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LESSON 8

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY COUNSELLING AND PASTORAL CARE

Introduction

Aims

1. To help ministers to prevent marital conflict through helpful premarital counselling.
2. To alert newly weds to the potential sources of conflict in their marriage.
3. To show how children are involved in marital difficulties.
4. To help parents to avoid using their children in marital conflicts.
5. To recognize and cope with anger in a constructive way.

A large amount of the time of the minister will be invested in helping families through their different stages of adjustment in marriage and family life. The minister will be called upon more often in this area than in any other, unless he is involved in ministry to a specific group of people. The trends in family patterns and attitudes towards marriage and the home will require that the minister be constantly improving his skills in this area of ministry.

From the time of courtship and engagement the pastor will have occasion to counsel young people. He will have many opportunities to help the young married couple in their adjustments in marriage. He will be called upon to help families whose children are causing them to have difficulties. The present lesson will offer suggestions for help in these areas.

Pre-marital Counselling

Setting the stage for pre-marital counselling

John and Mary have been reared in the church. They have been dating for some three years and engaged for six months. Their wedding date is now approaching within three months. They have called the pastor and made appointments for a series of sessions before their marriage ceremony. They arrive at the pastor's office for the first session ten minutes early. Obviously they are quite nervous, but very much in love with each other. They engage in light conversation with the pastor's secretary while the pastor finishes his counselling session with other counselees. Finally, they are invited to enter into the pastor's study. They are invited to be seated on the couch, and the pastor pulls up one of the other chairs to be nearer to them as they converse.

Restate the aims for this lesson in your own words.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

The minister spends a large amount of his time helping

(families)

The conversation that ensues will cover a span of four to six hours over a period of that many weeks. The purpose that the pastor has is to help the young couple to begin their marriage under the most favourable conditions possible and with a Christian basis. The fact that both of them are Christians gives a good positive basis for a happy marriage. The following areas will be covered during the sessions.

Areas of focus in pre-marital counselling

God's ideal in marriage. – It will be appropriate for the pastor to read from the Bible the basic verses that have to do with the creation of man and woman and the home (Gen. 1:26-27; 2:18-25; Matt. 19:4-6). During this time the pastor will answer questions which the couple have which relate to the meaning of marriage. It is best if the session is not carried on as a lecture from the pastor to the young couple. Hopefully there can be interchange of opinions and ideas among the people present.

Love as a basis for a happy marriage. – During this time the pastor and the young couple will express their different ideas about love in marriage. The pastor can supplement the ideas presented with a more mature and Christian concept of love if the ideas of the young people are based more on surface matters. Here the young people will be encouraged to see that love involves giving as well as receiving, that it involves respect and appreciation, and that it is expressed in physical, emotional, and sexual mediums.

Give and take in marriage. – John and Mary will discover that happiness in marriage is the result of a willingness to work together, to give in to each other, and to be open in the relationship which permits each to be different. They will talk about the ways that they settle their differences of opinion during their courtship and engagement period, and how effective this has been in helping them to maintain a harmonious relationship with each other.

Managing finances in marriage. – The couple will be encouraged to plan together their economic future. They will make plans about the family budget based upon a realistic point of view as to their income. How does each feel about the wife's working after marriage? Will either of them continue their formal education, and if so, what provisions are being made to finance this educational venture? Will they be able to begin a savings programme upon marriage? The pastor will point out to them the advantages of this policy from the very beginning of their marriage.

The sexual aspect of marriage. – What is the basic attitude of each of the two regarding sex? Are they informed about the biological and religious aspects concerning sexual relations in marriage? Have they visited a physician for an examination and for information and counsel regarding sexual relationships and conception control? The pastor will be able to explain to the couple that the sexual impulse is from God, and that there is nothing dirty or shameful regarding sexual relationships within marriage. He can pick

The purpose in pre-marital counselling is to help young couples to begin their marriages under the most _____ conditions possible and with a Christian _____.

(favourable, basis)

How may the pastor present God's ideal in marriage to the couple he is counselling?

(Compare your answer with the text.)

How can the pastor help deepen the young couple's ideas about love in marriage?

