word clearly asserts His will toward marriage and gives directives and guidelines in regard to

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<sup>72</sup>1 Tim. 2:1, NET.

<sup>73</sup>Eph. 6:18, NET

<sup>74</sup>Ro. 1:9, NET.

<sup>75</sup>Eph. 1:16, NET.

<sup>76</sup>Phil. 1:4, Col. 1:3, 1Thess. 1:2, NET.



marriage. These two points have been discussed, but what follows is a brief summary. Marriage is God's institution. Also, the Lord delineates in His Word specific directives and guidelines to be followed by the married couple. Finally, our Lord enjoins us to pray on behalf of others, granting us this gracious privilege to call upon Him for His benediction and assistance. Therefore, the Christian pastor in premarital counseling would do well to pray for and pray with the premarital couple as they endeavor to follow the Lord's directives. Within the prayers, the pastor could thank the Lord for His benediction upon their marriage. He could also petition our Lord to be with the couple as they seek to follow these directives and guidelines.

#### *Results of the "Survey Of Christian Married Adults"*

The results of the "Survey Of Christian Married Adults" support this objective. Of the twelve married adults in our ministry who returned the Survey, eight (67%) chose "Praying For The Couple Within The Premarital Counseling Sessions" as one of the topics that they consider "relevant and beneficial for pastoral premarital counseling."

#### *Results of the "Survey Of Christian Singles"*

The replies of the single adults also support this objective. Of the twenty-six singles in our Chapel Ministry who returned the

survey, seventeen (65%) indicated that "Praying For The Couple Within The Premarital Counseling Sessions" would be relevant and beneficial, in their opinion, for pastoral premarital counseling. Three singles, or 12%, favored "Praying For The Couple Within The Premarital Counseling Sessions" as one of the three topics that would be "most significant" for premarital counseling.

*Results of the Family Therapy, Psychology, and Counseling Resources Study*

H. Norman Wright speaks of the importance of prayer within counseling. His words apply to premarital counseling as well. Wright states, "It (prayer) releases the person to God and it reminds us that we are not the one who is the final source in his life."<sup>77</sup> Praying for and with the premarital couple reminds the couple and the pastor, that God is the final source in their life.

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<sup>77</sup>H. Norman Wright, Self-talk, Imagery, and Prayer in Counseling, Resources For Christian Counseling, ed. Gary R. Collins, vol. 3 (Dallas, Texas: Word Publishing, 1986), 128.

**Objective #4:**

**In the area of prayer, there is also an educational goal; the pastor teaches the couple to pray.**

**Results of the Scriptural Research**

The first two scriptural conclusions that produced the third objective were that marriage is God's institution and that the Lord delineates in His Word specific directives and guidelines to be followed by the married couple. These two conclusions also support this fourth objective.

A third conclusion from my scriptural research which also supports this fourth objective is that our Lord commands us to pray for ourselves and for our own needs. Philippians 4:6 instructs us, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."<sup>78</sup> The words "your request" would connote praying for ourselves and for our own needs. Matthew 7:7 bids us, "Keep asking, and it will be given to you. For anyone who continues to ask receives."<sup>79</sup> Jesus asserts, "Whatever you ask for in prayer, believing, you will receive."<sup>80</sup> The words "it will be given to you" from Matthew 7 and

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<sup>78</sup>Phil. 4:6, NASB.

<sup>79</sup>Matt. 7:7,8, NET.

<sup>80</sup>Matt. 21:22, NET.

"you will receive" from Matthew 21 make clear that the suppliant is requesting personal benediction from the Lord. These passages would endorse the concept that we should be praying for ourselves and for our own needs.

Taking into consideration the conclusion that the Lord commands us to pray for ourselves, I would submit the following: Not only would the pastor do well to pray for and with the couple (as the third objective for premarital counseling states), but he also would be wise to teach the couple within the premarital counseling sessions to pray for themselves and for their new family .

The couple serves the Lord and loves one another in marriage. To accomplish that service and love, prayer is a necessity. Luther, in our Confessions, writes that we should "view it (marriage) in light of God's Word, by which it is adorned and sanctified."<sup>81</sup> Indeed, the Lord grants guidance and direction to the married couple within His Word. He adorns and sanctifies their marriage with His Word. The couple, therefore, is to pray for the Lord's benediction to hear, believe, and follow His Word.

As discussed earlier, faith issues are a primary life issue for young adults of college age. Among other considerations, faith issues embrace prayer in the young adult's life. "Lord, teach us to pray as John taught his disciples," was the request of one of Jesus' followers.<sup>82</sup> "Teach us to pray" is the request that I hear from college students. This request comes in the form of repeated requests for

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<sup>81</sup>Luther, "Large Catechism," 393.

<sup>82</sup>Luke 11:1, NET.

Bible studies on prayer. It also comes in the form of frequent questions that students ask me regarding prayer. In premarital counseling, the pastor can teach the couple to pray for the Lord's benediction and protection upon their marriage.

### Survey Results

Of the twelve married adults in our Wittenberg Chapel who returned the "Survey Of Christian Married Adults," ten, or 83%, indicated the topic "Teaching The Couple To Pray" as a topic that they would regard as "relevant and beneficial for pastoral premarital counseling." These results would certainly suggest including an educational goal for the pastor to teach the couple to pray. One married adult indicated, in addition, that the topic was one that she (or he) regarded as one of the three "most significant topics for premarital counseling."

Of the twenty-six singles, 15 (58%) marked "Teaching The Couple To Pray" as a topic that they deemed "relevant and beneficial for pastoral premarital counseling." The percentage was lower than that of the married adults who chose the topic. Perhaps the marked statistical difference occurred because married adults had experienced the challenges and demands of married life and realized more fully the significance of prayer. Singles could only predict those challenges and demands. Nevertheless, the results among singles would still propose teaching the couple to pray as a goal of

premarital counseling. Of the singles, six (23%) chose "Teaching The Couple To Pray" as one of the three topics that they deemed "most significant" for premarital counseling.

*Results of the Family Therapy, Psychology, and Counseling Resources Study*

William E. Hulme writes of the value of prayer in pastoral care and counseling, stating, "Even in our churches many people feel inadequate in prayer and desire help with their spiritual life, even though they may not openly request it."<sup>83</sup> Some premarital couples feel inadequate in prayer and desire help with that aspect of their spiritual life. Premarital counseling can assist couples in that aspect.

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<sup>83</sup>William E. Hulme, Pastoral Care and Counseling (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1981), 150.

**Objective #5:**

**Pastoral Premarital Counseling should promote and enhance the couple's communication skills.**

**Results of the Scriptural Research**

Promotion and enhancement of the couple's communication skills is an objective of pastoral premarital counseling which ensues from the scriptural teachings regarding marriage. In fact, the following scriptural analogy prompts one to conclude the significance of communication within marriage.

By inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul compared the relationship of husband and wife to that of Christ and the Church. He states, "A husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the Head of the church, His body, of which He is the Savior."<sup>84</sup> Additionally, he says, "Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her, to make the church holy by using water together with the word to wash her clean."<sup>85</sup> Other similar examples from the chapter can be furnished in which Paul parallels the relationship of husband and wife to that of Christ and the Church.

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<sup>84</sup>Eph. 5:23, NET.

<sup>85</sup>Eph. 5:25,26 ,NET.

Within the relationship of Christ and His Church, Word and prayer is always present; through the Word Christ speaks to His Church and His Church speaks to Him in prayer. Communication is integral to that relationship; the relationship of Christ and the Church is not complete without the Word and prayer. This can be compared to the relationship of husband and wife. The relationship of husband and wife is not complete without communication. Positive communication enhances the relationship, is necessary to the relationship, and is a constituent part of the relationship. The relationship of Christ with the Church provides examples of these characteristics of positive communication.

Communication is an interaction between at least two individuals that involves transferring information. The very fact that the two "become one flesh" in marriage seems to imply the necessity and significance of communication within the marital system.<sup>86</sup> The different parts of the "one flesh," of necessity, must be in communication with one another. For "one flesh" to function, the two must be in communication with one another. Information must be transferred and shared within that system.

Biblical examples of communication within marriage stress the significance of communication to the marriage relationship and portray the necessity to promote and enhance the communication skills of the couple. For instance, consider communication within the first marriage. Adam speaks subsequent to the Lord forming the

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<sup>86</sup>Gen. 2:24, AAT.



woman from his rib, saying, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."<sup>87</sup> Was this communication from Adam's mouth directed toward the Lord or was it directed toward Eve? Was it communication with the Lord or was it communication with Eve, or was it communication with both the Lord and Eve? The text does not answer those questions.

Here we have an example of communication before the Fall into sin. This is communication that relates to what is real. Adam speaks the truth; he tells it like it is.

Adam speaks according to the will of God. He recounts God's creation ("she was taken out of Man"). Adam's comment shows proper respect for Woman. She is bone of Adam's bones and flesh of Adam's flesh; he has a oneness with woman, an intimate relationship with her from her creation.

Adam's communication has no hidden agenda. He speaks what he perceives and observes. He genuinely speaks his feelings.<sup>88</sup> Adam's intention is to declare who Woman is and that Woman is as a creation of God. His communication follows through with his intention. There is no selfishness or hatred in his words. Once again, I submit that this scriptural example of communication prior to the fall provides a paradigm for married couples today.

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<sup>87</sup>Gen. 2:23, NASB.

<sup>88</sup>Virginia Satir, James Stachowiak, and Harvey A. Taschman, Helping Families To Change (New York: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1975), 47.

The first parish that I served included a Christian couple, Jason and Beth, who seem to follow this paradigm. As I observed them, Jason and Beth were both strong in the Lord and in His Word. I concluded, from my observations, that Jason apparently was a bit stronger in His outward Christian faith than Beth. Jason and Beth were also both very strong-willed people according to their own description. They were strong in their opinions and vocal with those opinions. One day, while working on a project with Jason, he explained the secret of their successful marriage. "Pastor," he said, "you know Beth and I well. You know how blunt we are with one another. You know that we are strong-willed and vocal with what we believe. In spite of that, however, our marriage has really been blessed. Do you know why? Right before I got married, my Dad told me that there was something that he always followed in his marriage. It was a Bible passage: 'Don't let the sun go down on your anger.'<sup>89</sup> That is what Beth and I have always practiced. No matter how mad we get with one another during a fight, before we go to sleep at night, we always make sure to talk it out." I picked up a valuable piece of advice in that conversation that I have utilized in my premarital counseling.

Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit to advise us, "Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger."<sup>90</sup> These words, according to verse 20 and the context in general, are spoken to believers in Christ. Believers are instructed in how to

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<sup>89</sup>Eph. 4:26, NASB.

<sup>90</sup>Eph. 4:26, NASB.

conduct their daily lives. They can be angry, yet they are not to sin. I would interpret the caveat "do not sin" within this passage as a reference to hatred, hostility, or animosity connected with the anger. The Christian can get angry when he or she, or another, has been wronged. This anger is a justified anger, a righteous anger over the unrighteousness which has been committed. This anger, however, should not contain hatred. Anger which contains hatred is opposed to the Fifth Commandment. Communication in the manner practiced by Jason and Beth avoids the hatred, hostility, animosity, and resentment which often accompany anger. They "talked out" the anger before they went to sleep. I submit that communication is a valid means that the Christian couple can utilize in order to strive, in faith, to "be angry, and yet do [no] sin," to "not let the sun go down on [their] anger."

In Ephesians, the verse previous to this also addresses the value of promoting and enhancing the couple's communication skills: "So after each of you has stripped off lying, speak the truth to one another, because we are members of one another."<sup>91</sup> Although applied in a general way to the Ephesian Christians, the passage is also germane to the Christian husband and wife in their relationship to one another. The believing wife and husband are to "strip off lying" and "speak the truth to one another." That is intrinsic to beneficial communication patterns within marriage. As the pastor teaches the premarital couple this inspired aphorism from Ephesians,

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<sup>91</sup>Eph. 4:25, NET.

he is working to promote and enhance the couple's communication skills.

### *The Survey Results*

The fifth objective of pastoral premarital counseling emanates also from the results of the "Survey Of Christian Married Adults." Of the twelve married adults, nine (75% ) chose "Communication And Communication Skills" as a "relevant and beneficial" topic for pastoral premarital counseling. Of the twelve, seven, or 58%, also indicated that "Communication And Communication Skills" was one of the three "most significant" topics.

Promotion and enhancement of the couple's communication skills as an objective within pastoral premarital counseling is also supported by the results of the "Survey Of Christian Singles." The topic of "Communication and Communication Skills" was marked by twenty-four of the twenty-six, or 92%, of the singles who responded to the survey as "relevant and beneficial." In addition, sixteen singles (62%) also indicated that "Communication and Communication Skills" was one of the three topics which they considered "most significant" for premarital counseling.

Results from the Study of Systems, Counseling, and Psychological Resources

The results of my research of counseling, systems, and psychological resources strongly encouraged pursuing the specific objective of pastoral premarital counseling that deals with communication within marriage. Ten sources speak of the value of targeting this objective for pastoral premarital counseling.

Robert F. Stahmann of Brigham Young University and William J. Hiebert of Marriage and Family Counseling Service write,

The premarital counseling process has as another of its goals the improvement of communication. First, the premarital counseling process itself, being structured, will help each person to become more aware of his or her own thoughts, feelings, and actions. As such, the process will aid the couple to be able to communicate their separate identities more effectively. Second, the premarital counseling process will introduce the couples to a special kind of language; that is, the manner and style of the premarital counselor can introduce couples to the unique language of relationship.<sup>92</sup>

The "improvement of communication" is one of the goals of premarital counseling, according to Stahmann and Hiebert.

Ruth E. Deacon, of Iowa State University, and Francille M. Firebaugh, of The Ohio State University, write, "Each family unit is composed of a special set of people whose relationships are established and maintained through their communication

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<sup>92</sup>Robert F. Stahmann and William J. Hiebert, Premarital Counseling: The Professional's Handbook, 2d ed. (Lexington, Massachusetts: D. C. Heath and Company, 1987), 48.

behavior."<sup>93</sup> If "relationships are established and maintained through their communication behavior," it is imperative for the premarital counseling to work with the communication behavior of the couple.<sup>94</sup>

In their book Family Therapy: An Overview, Goldenberg and Goldenberg maintain, "For a family to function effectively, it must develop ways and means of establishing and maintaining clear communication channels."<sup>95</sup> The importance that the authors place upon "establishing and maintaining clear communication channels" for effective family functioning endorses the objective of promoting and enhancing communication in premarital couples.<sup>96</sup>

Owen Morgan, Director of the Center for Family Life Studies at Arizona State University, asserts,

Human relations skills, attitudes, personality and behavior patterns constitute the basic equipment a person brings to marriage. ....Such human relations skills as the ability to communicate and talk out your feelings and thoughts, hopes and aspirations, problems and disappointments with each other in ways which are neither personally threatening nor defensive, are also mighty valuable assets.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>93</sup>Ruth E. Deacon and Francille M. Firebaugh, Family Resource Management: Principles and Applications, 2d ed. (Needham Heights, Massachusetts: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1988), 23.

<sup>94</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup>Irene Goldenberg and Herbert Goldenberg, Family Therapy: An Overview, 2d ed. (Monterey, California: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, 1985), 58.

<sup>96</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup>Owen Morgan, "Some Points for Premarital Discussion," Handbook of Marriage Counseling, 2d. ed., eds. Ben N. Ard, Jr., and Constance Callahan Ard (Palo Alto, California: Science and Behavior Books, Inc., 1976), 260.

If the "ability to communicate" is a "valuable asset" within marriage, then it would follow that the preparation for marriage should include the promotion and enhancement of that ability to communicate.<sup>98</sup>

Professor of Counseling Ben Ard, Jr., of San Francisco State University, writes,

Faulty communication (frequently, lack of communication) would seem to be one of the major reasons why so many families do not function at their optimal level. Counseling with married couples, as well as with parents and children, has led many people in the various helping professions to the general conclusion that lack of effective communication lies at the root of many a family's problems.<sup>99</sup>

Ard's comment supports the objective of promoting and enhancing the couple's communication skills within premarital counseling. In order for families to function at an optimal level, the pastor in premarital counseling should work with the couple to eliminate and prevent "faulty communication."<sup>100</sup>

H. Norman Wright states, "When difficulties occur in a marriage, communication is usually involved. It may be the actual problem, or it may be the holding tank into which other problems spill."<sup>101</sup> Wright's belief that "communication is usually involved" in

<sup>98</sup>Ibid.

