

Strengthening the Christian Family

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[A Workshop Report, June 21-25, 1982]

INTRODUCTION

The Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Faculty at Mequon, Wisconsin, thought it would be beneficial to offer a summer workshop on "Strengthening the Christian Family" in June of 1982. The focus of this workshop was to be on prevention, on enrichment, on education, on strengthening rather than on repairing the Christian family. The intent of the workshop was to explore ideas and discuss various ways in which the local congregation could provide support and enrichment for the Christian family. Special emphasis was to be placed on pre-marriage sessions.

Professor Irwin Habeck, from the Seminary, and Mr. Fred Matzke, from Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Service, were asked to provide the leadership for the workshop. The following memo was sent to all twenty-one participants on May 12, 1982.

It is our understanding that each of you has received the book, Family Ministry. We expect you to read this prior to the workshop session.

We are also planning on each class member preparing some type of activity or program or special project which will focus on strengthening one stage of family life. These stages include: Confirmation, youth, pre-marriage, early post-marriage, parenting younger children, older children, blended families, single-parent families, etc. Some resources will be available at the workshop. However, you may wish to bring along some additional material which you currently have available. We are looking forward to a true "working-shop" type of session with minimal leader presentation and maximum sharing and development of ideas and activities. Sometime after the workshop is completed, the leaders will prepare a booklet which will be distributed to all pastors. This booklet will incorporate ideas, concepts and references to the material which is shared during the workshop. Please provide documentation for all resource materials so that others may benefit from your knowledge.

We are looking forward to a workshop which will focus on strengthening, rather than on repairing, Christian family life.

THE WORKSHOP BEGINS

The first step in any real "working-shop" is to begin to build a feeling of trust and acceptance among the participants. This process was started by the leaders personally greeting each one, followed by each of the other twenty-one participants. The chairs in the large room were arranged in close proximity of each other. The second step in a workshop is to be able to determine what the participants are expecting from the session. (Incidentally, a participant who expects nothing usually meets his expectation!) In this workshop we divided the group into five smaller groups. One of their tasks was to discuss and list their expectations for the workshop. Several expectations were in the area of programs and activities for pre-marital counseling, marriage enrichment, parenting, discipline, and other similar areas of family life. Another grouping of expectations centered around the Christian family communication, family stresses and problems, raising the spiritual level of

the family, family life today, etc. A third set of expectations focused on the Christian family within the parsonage. There was the anticipation that the workshop material could be personally beneficial to the participant and his family. These three major groupings of expectations all coincided with the expectations of the leaders. There was a fourth set of expectations which dealt with pastoral counseling in problem situations such as divorce, alcoholism, marital problems, etc. The leaders recognized the interest of the participants in these problem areas. However, the focus of this workshop was on strengthening and prevention. Therefore, pastoral counseling of family problem areas was not a part of this workshop.

THE TEXTBOOK

The textbook used in the workshop was "Family Ministry, the Enrichment of Family Life Through the Church", by Charles M. Sell. Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1981. 298 pp. A review of the book appeared in the summer issue of the Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly.

Charles M. Sell, Th. D., Dallas Theological Seminary, is Director of Education at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois. Concerning the purpose of his book he writes: "Family Ministry" is about two major processes: Christian education of the home and Christian education in the home" (p 200). "Our major task is not to choose between the church and the home as agents of nurture 'but to integrate their efforts. How to do that is really the subject of this book" (p 211).

Concerning the purpose He points out that while today there are many homes made up of single parents or single persons, the nuclear family (parents and children) is still the ideal. He observes that the extended family where grandparents and other relatives lived either under the same roof or nearby and helped to supply support and intimacy is gradually disappearing. As a result nuclear families are becoming increasingly isolated and look only to one another for intimacy. This imposes greater strains upon the family and results in frequent disappointments which need to be recognized and resolved.

He discusses courtship and engagement, pre-marital counseling, the functions of marriage and the role of marriage partners, and parenting. There must be a strong Christian family if there is to be a strong church. In discussing the role of marriage partners he makes an interesting observation: "It is possible to see a consent to slavery in his (Paul's) writings, but he never offers theological support for the practice as he does for order in marriage" (p 104). He upholds the principle that the Lord has assigned the prime responsibility for the Christian training of children to parents and not to the church. He stresses the importance of communication in all interpersonal relationships. The latter chapters of the book tell of programs which have been introduced into evangelical churches to assist parents in working with their children. We may derive less benefit from these practical suggestions than from the statistical information which is cited and from the author's evaluation of what is happening to the American family. Especially pleasing is his acceptance of the Bible as the Word of God and final authority in matters of faith and life.

The participants in the workshop divided into smaller groups to discuss and subsequently to report on their general evaluation of the textbook. Some of the reactions were as follows. The contents are well-organized. Some of the doctrinal views need to be tested, for example, concerning the depravity of man. The plea for more gospel orientation in matters like divorce counseling, organizations, and child discipline was appreciated. Reference to the extended family was interesting as was the comparison between life in the parsonage and in

the average nuclear family. The attempt to keep the material biblically and theologically based was good. Sin is called by its right name and repentance and commitment are called for. The statistical information about the present state of family life was impressive. There are good bibliographies and suggestions for further reading.

There were also comments about some specific areas. The stressing of the importance of communication in interpersonal relations was good. The need for parent training was highlighted. While the value of family devotions was recognized, the caution was expressed that at times the less regimented approach might be more beneficial.

Quite a few comments were made about the suggested programs for implementing family ministry. The discussion of hazards in "Marriage Encounter" were appreciated. The present form of organizations in the church tends to involve only a part of the family at one time with the result that families cannot be at home together. Intergenerational activities would tend to involve entire families and also provide room for single parent families. The suggested programs sound good, but are they feasible? They are too time consuming for the pastor of an average sized congregation to implement.

The evaluation of the textbook was continued as the leaders raised questions for group discussion. Is strengthening the family an essential or a peripheral function of the church? If the church regards preaching and teaching the Word as its primary function, will it be by-passing training for family living? What are we in our churches now doing to train for family living? Does the textbook downgrade evangelism in favor of training for family living? In the discussion which these questions evoked there was a clear consensus that the primary function of the church is to preach the Word, a function which includes evangelism. But since the teaching of the Word involves the third use of the law, pointing out the divine directives for sanctification, training for family living will be included. Parents will teach their children the virtues which need to be cultivated if there is to be harmony, cooperation and joy in living together in the family. By their own example they will model these virtues. This training will be augmented by the catechetical instruction of their children.

In the textbook the plea for more intensive family ministry is based upon the fact that the extended family is disappearing while the stresses upon the nuclear family are increasing. We asked, "Does the textbook overstate the case? What is your experience?" While the answers varied according to the location of congregations, it was surprising to have a considerable number of the participants report that they have noticed that once people have reached their home they want to remain in isolation. In this connection it was mentioned that changes in family structure are not the only factor contributing to family problems. The media give the impression that divorce, living together without the benefit of marriage, and homosexuality are quite normal and therefore to be accepted. Hence the church needs to emphasize a family ministry which proclaims God's standards for marriage and the family.