(Compare your answer with the text.)

How can the pastor help the young couple to realize the importance of give and take in marriage?

(Compare your answer with the text.)

The couple will be encouraged to plan together their _____ future.

(economic)

How can the pastor help the young couple to have a healthy attitude about sex in marriage?

(Compare your answer with the text.)

up on any indications of guilt regarding sex or the idea that sex is not important for either of the two. Depending upon their previous reading the pastor may need to recommend a good book on physiology and sex. The young couple should be able to enter into marriage with the realization that sexual expression is beautiful and normal and is a means of fulfilment in marriage.

Making the marriage Christian. – The pastor will read from Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3 the passages that deal with the duties between husband and wife. He can help them to see that if they include God in their marriage from the very beginning, they will have a solid basis for a happy home. He will encourage them to be faithful in attendance and participation in church activities. He will give to them the guidance that they need in every experience as they face the future together as husband and wife.

It should be pointed out that the dynamic relationship that is established and maintained in these sessions will be very helpful for the couple as they plan together. Also, it will give them confidence to seek out the pastor in the future when they need him for some reason.

Early Conflicts Emerge

Disillusionment from erroneous expectations

Before marriage a couple will tend to focus upon the qualities which they have in common. After marriage their basic differences begin to come to the forefront. They discover that they have different preferences, habits, tastes, pleasures, expectations, and opinions. They uncover different personality traits in themselves as well as their spouse which they had not been aware of previously.

Prior to marriage each one felt that he or she had love in abundance to give. As these differences are uncovered, they find that the love they had is sometimes hard to give and just as hard to receive. Strains come in the marriage relationship which test its stability. The result is an emotionally impoverished relationship. The lack of self-esteem in each other leads to the lack of trust towards each other. The ability to share becomes impaired or limited. Some couples decide after a few months of marriage that they really were not ready to settle down to married life.

After marriage each person may find that the other is not the strong, self-sufficient, and capable person that he or she was perceived to be prior to marriage. Frustration, disappointment and anger come as a result. Satir mentions this as she talks about the unconscious factors that attract each person to the other.¹ So while each one thinks that the other has an abundance of that which he feels to be lacking, and that he will be able to take from the other as needed, he finds that the other is bankrupt also in the very areas in which there is the greatest need. Many conflicts will result in this marriage relationship because both persons have areas in which they feel themselves to be so deficient and

How can the pastor help the young couple to make their marriage Christian?

(Compare your answer with the text.)

List things to be emphasized in pre-marital counselling.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Before marriage a couple will tend to focus upon the qualities that they have in _____. After marriage their basic differences come to the

(common, forefront)

also will discover areas of deficiency in their mate. An underground war ensues in which issues are not looked at or dealt with in an atmosphere of honesty and openness; rather the couple constantly avoids looking at the truth with each other.

When a person dreams of his or her future spouse for marriage, each unconsciously wants an extension of himself or herself. Each wants a spouse who is perfect, and has difficulty dealing with the imperfect qualities that surface. This situation sets the stage for continual conflict in marriage.

Learning to communicate openly on significant levels, being able to admit one's weaknesses, and speaking of one's needs in a non-threatening manner would go a long way towards achieving a happy and harmonious marriage. If a couple prior to marriage could have some sessions in which they talk about each other's own weaknesses personally and the weaknesses as perceived by the other, this could help them not to be surprised upon discovering these weaknesses after marriage. At the same time it would show them that their relationship is not so fragile, because it can withstand the realistic recognition that no one is perfect. It would open the channels of communication for the couple for the years that lie ahead.²

The pastor can help people to discover the basis of their difficulty as he listens to them during a series of sessions. He will meet with both of them together at the beginning of the session. He may feel it wise to meet with each of them separately for a time or two during therapy. If lack of communication is the basic problem, then it is wise to continue to meet with the two at the same time in order to help establish lines of communication and facilitate it in the early stages. He may discover that neither of the two listens to the other. He may discover that one dominates the other in the conversation. He can do a lot in helping the couple to discover what is happening to them in their relationship. Hopefully, he will help them to work through their initial difficulties.