<sup>99</sup>Ben N. Ard, Jr., "Communication Theory in Marriage Counseling: A Critique," Handbook of Marriage Counseling, 2d. ed., eds. Ben N. Ard, Jr. and Constance Callahan Ard (Palo Alto, California: Science and Behavior Books, Inc., 1976), 218.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid.

<sup>101</sup>H. Norman Wright, Marital Counseling: A Biblical, Behavioral, Cognitive Approach (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1983), 284.

marital difficulties supports the significance of working with the couple's communication skills within premarital counseling.<sup>102</sup>

Virginia Satir places paramount significance upon communication within family systems. She sees communication as a basic for well-functioning families. Satir believes that the "patterns of communication in the family" manifest "the way in which family members experience their relationships with one another." Family communication patterns manifest "their ability to express intimacy," "how they pass information back and forth," "what meaning they make of their communication," and "in general the ability of family members to use words appropriately." She views "good communication" as an "important factor in healthy family life."<sup>103</sup> If communication is so significant a factor within family systems, then the counseling which precedes the forming of that system must work with the communication between the two central members of the family system, the husband and wife.

Barbara F. Okun and Louis J. Rappaport, members of the Department of Counselor Education of Northeastern University, are co-authors of a textbook entitled Working With Families: An Introduction to Family Therapy. They present the theories of many schools of thought within the field of family therapy. Okun and Rappaport include "clear communications" as one of the "criteria for a

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<sup>102</sup>Ibid.

<sup>103</sup>Virginia Satir and Michele Baldwin, Satir Step by Step: A Guide to Creating Change in Families (Palo Alto, California: Science and Behavior Books, Inc., 1983), 196,197.)



functional marriage."<sup>104</sup> Their conclusion endorses the objective of working toward the couple's clear communication. Gary R. Collins suggests seven basic goals of premarital counseling, including "stimulating effective communication skills."<sup>105</sup> "It is widely recognized," attests Collins, "that failure or inability to communicate is one of the most fundamental problems in troubled marriages. Before marriage, couples must be shown the value of spontaneous, honest, sensitive communication."<sup>106</sup>

Raphael J. Becvar and Dorothy Stroh Becvar write, "Communication patterns define the nature of the relationship in a family system."<sup>107</sup> Counseling that precedes marriage should then work with the couple toward positive communication patterns.

In another book, the same authors explain, "Communication and information processing are at the heart of the matter when thinking systemically."<sup>108</sup> Husband and wife form a system. Any children with which the marriage is blessed also comprise the system. Since "communication and information processing are at the heart" of that system, it is of the utmost importance that the husband

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<sup>104</sup>Barbara F. Okun and Louis J. Rappaport, Working With Families: An Introduction to Family Therapy (North Scituate, Massachusetts: Duxbury Press, A Division of Wadsworth Inc., 1980), 166.

<sup>105</sup>Collins, 162.

<sup>106</sup>Ibid.

<sup>107</sup>Raphael J. Becvar and Dorothy Stroh Becvar, Systems Theory and Family Therapy: A Primer (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1982), 11.

<sup>108</sup>Dorothy Stroh Becvar and Raphael J. Becvar, Family Therapy: A Systemic Integration (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1988), 69.

and wife be trained in "communication and information processing."<sup>109</sup>

Furthermore, Becvar and Becvar explain, "An area of such great importance to healthy family functioning that it requires further elaboration is that of communication."<sup>110</sup> The importance of communication to a healthy family once again requires the necessity to promote and enhance the couple's communication skills in premarital counseling.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>109</sup>Ibid.

<sup>110</sup>Ibid., 111, 112.

<sup>111</sup>Ibid.

**Objective #6:**

**Premarital counseling should teach the couple about the Christian wedding worship service and work with the couple on their wedding worship service.**

**Results of the Scriptural Study**

While following primarily from the survey results, this sixth objective is also supported by scriptural study. The following scriptures suggest including this objective in pastoral premarital counseling.

Psalm 95:6-7 exhorts us, "Come, let us worship and bow down; Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand."<sup>112</sup> The man and woman who come to the pastor for premarital counseling are to "worship," "bow down," and "kneel before the Lord their Maker."

Psalm 96:8-9 asserts, "Give to the Lord the glory due His name; bring an offering, and come into His courts. Oh, worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness! Tremble before Him, all the earth."<sup>113</sup> Woman and man are to "give to the Lord the glory due His name" in

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<sup>112</sup>Psalm 95:6,7, NASB.

<sup>113</sup>Psalm 96:8,9, NKJV.

their marriage. They are to "worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness."

Jesus instructs, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only."<sup>114</sup> My point is that scripture teaches that the premarital couple who comes to the Church for their wedding are to worship the Lord in their lives and in their wedding service.

By choosing a church wedding, a premarital couple elect that their wedding would be a worship service to the Lord, rather than choosing to go to a judge or justice of the peace. The pastor is cognizant of the Lord's will for the couple pertaining to worship. He recognizes and appreciates the wedding service as a worship service. The pastor, therefore, must teach the couple about worship and instruct the couple on the elements of the wedding worship service.

Other passages indirectly support this sixth objective. The Christian Church was given the responsibility to teach people by our Lord in His post-resurrection conversation with Peter. Jesus told His Church to feed His lambs and sheep and shepherd His sheep.<sup>115</sup>

The pastor serving in the public office of the ministry of Word and Sacrament is given this charge to shepherd and feed the lambs and sheep.<sup>116</sup> The pastor is to teach. First Timothy 3 verse 2 informs us that the pastor is to be "able to teach."<sup>117</sup> Paul instructed Timothy to "devote [himself] to the public reading of Scripture,

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<sup>114</sup>Matt. 4:10, NASB.

<sup>115</sup>John 21:15, 16, 17, NET.

<sup>116</sup>Ibid.

<sup>117</sup>1 Tim. 3:2, NET.

encouragement, and teaching" until Paul came to visit him.<sup>118</sup> Second Timothy 4:2 records Paul's command to Timothy to be "very patient and thorough in [his] teaching."<sup>119</sup> Chapter two of the same epistle apprises us of the fact that the "servant of the Lord... must be a good teacher."<sup>120</sup> Timothy, in fact, was directed to be "a worker who does not have to feel ashamed because he teaches the word of truth in the correct way."<sup>121</sup> In teaching the couple about the Christian wedding service, the pastor is following the directive given by the Lord to teach.

First Timothy chapter 4:4-5 states, "For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it is received with gratitude; for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer."<sup>122</sup> Just prior to this, the text speaks of some falling away from the faith "in later times."<sup>123</sup> It also refers to "spirits who deceive" and "things taught by demons," to people being "led astray by the hypocrisy of liars," further clarifying that "these liars order people not to marry and to keep away from foods which God created to be received with thanks by those who believe and know the truth."<sup>124</sup> Therefore, the following is true.

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<sup>118</sup>1 Tim. 4:13, NET.

<sup>119</sup>2 Tim. 4:2, NET.

<sup>120</sup>2 Tim. 2:24, NET.

<sup>121</sup>2 Tim. 2:15, NET.

<sup>122</sup>1 Tim. 4:4,5, NASB.

<sup>123</sup>1 Tim. 4:1, NET.

<sup>124</sup>1 Tim. 4: 1-3, NET.

Marriage is good. It was created by God. It is not to be rejected; rather, it is to be received with gratitude to God. Marriage is sanctified by the Word and prayer. The premarital couple who approach the Church for their wedding desire and are requesting that their wedding and marriage be sanctified by the Word of God and prayer. The pastor, therefore, in premarital counseling teaches the couple the manner in which their wedding and their marriage is sanctified by Word and prayer. He explains the elements of the wedding worship service, emphasizing the Word of God which is proclaimed, as well as the prayers.

#### *The Results Of The "Survey Of Christian Married Adults"*

The results of the "Survey Of Christian Married Adults" in Wittenberg Lutheran Chapel support objective six for pastoral premarital counseling. Of the twelve married adults, eleven, or 92%, chose the topic "The Wedding Worship Service" as a topic that they deem "relevant and beneficial for pastoral premarital counseling." Of the twelve, two (17%) also chose "The Wedding Worship Service" as one of the three topics that they would consider "the most significant topics for premarital counseling."

#### *The Results Of The "Survey Of Christian Singles"*

The results of the "Survey Of Christian Singles" give strong support for this objective for pastoral premarital counseling. Of the

twenty-six singles who returned the survey, twenty (77%) stated that they thought "The Wedding Worship Service" to be a "relevant and beneficial" topic for pastoral premarital counseling. Of the twenty-six, three singles, or 12%, favored "The Wedding Worship Service" as one of the three topics that they determined to be "most significant" for premarital counseling.

### Research Of Family Therapy Resources

Two family therapy sources support the inclusion of this objective of educating the couple regarding the Christian wedding worship service. From the perspective of family therapy, Evan Imber-Black makes the following observation, "A wedding, at once, marks the loss of members in particular roles from the families of origin, while at the same time it marks the beginnings of the new couple and in-law relationships."<sup>125</sup>

The wedding serves, from a systems perspective, to enable "individual change" from "single adult to married adult," to enable "relationship change" from "dating couple to married couple," and to enable "family system change" to "expansion through the addition of members."<sup>126</sup> The pastor who teaches the couple about the Christian

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<sup>125</sup>Evan Imber-Black, "Idiosyncratic Life Cycle Transitions and Therapeutic Rituals," in The Changing Family Life Cycle: A Framework for Family Therapy, 2d. ed., ed. Betty Carter and Monica McGoldrick (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, a Division of Simon & Schuster, 1989), 149.

<sup>126</sup>*Ibid.*, 149, 150.

wedding supports the couple during a significant change period within their lives. He emphasizes the wedding as a period of change.

Jay Haley adds to that perspective,

The importance of a marriage ceremony not only to the young couple but to the entire family is beginning to become more apparent as more young people give it up. Rituals that may seem superfluous to young people can be important demarcations of stages, which help everyone involved to make the shift to new ways of relating with one another.<sup>127</sup>

As the couple and the two families of origin enter a new stage, the wedding worship service marks the beginning of that new stage and initiates that stage with prayer and the Word of God. The pastor explains this to the couple in premarital counseling. The pastor also explains the significance of the various parts of the wedding worship service and the application to the new stage of life that they enter.

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<sup>127</sup>Jay Haley, Uncommon Therapy: The Psychiatric Techniques of Milton H. Erickson, M.D. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1973), 49.



**Objective #7:**

**Pastoral premarital counseling should explore and further the couple's understanding of their families of origin. This is intended for the purpose of assisting the couple in differentiating from those families of origin as well as for establishing a clear boundary around the couple.**

**Results Of The Scriptural Study**

This objective deals with family of origin. It arises from scriptural study, especially the conclusion that Scripture places importance upon family of origin.

Moses taught the people of Israel that which the Lord commanded him. Deuteronomy 6:1-2 record Moses' teaching,

Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments which the Lord your God has commanded me to teach you, that you might do them in the land where you are going over to possess it, so that you and your son and your grandson might fear the Lord your God, to keep His statutes and His commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged.<sup>128</sup>

Moses' teaching was to affect the people of Israel themselves. Note, however, that the teaching affected their sons and grandsons as well. That teaching was commanded in order that the children of Israel

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<sup>128</sup>Deut. 6: 1, 2, NASB.

would fear the Lord their God, keeping all His statutes and commandments. In addition, that teaching was granted for the purpose of transmitting God's Word to the sons and grandsons of the children of Israel so they also would keep God's commandments.

Two possible scenarios come to mind for the setting of this instruction. Perhaps the children and grandchildren, to whom this passage refers, were already born and, in fact, present at the hearing of these words. If that were the case, then the children and grandchildren would be granted the teaching immediately in order that they would fear the Lord their God, keeping all His statutes and commandments.

Or perhaps some of the children and grandchildren were not even born and they would be affected through their families of origin. In other words, the teaching, lifestyle, and modeling which occurred within their families would carry these statutes and commandments from one generation to another. Verses 6 through 9 within this context corroborate this second perspective. Moses said,

And these words, which I am commanding you today," Moses told the Israelites, "shall be on your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.<sup>129</sup>

The teaching of the commands in Moses' words was to occur within the family setting. Evident throughout these verses, in my opinion, is

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<sup>129</sup>Deut. 6:6-9, NASB.

the significance of the family of origin, especially in regard to teaching, discussing, and modeling the ways of the Lord.

Deuteronomy 4:9 continues, "Only give heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things which your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life; but make them known to your sons and your grandsons."<sup>130</sup> Here also, the significance of the family of origin is evident. Those blessings of the Lord which the Israelites were privileged to see and experience were to be made known to their sons and grandsons. It was the Lord's will that teaching was to take place within the family of origin.

The importance of the family of origin is accentuated in Proverbs 22:6, "Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it."<sup>131</sup> Training of the child occurs within the family of origin. The child's faith and faithfulness in later life ("even when he is old he will not depart from it") is effected by the training that occurred within the family of origin.<sup>132</sup>

This is especially germane to the premarital couple. In premarital counseling, the pastor should ask questions, such as: How did that training take place within your families of origin? What values from your family of origin, and from that training, would you like to reinforce in your married life? Is there anything from that training within your family of origin that you would desire to think

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<sup>130</sup>Deut. 4:9, NASB.

<sup>131</sup>Prov. 22:6, NASB.

<sup>132</sup>Ibid.

through more completely? Is there anything from the training within your family of origin that you would like, in your life now and within your marriage, to disregard and discard?

Ephesians 6:1-4 furnishes the Lord's ideals and commands for one's family of origin,

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, because this is right. Honor your father and mother - this is an important commandment with a promise - that it may be well with you, and you may live long on the earth. And fathers, do not make your children angry, but bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."<sup>133</sup>

The Lord has a definite plan for families of origin, as is obvious from these verses. Children are given directions from the Lord. Fathers are also given directions. Children are to be raised in the family of origin "in the training and instruction of the Lord."<sup>134</sup> This passage supports the objective of exploring and furthering the couple's understanding of their families of origin within premarital counseling. The couple should explore their families of origin and contemplate certain questions: Did our families of origin follow the Lord's directives? In what manners did our families of origin follow the directives from the Lord? In what manners were our families of origin weak in following the directives of the Lord? Has this affected my life? Will this affect my married life?

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<sup>133</sup>Eph. 6:1-4, NASB.

<sup>134</sup>Ibid.

Certain families of origin in Scripture provided salutary modeling and examples for their siblings. For example, consider the Lord's Words to Solomon,

As for you, if you walk before Me as your father David walked, in integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you and will keep My statutes and My ordinances, then I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever, just as I promised to your father David, saying, "You shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel."<sup>135</sup>

For Solomon, David was a model and paradigm from his family of origin, "who walked... in integrity of heart and uprightness."<sup>136</sup>

Another example was Uzziah, the King who took the throne at age 16 and reigned in Jerusalem for 52 years. Of Uzziah, the Bible says, "He did right in the sight of the Lord according to all that his father Amaziah had done."<sup>137</sup> Here is an example of the significance of one's family of origin as well as the importance of differentiating from negative aspects of one's family of origin. Uzziah's family of origin, specifically his father Amaziah, provided salutary and helpful modeling for Uzziah. This was the case up to a point, that is, because there came a time when Amaziah, Uzziah's father, turned away from the Lord. Uzziah followed the paradigm given him within his family of origin, the paradigm of his father Amaziah doing right in the sight of the Lord. However, he differentiated from the deeds and example of his father's later life that contradicted the Lord's will.

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<sup>135</sup>1 Kings 9:4,5, NASB.

<sup>136</sup>1 Kings 9:4, NASB.

<sup>137</sup>2 Chron. 26:4, NASB.

In the New Testament, Timothy's family of origin had a positive influence on his life. When speaking of Timothy's "sincere faith," Paul gave credit to the sincere faith that first dwelt in Lois, his grandmother, and Eunice, his mother.<sup>138</sup> Timothy's family of origin had an effect upon his faith through the sincere faith of Timothy's grandmother Lois and mother Eunice<sup>139</sup>

On the other hand, Scripture also records examples of negative influences imposed by families of origin upon siblings. In speaking of the evil of Ahaziah, who served Israel as King for two years, the Bible refers to the evil of his parents,

And he [Ahaziah] did evil in the sight of the Lord and walked in the way of his father and in the way of his mother and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who caused Israel to sin. So he served Baal and worshipped him and provoked the Lord God of Israel to anger according to all that his father had done.<sup>140</sup>

From his family of origin, Ahaziah witnessed and experienced a father and a mother who walked in the way of evil. As King, he then followed suit, doing evil in the sight of the Lord and walking in the way of his father and mother. Just as his father had "served Baal and worshipped him and provoked the Lord God of Israel to anger," even so Ahaziah did the same.