What about the programs which the textbook suggests for strengthening the family? Do present organizational patterns tend to disrupt family living by taking family members away from the family at different times? Does the emphasis on plans and programs point toward structured sanctification and ignore spontaneous sanctification, the Spirit-directed response of the Christian to God's will in his own way and place? Since voluntary participation is stressed, do the suggestions aim only at strengthening the family life of those who have the time and desire to participate in a suggested program? What can be done for those who do not participate? In this connection attention was called to the importance of pastoral calls. If a pastor regularly visits his members in their homes, they may use the opportunity to ask advice concerning a problem which has arisen in their family although they would have shied away from asking for a counseling session. Even if nothing like that happens, the very presence of the pastor in their home will be a silent reminder that the Lord is interested in their family. Thus pastoral visits become an aid in strengthening the family.

The textbook encourages having intergenerational activities in the program of the church. Participants were asked whether in their congregations they now have activities other than the worship services which serve to bring entire families together, including fractured, blended, single parent and single person families. Among activities mentioned were fellowship meals and church picnics. A different type of church sponsored activity was discussed briefly: Family nights. All members of a family are encouraged to be at home together either one night per week or at regular intervals and to worship together, talk together and play together. This was looked upon as an idea worth considering.

PASTOR'S OWN FAMILY

The textbook, Family Ministry, postulated that the modern family is a unit isolated from kin and community. As such, many emotional demands are made upon the nuclear family. In many cases, the pastor and his family are also removed from their family of origin. They also can feel as an isolated unit in their congregation and community. Time for the family is another critical issue in the parsonage. The following excerpt from Dr. Dobson's article was distributed to the members of the class.

From, May 7, 1982, Christianity Today.
James Dobson, "Snatching the Family
From its Grave." p. 19

Question: What is the biggest obstacle facing the family right now?

It is overcommitment; time pressure. There is nothing that will destroy family life more insidiously than hectic schedules and busy lives, where spouses are too exhausted to communicate, too worn out to have sex, too fatigued to talk to the kids. That frantic lifestyle is just as destructive as one involving outbroken sin. If Satan can't make you sin, he'll make you busy, and that's just about the same thing.

Question: What is the future of the family - the mother and father - the traditional understanding of what constitutes a family? Will it survive?

I think it will survive. It will depend on several factors. I have stated that the continuation of the family depends largely on the attitudes of husbands and fathers. Women, for the most part, are already committed to holding it together; they often know more about the man's role than he does. And women will follow the leadership of their husbands in this regard if we can get the attention of the men. I might add that this leadership is occurring all across America today, and I am very encouraged by the dedication I see among husbands and fathers who care very deeply for their families. This trend must continue if we are to get through the present crises.

Second, America is desperately in need of a spiritual revival that would sweep the country. I become emotional when talking about it, because I really believe this is a desperate need. The "born-again" phenomenon of about four or five years ago is passing, leaving in its wake a vacuum. Now our greatest need is for men and women to fall on their faces before the Lord, repenting of their sins and asking for forgiveness and renewal. Every area of our lives, including relationships within the family, would become healthier if that kind of obedience and devotion to the Word of God were evident in every home. Unless this spiritual renewal occurs, I'm afraid we're going to face some hard times ahead.

Question: Is there hope for a genuine revival? I really don't know. Historically, the only thing that turns nations around is serious national trouble of some variety. But we're holding a full cup. We do a lot of moaning and groaning about unemployment and hunger and sacrifice, but we're still better off than almost any country in the world. Until the majority of Americans have reason to turn to God, I question whether they'll make that commitment and pay the price of repentance.

Each participant was then given an assignment sheet and was asked to complete it individually. The assignment was to have each participant think about his own family support system and kinship and determine what was or was not available to him. Secondly, he was to reflect on Dobson's comments in relationship to his own marriage and family. After completing the individual assignment, small groups were formed in which the participants could voluntarily share and discuss their thoughts. The purpose of this activity was two fold. First, it is important for leaders in family life programs to reflect on their own families. Since pastors are in positions of leadership, an understanding of some aspects of family functioning is important.

Secondly, the workshop actively involved small groups. The participants were able to experience the process involved in sharing ideas of a personal nature with each other. This could serve to heighten their awareness of participation in group activity.

The section on family life in the parsonage ended with the distribution of two sheets which pertained to marriage and family life. One of the expectations for the workshop was to characterize the ideal marriage and family. The following brief statements do present some of the important aspects of marriage and family strengths.

"The Plus Element"

Marriages with the "plus element" are characterized by:

1. Partners who place their relationship above their own personal desires.
2. The willingness of both partners to give each other what they need.
3. The ability of both partners to adjust to changes and growth in the relationship.
4. Partners who will work at keeping the lines of honest communication open.
5. Playful spontaneity.
6. The willingness of both partners to spend time specifically building and improving the relationship.
7. Partners who love Jesus Christ above all else.

From: Dahl, Gerald
Why Christian Marriages Are Breaking Up
 Thomas Nelson Publishers
 Nashville, New York 1979
 p. 132 – 139

FAMILY STRENGTHS

Family strengths are defined as those relationship patterns, interpersonal skills and competencies, and social and psychological characteristics which:

1. Create a sense of positive family identity
2. Promote satisfying and fulfilling interaction among family members
3. Encourage the development of the potential of the family group and individual family members

4. Contribute to the family's ability to deal effectively with stress and crises p. 1
 Families constitute a small group of people who live together in a committed, intimate, interpersonal relationship and who see their own identity as being important by being attached to the group - a group which has a clear identity of its own. p. 2

From: Stinnett, Nick
Building Family Strengths
 1979, University of Nebraska

WORKING WITH GROUPS

It is generally accepted that marriage enrichment and family life education type activities are best implemented through small group sharing and discussion. This means that the group leader is an important person in facilitating group participation. Generally, the pastor is the group leader if a marriage or family activity is held within the congregation. The workshop devoted a short amount of time to the function of a group leader.

The primary function of a group leader is to enable the members of the group to share their ideas and experiences and to stimulate the discussion with some input. The group leader must also have some convictions about the capabilities of the people who are attending a group function. In other words, the group leader must have the belief that the group does have knowledge and expertise and not only the leader.

The leader's manual of S.T.E.P. (Systemic Training for Effective Parenting) has some excellent points about group leadership.

The Leader Must Have These Basic Beliefs About People.

1. People are able, not unable. They have the capacity to solve their problems
2. People are friendly, not unfriendly. They expect a reciprocal relationship.
3. People are worthy, not unworthy. They possess dignity which must be respected.
4. People are basically internally motivated, not externally motivated. They are creative and motivated from within.
5. People are dependable, not undependable. They are essentially trustworthy, predictable and understandable.
6. People are helpful, not hindering. They are sources of satisfaction and enhancement.

An effective leader must also project an impression of self-confidence. This rests upon the belief that one is adequate to meet the responsibilities and challenges of life. A feeling of personal adequacy also gives a leader something else - the courage to be imperfect.

As a summary to this section on group leadership, we have included several items which are important to becoming a group leader.