The discovery of imperfections in the spouse

A few days after the honeymoon the couple may have occasion to discover some things about each other which they had not previously recognized. The husband has to get up early in the morning and hurry off to work. He may leave his pajamas on the bed or in a chair, and his clothes from the previous day strewn on the floor in the bedroom or bath. His wife may be tempted to stay in bed and let him get his own breakfast, or she may get up and get his breakfast before dressing for the day and fixing herself up. The husband sees her before she is fixed up each day, and recognizes a vast difference in this person and the neatly dressed young lady that used to appear at the door while

Each person wants a spouse who is _____ and has difficulty dealing with the _____ qualities that _____.

(perfect, imperfect, surface)

Give three things that can help achieve a happy and a harmonious marriage.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Is the following statement true or false?

Soon after the honeymoon the couple discovers things about their mate that they had not previously recognized.

(true)

they were dating with the fragrance of an enchanting perfume and with every hair in place.

Also the husband may be short-tempered as he calculates his income and all the bills that must be paid. Previously, they have not had to struggle to make ends meet. He now realizes that marriage involves paying the rent or house payment, making the motor car and furniture payments, and endless other expenses that they had not previously considered. The young wife has previously had her money from her employment to spend on clothing and things for herself. If she is no longer working, she may have very little spending money of her own. If she continues to work, she discovers that her salary now goes to supplement the husband's income. All these factors bring strain to the marriage.

Carelessness in marriage maintenance

The young couple may discover that conflicts are emerging in their marriage after a few weeks. They need to plan together those activities which keep their marriage alive and glowing. Remembering significant days in their early married life is one way to keep the dynamic relationship going in the marriage. Forgetting those significant days can cause the spouse to feel sad and disappointed. Neglecting to do the little things which mean so much to us all is another way that the brilliance of the marriage relationship is tarnished.

The church and the pastor can have a significant ministry by contributing the stabilizing influences which will be meaningful to the young couples in the congregation. They can plan parties together on a regular basis. Some young couples take excursions or go to a resort home to spend the night. Conferences, discussions, and films can be used in a positive way to enhance the marriage. Couples should feel free to share with each other those things which help them to feel happy as well as those things which seem to frustrate in their marriage.

At times we see a couple drift apart because the business of the husband takes him away from the home a great deal of the time. The working wife may get caught up in the social whirl of the office girls, and have little time to do those things which make her marriage stay alive. The young couple should seek to adjust their work schedules in such a way that they have time to be together during some significant time each day and each week. These suggestions will help to guarantee that the marriage will be a joyful experience.

Sexual difficulties

Couples frequently have conflicts which relate to their sexual adaptation. Depending upon the information and attitudes that each has received about sex from early childhood, each one may see sex as a wholesome expression of love that has God's blessing, or either or both may see sex as something carnal and dirty. The wife may have been taught that submission to sexual relations is something that

Remembering significant days in their early married life is one way to keep the _____ relationship going in their _____.

(dynamic, marriage)

A significant ministry to young couples can be had by the _____ and the _____.

(church, pastor)

Couples frequently have conflicts which relate to their _____ adaptation.

(sexual)

is expected, but that she will not enjoy them. The husband may feel that sex is his exclusive privilege and have little knowledge about his wife's needs or potential in sexual fulfilment. As Christians they may have been erroneously taught that spirituality excludes the need for sexual pleasure. All these attitudes may contribute to a time of strain and the need for counselling.

Newlyweds need to have some good books on sex that they can read together. *The Act of Marriage* by Timothy LaHaye is an excellent book that gives information and helps to develop Christian attitudes about the sexual aspect of marriage. *Sex without Fear* by Lewin and Gilmore is an old book, but is simple and factual, and can help a young couple to get started in their sexual adaptation in marriage.

If a young couple mentions to the pastor that they have difficulties in their sexual adjustment, he can ask them to explain more in detail the nature of their difficulty. If it has to do with their attitude about sex as it relates to morality, a feeling of guilt, or its significance for marriage, then this is the sphere of his expertise. He should be able to explain to them what the Christian attitude about sex is. If their problem has to do with lack of information, he may be able to recommend some good books for them to read. If the problem is more serious, he probably should refer them to a gynecologist or some specialist who would be able to help more adequately. Problems which are not solved early tend to become magnified and form the basis for more serious conflicts later.