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<sup>138</sup>2 Tim. 1:5, NASB.

<sup>139</sup>Ibid.

<sup>140</sup>1 Kings 22: 52, 53, NASB.

Jeremiah was speaking the Lord's lamentation over His people and their actions when he wrote,

And the Lord said, "Because they have forsaken My law which I set before them, and have not obeyed My voice nor walked according to it, but have walked after the stubbornness of their heart and after the Baals, as their fathers taught them," therefore thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, "behold, I will feed them, this people, with wormwood and give them poisoned water to drink. And I will scatter them among the nations, whom neither they nor their fathers have known; and I will send the sword after them until I have annihilated them."<sup>141</sup>

Note that the people, according to the Lord's description through the prophet Jeremiah, had followed their sinful hearts and, contrary to the Lord's will, committed idolatry "as their fathers taught them." In describing the evil of the people, the Lord in His Word observes the connection with the evil modeled within their families of origin by their fathers.

Another instance in Scripture that describes the negative impact imposed by one's family of origin involves a renowned Biblical character, Joseph. Scripture itself makes the connection between Jacob's [Israel's] favoritism toward his son Joseph and the hateful reactions of Jacob's other sons. In Genesis 37: 3,4, we find, "Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons, because he was the son of his old age; and he made him a varicolored tunic. And his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers; and so they hated him and could not speak to him on friendly terms."<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>141</sup>Jer. 9:13-16, NASB.

### Results Of The Married Adults Survey

Much to my surprise, the replies of married adults in our Wittenberg ministry did not support including an exploration and contemplation of one's family of origin within pastoral premarital counseling. Only 42% or five of the twelve married adults indicated that "Families Of Origin (considering the family in which you were born and its effect upon your marriage)" was a topic which they considered "relevant and beneficial for pastoral premarital counseling." Ten percent, or one of the ten, chose "Families Of Origin" as one of the three topics that they would consider "the most significant topics for premarital counseling." I take these results to mean that the married adults who were surveyed placed little significance upon their family of origin and its impact upon their marriage.

Interestingly, 67% (or eight of the twelve married adults) selected "Family Systems (contemplating your family as a system with the dynamics involved within your family)" as a "relevant and beneficial" topic for pastoral premarital counseling. This, in my opinion, states that the married adults consider their nuclear family to be a system. They believe that there are dynamics involved within their nuclear family system and consider it valuable to contemplate those dynamics in premarital counseling. They do not

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<sup>142</sup>Gen. 37: 3,4, NASB.



consider it valuable to contemplate the system of their family of origin and the dynamics inherited from their family of origin.

### *Results Of The Single Adults Survey*

The replies of the singles within my ministry supported the inclusion of an objective regarding families of origin within pastoral premarital counseling. Of the twenty-six singles who returned the "Survey of Christian Singles," 54% (or fourteen) indicated "Families of Origin (considering the family in which you were born and its effect upon your marriage)" as a topic that they would consider "relevant and beneficial" for pastoral premarital counseling. That over 50% chose the topic indicates that the singles supported the inclusion of this objective. That only 54% chose the topic indicates that the support was not strong.

Eleven of the twenty-six (44%) marked "Family Systems (contemplating your family as a system with the dynamics involved within your family)" as a topic that they would deem "relevant and beneficial" for pastoral premarital counseling. Only one single (4%) selected "Families Of Origin" as one of the three topics that they deemed "most significant" for premarital counseling. Likewise, only one person chose "Family Systems" for the same purpose.

Even the single adults had little knowledge of how families of origin impact marriage. Perhaps the married adults and singles knew little about the concept of family of origin and gave it little contemplation prior to the survey.

Results From The Study of Family Therapy, Psychology, and  
Counseling Resources

The resources that I studied from the fields of family therapy, psychology, and counseling favor the inclusion of an objective regarding families of origin within pastoral premarital counseling. Hamilton McCubbin and Barbara Blum Dahl of the University of Minnesota note the significance of one's family of origin in explaining that people obtain "important information regarding role interaction and sex-role identification" from observing interactions between members of their family of origin.<sup>143</sup> The two professors also affirm, "The key role of the family in the formation of identity, self-image, and self-esteem is widely recognized."<sup>144</sup> Since one's identity, self-image, and self-esteem play an important role in one's married life, premarital counseling should explore the family of origin which helped form that identity, self-image, and self-esteem.

Monica McGoldrick and Randy Gerson note "complex family patterns" that can transpire within families of origin.<sup>145</sup> The authors maintain that a study of the family of origin can offer a "view of potential problems" for individuals.<sup>146</sup> There can occur "patterns and

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<sup>143</sup>Hamilton McCubbin and Barbara Blum Dahl, Marriage and Family: Individuals and Life Cycles (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1985), 6.

<sup>144</sup>Ibid.

<sup>145</sup>Monica McGoldrick and Randy Gerson, Genograms in Family Assessment (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1985), 1.

<sup>146</sup>Ibid., 2.

events that may have recurring significance" within one's family of origin.<sup>147</sup> McGoldrick and Gerson's comments support objective seven. The premarital couple may have experienced "complex family patterns" within their families of origin.<sup>148</sup> Those patterns may recur within their marriage.<sup>149</sup> An exploration of the families of origin of the premarital couple would assist the couple in realization of these patterns and aid the couple in avoiding detrimental patterns within their marriage.

Stahmann and Hiebert assert,

It has been well established in family theory and family therapy theory that the degree of separation a person has from his or her family of origin can be an important indicator of marital success. The degree to which a person is able to move in status from child to adult, to become a peer with his or her parents, has something to do with the ability of that individual to succeed in marriage.<sup>150</sup>

Their assertion supports the idea that premarital counseling should consider with the couple their families of origin for the purpose of assisting husband and wife in separating from the families of origin.

Becvar and Becvar state,

According to systems theory, it makes no sense to analyze any person independently. To understand each person in a family,

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<sup>147</sup>Ibid.

<sup>148</sup>Ibid., 1.

<sup>149</sup>Ibid., 2.

<sup>150</sup>Stahmann and Hiebert, 83.

one must study how each is in relation to every other family member. To study one apart from the others, out of the context of the family relationships, is to know that person relative to the new context (the context in which he or she is studied) but not in the context of his or her family relationships."<sup>151</sup>

To understand his wife, the husband should contemplate her within her family of origin. To understand her husband, the wife should contemplate him within his family of origin. The seventh objective in premarital counseling contemplates the wife within her family of origin and the husband within his family of origin.

Becvar and Becvar explain, "Spouses in a family system bring to their new family the elements of the interpretive systems they learned in their families of origin."<sup>152</sup> One's "interpretive system" is one's "frame of reference."<sup>153</sup> Becvar and Becvar's comment further supports objective seven. The contemplation of families of origin within premarital counseling assists the couple in understanding the spouse's frame of reference.

In The Family Crucible, Augustus Napier speaks of family of origin,

We project so many symbolic images onto our spouses that we do see him or her alternately as mother, father, brother, sister, even grandparent. We re-create a variety of different family relationships in the marriage in order to try to solve some of the problem areas out of the past. And we don't stop with the

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<sup>151</sup>Becvar and Becvar, Systems Theory and Family Therapy: A Primer, 6.

<sup>152</sup>*Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>153</sup>*Ibid.*, 27.

marriage; our children too are soon involved in our incessant attempt to re-create our family of origin.<sup>154</sup>

Napier's comment strongly favors this objective. The exploration of family of origin within premarital counseling would assist the husband or wife in realizing a problem area within his or her family of origin. It could also aid them in confining that problem area to the family of origin and prevent them from attempting to solve the problem by re-creating the situation in their marriage.<sup>155</sup>

Betty Carter and Monica McGoldrick write, "[The] completion of the primary task of coming to terms with their family of origin most profoundly influences who, when, how, and whether they [young adults] will marry and how they will carry out all succeeding stages of the family life cycle."<sup>156</sup> They add, "The more adequately young adults can differentiate themselves from the emotional program of the family of origin ..., the fewer vertical stressors will follow them through their new family's life cycle."<sup>157</sup> The objective of exploring the couple's families of origin assists the couple in differentiating "from the emotional program of the family of origin" and, in turn, decreases the "vertical stressors" in the "new family's life cycle."<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>154</sup>Augustus Y. Napier with Carl A. Whitaker, The Family Crucible (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1978), 119.

<sup>155</sup>Ibid.

<sup>156</sup>Betty Carter and Monica McGoldrick, "Overview, The Changing Family Life Cycle: A Framework for Family Therapy," chap. in The Changing Family Life Cycle: A Framework for Family Therapy, 2d. ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, A Division of Simon & Schuster, 1989), 13.

<sup>157</sup>Ibid.

<sup>158</sup>Ibid.

Jay Haley asserts, "Marriage, then, is not merely a joining of two people but a coming together of two families who exert their influence and create a complex network of subsystems."<sup>159</sup> A couple's understanding of the two family systems that come together in the marriage, and their understanding that those two family systems will exert influence upon the marriage, would be beneficial. Discussion and exploration of the couple's families of origin within premarital counseling would assist in that understanding.

Haley further comments, "Most of the decisions made by a newly married couple are influenced not only by what they learned in their separate families but by the current entangling alliances with the parents, which are an inevitable aspect of the marriage."<sup>160</sup> Premarital counseling could contemplate the alliances that husband and wife have with their parents by considering families of origin. This would assist the couple in comprehending their decisions and actions within the new marriage.

Goldenberg and Goldenberg speak of families of origin and the differentiation from families of origin required of newly married couples. They declare, "A newly married couple also has the developmental task of separating still further from their families of origin. New relationships must be negotiated with each set of parents, siblings, and in-laws."<sup>161</sup> The premarital couple must separate from their families of origin. As the pastor works with the

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<sup>159</sup>Jay Haley, 45.

<sup>160</sup>*Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>161</sup>Goldenberg and Goldenberg, 22.

premarital couple to explore their families of origin, that separation is assisted and the negotiation of new relationships with parents is encouraged.

Leman writes,

The most intimate relationships we ever have in life are with our families - the one we grew up in and the one we make for ourselves through marriage; for a young child growing up, there is no greater influence than his or her family; the relationship between parents and children is fluid, dynamic, and all-important; we don't spend enough time being aware of just how our branch fits on the family tree."<sup>162</sup>

Objective seven aids the couple in understanding just how their branch fits on the family tree.<sup>163</sup> The objective also assists the premarital couple in comprehending the influence of their families of origin upon their lives and their marriage.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>162</sup>Kevin Leman, The Birth Order Book (New York: Dell Publishing, 1985), 23, 24.

<sup>163</sup>*Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>164</sup>*Ibid.*, 23.

**Objective #8:**

**Pastoral premarital counseling should educate the couple regarding the family life cycle in order to facilitate the couple's transition, as well as the transition of the family of origin members, into this next stage of the family life cycle.**

**Results Of The Scriptural Study**

After my scriptural study I believe there is a need to include an objective on family life cycle in premarital counseling. By deduction, I believe Holy Scripture itself predicts and describes a life cycle stage development involved in marriage. It does so, in the first place, by defining marriage as two becoming one flesh.<sup>165</sup> Two people, from two disparate and distinct families, become one flesh and form a new family. The two people themselves proceed to the next stage of the life cycle. They are no longer two single unmarried adults; rather, they are one flesh.

Scripture states that the man " shall leave" his father and mother and "shall cleave" to his spouse.<sup>166</sup> This passage strongly implies a realignment of the family system that the man "leaves."

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<sup>165</sup>Gen. 2:24, NASB.

<sup>166</sup>Ibid.



The passage also strongly implies the formation of a new family system; husband and wife will now "cleave" to one another.

God forms the new family system. That is a conclusion that one can deduce from Jesus' words, "What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."<sup>167</sup> God joins together husband and wife into a new family system. Husband and wife proceed to a new developmental stage within the family life cycle. In addition, the families of origin of both wife and husband will proceed to a new developmental stage.

The fact that the man and woman "leave" their families of origin inherently requires a renegotiation of personal relationships and roles with parents, with brothers, with sisters.<sup>168</sup> Renegotiation is further explained in the section of this MAP entitled "Results From The Family Therapy Resources." This renegotiation is an intrinsic aspect of the family life cycle. The Biblical fact that the woman and man "cleave" to one another also inherently requires a renegotiation of personal issues, another intrinsic aspect of the family life cycle.<sup>169</sup>

As I studied the Sixth Commandment, Ephesians 6:1, and Ephesians 5:22, I could see the necessity of role and relationship renegotiation and a family life cycle stage development. The Sixth Commandment calls for honoring mother and father.<sup>170</sup> Ephesians

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<sup>167</sup>Matt. 19:6, NASB.

<sup>168</sup>Gen. 2:24, NASB.

<sup>169</sup>Ibid.

<sup>170</sup>Ex. 20:12, NASB.

6:1 states that children are to "obey" their parents "in the Lord."<sup>171</sup> The daughter is to honor and obey her father and mother. However, Ephesians 5:22 implies a family life cycle stage development for the daughter, for the woman who marries is to "be subject" to her husband.<sup>172</sup> She is commanded to honor father and mother and obey them. Now, she is also to be subject to her husband. Relationship and role renegotiation would be necessary. She must renegotiate relationships with parents. Her role as daughter to her parents now must accommodate also her role as wife to her husband.

### *The Survey Results*

The replies of married adults to the "Survey Of Christian Married Adults" as well as the replies of the single adults to the "Survey Of Christian Singles" indicate support for a pastoral premarital counseling objective regarding the family life cycle. Of twelve married adults who returned the Survey, eight (67%) selected "Family Life Cycle (stages of the family's life cycle, including the 'unattached young adult stage,' the 'newly married couple stage,' etc.)" as a "relevant and beneficial" topic for pastoral premarital counseling.

In the "Survey Of Christian Singles," sixteen of twenty-six, or 62%, of the singles who returned the survey indicated "Family Life

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<sup>171</sup>Eph. 6:1, NASB.

<sup>172</sup>Eph. 5:22, NASB.

Cycle (stages of the family's life cycle, including the 'unattached young adult stage,' the 'newly married stage,' etc.)" as a topic which they would suppose to be "relevant and beneficial for pastoral premarital counseling."

### *Results From The Family Therapy Resources*

Five sources from the field of family therapy strongly support including an objective for educating the premarital couple in the family life cycle as part of the pastoral premarital counseling. McGoldrick and Carter write that there are "statistically predictable developmental stages of American middle-class families in the last quarter of the 20th century."<sup>173</sup> They further elaborate: "Our classification of family life cycle stages highlights our view that the central underlying process to be negotiated is the expansion, contraction, and realignment of the relationship system to support the entry, exit, and development of family members in a functional way."<sup>174</sup> McGoldrick and Carter term this stage in the family life cycle as, "the joining of families through marriage: the newly married couple."<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>173</sup>Monica McGoldrick and Elizabeth A. Carter, "The Family Life Cycle," in Normal Family Processes, ed. Froma Walsh (New York: The Guilford Press, 1982), 175.

<sup>174</sup>Ibid.

<sup>175</sup>Ibid., 178.

They perceive the transition into this stage to involve the following,

Marriage requires that a couple renegotiate a myriad of personal issues that they have previously defined for themselves or that were defined by their parents, from when to eat, sleep, have sex, or fight, to how to celebrate holidays or where and how to live, work, and spend vacations. The couple must renegotiate their relationships with their parents, siblings, friends, and other relatives in view of the new marriage, and this will to some degree affect all personal relationships. ...In addition, marriage involves a shifting of family boundaries for the members on both sides to some degree or other. Not only is the new spouse now a factor for each family, but priorities of both systems must now be negotiated in a complex set of arrangements of each system.<sup>176</sup>

The reality of the developmental stage change that will occur when the premarital couple marries, the fact that family boundaries will shift, and the necessity for renegotiation of personal issues and relationships by husband and wife supports objective eight of educating the premarital couple regarding the family life cycle.

Becvar and Becvar, in their textbook on systems theory and family therapy, write, "Families like individuals go through development stages. At what stage is the family? At what stage is each individual member of the family?"<sup>177</sup> Objective eight takes into consideration the reality of a developmental stage change that occurs when the couple marries. Man and woman form a new family. Their

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<sup>176</sup>Ibid.