There are certain experiences which every discussion leader has to live through. In the first place, the leader must make mistakes, even the most skilled leaders make many errors. That is the best way to learn; by recognizing that what you do can be improved by trying to do it differently and better the next time. When the next time arrives you are likely to discover that you made the same mistake. That, too, is to be expected.

1. Just keep on and "take it." Criticize yourself and you will find that in time you will improve and be able to correct your own mistakes.
2. You will feel a bit awkward and a bit tense. This is because you will not feel quite confident in your ability.
3. When members of the discussion group seem to have nothing to say there will be a painful silence. The beginning leader feels the strain and doesn't know what to do. He will start telling the group what he thinks. This is not wise. Try, instead, to encourage the group to do the speaking. Find out what blocks the discussion. Very often, if you observe closely, you will discover that the chief factor is fear of being different, fear of being criticized by other members or by the leader. This is the chief stumbling block in learning. Most individuals are unsure of themselves. Hence, they become defensive in the attempt to reassure themselves. Few of us really try to face and admit our limitations, uncertainties, and confusion. This holds true, too, for the leader who isn't sure of himself. He starts talking because he does not know what else to do and is not comfortable in the presence of group silence.
4. Some members talk too much. The leader becomes irritated and wants to shut them up. There are different ways of doing this, some ways are better than others. The simplest procedure is privately to ask those who talk too much if they'd like to help and give others a chance.
5. Some members rarely talk. The leader feels the need to get them into the discussion. Here, too, there are different ways of helping the more timid or retiring members. Often, the leader makes the mistake of dragging them into the discussion. It is much better to watch for the time when they appear ready to participate and then encourage them.
6. It is a very easy matter for a discussion to get out of hand and develop into a "bull session." The leader makes a mistake when he fails to stop irrelevant discussion. It is not always easy to decide when the discussion does become irrelevant but the careful leader is on guard. "I think we had better return to the main point" is a simple way to bring the discussion back to the issue.
7. It is a mistake for a leader not to start exactly on time and not to call a halt exactly when the meeting is scheduled to close. This makes both leader and group members more responsible in their respective duties.
8. Remember, there is no end to skill in leading a discussion. The best way to acquire increased skill is to lead a discussion. The more experience you have the more likely will your technique improve. Here, as elsewhere, you learn by making and profiting from mistakes. You will make many mistakes. All leaders do. As you gain experience you will gain awareness of how to correct them. It takes time - and the will to improve.
9. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. Any leader who wants to improve and who is willing to put the effort into the job and accept the pain of failure will inevitably experience genuine satisfaction after a certain period. The normal individual possesses a

great deal of unreleased creativity. The trouble is that individuals have been led to fear to use their own creativity.

The leader is responsible for knowing the material to be learned and the member is responsible for learning the material to be known.

PRE-MARITAL COUNSELING

Since a new family begins with marriage, we considered it logical to begin with a discussion of pre-marital counseling. The bibliography in this area is extensive. The focus is upon a number of consultations, generally ranging from three to five, between a couple and its pastor. This does not mean to say that a couple has learned nothing about marriage and subsequent family life before these consultations take place. Children often think of themselves as future husbands and wives as they "play house." They constantly have the example of the marriage of their parents before their eyes. They learn about the institution of marriage in Eden. Many other Bible stories in one way or another set them to thinking about marriage and family relationships. When they learn the Fourth and Sixth Commandments, they need to think about the family and marriage. During courtship couples evaluate one another as potential marriage partners. When they become engaged they show that their mutual evaluation has been favorable and that they are ready to enter upon a lifelong commitment to one another.

The pre-marital consultations serve to draw the previous thoughts and impressions together and to augment them. One of the participants in the workshop wrote:

Pre-marital counseling should not be initiated only after a couple makes a public announcement of their impending marriage. The pastor must lay the groundwork for pre-marital counseling early in the lives of the members of his congregation. His intentions to meet with every engaged couple should be reinforced through the medium of preaching and teaching those topical Scripture texts which deal with the subject of male-female-family relationships.

Over a period of time the members of the congregation should consider it to be an automatic part of their marriage preparation that they spend at least three sessions discussing what God's idea is about marriage and what they can do to benefit from the blessings of marriage that God intends. These sessions will cover a range of topics: The purpose of marriage, the relationship between the husband and wife to each other under Christ, the dual blessing of sexual chastity in the union of marriage, dealing with family finances, problems and blessings, and evaluating the importance of the unity of faith in marriage.

Questions will be asked at the end of each session in order to stimulate open lines of communication regarding vital issues before the marriage takes place.

...Only a love for and faith in the risen Christ will enable the sinful but righteous spouse to carry out the promise of sharing his or her life with another human being and expect the blessing of God after saying, "I do!"

One of the participants submitted for discussion the program which he follows in pre-marital counseling.

I. Marriage -- a scriptural perspective

- A. The institution of marriage. Gn 2:18-21.
- B. The love God commands for husbands and wives. Eph 5:25, 28
- C. The roles of husband and wife in marriage. Eph 5:22-24
- D. The crosses laid upon husband and wife. Gn 3:16-19
- E. The blessings of marriage -- to whom they are promised and the circumstances under which they apply. Pr 18:22, Ps 128:1-4
(Home assignment: Read Pr 31:10-31 and 1 Cor 13 together, preferably out loud.)

II. The Vows.

Not a contract but a commitment.

What do they mean to us? To God?

- A. Love (refer to I,B; also to 1 Cor 13:1-13)
- B. Honor (Eph 5:21)
- C. Cherish (Ru 1:16, 17)
- D. Keep
 - 1. Sickness and health
 - 2. Forsaking all others
 - 3. Till death parts
- E. Obey (see I,C)

III. Religion

- A. Where both are members of your church
 - 1. What does Jesus mean to you?
 - 2. How do you plan to include Him in your life? marriage? home?
(Praying together; public and private worship together)
- B. Where one (or both) is of another faith or unchurched
 - 1. How will II above be applied? (Point out problem areas).
 - 2. What can be done to derive the benefits of I, E?
 - 3. Evangelism thrust. Explain the pastor's class and seek commitment to attend.

The couple is asked to fill out a form giving the following statistical information about each: Name; address and phone; previous marriage(s); children; employer; type of employment; educational background; baptized? active in church? parents' name; parents' address; parents' phone; parents' religion; number of brothers and sisters; has the permission of parents been given? It is evident that both the program and the statistical information requested will vary. Some ask couples to fill out extensive questionnaires so that problem areas might be spotted and discussed. Some even presume to advise against marriage if too many serious problem areas surface. The question was raised about the degree of responsibility a pastor has for discussing finances or sexual relations. Some were of the opinion that the pastor ought to restrict himself to discussing the Bible passages which bear directly upon marriage and family. Attention was called to the fact that the effectiveness of pre-marital counseling is being called into question because the divorce rate among those who have had pre-marital counseling is as great as it is among those who have not had it. The substitute or complement which is being suggested is neo-marital counseling. This will be treated later.