Children as a Source of Conflict

Use of children as an extension of parental hopes

The couple that has some pathology in their marriage tends to complicate matters more when the children begin to form a part of the family. This is illustrated first in the way that they see the child.³ They may see him as a means of their achieving self-worth in the community. They want the child to love them and so have difficulty in disciplining the child for fear he will react in hate or resentment. They make of the child an extension of themselves. They expect him to want the things that they wanted, and buy them toys which they wanted but perhaps could not have because of the economic limitations of their parents.

The parents have a role in helping the child to identify with and accommodate to the two sexes in the world. The boy must identify with his own sex and learn to accept people of the opposite sex. He should develop a sense of well being about his own sex. The male child learns about his own sex by studying the model of his father and about females through his mother.

The child needs both sex models in the home in order to get a balanced view of the world of the two sexes. If one parent dies, the child needs a surrogate or substitute parent in order to develop normally. He can find this substitute parent from among relatives, teachers, neighbours, or other persons of significance in his world.

Newlyweds need to have some good books on _____ that they can read _____

(sex, together)

The pastor should be able to explain to the young couple what the _____ attitude about _____ is.

(Christian, sex)

Parents have a role in helping the child to identify with and accommodate to the two _____ in the world.

(sexes)

The child needs both sex _____ in the _____

(models, home)

When there is conflict between husband and wife, the child will not be able to develop functional, gratifying, and satisfying relationships between males and females. Frequently counsellors see couples who are in conflict, and they testify that their children are nervous, maladjusted, and misbehave constantly. Children act out the insecurity which they feel at home in unacceptable behaviour.

Parents validate their children by showing that they consider them as persons who deserve respect. If the parents demonstrate a satisfying, functional male-female relationship, the child acquires self-esteem and becomes increasingly independent of his parents. As the child grows to be an adult, he can make his choice of a life's companion out of a sense of health and not sickness. This will mean that the young man can choose a mate that is independent and stable and does not need to lean on him. He can accept her individuality, and not require that she be an extension of himself. Self-esteem, independence, and individual uniqueness go together.⁴

Use of children as a shock absorber

Parents that have difficulty expect the children to relieve the areas of conflict through their participation in the home. Therefore the children become "shock absorbers" to try to better the relationship between the parents. This is harmful to the child, because he should not have the responsibility of having to mediate peace with the parents. Also, the child needs the environment of peace and security in order to be able to develop a good self image and self-confidence.⁵

The child must learn to respect the rules as a part of growing up. This means establishing the limits and helping them to know what these limits are. This helps the child to develop in a world that is filled with expectations, and he will know what they are and how to fit into the expectations that society has given us. Parents need to be in accord in promoting the development of positive values in the child. Where there is disagreement among the parents, this will create more confusion within the child as he makes plans for the future and develops his abilities and skills.

Use of children as an identified patient

Children who grow up under stress naturally develop symptoms. These symptoms can manifest themselves in many different ways, and slowly the child becomes the "identified patient" in the family. This means that when there is more than one child in the home, usually one will become the identified patient, and will carry all the pathology of the entire family. He becomes the scapegoat for all the problems within the family.

What are some of the factors which influence parents to choose a child as the identified patient? If he or she has a defect, this increases the lack of self-esteem on the part of the parents. If the child is adopted, this may make it easier to scapegoat on him or her. If the child has physical similarities of a parent or grandparent, this will cause some

Is the following statement true or false?

The effects of marital conflict are limited to the husband and wife. _____

(false)

Parents validate their children by showing that they consider them as _____ who deserve _____.

(persons, respect)

To try to better the relationship between parents, children become "_____."

(shock, absorbers)

Circle the correct answer.