<sup>177</sup>Becvar and Becvar, Systems Theory and Family Therapy: A Primer, 73.

families of origin move to the next developmental stage. The objective attempts to facilitate the couple's transition into the next developmental stage as well as the transition of the families of origin.

Dr. W. Robert Beavers, speaking of "family life cycles," states, "There are special developmental challenges that couples must meet as the family evolves in order to remain stable and gratified."<sup>178</sup> He refers to one of the stages of the "family life cycle" as "formation of the dyad."<sup>179</sup> "Formation of the dyad," he maintains, "requires leaving home, a clear renunciation of being a child in the family of origin and becoming an adult in a new household."<sup>180</sup> He concludes: "Though this challenge is a continuing one, it is highlighted in the formative stage of a new family."<sup>181</sup> Beaver's comment supports the objective for premarital counseling of educating the couple regarding family life cycle.

Irene Goldenberg and Herbert Goldenberg assert,

Intact families go through more or less the same developmental process over time. They pass through the same sequences or phases, most of which are marked by a critical transition point - marriage, birth of the first child, departure from home of the youngest child, retirement. Much like an individual, a family can be viewed as going through a life cycle as members age and play a variety of roles in succession.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>178</sup>Beavers, 152.

<sup>179</sup>Ibid.

<sup>180</sup>Ibid.

<sup>181</sup>Ibid.

<sup>182</sup>Goldenberg and Goldenberg, 16, 17.

The authors' comments advocate the objective for premarital counseling of educating the couple regarding family life cycle. Upon marriage, the man and woman enter a new stage of the life cycle. They begin a new family. Their families of origin also progress in the "developmental process."<sup>183</sup> This is a "critical transition point" in the life cycles of the man and woman and their families of origin.<sup>184</sup> The premarital counseling educates the couple regarding the "developmental process" and prepares them for the changes that will occur at this "critical transition point."<sup>185</sup>

Jay Haley writes, "Whatever the stage of family life, the transition to the next stage is a crucial step in the development of a person and his family."<sup>186</sup> In fact, Haley explains, "Symptoms appear when there is a dislocation or interruption in the unfolding life cycle of a family or other natural group. The symptom is a signal that a family has difficulty in getting past a stage in the life cycle."<sup>187</sup>

Haley's comment supports objective eight of pastoral premarital counseling. In premarital counseling, the pastor who instructs the couple regarding the family life cycle stages assists in furthering the development of the couple and of their family. He also helps eliminate or, at least, minimize the "symptoms" which Haley noted.

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<sup>183</sup>Ibid.

<sup>184</sup>Ibid.

<sup>185</sup>Ibid.

<sup>186</sup>Jay Haley, 40.

<sup>187</sup>Ibid.

**Objective #9:**

**Pastoral premarital counseling should educate the couple regarding sibling position for the purpose of the couple giving further consideration to their own sibling positions and to the impact that their own sibling positions may have upon their marriage and new family.**

**Conclusions From The Scriptural Study**

This objective emanates chiefly from family therapy, psychological, and counseling research. Certain Scripture passages that were researched for this objective, however, do lend credence to the theory that sibling position and characteristics of that sibling position can impact one's relationships.

Genesis records the history of Jacob and Esau. Genesis 25 emphasizes the importance of the first-born status and of the birthright in the culture and ambiance of that particular day. It also emphasizes the impact of that respective sibling position on the lives of others within the family system. Esau came in from the field thirsty and hungry. He spoke to Jacob, who was cooking, "Please let me have a swallow of that red stuff there, for I am famished."<sup>188</sup> Jacob had been taught to esteem highly the first-born rights, so that

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<sup>188</sup>Gen. 25:30, NASB.

he sinfully and successfully plotted to obtain Esau's birthright as the first-born. He says to Esau, "First sell me your birthright." Esau responds, "Behold, I am about to die; so of what use then is the birthright to me?" Then, Jacob says, "First swear to me." Scripture itself records that Esau despised his birthright and sold it to Jacob.<sup>189</sup> The importance and privileges granted to the first-born position and birthright within that day are accentuated throughout the entire episode; Jacob, in fact, coveted that first-born status and the privileges which his brother possessed.

Turn one page in the Bible and one finds another example of the impact of sibling position. One finds also another paradigm of coveting the birth order status and privileges held by another sibling. The characters are the same as those of the previous example; merely add Isaac and Rebekah to the story. Sibling position was all important to Isaac; he was to grant his blessing upon the first-born prior to his death.<sup>190</sup> In fact, Isaac had favored the first-born son Esau throughout his life.<sup>191</sup> Rebekah, the mother, in an insidious manner, coveted the first-born blessing for Jacob, the son she loved, and planned the manner to obtain that first-born blessing for Jacob. Isaac unwisely reserved such high favor for his first-born, that Rebekah and Jacob sinfully coveted this blessing and successfully stole it.<sup>192</sup> This true story from God's Word explains that

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<sup>189</sup>Gen. 25: 29-34, NASB.

<sup>190</sup>Gen. 27:4, NASB.

<sup>191</sup>Gen. 25:28, NASB.

<sup>192</sup>Gen. 27:1-40, NASB.



unequal status and privileges were granted in that day according to birth order and conflictual sibling-to-sibling and parent-to-sibling relationships resulted.

Another scriptural example previously mentioned, germane to this objective, involves the special privileges accorded Joseph by Jacob his father. Why did Jacob grant Joseph special privileges? Jacob loved Joseph more than all his other sons because Joseph was his youngest, the son given to Jacob in his old age.<sup>193</sup> Here, Scripture is furnishing an example of the impact that sibling position had upon a person and upon his brothers, a negative impact that resulted from a parent's attitude toward that sibling position. Sibling position has an impact upon two persons who marry. Objective nine takes that impact into consideration and educates the couple regarding sibling position.

In the Bible, the final plague against the Egyptians involved a specific sibling position, the death of the first-born.<sup>194</sup> Perhaps in the Lord's omniscience, he foresaw the impact that the death of the first-born would have. Who are we, though, to know the mind of the Lord? Also to be taken into account is the consecration of the Israelite first-born which followed the death of the Egyptian first-born and occurred in the midst of the exodus from Egypt. The Lord instructed Moses, "Sanctify to Me every first-born, the first offspring of every womb among the sons of Israel, both of man and beast; it

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<sup>193</sup>Gen. 37:3, NASB.

<sup>194</sup>Ex. 11:4,5, NASB.

belongs to Me."<sup>195</sup> Further elucidation follows within the chapter in verses 11 through 16, especially in verse 12. The Lord killed the first-born of the Egyptians, because of the stubbornness of Pharaoh. Through the Lord's action, the people of Israel were freed from Egypt.<sup>196</sup> The Lord, therefore, willed that every first-born male Israelite was to be devoted to Him.<sup>197</sup> The first-born male Israelite was to hold a certain distinction in remembrance of the Lord's redeeming action of His people from the Egyptians.

This is a scriptural example of the impact that sibling position had upon two groups of people, the Egyptians and the Israelites. Objective nine states that sibling position has an impact upon people's lives, as has been shown by historical examples. Objective nine assists the premarital couple in comprehending the impact that their sibling positions have upon their lives. The objective also aids the couple in understanding the possible impact upon their marriage.

### *Conclusions From The Survey Of Married Adults*

The conclusions of the "Survey Of Christian Married Adults" did not recommend the education of couples in sibling positions as an objective of pastoral premarital counseling. Only five of the twelve (or 42%) of the married adults who completed the survey chose

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<sup>195</sup>Ex. 13:2, NASB.

<sup>196</sup>Ex. 13:11-16, NASB.

<sup>197</sup>Ex. 13:12, NASB.

"Birth Order (first born in the family and traits which often accompany that first born birth order, last born and accompany traits, etc.)" as a topic which they deemed "relevant and beneficial for pastoral premarital counseling."

### Conclusions From The Singles Survey

Neither did the conclusions of the "Survey Of Christian Singles" recommend the objective. Only 31% (or eight of the twenty-six singles who returned the survey) said that they would suppose "Birth Order (first born in the family and traits which often accompany that first born birth order, last born and accompanying traits, etc.)" to be a "relevant and beneficial" topic for pastoral premarital counseling.

The conclusions from the two surveys were included to be honest regarding my work. Just as the results of the surveys which supported the previous objectives were reported, also the results pertaining to this objective were reported. The two surveys did not support this objective. The results of the scriptural study, as reported in the first section of this objective, and the results of the study of family therapy, psychology, and counseling resources that will be reported in the next section, support objective nine.

*Conclusions From The Family Therapy, Psychological, And Counseling Resources*

The results of my research of family therapy, psychological, and counseling resources recommended this objective for premarital counseling. Drs. Margaret Hoopes and James Harper for example assert,

Siblings develop unique characteristic response patterns according to their sibling position in the family. Because these characteristic response patterns set the stage for interpersonal interactions, a knowledge of these patterns is an invaluable tool for the therapist.<sup>198</sup>

The professional opinion asserted by Hoopes and Harper advocates work with the premarital couple regarding sibling position. These "unique characteristic response patterns" resulting from sibling position will, no doubt, transfer into the couple's marriage and new family.<sup>199</sup> In premarital counseling, the pastor who educates the couple in the different sibling positions enables the spouse to more fully understand why her husband feels a constant need to achieve or why his wife is so rule oriented or why the husband is so impulsive or why the wife or husband feels uncomfortable with too much power.

Professors Hoopes and Harper explain the need for a section on sibling order in premarital counseling,

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<sup>198</sup>Hoopes and Harper, 1.

<sup>199</sup>Ibid.

The interactions between sibling positions are inescapably a part of the fabric of marriages and families. The interaction of complementary patterns in marriages creates both harmony and conflict, function and dysfunction. ...The differences in the patterns provide interest and intrigue in the relationship because of the variation; however, these same differences also serve as fuel for conflict.<sup>200</sup>

If the "interaction between sibling positions" will "inescapably" be "a part of the fabric" of the marriage, the premarital couple would profit from recognition of the future spouse's sibling position and would especially profit from the realization of how the aforementioned impacts the marriage.<sup>201</sup> Pastoral premarital counseling which instructs the couple in sibling position may promote that "harmony" which "develops from the familiarity of the patterns" of the two sibling positions.<sup>202</sup>

Another comment from Hoopes and Harper advocates this objective of premarital counseling by affirming the fact that sibling positions impact the "dyad" of husband and wife.<sup>203</sup> Hoopes and Harper write,

Each spouse brings to the marriage sibling response patterns developed from the unique experiences and sibling assignments in his or her family of origin. These patterns interact with all other patterns and factors in the marriage, weaving diverse marital configurations. Consequently, each marital dyad has both its own unique 'personality' and some characteristic

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<sup>200</sup>Ibid., 81.

<sup>201</sup>Ibid.

<sup>202</sup>Ibid.

<sup>203</sup>Ibid., 83.

patterns traceable to the sibling position characteristics of each spouse.<sup>204</sup>

What are the "sibling response patterns" that the wife will "bring to the marriage" and the "sibling response patterns" that the husband will bring?<sup>205</sup> How will these two patterns interact with one another? How will this effect the "marital dyad"?<sup>206</sup> These questions should be explored in pastoral premarital counseling with the couple.

In his book The Birth Order Book, Dr. Kevin Leman explains,

Your birth order - whether you were born first, second, or later in your family - has a powerful influence on the kind of person you will be, the kind of person you will marry, the type of occupation you will choose - even the kind of parent you will be.<sup>207</sup>

It is true that one's birth order will have a "powerful influence" on the kind of spouse a person becomes within a relationship. Pastoral premarital counseling should take birth order into consideration and teach the premarital couple about birth order and its possible influence upon their marriage

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<sup>204</sup>Ibid.

<sup>205</sup>Ibid.

<sup>206</sup>Ibid.

<sup>207</sup>Leman, 11.

<sup>208</sup>Ibid., 25.

relationship will be improved.<sup>209</sup> The couple will grow in their understanding of the spouse's feelings and actions that resulted from birth order position. Their marriage will be enhanced as a result of this increased understanding.

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<sup>209</sup>Ibid.

**Objective #10:**

**Pastoral premarital counseling should educate the couple regarding family rules, explore the family rules which existed within the couples' families of origin, and assist the couple in establishing family rules within their new family.**

**Results Of The Scriptural Study**

Although this objective for pastoral premarital counseling is primarily grounded upon my study of family therapy resources, the results of scriptural study also indicate a need in this area. The circumstances in four scriptural passages imply the need for the concept of family rules.

In the first passage, Paul writes about Timothy's sincere faith that "first dwelt in [his] grandmother Lois, and [his] mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in [Timothy] as well."<sup>210</sup> As I read that description, I picture a family system (a family system of grandmother Lois, Eunice the mother, and Timothy the son) that consisted of expressed and implied rules that were centered in and nourished the Christian faith. I envision a family system that held certain truths, values, and behavioral norms that made that family system unique and helped to define that system. Obviously, the children in this family learned and perpetuated those family rules

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<sup>210</sup>2 Tim. 1:5, NASB.



which expressed the values within the family system, as is witnessed by the words regarding Eunice and the words regarding Timothy.

Scripture also gives the command in 1 Peter 3:1, "You wives, be subordinate to your husbands."<sup>211</sup> In verse 7, there is the command, "You husbands likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way."<sup>212</sup> Those are behavioral norms that are to be part of the Christian family system, family rules which are to organize and govern family interaction and functioning.

Scripture speaks of "Sarah who obeyed Abraham and called him 'lord.'"<sup>213</sup> Why did Sarah call Abraham "lord"?<sup>214</sup> Perhaps this was a family rule modeled by her mother as she dealt with Sarah's father? First Peter 3:6 provides the third example of a family rule within Sarah and Abraham's family.

Finally, one reads another segment within the history of that family, "And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, 'She is my sister.' So Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah."<sup>215</sup> Perhaps an implicit relationship rule which defined Abraham and Sarah's family was that Abraham's word was to be followed by his spouse Sarah; Abraham's word was not to be questioned. The fact is that Abraham,

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<sup>211</sup>1 Pet. 3:1, NET.

<sup>212</sup>1 Pet. 3:7, NET.

<sup>213</sup>1 Pet. 3:6, NET.

<sup>214</sup>Ibid.

<sup>215</sup>Gen. 20:2, NASB.

in protecting his own life, lied and stated that Sarah was his sister. Sarah, in obedience, seemed to conceal his deception.

If that indeed was a family rule within Abraham and Sarah's family, then it was passed on to the next generation. Abraham's son Isaac also lied and stated that Rebekah, his wife, was his sister.<sup>216</sup> As one reads that the deception proceeded for "a long time," one may have the impression that Rebekah also, in obedience, concealed that deception of her husband.<sup>217</sup> As with Abraham and Sarah, perhaps an unspoken agreement which defined Rebekah and Isaac's family was the rule that Isaac's word was to be followed by Rebekah and was not to be questioned.

Exodus 20, verses 8 through 10, commands,

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or you sojourner who stays with you.<sup>218</sup>

This was an external rule, but a rule nonetheless, that was to be received and followed within the Israelite families; they were to accept and live by it as one of their family rules. Not only did the directives to "remember the Sabbath day" and "not do any work" upon the seventh day, observing it as a "Sabbath of the Lord," apply to the Israelite man or woman; those directives were also germane

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<sup>216</sup>Gen. 26:6-17, NASB.

<sup>217</sup>Gen. 26:8, NASB.

<sup>218</sup>Ex. 20:8-10, NASB.

for anyone within the Israelite household. The directives applied to the son or daughter, the male or female servant, as well as the sojourner who was staying within the household.<sup>219</sup> The directives were commands not only for the head of the household; they were rules by which the entire Israelite family was to operate.

In my ministry, I have spoken with families who live in our town and attend our chapel worship services. Several times parents told me that the "rule" within their household was the following, "If my son or daughter is still living under my roof, then he or she will go to church on Sunday." That is an example of a family rule within certain Christian families.

### Survey Results

This objective did not emanate from the "Survey Of Christian Married Adults," neither did it emerge from the "Survey Of Christian Singles." Neither survey contained any questions pertaining to "family rules."

Although the objective could not be advocated by the surveys, the family therapy resources supported the objective for premarital counseling of educating the couple regarding family rules. Scriptural study also supported this objective.

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<sup>219</sup>Ibid.

Results From The MAP Study Of Family Therapy Resources

This objective emanated from my study of family therapy resources. The results of that study will be presented within the following paragraphs.