THE WEDDING

The discussion of weddings was introduced by means of a film depicting a marriage ceremony.. The Aid Association for Lutherans funded the production. In it the couple used an original exchange of vows. The consensus of the participants was that the film was beautiful but shallow. While they do not advocate the use of an original form, they are ready to tolerate one if it is carefully edited by the pastor. Experience showed that if in pre-marital counseling there had been a reverent review of what the Bible has to say about marriage, couples preferred the traditional marriage form because it emphasizes scriptural principles. While in the film the focus was upon the bridal pair and what they would do, with little reference to the Lord, the traditional form does emphasize the Lord's part in establishing, blessing and preserving marriage. Other matters discussed were the use of the word "obey". Service music, soloists, the wedding address, the need to guard against letting the wedding degenerate into a well-rehearsed theatrical production.

One feature of the film were the flashbacks in the minds of the parents of the bridal pair as they heard certain words of the ceremony. When promotion made moving to a different city necessary, the husband at first had been self-centered. The wife reluctantly acceded to his wishes. When he realized what an emotional strain she was undergoing, he became understanding and supportive. In another flashback husband and wife recalled having barked at one another over a trivial matter. The incident led them to realize that instead of communicating they had been allowing resentments to mount. A counseling session enabled them to straighten things out and again to appreciate each other and their love for one another. The film also brought the reminder that there are going to be many changes in circumstances during the course of married life and that couples need to learn to adjust to change. It was also observed that there is danger that parents might become so engrossed in their children and in their role as parents that they neglect to think of themselves as husband and wife and to continue to work at cementing their relation to one another.

NEO-MARITAL COUNSELING

This approach to strengthening marriages and families is attracting more and more attention and is being viewed favorably. Participants in-the workshop also were interested. Another term which has been used is early post-marital counseling. The idea is to have consultations with couples, singly or in groups, during the period between six months and two years after their marriage. The reason given is that at the time of pre-marital counseling the couple have had no experience as to what marriage is all about and are so idealistic and starry-eyed that they feel no need for information because they dream that theirs is bound to be an ideal marriage. After a number of months, however, they have come to know what marriage really is and may have come to realize that there are issues which need to be resolved. A starting point in such consultations might be a review of the areas discussed in pre-marital counseling. The suggestion is that a couple at the time of the pre-marital counseling session commit itself to a neo-marital consultation. If such a firm commitment is made, in-depth discussion of some of the areas usually touched upon in pre-marital counseling (finances, communication, sex) could be deferred until the neo-marital consultation.

This is how one of the participants visualized such a consultation:

- I. Goals
 - A. Sensitize them to the feelings of each other
 - B. Show pastoral concern
 - C. Prepare them to face the new and continuing issues in marriage
 - D. Help them improve their communication skills
 - E. Help them appropriate the God-intended fulfillment of marriage

II. Procedure

Ask each spouse to answer the following questions separately on paper:

- A. How do you feel about your marriage?
- B. What do you like most about your marriage?
- C. What do you like most about your spouse?
- D. In what area would you like to see your marriage grow?
- E. What can you do to help that growth?

Hand them in and put them aside for now.

III. Review the following concepts, trying to involve them in the discussion:

- A. Review the biblical principles of marriage
 1. Christ as the head of the family (family devotions, prayer, etc.)
 2. Loving submission of the wife willing to be a helper
 3. Loving headship of the husband willing to assume his authority
 4. The physical, emotional and spiritual oneness
 5. Children as a gift of the Lord
- B. Review the practical aspects of marriage
 1. The formation of a new nuclear family and its relationship to the extended family
 2. The importance of each spouse's financial responsibility
 3. Settling differences in a God-pleasing way
 4. Definition of love - doing based on marital commitment, not just a feeling
 5. The importance of open, honest communication between spouses

IV. Windup

- A. Ask each to guess the spouse's responses (II) and then let them read each other's answers. Discuss their accuracy/inaccuracy and re-emphasize the importance of communication of feelings
- B. Close with a prayer asking God to bless and enrich their marriage relationship. One participant showed the need for neo-marital counseling by listing the five phases through which marriages pass
 1. The dream world phase (my partner will change, will change), sex is good, careful conversation, quick quarrels - quick make-up). The marriage can only get worse.
 2. Disillusionment phase (first stage of getting into reality, bad habits surface, pick-and-run quarrels, doubts of love/thoughts of other person one maybe should have married.) This is a good time. It needs to happen.
 3. The misery phase (dangerous time, sex isn't working/duty, give up on the partner's changing, on edge toward each other, convinced that I got the bum deal.) This is no time to quit. The element for growing is finally present - honest talk.
 4. Awaking phase (facing realities - there must be something!/some love here, honest conversations, I/we know true love has to be built, I know I have to do something about it even if you don't, hope revives).
 5. Love phase (not perfect, feel appreciated/feel confidence, trust is re-established, sex is finally blooming). Problems are not problems but opportunities to take the initiative to truly love.

LATER MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT

Meetings with couples in the 35-45 age bracket came up for discussion. One participant wrote: "It seems that many have difficulties at this period of marriage.

My pastoral experience has been that the greatest number of divorces have occurred in this age group. Perhaps stresses produced by the children, career, time pressures, realization of aging, lure of an extra-marital affair, lack of communication are some of the contributing factors. If a marriage fails, one or both of the partners usually ends up leaving the church."

Some of the suggestions which he offered for improving the situation were: continue to preach the Word, special series of sermons on marriage and home, counseling couples, written materials (segments in newsletters, listing and promoting good books and booklets, new member packet), special series of Bible classes on marriage, marriage enrichment seminar using the help of Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Service, a seminar tailored to own needs and personality and situation.

In connection with the latter two items he offered suggestions for a seminar. It would be a combination of informal lectures, reactions and couple discussions and application. "I have in mind three sessions of several hours each." The leaders would be the local pastor, pastors of sister congregations, and lay people skilled in financial planning or in other areas. Meetings would be held on Saturday morning and afternoon and Sunday afternoon. An alternative would be three successive Wednesday evenings. The suggested program follows.

I. Bible Principles

- A. Getting acquainted
- B. Each writes "Several Things about My Marriage and Spouse for Which I Thank God." Couples discuss what they have written and then share with the larger group matters which they wish to share. The purpose is to get things off on a positive note by looking at the blessings God has given to their marriage.
- C. An informal lecture on "Back to the Basics." What does God say about marriage? Stress lifelong commitment and define terms such as love, forgiveness, headship, commitment. Encouragement to respect each other's individuality: Feelings and the right to have them, abilities and gifts. Stress that the spouse too is a redeemed child of God dearly loved by him.
- D. Each person writes "Strengths and Weaknesses in Our Family's Spiritual Life." Couples discuss what they have written. It shares with the larger group anything which it desires to share, especially suggested helps.