The "identified patient" is the child within the family who becomes the scapegoat for all the problems within the family. true false

(true)

identification with hostility towards that person for whatever the reason. The parents had hoped that the child would be a source of increased prestige in the community, and now he becomes the source of shattered dreams. The child refuses to fulfil the parents' ambitions, or he rebels completely against their expectations of him. The child responds by manifesting behaviour that will create a greater amount of conflict between his parents.⁶

Use of children to manipulate the spouse

Unfortunately, the pastor will find that there are some marriages in which the spouses will use the child as a means of manipulation. At times the mother will use the children as leverage to pressure the husband to do the things which she feels that she cannot get him to do. There are times when couples agree that they will stay together until the children are big enough to leave home, and then they will separate. Marriages which stay together "for the good of the children" are not necessarily being helpful to the children. Couples need to seek to work out their difficulties without involving the children in the conflict.

Some parents will use their child as a means of

(manipulation)

Pastors can help their counselees to realize that couples which use their children as alliances either for or against each other are contributing to anxiety and instability in their children. Children are able to pick up the conflict that takes place between mother and father, and this contributes to their insecurity in many other ways.

Parents who use their children to manipulate each other are contributing to _____ and _____ in their _____.

(anxiety, instability, children)

A few years ago a husband and wife were having difficulty in their marriage. They would have an argument and the husband would storm out of the house for a few hours. At times he would spend the night with friends as a means of creating anxiety in his wife. One night he took their eighteen-month-old daughter with him. The wife became extremely alarmed and finally called the police. The police spent the night trying to locate the young man and the child. Finally, the following day they appeared again, and the daughter was well and happy. In the process of working through their difficulties he stated that he took the daughter with him as a means of punishing his wife. He knew that she would be much more worried in his absence because he had taken their only child with him. Manipulation can be a very devious mechanism of control.

Coping with Anger in Family Relations

The discovery of anger

Probably one of the greatest impediments to harmony in marriage is unresolved and uncontrolled anger. More Christians have difficulty with their anger than any other problem which they face. Those who have been in the church have been taught that to get angry is to fall short of Christ's ideal for the Christian. The Bible contains many references to the destructive consequences of anger. Cain

was angry when he rose up to slay his brother. Anger brought sadness to the home of Isaac and put enmity between his two sons, Jacob and Esau. Moses had to flee from Egypt because in anger he slew the Egyptian. Anger prevailed in the life of Saul as he sought opportunity to destroy David. Anger interrupted the fellowship among the disciples. Anger caused Paul and Barnabas to split up and go their separate ways. Paul admonished Christians to put away anger (Col. 3:8, Gal. 5:20). Anger was frequently present in relationships in Bible times and it is no less present today.

There are some passages in the Bible that seem to encourage one to be angry for causes that are just. "Be ye angry, and sin not. Let not the sun go down upon your wrath" (Eph. 4:26). This verse has been a tremendous comfort to Christians, and sometimes unjustifiably so since Christians have used this verse to excuse their uncontrolled rage. Proverbs 15:1 says "A soft answer turneth away wrath," and this verse has salvaged a number of marriages that otherwise might have been permanently ruptured. The Bible calls us to temper our anger.

Bennett divides anger into two categories.⁷ First, there is anger that erupts from obvious, direct causes. When something happens that provokes us, we react in anger if we are normal. When people treat us unjustly, we respond to them in anger. If one is robbed, he is probably going to react in anger. When someone is abused verbally, he will respond on an emotional level that is equal to the attack. If he cannot, we would judge him as being a coward, a weakling, or a very apathetic person. In international relations, much money and energy is expended in responding to acts of aggression to show that other nations and ideologies will not be permitted to take over the world. So the expression of anger within this context is looked upon as a matter of strength.

The other kind of anger that Bennett describes is the unconscious, free-floating anger that is harder to deal with because its origin and the causes of its expression are obscure.

Steps in coping with anger

Many couples will be helped by the pastor if he can assist them to recognize anger, identify the source, and neutralize its effect, direct and indirect, upon their relationship. Let's take a look in more detail at all that is involved in the previous sentence.

Recognize it. – First, how does a couple recognize their anger towards each other? At times the pastor will have to work for some time to get a couple to admit to themselves and to each other their anger. Some couples have such a fragile marriage relationship that they fear that if they admit to having anger, their marriage might disintegrate completely. Unrecognized anger crops up in the sarcasm that couples express towards each other at parties when everyone is supposedly having a good time. Or it comes forth in the resentment that is expressed in so many little ways in

Circle the correct answer.