Becvar and Becvar support objective ten by explaining the reality that rules within families express the values of that family and guide the roles required by the individuals within that family. They write,

The rules according to which a system operates are comprised of the characteristic relationship patterns within the system. These rules express the values of the system as well as the roles appropriate to behavior within the system. ... However, such rules, or boundaries, are not visible but must be inferred from the repeated patterns of behavior of a system.<sup>220</sup>

Premarital counseling must admit the reality of rules and educate the couple regarding family rules. That will enable the couple to work with the rules governing their new family.

Froma Walsh speaks about family rules,

Relationship rules, both explicit and implicit, organize family interaction and function to maintain a stable system by prescribing and limiting members' behavior. They provide expectations about roles, actions, and consequences that guide family life. Through the operation of a "redundancy principle," a family tends to interact in repetitious sequences, so that family

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66. <sup>220</sup>Becvar and Becvar, Family Therapy: A Systemic Integration, 65,

operations are governed by a relatively small set of patterned and predictable rules.<sup>221</sup>

As Froma Walsh states, there are "relationship rules" that "organize family interaction and function."<sup>222</sup> The premarital couple experienced rules within their families of origin and will establish rules within their new family. Objective ten assists the couple in their understanding of rules within their family of origin that governed relationships. It also aids the couple in establishing their own rules to organize the interaction within their new family.

Becvar and Becvar write,

Observations of a family in action reveal repetitive interaction patterns among family members. These patterns can be construed as unspoken agreements which define various relationships in the family. They circumscribe the manner in which family members communicate with each other, the nature of the relationships between family members, and how decisions are made in the family. These rules create a stable, predictable system which is resistant to change. Rule systems tend to be passed on from one generation to the next with only slight modifications.<sup>223</sup>

Becvar and Becvar explain "repetitive interaction patterns" that existed within the families of origin of the premarital couple.<sup>224</sup>

Objective ten for premarital counseling assists the couple in realizing

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<sup>221</sup>Froma Walsh, "Conceptualizations of Normal Family Functioning," chap. in Normal Family Processes (New York, New York: The Guilford Press, 1982), 10.

<sup>222</sup>Ibid.

<sup>223</sup>Ibid., 49.

<sup>224</sup>Ibid.

those patterns and considering whether or not they desire for those patterns to continue within their new family.

Goldenberg and Goldenberg explain,

A family is a rule-governed system; the interaction of family members follows organized, established patterns. ...Instead of utilizing the full range of behavior available to them, the members settle on certain 'rules' or redundant patterns when dealing with one another. If you understand the rules - usually unstated and out of the awareness of family members - you begin to understand how the family defines its relationships.<sup>225</sup>

Once again, here is support for the objective. As the premarital couple understands the rules present within their families of origin, they begin to comprehend the relationships present and how those relationships were defined.<sup>226</sup> They begin to understand the aspects, both positive and negative, of the relationships within their families of origin. They can utilize this understanding in guiding the relationship within their marriage.

Two more quotes support objective ten as they attest to the reality of family rules. Augustus Napier explains, "Families come into therapy with their own structure, and tone, and rules."<sup>227</sup> He adds, "The hidden rules, the subtle nuances of language, the private rituals and dances that define every family as a unique microculture may not be easy for an outsider to perceive at first glance, but they are there."<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>225</sup>Goldenberg and Goldenberg, 30, 31.

<sup>226</sup>Ibid.

<sup>227</sup>Napier with Whitaker, 11.

<sup>228</sup>Ibid., 79.

Hoopes and Harper write,

All families have rules that govern family and individual behavior. Every family develops rules for the division of labor, power, and money; the provision of emotional support; and the performance of other functions necessary to carry out the tasks of daily life. In their interactions family members develop rules that regulate the expression of emotions, trust, intimacy, dependency, and autonomy in all relationships. Rules may be explicit or implicit.<sup>229</sup>

Objective ten takes into consideration the reality of family rules within the families of origin of the premarital couple and works with the future reality of family rules within the new marriage.

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<sup>229</sup>Hoopes and Harper, 5.

**Objective #11:**

**Pastoral premarital counseling should explore the couple's negotiation skills and assist the couple in advancing those skills in their relationship, when advancement is necessary and desired by the couple.**

**Results From The Scriptural Study**

The very fact, presented in Scripture, that two become one flesh presupposes the requirement of negotiation on the part of husband and wife.<sup>230</sup> Scripture asserts that it is God who joins two people together in marriage.<sup>231</sup> Two people who have lived separate and distinct lifestyles now become one flesh. That necessitates a conferring and discussing of personal day by day issues on their part, with a view toward reaching some sort of agreement. For example, the husband may only require five hours of sleep per night and may like to watch television or read into the evening, while the wife requires eight hours and prefers quiet during those times. The wife may be accustomed to her evening meal at 7:30, however husband may be used to eating at 5:30. The wife may love to go out in the evenings. The husband may prefer remaining home most of the

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<sup>230</sup>Gen. 2:24, NASB.

<sup>231</sup>Matt. 19:6, NASB.



time. These examples are only hypothetical, but the point is that some negotiation is a necessity when two people become one flesh.

Another passage from Scripture that presupposes, in my estimation, the necessity of negotiation is Romans 12:18, "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men."<sup>232</sup> The context of the passage is one of the Christian's life in this world.<sup>233</sup> The context explains the ways in which Christians can "present [their] bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is [their] spiritual service of worship."<sup>234</sup>

As a member of the Body of Christ, the Christian is to "be at peace with all men."<sup>235</sup> The statement is qualified by the introductory phrase, "if possible, so far as it depends on you." The context does not speak specifically of marriage; it deals with Christians and their lives in this world in general. The Christian, in her or his relationships has to "do as much as [he or she] can to live in peace with everybody."<sup>236</sup> A Greek word used in this passage is *eireneuontes*. It translates, "to keep peace."<sup>237</sup> "In the New Testament," explains Kittel and Friedrich, as translated by Bromiley,

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<sup>232</sup>Ro. 12:18, NASB.

<sup>233</sup>Ro. 12:2, NASB.

<sup>234</sup>Ro. 12:1, NASB.

<sup>235</sup>Ro. 12:18, NASB.

<sup>236</sup>Ibid.

<sup>237</sup>Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, ed., Theological Dictionary Of The New Testament, Abridged In One Volume, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985), 210.

"the word is used only for 'to keep peace' with *en* or *meta*. ...In 1 Th. 5:13 the point seems to be that we should be at peace with one another . This is also what is meant in Rom. 12:18 and 2 Cor. 13:11."<sup>238</sup>

I have taken the liberty of applying Romans 12:18 to the most intimate earthly relationship that a Christian can experience, namely one's relationship to spouse. Within that relationship, the Christian should "do as much as [he or she] can to live in peace."<sup>239</sup> That would, by necessity, involve negotiation skills. When two flesh and blood saints who are also sinners become one flesh and live together, total agreement on every issue will not ensue. Negotiation will be necessary to maintain peace.

### Survey Results

The results of the "Survey Of Christian Married Adults" imply the value of including the advancement of the couple's negotiation skills as an objective of pastoral premarital counseling. Of the twelve married adults in my ministry who returned the survey, 83% (or ten) chose "Relationship And Relationship Skills" as a "relevant and beneficial topic for pastoral premarital counseling.

The results of the "Survey Of Christian Singles" were that twenty-one of the twenty-six singles (or 81%) marked "Relationships

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<sup>238</sup>Ibid.

<sup>239</sup>Ro. 12:18, NASB.

and Relationship Skills" as a "relevant and beneficial" topic for pastoral premarital counseling. Twenty-three percent (or six people) chose "Relationships and Relationship Skills" as one of the three topics which they deemed "most significant" for premarital counseling. Under the category "Other Topics," one single wrote in, "preparing for dealing with arguments." Another single wrote, "conflict resolution." Both of these "Other Topics" would also suggest this objective of exploring the couple's negotiation skills and assisting the couple in advancing those skills.

### *Results From The Field Of Family Therapy*

My research of family therapy, psychological, and counseling resources, especially the resources from family therapy, support including an objective of working with the couple's negotiation skills. Becvar and Becvar perceive negotiation skills to be significant for healthy family systems, stating, "Healthy families are not symptom free, but problems are handled successfully through a process of negotiation."<sup>240</sup>

Of the importance of negotiation within optimal families, W. Robert Beavers writes, "In shared tasks, optimal families excel in their capacity to accept directions, organize themselves, develop input from each other, negotiate differences, and reach closure

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<sup>240</sup>Becvar and Becvar, Family Therapy: A Systemic Integration, 159.

coherently and effectively."<sup>241</sup> Beavers also states, "All of the attributes of a healthy couple come to fruition in the skill of negotiating problem solutions that meet both people's needs."<sup>242</sup>

The quote from Becvar and Becvar and the two quotes from Beavers advocate the objective for premarital counseling that explores the couple's negotiation skills and assists the couple in the advancement of those skills. The three quotes attest to the necessity of negotiation skills in healthy families.

McGoldrick and Carter assert,

Marriage requires that a couple renegotiate a myriad of personal issues that they have previously defined for themselves or that were defined by their parents, from when to eat, sleep, have sex, or fight, to how to celebrate holidays or where and how to live, work, and spend vacations. The couple must renegotiate their relationships with their parents, siblings, friends, and other relatives in view of the new marriage, and this will to some degree affect all personal relationships.<sup>243</sup>

McGoldrick and Carter's comments regarding negotiation within marriage attest to the importance of objective eleven for premarital counseling.

Haley writes,

As the married couple begin to live together, they must work out a number of agreements necessary to any pair living in intimate

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<sup>241</sup>W. Robert Beavers, "Healthy, Midrange, and Severely Dysfunctional Families," in Normal Family Processes, ed. Froma Walsh (New York: The Guilford Press, 1982), 51.

<sup>242</sup>Beavers, Successful Marriage, 82.

<sup>243</sup>Monica McGoldrick and Elizabeth A. Carter, "The Family Life Cycle," in Normal Family Processes, 178.

association. They must agree about ways of dealing with their families of origin, their peers, the practical aspects of life together, and the subtle as well as gross differences between them as individuals. Either implicitly or explicitly, they must resolve an extraordinary number of questions, some of which could not be anticipated before marriage, including who will decide where they are to live, how much influence the wife is to have on her husband's career, whether either should judge the other's friends, whether the wife should work or remain at home, and hundreds of others - even so apparently trivial a matter as who will pick up whose clothes.<sup>244</sup>

Haley's words clarify the necessity within marriage of working out a number of agreements.<sup>245</sup> That necessity supports the objective for premarital counseling that deals with advancing the couple's negotiation skills.

Goldenberg and Goldenberg assert,

In the marital coalition, the partners must not only provide for their basic physical needs but negotiate (and renegotiate over a period of time) such personal issues as when and how to sleep, eat, have sex, fight, and make up. They must decide how to celebrate holidays, plan vacations, spend money, and do household chores.<sup>246</sup>

Goldenberg and Goldenberg recognize the need to advance negotiating skills, thereby supporting objective eleven.<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>244</sup>Haley, 50.

<sup>245</sup>Ibid.

<sup>246</sup>Goldenberg and Goldenberg, 21, 22.

<sup>247</sup>Ibid.

**Objective #12:**

**Pastoral premarital counseling should discuss with the couple the topic of human sexuality.**

**Results From The Scriptural Study**

Genesis 1:27 indicates the value of this objective for pastoral premarital counseling, "And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."<sup>248</sup> God created humankind as male and female; sexuality is a gift of the Creator. In marriage, the wife enjoys the maleness of her husband and the husband enjoys the femaleness of his wife. The fact that the husband is different than his wife is a gift of God. That is sexuality. Sexual intercourse between male and female is a gift of God to marriage. That is sexuality. Sexuality is God's gift to marriage, as the passage manifests. Therefore, the pastor needs to discuss sexuality with the couple in the premarital counseling sessions.

The fact that the Lord has given a commandment that deals specifically with one's sexuality is an indication of the importance of the subject of sexuality in general. It also indicates the importance

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<sup>248</sup>Gen. 1:27, NASB.

of discussing the subject within pastoral premarital counseling. The commandment and Luther's meaning from the Catechism read,

You shall not commit adultery. What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we lead a sexually pure and decent life in what we say and do, and husband and wife love and honor each other.<sup>249</sup>

It is the Lord's will that the husband and wife "lead a sexually pure and decent life in what they say and do" and "love and honor each other."<sup>250</sup> Therefore, in premarital counseling, the pastor should use the opportunity to teach and encourage the couple in this will of the Lord. This is especially appropriate and important in my campus ministry. Those to whom I minister in premarital counseling are currently living in a milieu that disregards God's commandment regarding sexuality.

Scripture passages, such as Hebrews 13:4 and 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, prescribe the discussion of sexuality within the time set aside to prepare for marriage. In Hebrews 13:4 the Lord's Word states, "Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral."<sup>251</sup> The Lord commands one's outlook toward marriage and sexuality ("marriage should be honored by all") as well as one's specific sexual actions ("the marriage bed kept pure").<sup>252</sup> The Lord, in addition,

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<sup>249</sup>Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1986), 79.

<sup>250</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>251</sup>Heb. 13:4, NIV.

<sup>252</sup>*Ibid.*

grants a warning regarding His judgment upon those who disobey His command ("God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral").<sup>253</sup> This is reiterated in 1st Corinthians 6:9-10, "Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders ... will enter the kingdom of God."<sup>254</sup>

### Survey Results

The replies to the "Survey Of Christian Married Adults" support counseling that focuses on discussing the topic of sexuality with the premarital couple. Of the twelve married adults who completed the survey, seven (or 58%) indicated that "Sexuality" was a topic that they considered "relevant and beneficial for pastoral premarital counseling."

This objective also follows from the survey replies of single adults. Of the twenty-six singles who returned the "Survey Of Christian Singles," sixteen (or 62%) marked "Sexuality" as a topic that they would consider relevant and beneficial for pastoral premarital counseling.

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<sup>253</sup>Ibid.

<sup>254</sup>1 Cor. 6:9,10, NIV.



Results From The Family Therapy Resources Study

The concept of this objective on sexuality arose primarily from family therapy resources. The first and second resource dealt with sexuality from the perspective of the sexual relationship.

Nichols and Everett teach and practice family therapy. They write, "Generally, the sexual relationship is a fairly valid barometer of the quality of relatedness and satisfaction for many married persons."<sup>255</sup> The importance that Nichols and Everett place upon the sexual relationship within marriage suggests discussion of the sexual relationship within the premarital counseling sessions.

Okun and Rappaport write of the marital relationship,

How can we describe this relationship? We know that it is a very unique, intense way of relating. Two separate individuals must learn to live with each other and relate to each other in a special and intimate way, involving close emotional interaction and a sexual relationship. The emotional and sexual dimensions of their relationship in turn affect their financial, political, religious, and domestic relationships.<sup>256</sup>

Their comment emphasizes the need to discuss the "sexual dimensions" of the marriage relationship within premarital counseling.<sup>257</sup>

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<sup>255</sup>William C. Nichols and Craig A. Everett, Systemic Family Therapy (New York, New York: The Guilford Press, 1986), 326.

<sup>256</sup>Okun and Rappaport, 163.

<sup>257</sup>Ibid.

Glick, Clarkin, and Kessler affirm,

The sexual identity of the offspring is an important factor in personality formation. ...The crucial factor in determining one's basic sexual identity (that is, whether one regards oneself as basically a male or female) is that of how our parents deal with us in this respect.<sup>258</sup>

The man and woman who prepare for marriage have a sexual identity. Their sexual identity will be a significant factor within the marital relationship and cannot be overlooked within premarital counseling.

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<sup>258</sup>Ira D. Click, John F. Clarkin, and David R. Kessler, Marital And Family Therapy, 3d ed. (Orlando, Florida: Grune & Stratton, Inc. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1987), 71.

**Objective #13:**

**Premarital counseling establishes or improves the pastoral relationship between the couple and the pastor.**

This objective for pastoral premarital counseling did not follow from scriptural study; neither did it arise from the surveys nor from the family therapy, psychology, and counseling resources. This objective originated from my own pastoral experience in campus ministry.

During the nine and a half years I have served as a campus pastor, I have established pastoral relationships with students, by the Lord's benediction, in a number of ways. I define a pastoral relationship with students as a relationship of trust in which the students consider me their pastor while at the University of North Dakota and seem to speak freely with me and value my opinion as a pastor.