II. Communication In Marriage

- A. Couples evaluate communication skills using questionnaires
- B. Small group discussion about importance of communication and areas where better communication often is needed
- C. The leader speaks on communication. Communication guidelines are to be handed out later. Stress:
 - 1. Speaking well of others
 - 2. The art of listening
 - 3. Speaking the truth
 - 4. How the truth is to be spoken
 - 5. How to communicate differences
 - 6. Hazards of "overcommunication" (some things should not be said, the sinful nature's mouth is to be kept closed)
- D. Couples again assess own communication skills, their strengths and weaknesses

- III. Sex and Money
 - A. Pastor: What God says about sex
 - B. If possible, use film #6 in Dobson's series "Focus on the Family" which speaks about the emotional differences between man and woman
 - C. Use the practical sections on this subject in the books One Plus One Equals — and Marriage Should Be Honored by All
 - D. Suggestions
 - 1. Since this is a very private area, sensitivity should be used by the speaker
 - 2. Give couples a discussion guide and have them discuss it at home
 - 3. A questionnaire for each about money and marriage
 - 4. Couple or small group discussion
 - 5. Informal lecture on biblical principles and practical applications
 - 6. Large group interaction

Since communication is widely regarded as an important aid in strengthening the family, we submit a program on this subject which was suggested by one of the participants.

COMMUNICATION IN MARRIAGE

- I. Objectives
 - A. To examine Scripture passages dealing with interpersonal communication
 - B. To strengthen communication
 - C. To overcome communication barriers
- II. Opening devotion: James 3:2-10 (use of the tongue)
- III. Concerns in marriage
 - A. Unfaithfulness
 - B. Financial trouble
 - C. In-law interference
 - D. Mistreatment
- IV. Comments typical of communication barriers
 - A. "We just don't talk anymore. We just sit and watch TV." (Non-communication)
 - B. "All we talk about is the mundane." (Surface talk)
 - C. "I can't get a word in edgewise." (Nagging)
 - D. "He won't say a word." (Silent treatment)
 - E. "We talk civilly when others are around, but not when we're alone." (Argument)
 - F. "He talks a good game, but doesn't mean it." (Insincerity)
 - G. "He thinks he knows it all and treats me like a dummy." (Superiority)
- V. Scriptural Guidelines for Communication
 - A. Look at Proverbs: (Divide into groups, look up passages and list positive and negative forms of communication). Proverbs 12:18; 13:3; 14:29; 15:23; 28; 17:14; 18:13; 20:3; 21:23; 25:11; 29:11; 20.
 - B. Look at Ephesians 4:15, 29-32. (St. Paul describes the kind of Christian communication God's Spirit makes possible in our lives and in marriage)
 - 1. What does Paul condemn in 29 and 31? How do these things build communication barriers?

2. What does Paul mean in 29 when he says: "Only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen?"

Take any one (or all) of the seven communication barriers and consider how you could improve communication by "building up" each other (be specific)

- C. Look at James 1:19,20. Put your faith into action by being a good listener ("be quick to listen") and a careful speaker ("slow to speak and slow to become angry").
 1. In what ways is a speaking problem often a listening problem?
 2. How many of the seven communication barriers could be minimized by careful listening?
- D. Breaking down the barriers
 1. Make better communication a top priority
 - a. Set aside daily time for talking together
 - b. Detect and evaluate some of your unique communication problems devise a strategy to deal with them in a positive way
 2. Learn better listening skills, especially in the area of feelings
 3. Avoid careless speech - nagging, judging and angry outbursts
 4. Speak the truth in love clearly (thinking and feelings)

VI. Closing comments and prayer

Middle Years -- Empty Nest

Under this heading there was a discussion of stresses imposed upon marriage by the beginning of the aging process and the fact that the children have grown up and left home. The body is no longer as vigorous and attractive as it once was. Work is not approached with the same zest as heretofore and accomplishments taper off. Emotional life, formerly kept busy by a multitude of problems, slows down to a mid-life crisis which may be accompanied with intense self-doubt resulting in terrifying thoughts which one does not want to face or admit.

When people suddenly panic at mid-life or a little later, when the nest is empty, they may suddenly become aware of something that was there all along: It has been an empty marriage, husband and wife were fathers and mothers only. They surely need to talk, but only if it is in love's language. Mere brutal honesty would do more harm than good. There must be respect, loyalty and kindness. One can teach people how to talk, to avoid fight ruts, to avoid attacking people instead of issues, but only if they want to listen, share thoughts, feelings, hopes; yes, to share their life and their eternity with one another.

After this diagnosis these practical suggestions were offered:

1. Touch upon this problem when treating marriage in confirmation class
2. In the youth organization discuss the role of children in the marriage of their parents.
3. Once annually in the monthly mailing include assessment questions to be filled out together by husband and wife. Those with problems in doing so are urged to contact their pastor.
4. An annual marriage renewal Sunday. The bulletin is to contain the vows. At an appropriate time all husbands and wives are to repeat: "Before God I take you anew etc."

EARLY PARENTING

Ordinarily the family consists not only of husband and wife but also of the children who are the offspring of their marriage. Therefore the relationship between parents and children was also discussed.

A SEMINAR FOR EXPECTANT PARENTS

- I. Goal: To help first time parents prepare for the new family member
- II. Leaders: Pastor, parents, professionals from the congregation (physicians, lawyers, insurance agents)
- III. Basic purposes
 - A. To strengthen the marital bond of husband and wife by post-marital type of discussion: Meaning of marriage, communication, problem solving, financial planning, blessing of children.
 - B. To support new parents during the waiting period. Using a brief test format center the discussion upon such topics as physical changes, parent terminology, family background and cost factors. Audi-visual aids such as overhead outlines and cartoons may be helpful in keeping things interesting.
 - C. To prepare the couple for changes that will occur in their life together, the time the baby will take up, what to expect as far as sleep is concerned, a warning not to forget one another.
 - D. To encourage the parents carefully to provide for the baby's spiritual needs: The necessity of baptism soon after birth; suggestions for songs, prayers and ways of helping the baby to learn about its Savior.
 - E. To present the need for Christian loving, holding and caring for the baby to let it know that the parents accept it as God's gift to them.

EARLY PARENTING

- I. In discussing this area a workshop participant started by saying that if a child becomes a problem child when he enters school, this may be due to the fact that its parents have neglected their responsibility in the training of the child. Fathers have been so busy with their jobs, their household chores and their recreation that they have neglected to give the child the attention which it needed. Mothers may have let the child shift for itself and looked forward to the time when it would be off to school.
- II. Meanwhile the church has sought to provide guidance for parents. The following items were listed:
 - A. We have had the custom of Christian family emphasis in our services on the traditional days: Mothers' Day, Fathers' Day, school opening.
 - B. We have emphasized proper discipline and training as part of our pre-marital counseling.
 - C. We have had Bible studies devoted to the family.
 - D. We have both made available and recommended proper reading materials on the family.
 - E. We instituted a practice of having quarterly Christian family meetings
- III. The following goals for such meetings were listed:
 - A. To get family members to review their roles and accept their responsibilities.
 - B. To get fathers to see the importance of spending time with their children.
 - C. To get fathers and mothers to work together as a team in the area of teaching and discipline during this important stage of development in the lives of their children.
 - D. To present guidelines for happiness and enriched family life so that crises might be avoided.