The Bible calls us to temper our anger. true false

(true)

What are two kinds of anger mentioned by Bennett?

(Compare your answers with the text.)

the day by day relationships. Or it manifests itself in the ulcer that develops as a result of repressed anger. Silence can be a form of anger. Anger surges forth in criticism. The list is endless. It has been said that anger has a wardrobe the like of which the Queen of England has not seen. It can dress itself in so many different ways and be so camouflaged that it is hardly recognizable. As the pastor hears the couple talk, he can help them to become more comfortable with their own anger and help them to see that the world will not fall apart when someone gets angry with them. Rather it may be the best occasion for taking a look with a person at what is really transpiring in relationships.

If a pastor can observe the way that a couple "fights" from time to time, he will gain insight into the kind of relationship which they have. He can also help them to "fight constructively" and help them to see how they cover over their basic difficulties with a facade. Many times they fight insignificant battles over issues which are not the real ones. The perceptive pastor can ask the timely question: "It seems to me that the conflict which you describe is symbolic of a bigger struggle that you have. Can you take a look at the more significant issue? What's the real issue?" Many times this question will be very productive in that it will cause the venting of feeling and clear the atmosphere. The couple will be ready to look at deeper issues. Thus helping them to recognize and name their anger will be the first step towards the solution to their problem.

Find its source. - The second step is to identify the source of anger. It may be somewhat near the surface, or it may be underneath a number of layers of repressed experiences and memories. It may go back to the early experiences of each during childhood. It may be displaced hostility that more appropriately is meant for father or mother. It could have something to do with early sexual experiences with persons of the same or the opposite sex. The pastor through creative and responsive listening may be able to help people to discover the reasons for their rage.

Once I was asked to counsel an older couple who were in their sixties. They had been married for over forty years, but had lived in perennial conflict. Both of them had become Christians after they were adults. During a few sessions together we looked at the early childhood of the husband, and he discovered that he had repeated in his own marriage the patterns of relating which he had observed in his own father and mother from those early years. He hated what he had lived through as a child, but he repeated, the same mistakes as he married and established his own home. Recognizing the things of which he had previously been unaware helped him to begin to relate towards his wife in a different way. This insight did not revolutionize completely his marriage, but it did give a basis for improving their relationship. They worked together on other areas of their marriage and have developed a greater degree of harmony.

The source of anger may be more easily identified in other marriages. It could have to do with something that happened during the time of courtship, but which has never

The pastor can help couples to become more _____ with their own _____.

(comfortable, anger)

How may the pastor assist a couple to begin to look at deeper issues?

(Compare your answer with the text.)

The second step is to identify the _____ of _____.

(source, anger)

How did the counsellor help the couple mentioned in the adjacent paragraph to improve their marriage?

(Compare your answer with the text.)

been resolved between the couple since marriage. Sometimes misunderstandings develop and are never cleared up. Doubts as to the virginity or sexual inexperience of one's spouse before marriage at times has tarnished the brilliance of the relationship during the years of marriage. Secrets which are kept from one another may create guilt and form a barrier to communication. This undermines the openness of the relationship. The attempt to hide experiences from the past may manifest itself in angry outbursts towards one's spouse, thereby guaranteeing that there will be no closeness.

Recognizing the source of the anger will not automatically dissolve or defuse it. This is only the preliminary step. It is like the medical doctor that begins treatment by analysing the symptoms of one's illness, whether they be pain, body temperature, or a malfunction of some organ of the body. This helps him to establish a diagnosis. He then must decide what is the most indicated type of treatment in order to cure the problem. This treatment may take some time, but hopefully the cure will come. So it is with the marriage relationship. When a couple discovers the origins of their anger, this also will prepare them to take steps to seek to dissolve it.

Neutralize it. – The third step that we mentioned is the neutralizing of the anger, either open or latent, that has affected the relationship between husband and wife. Taking the two previous steps will go a long way in achieving this goal. The spouse will not be as affected by the outbursts of anger when he or she discovers that at times it is provoked by experiences in the remote past. Projection can sacrifice innocent victims. When one discovers that he or she is not the cause of the anger, then its effect is less damaging.