The first way that I establish a pastoral relationship with a student is when the student is faithful in worship attendance. I see and speak with her or him Sunday after Sunday, or each Wednesday night. I get to know them and they get to know me. The Lord uses me to preach God's Word to them. Secondly, a student regularly attends one of our Bible studies. In the third place, a student participates regularly in other chapel activities. The student and I become acquainted through conversations before or after the Bible

study or before or after the chapel activity. I have the opportunity to learn more about the student and, in turn, he or she has the opportunity to learn more about me. In the fourth place, I have formed pastoral relationships with the students who have served on the Wittenberg Chapel Council. There are three other ways through which the Lord has blessed me in pastoral relationships with students: through Adult Catechism courses, through personal counseling, and through premarital counseling.

As I reflect specifically over five years of premarital counseling at Wittenberg, I think back to the pastoral relationships that I have established with individuals. I have chosen to share details of three of those relationships.

I think of Rob and Sharon. Sharon was very faithful in our Wittenberg ministry. Rob had little or no religious background. I knew Sharon fairly well through her worship attendance and through personal counseling, as well as through casual conversations before and after worship services. Sharon informed me that one of her goals of premarital counseling was for Rob to get to know me. "He has some different ideas about pastors," she said to me. "And I want him to get to know you as a regular person." By the next to last session, Rob and I were speaking somewhat freely with one another. He was asking a number of questions concerning faith and the Bible. He continues to ask more questions. Since the premarital counseling, I notice that he attends worship with Sharon once a month. Previous to the premarital counseling, Rob was not attending worship services

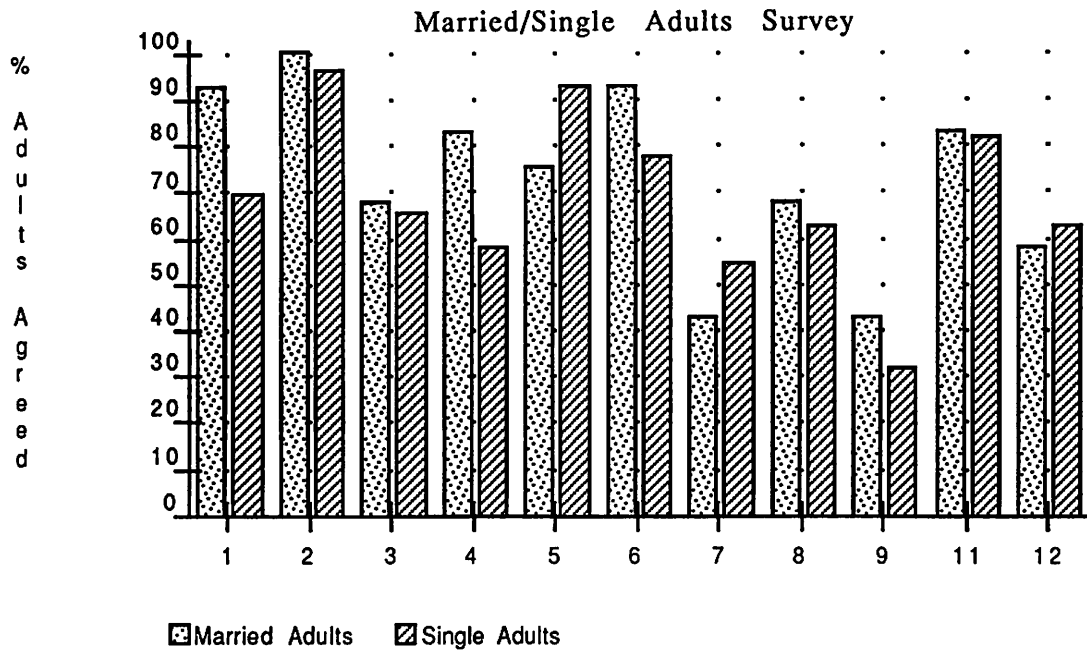
at our church or any other church. I believe that the premarital counseling began a pastoral relationship with Rob.

Then there were Peter and Cheri. I knew Cheri from worship attendance and from personal conversations after worship services on Sundays and Wednesdays. I had the privilege of becoming better acquainted with her during two personal counseling sessions. Her fiancée, Peter, was not Lutheran. When I saw Peter on campus, I was of the opinion that he kept his distance from me. It was during the premarital counseling sessions that we got to know one another much better. As we progressed through the premarital counseling, Peter began to open up to me. He seemed to feel more and more at ease sharing circumstances of his life with me during the premarital sessions. He also began to discuss topics of faith, such as devotions and prayers. I also noticed that Cheri gave more and more effort toward honesty and disclosure, both within the premarital sessions and following the sessions.

As I attempted to understand them, empathize with them on the specific challenges to their marriage, and assist them in preparing for marriage, I saw them in a different light and they seemed to see me from a different perspective. Peter began attending our chapel services, worshipping with us regularly. I used two criteria in judging that a pastoral relationship was established with Peter and improved with Cheri. Following the premarital counseling, Peter and Cheri had conversations with me involving topics of faith. On two occasions, they even stopped me on campus to ask a question or make mention of something. In addition, Cheri and

Peter's worship attendance became more regular following the premarital counseling.

The final example involves the premarital counseling of Gary and Ann. It may appear rather unusual and better left unsaid, due to the fact that their marriage ended in a divorce. I admit that I did not observe an improvement of my pastoral relationship with Gary after the premarital counseling. There seemed to be a slightly improved, more receptive outlook on his part toward my ministry and toward the preaching and teaching of God's Word. That increase and improvement in receptivity and outlook, however, proved to be very temporary and short-lived. Their divorce very much saddened me. In its midst, though, the Lord granted His benediction. Through premarital counseling, my pastoral relationship with Ann was improved. During and after the divorce, Ann, who had now returned to her parent's home, came to me for support and pastoral care. She set up regular appointments for pastoral counseling with me. She seemed to consider our pastoral relationship as a trust relationship to assist her as she dealt with the aftermath of the abuse she had received from Gary.



### **Objectives**

1. Christ & Salvation
2. Lord's Will
3. Praying For Couple
4. Teaching Couple To Pray
5. Communication
6. Christian Wedding Service
7. Families of Origin
8. Family Life Cycle
9. Birth Order
10. No Survey Results
11. Negotiation
12. Sexuality
13. No Survey Results

## THE PROCESS OF PREMARITAL COUNSELING

Having explained the thirteen objectives of pastoral premarital counseling in my campus ministry setting, I will address the process of premarital counseling. The process strives to accomplish these objectives.

### *Praying For and With The Couple*

The pastor begins the initial premarital counseling session and subsequent sessions with a prayer. He also concludes the sessions with petitions and thanksgivings to the Lord. In addition, in the midst of the premarital counseling session, the Pastor may deem a prayer addressing a particular need especially appropriate. Such is the process that I use to accomplish the third objective of praying for and with the couple.

The prayers are to be specific and personal in the sense that the pastor carefully listens to and contemplates the needs of the premarital couple, articulates those needs and then gives thanks to the Lord. These are not universal collects or general prayers as prayed in the liturgy of the worship service; these prayers are prayed from the perspective of God's Word and the Christian faith, focusing specifically upon the premarital couple and their needs, as well as their gratitude before their Heavenly Father. That is not to



say that the beautiful doctrines so meaningfully stated within the universal collects and general prayers are not to be included.

Indeed, they are, yet in a manner that applies them specifically to that premarital couple with whom the pastor is working.

Intercession occurs within the premarital counseling process to the glory of God. The couple is involved in praying within the premarital sessions. The pastor asks the couple to articulate requests for prayer, requests dealing with their marriage, with themselves, or with others. The pastor also asks the couple if they would like to pray aloud before or after his petitions.

The pastor teaches the couple to pray, aided by the following questions: What is the significance of prayer currently in the life of these two people who are now involved in premarital counseling? Is prayer currently a significant aspect of the faith of that young man who will be this woman's husband? Is prayer currently an important expression of the faith of that young woman who will be this man's wife? The pastor may ponder those questions in so many words. He then listens carefully to the responses and tailors his teaching on prayer according to the couple's present knowledge and experience.

Some couples and individuals seem to be well versed in scriptural teaching about prayer and seem to practice active prayer lives. This step in the premarital counseling process goes rather quickly for them, so as to avoid redundancy. On the other hand, there are those couples and individuals who appear to know very

little about prayer and use it very infrequently within their daily lives. A more thorough instruction is a necessity in their case.

Scripture passages would prove beneficial in the premarital counseling process for the pastor who endeavors to teach a couple to pray: "Keep asking, and it will be given to you. Keep searching, and you will find. Keep knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For anyone who continues to ask receives; anyone who continues to search finds; and to anyone who continues to knock, the door will be opened."<sup>259</sup> "I tell you the absolute truth, if you ask the Father for anything in My Name, He will give it to you."<sup>260</sup> "Throw all your worry on Him because He cares for you."<sup>261</sup> "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made know to God."<sup>262</sup> "We have confidence in God that if we ask for anything according to His will, He listens to us."<sup>263</sup> "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I shall rescue you, and you will honor Me."<sup>264</sup> "Always keep on praying."<sup>265</sup> Many, if not all, of these passages can be found in the Catechism. After reading each passage, the pastor should give specific application of the scriptural teaching to the lives of the premarital couple.

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<sup>259</sup>Matt. 7:7, NET.

<sup>260</sup>John 16:23, NET.

<sup>261</sup>1 Pet. 5:7, NET.

<sup>262</sup>Phil. 4:6, NASB.

<sup>263</sup>1 John 5:14, NET.

<sup>264</sup>Psalms 50:15, NASB.

<sup>265</sup>1 Thess. 5:17, NET.

It may be meaningful, at this point of the premarital counseling process, for the pastor to share, with the premarital couple, advice and experience from his own prayer life. Luther's prayers may also be very salutary and purposeful here. Finally, the pastor would do well to speak of the Lord's Prayer and focus on the meanings of the various petitions and encourage the couple to recognize the value of daily use of this prayer.

### *Teaching The Couple About Christ Their Savior*

The premarital counseling process then seeks to fulfill the first and foremost objective of any pastoral counseling, namely instructing the couple regarding Christ their Savior and regarding their salvation. This presumes that teaching from God's Word will follow.

The pastor can provide the premarital couple with Bibles and walk through germane verses of Scripture that explain our sin and assert our salvation from sin in Christ. Psalm 51:5 affirms, "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me."<sup>266</sup> At this time within the premarital counseling process, the pastor should teach the couple that each one of us is sinful from our conception. We have an inherited sin, a sin from our origin. "The Augsburg Confession," Article II, underscores the scriptural point that we are "full of evil lusts and inclinations from our mother's

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<sup>266</sup>Psalm 51:5, NASB.

wombs and are unable by nature to have true fear of God and true faith in God."<sup>267</sup>

Our original sin manifests itself in actual sins day by day. Luther's explanation to the fifth petition of our Lord's Prayer states, "We sin daily and deserve nothing but punishment."<sup>268</sup> The Pastor will find it beneficial to point out and apply Paul's words in Romans 7:18, 19, "Yes, I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my flesh. For I want to do what is right, but I just do not do it. I do not do the good I want to do; instead, I do the evil that I do not want to do."<sup>269</sup> Even as Christians, we sin and fall short of God's glory.

From that point, the premarital counseling process continues with commentary on the consequences of our sin. Romans 6:23 informs us, "The wages of sin is death."<sup>270</sup> Due to our sin, we deserve hell, everlasting damnation, and punishment. Isaiah 59, verse 2, further informs us, "Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God."<sup>271</sup>

The pastor has the opportunity to teach the premarital couple about their Savior Jesus Christ. The following verses serve as a guide

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<sup>267</sup>"The Augsburg Confession," in The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, tr. and ed. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Fortress Press, 1959), 29.

<sup>268</sup>Martin Luther, "Endhiridion, The Small Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther for Ordinary Pastors and Preachers," in The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, tr. and ed. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Fortress Press, 1959), 347.

<sup>269</sup>Ro. 7:18, 19, NET.

<sup>270</sup>Ro. 6:23, NASB.

<sup>271</sup>Is. 59:2, NASB.

for teaching the couple about their Savior and their salvation: "God made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."<sup>272</sup> "He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him."<sup>273</sup> "He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world."<sup>274</sup> "The blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin."<sup>275</sup> "Through the obedience of the One Man, multitudes will be proclaimed righteous."<sup>276</sup> "He took away the power of death and by the Gospel brought into the light the life which cannot be destroyed."<sup>277</sup> "He who believes in the Son has eternal life."<sup>278</sup> "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ."<sup>279</sup> "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself

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<sup>272</sup>2 Cor. 5:21, NASB.

<sup>273</sup>Is. 53:5,6, NASB.

<sup>274</sup>1 John 2:2, NASB.

<sup>275</sup>1 John 1:7, NASB.

<sup>276</sup>Ro. 5:19, NET.

<sup>277</sup>2 Tim. 1:10, NET.

<sup>278</sup>John 3:36, NASB.

<sup>279</sup>Gal. 3:26,27, NASB.

up for me."<sup>280</sup> "By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him."<sup>281</sup> "He died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf."<sup>282</sup>

The pastor should not merely read the verses to the premarital couple. He would read a verse and then proceed to discuss that verse with the couple, making personal applications to their lives. Christ Jesus has given to that premarital couple forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and salvation. He has lived perfectly to fulfill God's Law for them, died upon the cross as the Ransom for their sins, and risen to give them the victory over sin, death, and the devil. Salvation is theirs fully and freely in Christ.

In discussing Christ and salvation with the premarital couple, the pastor also contemplates their worship and devotional life. The pastor teaches to the couple salvation by grace. He explains to the couple that their worship and devotional life will not earn salvation for them. Salvation is the gift of God to them in Christ. Their worship and devotional life flows naturally from their faith. The pastor's hope is that husband and wife, by the blessing of the Holy Spirit, remain close to Christ in faith and grow in that faith.<sup>283</sup>

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<sup>280</sup>Gal. 2:20, NASB.

<sup>281</sup>1 John 4:9, NASB.

<sup>282</sup>2 Cor. 5:15, NASB.

<sup>283</sup>2 Pet. 3:18, NASB.

We are very accustomed to visiting our physician and receiving a prescription. That, upon the majority of our visits, is our expectation. The pastor should also give a prescription for the couple with whom the Lord has given him the privilege to work in premarital counseling. Unlike the physician's prescription, the prescription given by the pastor has the couple's eternal well-being in mind. The pastor prescribes, and strongly encourages, faithful worship and Bible study attendance. Regular worship and Bible study participation will constantly bring the husband and wife in contact with the Word which does not return to God empty without accomplishing His desire.<sup>284</sup>

In truth, the pastor's prescription and encouragement to the couple are not merely toward faithful worship and Bible study attendance, but above all, toward living by faith daily. This involves daily contrition and repentance, as our Baptism calls to mind; this involves living "by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me"<sup>285</sup>; and this involves living "no longer for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf."<sup>286</sup>

In addition, the minister may teach the couple about Word and prayer, devotions. This would embrace instructing the couple in the "how-tos" of daily devotions. Pastoral instruction given to the couple in the area of confession and absolution would be valuable. The

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<sup>284</sup>Is. 55:11, NASB.

<sup>285</sup>Gal. 2:20, NASB.

<sup>286</sup>2 Cor. 5:15, NASB.

pastor could actually teach the couple to confess their sins daily to their Heavenly Father and believe, rejoice, and have peace in His absolution in Christ. The minister may even "step through" the process of his own daily Word and prayer with the couple. Various resources can be suggested by the pastor to the premarital couple in the area of daily devotions. Invaluable is a Scripture, an actual translation and not a paraphrase, that the couple can understand, and a Lutheran Worship hymnal. The confession and absolution portions of the Divine Services can be suggested by the pastor for use at home as well as the Confessional Services, the Orders of Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, The Litany, the Responsive Prayer Services, etc. The premarital couple can be taught the value and beauty of liturgical prayer interspersed with their exorde prayers. Portals of Prayer, Meditations, or another similar daily devotional which is centered in Christ and the Word can also be recommended as helpful resources.

Strong rituals make strong families. That is an ancillary benefit of regular worship and Bible study as well as daily devotions together. I am reminded here of my parents-in-law. My father-in-law suffers from Parkinson's Disease and other physical ailments. He is degenerating and declining rapidly. My mother-in-law lovingly and sacrificially cares for him in the midst of his illnesses. While attending graduate school during the summers, my wife, two daughters, and I reside at their home. Each morning as I awake and go upstairs to shower, I can hear my mother and father-in-law



having their devotions. Strong rituals make strong families and give the family strength in the most difficult of times.