FAMILY EMPHASIS PERIOD

This was another suggestion which was presented. It would also provide help in early parenting. Family members would be invited to a group session sometime during the period between Mothers' Day and Fathers' Day. The following methods were suggested:

- I.
 - A. A film series
 - B. A workshop arrangement of Bible study and presentations in the area of general parenting, discipline, problem solving, communication, sibling rivalry.
 - C. A variety between presentation by a leader, group involvement, panel discussion, and individual interest and aptitude.
- II. These goals were listed:
 - A. To show that education and discipline are the continuing responsibility of parents.
 - B. To promote concert in action among those who have the most influence on the developing child.
 - C. To redefine roles of husband/wife/child and encourage faithful performance of these roles.
 - D. To promote commitment, communication and a feeling of common cause among family members.

CONFIRMATION -- INVOLVING THE PARENTS

A meeting with the children who are to be in the confirmation class and their parents before classes begin is suggested. The purpose would be to cover these basics:

- I. A definition of "confirm" and explanation of how it applies to the class.
- II. A statement of the aims of the class.
 - A. Preparation for proper reception of the Lord's Supper - 1 Cor 11:28.
 - B. Preparation to carry out the Great Commission - Mt 28:19,20.
 - C. Preparation for continuing in what has been learned - 2 Tm 3:14-17.
 - D. Preparation for living as a Christian - Eph 4:1.
 - E. Preparation for facing the temptations and problems of life - Cor 10:12,13.
- III. An explanation of how confirmation classes will accomplish these aims.
 - A. Stressing that confirmation is not "automatic" after attendance.
 - B. Reminding of the solemn promises that are made to God before his people.
 - C. Holding out the importance of this major step in life that opens more doors for Christian service and growth.
- IV. A look at the underlying command of God - Dt 6:4-7, Eph 6:1-4, Josh 1:7-9.
 - A. Stressing parental responsibility
 - B. Discussing the need for cooperation
- V. Information about class procedures

The suggestion was made to hold a second meeting (that is pre-scheduled) before too much of the year has passed. It will be used to treat any issues that need attention and to underscore cooperation. A further suggestion is to point out that it is possible to use the catechism also for daily devotions at home by taking advantage of the new catechism with its helps.

PARENTING – TEENAGERS

Keeping teenagers actively involved in the congregation is a real challenge. Some of the more recent ideas have included intergenerational groups. It is this idea which one of the participants captured in this report on the teenage years.

One source states that approximately 85 percent of the adult personality is already formed by the time the individual reaches his sixth birthday. With 85% of the work already done, it might seem as though there isn't much left to do during the teenage years. However, to continually make help available to parents and encourage them to realize there is always the possibility of improvement and better understanding in any family, a simple

evening session is planned with a simple meal and a couple of hours of talking about families. It begins weeks ahead with an invitation and a sheet with three questions: 1) What is a person? 2) What is marriage? and 3) What is a family? Very general questions to elicit thought. The evening of the session each of the questions will be answered in light of the Bible; each being God's creation, affected by sin, reclaimed/blessed by God and guided by God. One key to this evening will be inviting supportive Christians from varying age groups and family development. The evening will conclude with a discussion of the family regarding its purpose: 1) to develop relationships; 2) a shelter in life; 3) a unit of several parts working together; 4) a creativity center; 5) an education center; 6) a museum of memories (cf. Living & Growing Together, Gary R. Collins, ed., article by Edith Schaeffer). At the end a series of Bible readings for two weeks is handed out, and a prayer outline to be adaptable for each family. Then, follow-up visits can be made after the two weeks to discuss questions, issues, progress, and possibilities. This would hopefully lead to future sessions of greater depth and narrower scope.

One of the concerns during the teenage years is maintaining the communication of love. Our typical ancestry is not known for being overly open with our signs of emotion. This can be a disadvantage as youths approach and enter the teen years. Parents often react to the natural desire by youths to assert their independence by stressing their authority at the expense of reminding the child of the overriding love.

To demonstrate that there is love and concern on both sides of the fence, and that parental guidance is motivated by love, not an interfering zeal to domineer.

For the evening session, the parents and youth are separated into two groups, responding to a two-pronged answer sheet. One sheet one, each individual would make a scale of 1 to 5 the answer to these questions:

How much do I love my parent/child?

How much does my parent/child love me?

If I had a big problem I would want to take it to my parent/

If my child had a big problem I would want him to come to me with it.

If I had a problem, my parent would deal in a loving manner about it/

My counsel and action towards my child is based on my love.

On the second sheet each group of parents/children would list five things that your parents/children do that irritate you.

The first part of the survey will hopefully reveal that there is more love and concern than the individuals may be perceiving.

The second part will hopefully lead to better communication on the newly perceived dimensions of love.

Besides the home and family, the congregation can also help to strengthen the Christian family through the area of teenage participation in congregational activities. The author made four propositions:

1. A teenager is a stranger at church functions.
2. A teenager is different from other people at church functions.
3. A teenager speaks a "foreign language."
4. A teenager doesn't feel he "belongs."

In a summary of suggested actions, the author stated:

- a. Stress intergenerational experiences in a practical way.
- b. Stress "togetherness" in the same way that God has placed us together on this earth.
- c. Wherever it can honestly be done, praise (stroke) the young.
- d. Encourage and train church leaders to do likewise.

COLLEGE AGE SINGLES

We are certainly acquainted with the feelings and struggles of that part of life from ages 18-25. It is a time of idealistic planning, experiencing a new self sufficiency not previously known, concern in finding a spouse, a frustration with the Establishment, trying to find one's niche in life on this world, and a host of other feelings through which one must pioneer. The majority journey through these years without Christ in their hearts and, therefore, cannot emerge unscathed (emotionally, spiritually, mentally) from the havoc Satan wreaks on one's life through those times. Perhaps the parent/child relationship suffers, love for the church is lost, or morality of secular school life messes up his mind.

The goal for a weekend retreat or four or five separate sessions would be to help the single college student (ages 18-25) re-evaluate his position and reaction toward his family, school, and church life in general. Issues with his family include continuing communication while away, reflecting on past family life and values, and freedom/self-sufficiency issues. School related issues include student life, humanism, romance/sex and drugs/alcohol - use and abuse. Subjects related to church life while away at college include a reflection on the meaning of faith and the church and involvement with a "second" church home.

SINGLE PARENT FAMILY

As pointed out by the statistics in the textbook Family Ministry, there is a rapidly growing number of single parent families. While most of these single parent families are the result of divorce, and most of the literature is written with that thrust, we can also include in this group those who have been widowed.

There is a definite need for the church to minister to the special needs and problems of these families. The parent and often the child as well feel isolation and rejection. Sadly, these feelings are also perceived as somehow coming from the church. As a result, these families simply don't feel like a part of the congregation. They might express their feelings in words like these, "The church is protraditional family; therefore it is not pro-me."

We can serve these people directly with one on one counseling. Another way to strengthen these families would be through congregational or intercongregational support groups, which focus in on their special situation. Whole family events, single parent style, can also be planned. Much also will be gained by training the congregation to be sensitive to the single parent families, and to do their Christian best to make them feel wanted in the congregation. Much of this latter work can be taught by example.