Couples can develop practical steps or procedures which will be helpful in working through anger. Learning to be open and direct in communication can alleviate a lot of stress. For instance, the husband is anxious in the morning to get to the office or to work on time. His wife is taking her time about preparations for breakfast. Instead of letting his anger burst forth with an attack upon her because of her slowness, he can simply mention that he needs to get to the office or to work a few minutes early. This can avoid a conflict in which the husband explodes upon his wife and then she becomes upset or irritated, and they spend two days trying to get their relationship back where it was previousy. Simple communication of facts and feelings can help to avoid many unpleasant hours.⁸

Another procedure is to explain the source of one's irritation. Many times it may be because of something that someone said in the office or at work, and the spouse brings that experience home and it causes him or her to be depressed or irritated during the evening. Learning to deal with issues at the office or at work when we are there and then leaving them there when we depart for home could avoid a lot of unpleasantness in the home. The wife and children who are understanding of the husband and father can help at this point also. The pastor can ask a couple

Is the following statement true or false?

When a couple discovers the origins of their anger, this also will prepare them to take steps to seek to dissolve their anger. _____

(true)

The third step is _____ of the anger.

(neutralizing)

Learning to be open and direct in communication can alleviate a lot of _____.

(stress)

Another procedure is to explain the _____ of one's _____.

(source, irritation)

specifically what measures they feel that they can take to deal with their anger. He can then encourage them to make promises to each other that they will seek to follow this procedure when anger arises. The implementation of practical behavioural steps to deal with anger can be helpful. Each couple can be creative as to ways in which they can come to grips with their own problem. It can become a fun experience within itself.

The Problem of Alcohol

Cultural differences will dictate the attitude that people have towards alcoholism. In some cultures it will be a problem only of the unconverted, because no one is permitted to be in fellowship with the church if they have a problem of drinking. In other cultures social drinking among Christians or drinking on special occasions will be permitted. In other areas the Christian norm is for every person to abstain completely from the use of alcoholic beverages.

What causes alcoholism?

Most ministers will need to know how to minister to persons who have a problem with alcohol and how to minister to their family members. An understanding of the causes of alcoholism will be a first step towards helping. The emotionally weak and dependent personality is characteristic of a large percentage of alcoholics. The person has found that alcohol is a crutch which can help them to get through difficult circumstances. At times parents do too much for their children, and thereby cause them to develop a sense of dependence upon others. Early childhood trauma may create insecurity in the child, and this causes the adult to feel this insecurity even years later.

How the church can minister.

Frequently the pastor will be called upon to try to help the family because the one who uses alcohol has become abusive in behaviour towards other members of the family. He may be called because an excessive amount of the family income is spent on alcohol, or the person becomes incapable of holding a responsible position and the family is destitute because of his lack of work. These circumstances call upon the pastor to talk with the persons involved and to seek to help them gain self-understanding and make decisions which will help to solve the problem.

The pastor can help the person who is enslaved by alcohol to look to Jesus for the divine help which can change his life. He may need to hear the gospel and have the experience of regeneration. If he is already a professing Christian, he may need to rededicate his life to God and to let Christ have control of those areas of life which need his help.

The church should be encouraged to provide the community of warmth and fellowship which the alcoholic needs. In small groups within the church these people can experience warmth, acceptance, and renewal. The pastor can offer individual counselling for the people until they are

The emotionally weak and dependent personality is characteristic of a large percentage of _____

(alcoholics)

The pastor can help the person who is _____ by alcohol to look to Jesus for the divine help which can _____ his _____

(enslaved, change, life)

The church should be encouraged to provide the community of _____ and _____ which the alcoholic _____

(warmth, fellowship, needs)

underway in a new pattern of life. Some churches have a team of laypersons who are available to go and talk with the person who is struggling with the temptation to return to alcohol. These are ways in which people who care can communicate Christian love to those who need it.

Footnotes

¹Virginia Satir, *Conjoint Family Therapy*, rev. ed., (Palo Alto, California: Science and Behavior Books, Inc., 1967), pp. 8-10.