*Educating The Couple In Terms Of The Lord's Will For Marriage*

The premarital counseling process progresses to the education of the couple in terms of the Lord's will for marriage, for the husband, and for the wife. The method is a Bible study of the various passages regarding marriage and God's will for the husband and wife. The Pastor and premarital couple study together, discussing aloud, applying these verses specifically to the couple's marriage and lives. The Word is planted in the heart of this couple. The Lord gives the increase and grants faith.

What Scriptures are studied? Those verses previously listed in the section entitled "The Scriptural Teachings Regarding Marriage" (pages 13 to 28) would be very appropriate, along with the accompanying explanations. In particular, Genesis 2:18, 21-24 is appropriate along with the explanation which speaks of marriage as God's creation. The study could proceed to Matthew 19:6 and the explanation subsequent to it, emphasizing the fact that God joins together man and woman in marriage.

It would be well to contemplate Genesis 2:24 and the teaching that marriage is to be a lifelong institution. Matthew 19:4-6 may accompany this discussion. Luke 16:18 can also be studied within the premarital counseling session.

A study of Genesis 2:18, perhaps using the discussion accompanying it which deals with relationship and companionship, can follow. The Lord's will that husband and wife love, nourish, and cherish one another would be another appropriate teaching, focusing on Ephesians 5:28-31 and Ephesians 5:23-27, with a discussion regarding husband's love toward wife. Genesis 1:28 and Psalm 127:3 are passages to consider with the premarital couple in order to teach that children are a benediction that the Lord ordinarily grants unto husband and wife in marriage.

Ephesians 5:22,23, as presented in the second objective, would also prove relevant in answering the following: What does it mean for a wife to be subject to her husband? What is understood by the phrase "the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church?" These questions should be addressed within the premarital counseling.

### *The Genogram*

At this point in the process of premarital counseling the use of a genogram is suggested. What is a genogram? Monica McGoldrick and Randy Gerson describe a genogram in their book Genograms in Family Assessment,

A genogram is a format for drawing a family tree that records information about family members and their relationships over at least three generations. Genograms display family information graphically in a way that provides a quick gestalt of complex family patterns and a rich source of hypotheses about

how a clinical problem may be connected to the family context and the evolution of both problem and context over time.<sup>287</sup>

They add: "Genograms make it easier for a clinician to keep in mind family members, patterns and events that may have recurring significance...."<sup>288</sup>

Universal and easily read symbols are used in constructing genograms. Circles are used to represent females, squares represent males. Horizontal lines indicate marital status. Vertical lines signify children. Ages of individuals are specified.

The genogram takes note of birth order. The oldest sibling is noted to the far left, the youngest to the far right. Two lines across a marital line symbolize divorce. Separations between couples are also depicted. Date of marriage accompanies the horizontal line connecting the couple. A dashed line surrounds the household members.

Pertinent information is recorded on the genogram next to the appropriate person. For example, it may be noted: "Mother never missed church worship and she prayed a lot." "Father dropped away from worship when I was in high school." "Father was a lawyer." "Mother was a doctor." "Mom and dad fought a lot." "My sister was much more religious than I." "My brother had diabetes."

Assorted types of relationships are represented within the genogram by various lines. "Fused and conflictual" relationships

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<sup>287</sup>Monica McGoldrick and Randy Gerson, Genograms in Family Assessment (New York, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1985), 1.

<sup>288</sup>Ibid., 2.

between family members are signified by a certain configuration of lines, "poor or conflictual" by another pattern, "close" and "distant" relationships being symbolized by yet another two designs. Deaths are also noted.

The genogram should depict at least three generations. Therefore, the genogram would consider the premarital couple, as well as parents, brothers, sisters, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and all other attending relatives.

After discussing with the premarital couple salvation in Christ, prayer, and the Lord's will for their marriage, the genogram will assist discussion of the premarital couple's personal faith. In considering the parents of the couple, a door is opened for the pastor and premarital couple to consider the parents' religious background, then the parents' faith, and most significantly the faith of the man and woman involved in premarital counseling.

Various questions could be considered, questions which are asked in a loving, sincere manner, and not as an interrogation. The following questions might be employed: Were your grandparents of a particular religion? Were your parents active in the church? Did your family worship together regularly? What was your homelife like, in terms of the Christian faith, when you were growing up? Did you have family devotions as you were growing up? Did the members of your family pray frequently aloud? Did they pray frequently privately, as far as you know? Did your father and mother seem to follow these Biblical guidelines in their marriage that

we have discussed in premarital counseling? Was Christ and the Christian faith discussed in your home as you grew up?

To determine the couples' history of church involvement, the pastor would ask: Were you baptized as an infant? Were you active in worship during your high school years? How about in Bible study and in youth group (LYF or whatever)?

To determine the couples' current level of involvement, the pastor might ask: Have you been active in worship and in Bible study since you left home to go to college? What does your Christian faith mean to you now? Are you active in worship now? What will it mean to you to be a Christian wife (or Christian husband)? Perhaps some of the above questions (or other questions) which accompany the genogram construction may be used to facilitate open, personal discussion with the premarital couple regarding their faith, Christ, prayer, or the Lord's will for them as husband and wife.

### *Exploring and Furthering The Couple's Understanding of Their Families of Origin*

The genogram is also used in the premarital counseling process to explore and further the couple's understanding of their families of origin. As the couple explores and furthers their comprehension of their families of origin, they will be assisted in differentiating themselves from the families of origin. At the same time, they will be assisted in establishing a clear boundary around their new family, their marital relationship.

The genogram presents in "black and white" the couple's families of origin. "What type of relationship did your mom and dad have?" the pastor might ask. Maybe the relationship was a superb model. Perhaps the relationship was poor. Perhaps it was "conflictual." Maybe mom and dad were very distant from one another. Perhaps an emotional divorce actually occurred. On the other hand, maybe the communication between mom and dad was open and genuine. Or perhaps the woman's (or man's) mother and father never communicated about anything intimate; only functional details were discussed between them.

At times in discussing the families of origin with the couple, what was covert becomes overt. That which is covert within the family of origin refers to a family secret or circumstance which hindered the family, yet was never discussed openly. Once the covert becomes overt, the covert family secret or circumstance begins to lose its power. When the covert becomes overt, this may create a crisis for the man or woman who is involved in the premarital counseling.<sup>289</sup> The crisis forces that person to acknowledge the covert as well as react to that covert circumstance. Admitting the covert, that man or woman now has the opportunity to differentiate themselves emotionally from that covert circumstance within their new married relationship. He or she could then state, "Yes, that happened in my family of origin, but, no, I will not allow that to take place in my marriage and new family!"

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<sup>289</sup>Professor Joseph Barbour, June 4, 1991, Class Notes, DM-969 "Pastoral Care and Counseling I," Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri.

The pastor diagrams the couple's families of origin. The woman or man in premarital counseling contemplates and discusses the relationship with mother, father, brothers, or sisters within that family of origin. "What was the relationship like between you and your parents, as you were growing up?" the pastor may wonder out loud. He might ask, "Were you close to your mother? What comes to mind when you think about your father? When you reflect upon your homelife while growing up, is there a certain metaphor which comes to mind and would describe your homelife as you remember it?"

The use of the genogram also assists in premarital counseling by manifesting the role models (for being a husband and a wife) which the man and woman received. Discussion can follow regarding the type of husband dad was and the type of wife mom was. "Was affection shown openly by your mom and by your dad?" the pastor may choose to ask. He might continue, "Was love expressed through words and actions frequently by your dad toward your mom (and by your mom toward dad)? What type of role model and teaching were you given in your home while growing up in terms of a wife relating toward her husband?"

The genogram can be a helpful tool to assist the man and woman in differentiating from their families of origin. It assists the man and woman in considering the relationships that they experienced within their families of origin. The genogram may indicate an unhealthy enmeshment or may demonstrate difficulties being encountered by male or female in dealing with the family of

origin. It also assists them in detaching from the family of origin and, in turn, attaching to the spouse.<sup>290</sup>

The genogram also functions to further inform the woman or man regarding family of origin of spouse. In so doing, it prompts honest discussion and the flow of information within the relationship. This discussion between husband and wife regarding the family of origin of the spouse may occur during or between the premarital sessions. When the discussion takes place is not as significant as the mere fact that the discussion does take place. The marital relationship and new system formed by this marriage is an energy system created and blessed by our Lord. This system lives on husband and wife talking with one another. Such sharing yields a vital relationship.<sup>291</sup>

### *Family Rules*

The premarital counseling process proceeds with the pastor using the genogram to accomplish the objective of instructing the couple regarding family rules, exploring the rules which existed within their families of origin, and assisting the couple in establishing family rules within their new family. For this stage of the process, the pastor begins with an explanation of family rules. "What were the family rules that governed your families of origin?" is an

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<sup>290</sup>Ibid.

<sup>291</sup>Ibid.



appropriate question with which to begin. "Do you know what family rules are? Let me take a few moments to explain this practical concept."

The explanation by the pastor consists of the teaching that there are certain rules, explicit or implicit, that govern family behavior and also govern individual behavior within families. These family rules are usually unspoken agreements between the family members and help define the relationships within the family. Family rules may govern the way that emotions are displayed. Rules may govern the division of power within one's family. There may be a family rule regarding trust as well as a family rule regarding intimacy. One's family may have a rule regarding dependency. Family rules are developed by certain arranged, regular, and repetitive patterns of interactions between the family members.

The pastor, with genogram in hand, asks the couple to explore those family rules from their families of origin. Exploration assists the premarital couple in understanding their background, themselves, and their current interactions. Exploration also aids the couple in establishing the family rules within their marriage and new family.

Some of the following questions, asked by the pastor of the premarital couple, may be of assistance: What was the division of power within your family of origin? Do you desire for that same division of power to exist within your new family? What were the rules within your family of origin that regulated the expression of emotions? How about the rules which regulated the expression of

intimacy? What were the unspoken rules, the implicit rules, about being close within your family of origin? How about the rules regarding dependency? Do you wish for these particular rules regarding sharing of feelings or expression of emotions to be perpetuated within your new family? How about the rules from your family of origin about being close? What family rules from your family of origin would you like to see continue within your marriage and new family? What rules would you like to see discontinued?

### *The Couple's Communication*

The genogram can be beneficial in the initial discussion with the premarital couple regarding communication. Pointing to the genogram and specifically to the symbols for the parents of both the man and the woman, the pastor asks the couple, "What was the communication of your mom and dad like? How did they communicate with one another? What type of a model did you receive in communication of wife to husband (or, in the case of the male, husband to wife)? How would you describe the communication between them?"

Having given ample time for exploration and discussion by the couple, the pastor proceeds, "What communication skills exhibited by your mom or your dad within the marital relationship would you like to incorporate within your marital relationship? What communication skills and attributes would you like to further within

your marriage? To what communication scenarios or shortcomings exhibited by your parents would you react, 'No, I don't want that as part of my marriage and my new family!'"

Continuing, the pastor asks both people individually, "How would you describe your present communication within your current relationship? Are you pleased with your present communication within your relationship?" At this point, the pastor and couple contemplate the Biblical passages submitted in the communication objective. The passages are specifically applied to the couple, in the trust that the Lord's Word does not return void.

The pastor begins with Ephesians 5:23, which compares the relationship of husband and wife to that of Christ and the Church.<sup>292</sup> Communication is integral to this relationship. Within the relationship of Christ and the Church, there is always Word and prayer, Christ speaking to His Church and His Church speaking to Him. This provides a model for the relationship of husband and wife, where communication is also integral.

Next, the pastor and the couple study Genesis 2:24. The three read the passage from Scripture and the pastor asks the couple, "Does the fact that the two become one flesh in marriage imply anything regarding communication within the marriage?"<sup>293</sup>

From that point the minister asks the couple to consider the first marriage, "What was the communication between Adam and Eve like within the first marriage? What was their communication like

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<sup>292</sup>Eph. 5:23, NASB.

<sup>293</sup>Gen. 2:24, NASB.

prior to the fall into sin? Ponder aloud some characteristics, as you see it, of that communication." Further questions can be found in the section on the objective about communication (pages 50 to 60).

Subsequent to that consideration, the pastor introduces Ephesians 4:6 as it applies it to the couple's marriage. The anecdote involving Jason and Beth previously related in the objective of communication (page 52 and 53) may be beneficial here. Anger does arise within marriage. Communication in faith and love is a means which can be practiced by the married couple to avoid the hatred, hostility, animosity, and resentment which often accompany anger. The couple can be encouraged to "talk out" the anger before they go to sleep. The pastor can encourage communication as a sound way for the Christian couple to "be angry, and yet do not sin" as well as to "not let the sun go down on your anger."<sup>294</sup>

The pastor then specifically applies Ephesians 4:25 to the couple in their relationship with one another. The "stripping off of lying" and the "speaking the truth to one another" are two intrinsic elements presented within this passage that are necessary for beneficial communication patterns within their marriage.<sup>295</sup>

During premarital counseling, the pastor notes patterns of communication between the man and woman, noting more the process than the content. He identifies patterns which continue to emerge within the couple's communication.<sup>296</sup>

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<sup>294</sup>Eph. 4:6, NASB.

<sup>295</sup>Eph. 4:25, NASB.

<sup>296</sup>Professor Joseph Barbour, June 11, 1991, Class Notes.

One book which may be beneficial for the pastor is Changing With Families by Richard Bandler, John Grinder, and Virginia Satir. Even though I would not concur with all that is stated by these authors, beneficial information can be gleaned for the advancement of the couple's communication skills. Bandler, Grinder, and Satir speak of "patterns of congruity and incongruity," clarifying the phrase with this explanation,

When a person is communicating congruently, all of the messages which he conveys match - they are consistent, they fit with one another. Incongruent communication is presented to us when the other person sends out messages with his body, with his voice tonality, with the words he uses, which do not match.<sup>297</sup> (Ibid., 55.)

The pastor aids the couple in realizing their incongruent or congruent patterns of communication. Perhaps by discussing incongruent patterns of communication, either the woman or man might respond, "That's what happens in our relationship and I don't like that!" The couple, then, has the option of redefining their relationship and excluding that incongruent pattern of communication from their relationship.

Virginia Satir distinguishes five "communication categories or stances which people adopt under stress."<sup>298</sup> This is a tool which may be useful for the minister and couple in comprehending different communication patterns that married couples can exhibit. Satir

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<sup>297</sup>Richard Bandler, John Grinder, and Virginia Satir, Changing With Families (Palo Alto, California: Science and Behavior Books, Inc., 1976), 55.

<sup>298</sup>Ibid., 59.

classifies the "placater," the "blamer," the "computer," and the "distracter."<sup>299</sup> In another of her works, the book Helping Families To Change, she identifies also the category of "congruent."<sup>300</sup>

It would be helpful to teach the couple about the communication patterns of "placater," "blamer," "computer," "distracter," and "congruent."<sup>301</sup> The pastor could ask the premarital couple if they recognize any of the communication patterns within their own relationship. Subsequent to that question, he would ask if the couple desires to change any of their present communication patterns.

### Birth Order

At this time in the process, the pastor and couple working together on the joyful task of premarital counseling might find it profitable and fruitful to contemplate together sibling position. The pastor uses the genogram to portray vividly one's birth order and to facilitate reflection, sharing, and discussion on the part of the couple.

One's sibling position can affect one's actions, thoughts, words, feelings, and even affect one's reactions in marriage. I do not intend to overestimate or overstate the position, neither do I support a

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<sup>299</sup>Ibid., 59-69.

<sup>300</sup>Virginia Satir, James Stachowiak, and Harvey A. Taschman, Helping Families To Change (New York, New York: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1975), 47.

<sup>301</sup>Bandler, Grinder, and Satir, 59.

deterministic posture. One's sibling position has the potential to affect one's behavior in marriage. A couple can contemplate sibling position, however, and redefine their relationship to be what they desire for it to be.

The pastor educates the couple regarding birth order with the hope that the man and woman will give further consideration to their own sibling positions and to the potential impact those sibling positions might have in their new family system. The pastor could ask the following types of questions pertaining to birth order, "What characteristics do you exhibit as first born? What characteristics as first born will be beneficial in your marriage? What characteristics as first born will be harmful in your relationship with your wife? How could those characteristics be changed?"