BLENDED FAMILIES

The term, blended family, is a relatively new term. It denotes a situation in which both spouses have been married, have had children in a previous marriage and now "her children" and "his children" and the two spouses are being "blended" into a new family composition. Previous to this marriage, each family had its own history and identity as a family. These separate units must now work on the "blending process". The congregation is an important aspect in this process, as is stated in this report.

It is estimated that about one million children each year acquire stepparents, following death or divorce. The stepfamily is much different from the biological family. In the biological family, husband and wife get to know each other first and learn to live together. Before a child is born, they have time to prepare for the change. Any

new family members are usually born one at a time. Getting accustomed to new family members is a gradual process.

In the stepfamily, all of the children are immediately included in the family. A new stepparent cannot concentrate on getting to know just one child at a time and ignore the others. All the members of the stepfamily must learn to adjust to each other at the same time.

The local congregation can help to give encouragement to blended families. The encouragement is needed to keep Christ as the center of the family, to believe that things will work out (Rom. 8:28, Matt. 19:26, Phil. 4:13) to have realistic expectations of the new family composition, to recognize the early warning signs of stress overload and to give the relationship time to develop.

FRACTURED FAMILIES

Fractured families have experienced broken relationships. A common approach is to form a support group of fractured families. Another approach is to mainstream the fractured families into the everyday ministry of the congregation. It is this latter approach which is highlighted in this report.

Because of the increasing amount of fractured families, it is necessary for the Church to carefully consider how she can most profitably minister to their special needs.

Fractured families are the result of divorce, run-away children, or the death of member(s) of the family.

In its struggle to deal with these families, the Church must distinguish between the essential and non-essential tools to be used. It must never neglect that which is "essential" at the peril of becoming ineffective in ministering to the needs of the fractured family. It must, however, exercise great caution in using the "non-essentials" lest they replace or hinder the efficiency of the "essentials".

An example of a non-essential tool is the creation of new church societies or "support groups". These can actually be detrimental to the building up of the "church family" and the "fractured family" within the church. When societies within the congregation take the responsibility of ministering to fractured families, the rest of the family of believers are left out. The strong temptation is to "let the support group do it - that's what they're there for". Ministering to the needs of God's people is the privilege and God-given assignment of ALL of God's people, not just a few. This is as true of the support of fractured families as it is of stewardship or instruction of the youth. The further temptation is present to look to support groups as the Church's best answer for various areas of human distress.

The essential tool for ministering to fractured families still remains the proclamation of the Gospel which has been entrusted to ALL of God's people. The most essential thing we must do to help the fractured family is to draw it to the spiritual, "mother, brother, and sisters" of Christ (Luke 11:28, Mark 3:34-35) where healing will be found for sure. This can be done most effectively by sermonic exhortations, studies in Bible Class, private invitation and example. The family of God must be moved by the gospel of Christ to draw in the lonely, guilt-ridden, bitter or sorrowing members of the fractured family to the shelter and warmth of Christ's family - which cannot be separated by divorce or death. Through the means of grace, administered privately and corporately, the fractured family will find real healing. The more clergy and laity realize this, and are motivated by the love of Christ, the stronger our congregations will be in dealing on a one-to-one basis with each fractured family.

ENTIRE FAMILY EVENTS

There is an increasing amount of need for activities within the church that include not just the young or is only relegated to a few elderly individuals. The family of the church and in the church needs to be strengthened and nurtured. Our families are torn apart by job related activities, school related activities and the like. If one adds to this the increased amount of attention the TV gets, it leaves little time for a family to actually be a family and draw strength from interaction with one another. In order to counteract this phenomenon it is advisable to establish periodic family events to help acquaint young and (old) with family interaction not only with immediate family members but also with the members of the church in general. The most positive action for this, in this individual's opinion, is a family retreat program. These are to be open to all so that it may be intergenerational. One day retreats work best so that a greater number may attend without interfering with existing family activity. The retreat consists of group or family Bible study geared toward various aspects of family life; physical activity on an intergenerational plane; and also time to share and grow in each other's knowledge.

One workshop participant listed a number of ways in which the congregation and the home could emphasize entire family events. Some of these are the traditional events such as picnics, potluck and seminars which stress the family. Other types of events could be a once a month family night during the school year and a series of such nights in the summer. Another format would be a family retreat/ campout. In all of these events, the emphasis would be on education in family living.

These events could be a tool and support group for families to really function as families within their own home. Some specific suggestions for the home are:

1. Family forum in which all family members participate.
2. For a month, all could agree to shut off the TV and then share what happens in the family.
3. For a month, all could plan a family game night once a week and discuss the results at the monthly family night.
4. Family members could experiment and share different devotional practices and forms.
5. Families could discuss their traditions and roots and how their importance effects family living.

Some suggestions for the congregation:

1. Provide good family devotional material in the church library.
2. Use the Sunday bulletin, to suggest daily readings and helps for the family.
3. In special seasons, write and publish daily devotions.
4. "Have you tried this" column in newsletter for new family activities.
5. Make the family a part of the stewardship drive and discuss, "How much time does your family spend together?"

If emphasis is placed on the family, perhaps the whole church system would begin to change and include more entire family events rather than being a part of tearing the family apart with various types of meetings. Maybe, the whole church meeting structure would be revamped so that the whole family comes to church on a meeting night. The entire group could have devotions together and then split into various groups and again convene for a closing. Such a change would take good lay leadership and congregational members committed to the family.

CONCLUSION

At the conclusion of the workshop the participants received a form on which they were asked to indicate their reactions to the workshop in three areas; strong points, weak points and suggestions for the future. Among the strong points they listed the opportunity to exchange ideas, the practical suggestions which they received, the

resource material which was made available, the opportunity to evaluate their ministry in the area of strengthening the family and the impulse to remove the deficiencies which they detected, the guidelines for group ministry, insight into the changes through which couples and families pass. From these comments it is evident that workshops of this nature produce a variety of benefits.

The items mentioned as low points in general had to do with the structure of the workshop. It became evident that the participants were indeed individuals, for what some did not like was praised by others. One concern which emerged was that we dare not rely too heavily upon the opinions of secular and humanistic professionals, but need to draw guidance and motivation from God's Word.

There was a wide variety of suggestions: promote marriage enrichment seminars in all parts of the Synod; provide our people with printed material, filmstrips, video-tapes of seminars to guide them in strengthening their family; make workshops on strengthening the family a regular offering at the summer quarters, limiting the scope of each workshop by focusing upon one facet of the broad subject so that the same men could participate year after year; make more training in the behavioral sciences and pastoral counseling available.

The workshop was appreciated. Now we hope that the insights gained will be of some help to the participants in ministering to families. Yet the caution needs to be sounded that the fact that a pastor is well-informed about what is involved in strengthening the family does not guarantee that he will be successful with every family. If he fails in some instances in spite of his conscientious efforts, he dare not blame himself and eat out his heart in the process. The fact that we are dealing with sinful human beings means that there may well be situations where their Old Adam gains the upper hand. The pastor will apply the Word of God faithfully and lovingly and rest content in the knowledge that the Lord expects of him only that he does his best. Results are in the hand of the Lord.