²John Drakeford, *Games Husbands and Wives Play* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1970). This book discusses a series of needs that all marriages have and shows in an interesting presentation how certain games help to promote communication.

³Satir, *Op. cit.*, pp. 28ff.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 54.

⁵Nathan W. Ackerman, *The Psychodynamics of Family Life* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1958), p. 23. Also, chapter 12 in this book gives a good discussion of the various disturbances of childhood, their etiology, and the best procedure for treatment.

⁶Satir, *Op. cit.*, p. 41.

⁷George Bennett, *When They Ask for Bread* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1978), pp. 54ff.

⁸Theodore Isaac Rubin, *The Angry Book* (New York: Collier Books, 1969). This is an excellent book to show how anger is camouflaged and how to deal with it.

Recommended Reading

C W. Brister. *Life Under Pressure: Dealing with Stress in Marriage*. Nashville: Sunday School Board, 1976.

Larry Christenson. *The Christian Family*. Minneapolis: Bethany Press Fellowship, 1972.

Gary Collins, ed. *Make More of Your Marriage*. Waco, Texas: Word Books, Inc., 1976.

Timothy LaHaye. *The Act of Marriage*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974.

David Mace. *We Can Have Better Marriages If We Want Them*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974.

Virginia Satir. *Conjoint Family Therapy*. rev. ed., Palo Alto, California: Science and Behavior Books, Inc., 1967.

Home Study Exercise

Basic activity(Levels 1,2, and 3). After reading the study guide text, answer the following questions.

1. What is the purpose of pre-marital counselling?_____

2. List the areas on which the minister needs to focus in pre-marital counselling._____

3. Contrast the relationship of a couple before marriage to that after marriage._____

4. What difficulties often arise after marriage?_____

5. What can couples do to keep their marriage alive and glowing? _____

6. How can one's outlook on sex affect one's marriage? _____

7. How can couples who develop these conflicts be helped to improve their marriages? _____

8. What problems can arise in children when there is conflict between husband and wife? _____

9. How can parents validate their children? _____

10. How do parents sometimes use children as "shock absorbers"? _____

11. What does the author mean when he states that parents sometimes select a child as an "identified patient"? _____

12. In what ways do parents use children to manipulate their spouses? _____

13. What problems can manipulation cause in children?_____

14. How does the Bible call on us to handle our anger?_____

15. Give two kinds of anger mentioned by Bennett._____

16. List and briefly explain each step the author gives for coping with anger._____

17. What causes alcoholism?_____

18. How may the pastor and the church help the alcoholic?_____

19. What are the aims for this lesson?_____

Supplementary activity(Levels 2 and 3). Read pages 167-87 in *Pastoral Care in the Church* and answer the following questions.

1. What are the religious counsellor's frame of reference and chief concerns?
2. How do you distinguish precounselling conversations from more formal counselling situations?
3. According to the author, when do you have a more formal counselling situation?
4. List three distinctive elements in pastoral counselling.
5. What does the pastoral counsellor consider to be the integrating centre of life?

Advanced activity(Level 3). The following activities are based on the Supplementary reading assignment.

1. Contrast the approaches of the counselling examples given by Dr. Brister on pages 176-77.
2. How does counselling by responsible clergymen differ from the psychotherapeutic relationship between a troubled person and a psychiatrist?
3. What principles should guide the minister's conversations with others?

Seminar Discussion

1. Discuss pre-marital counselling. As a group, develop an approach to pre-marital counselling that students may use in their churches.
2. Discuss difficulties that often arise after marriage. How may these difficulties be overcome and a marriage be kept alive and growing?
3. What problems can conflict between a husband and wife cause in their children?
4. Discuss how to cope with anger.
5. Discuss the problem of alcoholism in your country. Discuss ways to help the alcoholic.

Special project

Prepare a case study notebook to be turned in to the Seminar Leader at the end of the term. The notebook will include a case study from the student's own experience of each of the types of counselling situations covered by the author in the study guide. Each case study should include a statement of the problem, a resume of counselling sessions, conclusions reached by the counsellee, and a report of the follow-through by the counsellee.