The pastor could provide the couple with Dr. Kevin Leman's book, The Birth Order Book. Appropriate sibling positions could then be studied by the couple between sessions and discussed in the premarital sessions

### Family Life Cycle

The pastor concludes the use of the genogram when he discusses with the couple the stages in the family life cycle. He uses the genogram to create a picture for the couple of two changes in the family life cycle. The couple is forming a new dyad, a new family system, and their families of origin are undergoing a developmental stage due to their exit. The pastor thus teaches the couple that three

family systems, the new family system that they will form and the family systems of both families of origin, will be affected.

Through the genogram, the pastor can graphically illustrate that differentiation from their families of origin must occur, creating a new family boundary that is sure and strong. As the couple enters the "newly married couple stage," there must be realignment within their new family system (their marital dyad) as well as within the systems of their families of origin. Changes have occurred which affect the family life cycles.

Then, once again, the pastor considers with the couple Genesis 2:24, emphasizing that two people from disparate and distinct families become one flesh and form a new family. The couple proceeds to the next stage of the family life cycle. Digging into that passage in even further depth, the pastor discusses with the couple the reality of the man and woman "leaving" father and mother. This would strongly imply a realignment of the family systems which the man and woman leave. This "leaving" connotes a renegotiation of personal relationships with parents, brothers, and sisters. The pastor then reiterates to the couple the Biblical teaching that they will "cleave" to one another. "Cleaving" strongly implies the formation of a new family system. In addition, this "cleaving" connotes a negotiation of personal issues between husband and wife, since the two will now "become one flesh."<sup>302</sup> All of the above reiterates the teaching that developmental changes must occur.

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<sup>302</sup>Gen. 2:24, NASB.



Monica McGoldrick and Elizabeth A. Carter's chapter from Froma Walsh's Normal Family Processes, "The Family Life Cycle," would be of assistance in the event that one or both of the premarital couple are having difficulty differentiating from their families of origin. Teaching the premarital couple about the family life cycle also profits their individual movement from one stage of the family life cycle, the "unattached young adult" stage, to the next stage, "the newly married couple" stage. If there is difficulty on the part of one or both of the premarital couple in moving from one stage to another, they could benefit from the explanations by McGoldrick and Carter.<sup>303</sup>

In contemplating the family life cycle, the pastor assists the couple in forming a clear boundary around their marital dyad. He teaches the couple that they must fully commit themselves to a new family system. The pastor supports and encourages the couple as they commit themselves. Simultaneously, he makes clear to the couple that the commitment and work is to be their own.<sup>304</sup>

### Negotiation

The process of premarital counseling moves next to the objective of exploring and advancing the couple's negotiation skills.

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<sup>303</sup>Monica McGoldrick and Elizabeth A. Carter, "The Family Life Cycle," in Normal Family Processes, ed. Froma Walsh (New York, New York: The Guilford Press, 1982), 176.

<sup>304</sup>*Ibid.*, 176.

Once again, pastor and couple study Matthew 19:6. God joins two people together in marriage.<sup>305</sup> These two people, who have lived separate and distinct lifestyles, now become one flesh. That necessitates discussing personal day-by-day issues for these two people. For instance, a husband has his habits pertaining to sleep; a wife has hers. Negotiation must now take place. Negotiation must also take place regarding meals, etc. The reality is no longer two distinct and separate lifestyles; the two have become one flesh. The Pastor furnishes the premarital couple with information and initiates negotiation.

Original sin, the pastor explains, is also a factor here. When two sinners live their lives together, problems will arise. Disagreements will occur. Arguments will happen. This is a sad reality and a result of humanity's fall into sin. Husband and wife must handle those problems successfully through a process of negotiation.

To explore and advance the couple's negotiation skills, the pastor may find it wise to execute a "Dynamic Relationship History" (DRH) with the couple. The concept comes from Robert F. Stahmann and William J. Hiebert's Premarital Counseling. The DRH is "a structured way of looking at the history of a relationship from the time the couple first met up to the wedding."<sup>306</sup> The authors explain,

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<sup>305</sup>Matt. 19:6, NASB.

<sup>306</sup>Robert F. Stahmann and William J. Hiebert, Premarital Counseling, Lexington, Massachusetts: Lexington Books, 1987), 57.

It is like a social history, with some significant differences. The DRH is informational in its orientation. The process is that of discovering some of the basic events, dates, dating maneuvers, and conflicts of the premarital process. But the DRH is rhythmic in its conclusions. The purpose is to help the couple become aware of how they behave with each other, how they affect each other, and the patterns they have already established.<sup>307</sup>

How is a DRH to be constructed? I have made certain suggestions of my own to add to Stahmann and Hiebert's recommendations. "The DRH," states Stahmann and Hiebert, "implies a chronological exploration of the relationship."<sup>308</sup> It makes use of a time line upon which significant events, dates, circumstances, and, in turn, patterns, are recorded. It progresses in time as one proceeds from left to right. Stahmann and Hiebert suggest "that the premarital counselor use a 'Y' graph placed on a horizontal dimension for the DRH."<sup>309</sup> The "Y" graph can also record significant circumstances in the individuals' lives prior to the relationship, significant circumstances in terms of prior dating or casual relationships, etc. The joining of the "Y" and the beginning of the straight horizontal line indicate the beginning of the current relationship. Stahmann and Hiebert emphasize that "the focus of the DRH is essentially rhythmic." The interest is in "the patterns that are evolving and being established in the process" of the couple's relationship. They write, "Our real interest is an exploration of the

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<sup>307</sup>Ibid.

<sup>308</sup>Ibid., 61.

<sup>309</sup>Ibid.

manner in which John affects Mary and Mary affects John and how they begin to develop a particular pattern in their relating style."<sup>310</sup>

In the midst of the DRH (in fact, within the recording of each event or significant circumstance), the pastor listens carefully for situations where past problems or areas of disagreement between the couple were negotiated. The pastor may elect to ask, "This (the reference being to a certain time period or event within the DRH that has caught the pastor's eye and ear) seemed to be a difficult time in your relationship. Were there any disagreements or disparities between the two of you? How did you work them out? Did you learn anything about negotiation or working out difficulties within your relationship from any of these past events? Are there any situations from which you did learn and now desire to negotiate future difficulties in the same way? Are there any 'disastrous attempts' at negotiation or working out difficulties in your past relationship history that you would want to avoid in the future?"

An additional line of questioning by the pastor may also be useful and may work toward the couple exploring and advancing their skills at negotiating. That line of questioning may include, "Tom, let's look back over your Dynamic Relationship History with Alice and then go way back to the time prior to your dating of Alice when you were dating other women. Are there examples or circumstances where problems or disagreements between you and Alice were negotiated more successfully than problems or disagreements that you experienced with other women? What was

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<sup>310</sup>Ibid., 63.

the difference in the case of the negotiating of problems between you and Alice? What successful methods or ways or idiosyncrasies have you and Alice used to work out disagreements? What successful methods of negotiation between you and Alice would you like to see used and enhanced in your marital relationship in the future?" The questions would also be addressed of the woman.

### Sexuality

The pastoral premarital counseling process includes discussion about sexuality, studying Genesis 1:27. Femaleness or maleness is a gift of the Creator.<sup>311</sup> The fact that the husband is male and the wife is female is a gift of God to marriage. Sexual intercourse between male and female is a gift of God to marriage. Some or all of the above may be discussed with the couple.

The pastor then proceeds to the Sixth Commandment. The Lord has given a commandment which deals specifically with one's sexuality. Consideration together with the couple of Luther's explanation of the Sixth Commandment provides salutary teaching and discussion for the premarital counseling session. Husband and wife are to "lead a sexually pure and decent life in what they say and do" and are to "love and honor each other."<sup>312</sup>

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<sup>311</sup>Gen. 1:27, NASB.

<sup>312</sup>Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation, 79.

Next, the pastor and couple study Hebrews 13:4. The Lord commands the husband and wife's outlook toward marriage and sexuality ("marriage should be honored by all") as well as commands their specific sexual actions ("the marriage bed kept pure"). The Lord also grants a warning regarding His judgment upon those who disobey His command with their sexuality ("God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral").<sup>313</sup>

The pastor may elect to begin a discussion about one's sexual identity by asking, "What does it mean to you, Tom, that you are a male? What will it mean for your marriage? What does it mean to you, Sandy, that you are a female? What will it mean for your marriage?" Questions similar to the above may be used to assist the premarital couple in thinking through their sexuality as well as any sex-linked role attributes. The pastor may also ask, "What did you learn from your dad, Tom, about being a male? Do you agree with those things that you learned from your dad? What did you learn from your mom, Sandy, about being a female? Do you agree with those things that you learned?"

### *The Wedding Worship Service*

Within the process of premarital counseling, the pastor teaches the couple about the Christian wedding worship service and works with the couple on their wedding worship service. Teaching the

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<sup>313</sup>Hebrews 13:4, NIV.

couple about the Christian wedding worship service is a very significant aspect of pastoral premarital counseling in any Christian Ministry. The placement of this section near the end of the process is not indicative that this aspect is any less significant than the other work within premarital counseling.

I have chosen to cover this issue at this point for two reasons. Other pastors with whom I have spoken include teaching the couple about the wedding worship service in their premarital counseling. This is nothing novel. In fact, for some of the pastors that is their entire premarital counseling. I believe that pastors are already well equipped to accomplish this aspect of the process. Also, I do not believe that I am able to add anything original to this aspect of the process.

Psalm 95:6,7 would be an appropriate Scripture to introduce this topic. Emphasis is made upon the fact that the bride and groom are "worshipping." They are "bowing down" and "kneeling before the Lord their Maker."<sup>314</sup> Nothing within their wedding worship service should be contrary to worship of their Lord; all which is a part of their wedding should hallow God's Name, do His will, and give Him glory.

It would also be good to proceed by examining 1 Timothy 4:4,5. The premarital couple who approach the Church for their wedding want their wedding and their marriage to be sanctified by the Word of God and prayer; that's what the wedding worship service is all about. It is fitting for the pastor to explain to the premarital couple

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<sup>314</sup>Psalm 95:6,7, NASB.

the wedding service, clarifying the specific aspects and elements of that service. "Here is the manner in which your wedding is sanctified by the Word and prayer," he might say, continuing, "We will be praying for you within the wedding worship service and here's how we will do that. You will be speaking vows to one another which are consistent with God's Word and God's will for your lives. Here are those vows. Here is God's Word which will be proclaimed at your wedding which will sanctify you and your wedding." Any song, aspect, or detail which is added to the service must, therefore, meet the criteria of sanctifying the wedding worship service with Word and prayer. If such is not the case in regard to a particular song, aspect, or detail, then there is no place for it within the service itself.

Finally, the pastor teaches the premarital couple that the wedding service is theocentric rather than anthrocentric. The people -- the bride, the groom, the pastor -- are not the center of the service; we are the worshippers. The Lord Christ is the center of the service.

### *Pastoral Relationship*

The final goal is the enhancement of the pastor's relationship with the couple for present and future ministry to the couple. I do not present a specific process that will accomplish this objective. Rather, I submit the following: The pastor speaks the truth in love to the Christian couple in premarital counseling. He lovingly and



faithfully ministers to them. He listens to their concerns compassionately and speaks to them from his heart. He gladly gives the time that they necessitate and gives assiduous effort to providing them a firm foundation for their marriage from God's Word. He loves them and cares for them, modeling that love and care. The pastor is sincere and honest with the premarital couple. He does not seek his own vainglory; rather, he seeks first God's kingdom and His righteousness. He loves the Lord, loves God's Word, loves the couple, and loves his calling and manifests that love in what he does.

The Lord Christ works through the pastor and through his ministry. In addition, the Spirit accompanies his teaching and sharing of God's Word. I would submit that the result would be a beautiful, loving, and respectful relationship of trust between the pastor and the couple. I would also submit that, by the Lord's benediction, there would be a continuing pastoral relationship with the couple.

## RESULTS

The goal of this MAP has been accomplished; at least ten specific objectives for pastoral premarital counseling in my campus ministry have been developed. In all, thirteen specific objectives were submitted. This MAP also presents a process which implements the thirteen objectives.

Each objective was developed through four components. The first component was my study of scriptural teachings regarding marriage. The second component was a "Survey Of Christian Married Adults" and the third was a "Survey of Christian Singles." The fourth component was my study of family therapy resources, psychological resources, and counseling resources.

## Appendix A

## A Survey Of Christian Married Adults

In my Graduate Studies, I am surveying Christian married adults and singles to ascertain their ideas regarding Pastoral Premarital Counseling. In Premarital Counseling, the Pastor works with the engaged couple to prepare them for marriage. I am very interested in your opinions as a Christian married adult upon this topic. What topics would you consider relevant to Premarital Counseling? Perhaps you experienced Pastoral Premarital Counseling before your marriage or possibly you did not have that opportunity. Perhaps, you have given this subject little or no thought previously; your answers, however, would be very much appreciated at this time.

*Please check any of the following topics (and/or add your own at the end) which you would consider relevant and beneficial for Pastoral Premarital Counseling.*

- \_\_\_\_\_The Lord's Word about marriage
- \_\_\_\_\_The Lord's Word about husbands
- \_\_\_\_\_The Lord's Word about wives
- \_\_\_\_\_The Lord's Word regarding divorce
- \_\_\_\_\_What does it mean to live your life "by faith" in Christ?
- \_\_\_\_\_Teaching the Couple to Pray
- \_\_\_\_\_Praying For the Couple Within the Premarital Counseling Sessions
- \_\_\_\_\_Sexuality
- \_\_\_\_\_Families of Origin (Considering the Family in which you were born and its effect upon your marriage)
- \_\_\_\_\_Family Systems (Contemplating your Family as a system with the dynamics involved within your Family)
- \_\_\_\_\_Family Life Cycle (Stages of the Family's Life Cycle, including the "unattached young adult stage," the "newly married couple stage," etc.)
- \_\_\_\_\_Communication and Communication Skills
- \_\_\_\_\_Relationships and Relationship Skills
- \_\_\_\_\_Birth Order (First Born in the family and traits which often accompany that First Born birth order, Last Born and accompanying traits, etc.)
- \_\_\_\_\_The Wedding Worship Service
- \_\_\_\_\_Financial Considerations Within Marriage including Budgeting, etc.
- \_\_\_\_\_The Couple's Worship Life
- \_\_\_\_\_Other Topics (Please jot down any other topics you think relevant and beneficial to Premarital Counseling upon the line that follows.)

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*Please list three of the topics that you checked (or that you wrote in) above which you consider the most significant topics for Premarital Counseling.*

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## Appendix B

## A Survey Of Christian Singles

In my Graduate Studies, I am surveying Christian married adults and singles to ascertain their ideas regarding Pastoral Premarital Counseling. In Premarital Counseling, the Pastor works with the engaged couple to prepare them for marriage. I am very interested in your opinions as a Christian single upon this topic. In the event that you would be involved in Premarital Counseling with a Pastor sometime in the future, what topics would you consider relevant to the Premarital Counseling? In your opinion, what topics would prepare couples in Premarital Counseling for marriage? Perhaps, you have given this subject little or no thought previously; your answers, however, would be very much appreciated at this time.

*Please check any of the following topics (and/or add your own at the end) which you would consider relevant and beneficial for Pastoral Premarital Counseling.*

- \_\_\_\_ The Lord's Word about marriage
- \_\_\_\_ The Lord's Word about husbands
- \_\_\_\_ The Lord's Word about wives
- \_\_\_\_ The Lord's Word regarding divorce
- \_\_\_\_ What does it mean to live your life "by faith" in Christ?
- \_\_\_\_ Teaching the Couple to Pray
- \_\_\_\_ Praying For the Couple Within the Premarital Counseling Sessions
- \_\_\_\_ Sexuality
- \_\_\_\_ Families of Origin (Considering the Family in which you were born and its effect upon your marriage)
- \_\_\_\_ Family Systems (Contemplating your Family as a system with the dynamics involved within your Family)
- \_\_\_\_ Family Life Cycle (Stages of the Family's Life Cycle, including the "unattached young adult stage," the "newly married couple stage," etc.)
- \_\_\_\_ Communication and Communication Skills
- \_\_\_\_ Relationships and Relationship Skills
- \_\_\_\_ Birth Order (First Born in the family and traits which often accompany that First Born birth order, Last Born and accompanying traits, etc.)
- \_\_\_\_ The Wedding Worship Service
- \_\_\_\_ Financial Considerations Within Marriage including Budgeting, etc.
- \_\_\_\_ The Couple's Worship Life
- \_\_\_\_ Other Topics (Please jot down on the line below any other topics you think relevant and beneficial to Premarital Counseling.)

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*Please list three of the topics that you checked (or that you wrote in) above which you consider the most significant topics for Premarital Counseling.*

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