On the other hand, passages like Psalm 128 assure us that by the grace of God there are strong, happy families. Those who are entrusted with the privilege of ministering to families will thank the Lord for the strong families in their flock and ask him to use them to support such families and increase their number. The goal is worth the effort.

SOME READING RESOURCES

By Fred Matzke

INTRODUCTION

These are some of the books which have come to my attention and which I think can be helpful in the area of family ministry. By listing the books, I am not indicating that they are the best or the only ones on the market. I also am fully aware that some of them are not Christian and others are not Scripturally accurate. My purpose is to give you a list of books which do contain ideas which can assist you in your ministry to families within your congregation. I have deliberately omitted a number of books which are listed in the catalogues of Northwestern and Concordia Publishing Houses since they are readily available.

GENERAL

1. Sell, Charles M. Family Ministry: The Enrichment of Family Life Through The Church, Zondervan, 1981.
This book was used as the textbook for the summer course at Mequon in 1982. It provides an excellent overview of family ministry. He has an excellent selected bibliography.
2. Miller, Wackman, Nunnally and Saline. Straight Talk, Rawson, Wade, 1981.
A basic book of communication skills. It can be used for all communication but is very pertinent for married couples.
3. Otto, Herbert A., Marriage and Family Enrichment, (New Perspectives and Programs) Abingdon, 1976.
This book presents a survey of various family life enrichment programs which are being offered.

Some Reading Resources

MARRIAGE

1. Birner, Herbert. Marriage Should Be Honored By All, Northwestern, 1981.
This is an excellent Scripturally orientated book which can be used with premarriage counseling as well as a sourcebook for married couples.
2. Wright, H. Norman. The Pillars of Marriage, Regal Books, 1979.
This author writes well and is a Christian. He has authored many books. This one, as others, includes a leaders guide with transparencies, hand outs, etc. An excellent resource for a marriage program.
3. Gedde, Palmer. One Plus One Equals, Northwestern, 1978.
A short concisely written book which can serve to stimulate discussion on matters pertaining to marriage.
4. Carter, Stephen J. Questions About Marriage (A Study Guide) Concordia, 1979.
A structured course with six sessions. Can be used with married people or those contemplating marriage. Very practical and useful with discussion questions.
5. Mace, David & Vera. How To Have A Happy Marriage, Abingdon, 1977.
This book is a step by step guide to an enriched relationship. It is written from the point of view of marriage as a lifetime commitment. It isn't just a book for reading. It is very definitely a work book to be used by a couple who wish to examine and enrich their marriage.
6. Collins, Gary R. Make More Of Your Marriage, Word Books, 1976.
This book is a collection of articles which are written about the current state of Christian marriages. It was written to stimulate churches to help people with their marriage.
7. MacDonald, Gordon. Magnificent Marriage, Tyndale, 1976.

This is a practical, Christian book about marriage written by a pastor who includes his personal experiences with his own marriage.

8. Wheat, Ed, M.D. & Gaye. Intended-For Pleasure (New Approaches to Sexual Intimacy in Christian Marriage), Revell Company, 1977.
This book was written for every married or soon-to-be married person who is searching for a medically accurate presentation of sex in marriage within the framework of the Bible's teaching. An excellent book.
9. LaHaye, Tim & Beverly. The Act Of Marriage (The Beauty of Sexual Love), Zondervan, 1976.
This is another book on sex in a Christian marriage and is printed in a paperback edition.
10. Mace, David. Sexual Difficulties in Marriage, Fortress, 1972.
A small, easily understood book designed to be read by couples who are experiencing sexual difficulties. As far as it is possible, Mr. Mace counsels people through this book.
11. Mace, David & Vera. What's Happening To Clergy Marriages?, Abingdon, 1980.
This book is a report of research which was done on clergy marriages. It gives a fairly representative picture of how pastors and their wives view the advantages and the disadvantages of the clergy marriage. An excellent and thought provoking book. It is also well written.

PARENTING

1. Wright, H. Norman & Inman, Marvin N. Preparing for Parenthood, Regal Books, 1980.
This series of 12 sessions for parents or expectant parents is designed to prepare them for parenthood and to help them realize the potential the role holds for them. Included in the series is a leader's guide which includes transparencies and reproduction masters.
2. Clarke, Jean Illsley. Self-Esteem: A Family Affair, Winston, 1978.
This book emphasizes positive self-esteem for both parents and children. It provides ways of offering positive self-esteem for different ages and information about emotional development tasks of children. It is not a Christian book but provides an important element in parenting, namely, self-esteem.
3. Meier, Paul D., M.D., Christian Child-Rearing & Personality Development. Baker, 1977.
This book integrates Scriptural passages with findings from psychiatric research on healthy and unhealthy child-rearing techniques. Dr. Meier emphasis that the first six years are the most crucial in child-rearing.

FAMILY LIVING

1. Wisconsin Lutheran Child & Family Services, Living In Grace (Living the Christian Life in the Family), 1975.
A concise book which covers the subject of identity, communication, marriage and parenting from a Biblical, Christ-centered point of view.
2. Schnetze, Armin W. Family Life Under Christ, NPH, 1971.
This is a Bible study course for adults which consists of seven units. This book is a good companion to Living in Grace mentioned above.
3. Collins, Gary R. Living & Growing Together (the Christian family today), Word Books, 1976.
This book is a collection of papers which were delivered at the Continental Congress on the Family. Each of the writers offers practical help for Christian families who are living and growing together.
4. Carves, Patrick J. Understanding Us, Interpersonal Communications, 1981.
Understanding Us was written to assist members of a family in better understanding themselves as they struggle with the challenges of today. It is a wellness book for families. It is an invitation for family

members to explore together the fundamental bonds which hold them together. Although it is not a Christian book, it is committed to the family.

5. Sawin, Margaret M. Family Enrichment With Family Clusters, Judson Press, 1979.
Family Enrichment is the process of enriching or deepening the strengths and attributes which a family already possesses in order to provide further growth and fulfillment for its family members. Family Cluster Model is an educational mode of learning within the congregation for well-functioning families and, therefore, is not therapy nor counseling.
6. McRoberts, Darlene. Second Marriage, Concordia, 1978.
A Christian author relates practical aspects of the feelings and hurts involved in a second marriage. Very well written.
7. Reed, Bobbie. Stepfamilies (Living in Christian Harmony), Northwestern, 1980.
This book is excellent. It presents the practical aspects of second marriages and the adjustments involved in bringing two Christian families together.
8. Peppler, Alice Stolper. Single Again: This Time With Children, Augsburg, 1982.
This book deals with the challenges of being a single parent. It offers support and guidance for any Christian parent who is struggling alone as a parent.

OTHER RESOURCES

Christian Marriage Enrichment
1913 E. 17th Street, Suite 118
Santa Anna, California 92701

The above office publishes newspaper type publication which list a variety of resources for Christian marriage enrichment.