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ABSTRACT

The author, a minister in the Free Methodist Church, seeks to validate the assumption that there is a substantial contrast between the pastoral practices of the pastors of the Wabash Conference of the Free Methodist Church and the espoused theories of these same pastors regarding marriage preparation. A secondary focus is an attempt to determine if a need exists for further marriage preparation training for these pastors.

A six-page questionnaire was mailed to seventy-nine pastors seeking information on the marriage preparation practices of the pastors. Five hypotheses are tested with data gathered from the questionnaires returned by sixty-eight of these pastors. Several tables are included in the analysis of the data from the questionnaire.

Written from the perspective of one who had served in the Free Methodist Church as a pastor for twenty-four years and as a conference superintendent for six years, the researcher surveys the biblical literature to uncover any biblical principles that help shape marriage preparation in the local church. The major pastoral care journals, pertinent books and major research projects are surveyed from 1940 through 1987 on the subject of marriage preparation. Chapter six presents a group marriage preparation model for possible use in a local church.

Data from the questionnaire mailed to the pastors is analyzed, conclusions drawn and recommendations made for further study. The major findings reveal a highly expressed need from the pastors for further training in marriage preparation. The data further discloses sharp contrasts between the pastors' marriage preparation practices and their espoused theories regarding those same practices. The author recommends a higher priority for marriage preparation in the ministerial training of future Free Methodist pastors of the Wabash Conference. The group model for marriage preparation is offered as part of the solution to pastors' reported frustrations with the time pressures of marriage preparation ministry.

Creation of a marriage preparation model including both pre-wedding preparation and post-wedding enrichment is also recommended. The development of such a model should include greater involvement of laypersons in marriage preparation in the local church.

A STUDY OF MARRIAGE PREPARATION PRACTICE
AMONG
FREE METHODIST PASTORS IN THE WABASH CONFERENCE

BY

DAROLD L. HILL

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Approved by Jedrick C. Van Tatenhove
Department Pastoral Ministry
Date May 9, 1988

AUTHORIZATION

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Signed Donald R. Hickey.

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Final appreciation is expressed to my wife, Marjorie, for her faithfulness in helping me understand and experience the challenge, mystery and beauty of becoming "one flesh" since we started on our marital journey twenty-eight years ago.

PREFACE

This dissertation is the result of an eight-year journey in the Doctor of Ministry program at Asbury Theological Seminary. The writer entered the program in 1980 while pastor of the Bedford Free Methodist Church. In 1982, after completing all class work and the qualifying exams, he was elected superintendent of the Wabash Conference of the Free Methodist Church. This change in the direction of ministry necessitated a delay in completing the dissertation.

Several changes occurred in the Doctor of Ministry program from the years 1980 through 1988. The reader should be aware that the problem statement in chapter one tends to be experientially stated and reflects the earlier format for dissertations. The inclusion of the contextual project in the dissertation is a further reflection of the evolvement from the earlier requirements of the program.

Chapter six reports the development of a group marriage preparation model which was prepared in 1981 as the contextual project. Although the contextual project may not appear directly related to the marriage preparation practices of the pastors of the Wabash Conference, it links directly with the pastors' identification of the problem of time pressures in marriage preparation, and the desire for further marriage preparation resources.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

In 1900 one in twenty American marriages ended in divorce.¹ Today, in some areas of the United States, the divorce rate exceeds the marriage rate. Marriages may be made in heaven, but they are coming apart on earth in ever-increasing numbers. Alarming trends plague the western world, although marriage remains a popular choice for most Americans. The divorce rate in 1983 was triple that of the national total recorded in 1962. This is the nineteenth consecutive increase in the divorce rate.²

Jane Pauley of NBC television reported the problem gets more complicated with an almost non-stop cycle of divorce. Sixty percent of first marriages will end in divorce for women currently in their thirties.³ The problems confronted in second marriages also often prompt those haunted by the bad memories of a first marriage to end the second marriage with divorce.

From 1970 through 1985, 15.6 million marriages

¹"The Harding Report," Ministry, 56:14, July 1983.

²Marianna Ohe, "Marriages, Divorces Continue to Rise," Bedford Daily Times Mail, December 28, 1982, p. 6.

³Jane Pauley, "Divorce is Changing America," NBC Television News, June 3, 1986, 10:00 P.M.

ended in divorce, disrupting the lives of 16.3 million children under age eighteen.⁴ The United States Census Bureau gives startling statistics. Sixty percent of today's two-year-olds will have lived in a single-parent household by the time they arrive at age eighteen.⁵

The church is not immune to this menace. Pastors in parish ministry are increasingly aware of couples within the church choosing to terminate their marriages. A poll of more than 5,000 Christians revealed that 39 percent would not choose the same mate again, if they had an opportunity to marry again.⁶ The actual number of divorces recorded in our courts may well represent only the tip of an iceberg of frozen and failing marriages. Will our American families continue reaping an unfortunate harvest of marital failures?

Our churches participate in the preparation of marriages by providing buildings, clergy and ceremonies. Support systems for the nurture of the marital relationship are often provided following the wedding. Is the church equally concerned about preventing the heart-rending consequences of divorce through adequate marriage

⁴Beth Brophy and Maureen Walsh, "Children Under Stress," U.S. News & World Report, October 27, 1986, p. 62.

⁵Ibid., p. 58.

⁶Craig Massey, "Before You Marry, Ask These Questions," Moody Monthly, March 1981, p. 28.

preparation ministry prior to the wedding day?

Marriage is the rare human vocation where little or no training is considered imperative. It is easier to get a marriage license in most states than it is to get a driver's license. In order to qualify for a driver's license, one must usually take vision, written and driving tests. Is driving a vehicle more significant than getting married? Many more persons are crippled by the fallout from marital collisions than automobile collisions.⁷

Because of the increasing divorce rate, there is an apparent increasing interest to do more than deal with damaging marital fallout. Are preventive measures by pastors possible? If preventive measures are not taken by pastors in preparing couples for marriage, who will? Most marriage and family therapists spend major blocks of their time treating couples and families at the terminal stages of their relationships.⁸ In view of the need, ought not the church place a high value on its marriage preparation ministry?

Several years ago the magazine, Better Homes and Gardens, conducted a survey drawing over 340,000 responses. In this sample only 11 percent of the respondents believed

⁷David H. Olson, "How Effective is Marriage Preparation?" (Paper presented at Toward Family Wellness Conference, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, October 1981), p. 1.

⁸Ibid.

most couples were well prepared for marriage.⁹ Is most marriage preparation done by pastors inadequately trained and with insufficient time to effectively work with couples prior to the wedding day?

This is a study that surveys the premarital practices of pastors of the Wabash Conference of the Free Methodist Church. A growing conviction behind this study is the need for better marriage preparation than what is being presently offered ministry by these pastors. It appears reasonable that a crusade for improved marriage preparation ministry should begin in the local church.

As a local pastor, and now as conference superintendent of the Free Methodist Church, this writer was interested in identifying the premarital practices of the eighty pastors who served under his supervision. Such an identification could give new direction to the implementation of improved marriage preparation ministry in local Free Methodist Churches in the Wabash Conference.

The Focus of the Study

With this background information in mind, the focal point of this proposed project emerges. Two basic areas

⁹Glen K. Cox, "A Proposal for Premarital Counseling in the Local Parish: An Evangelical Perspective," (Unpublished paper released for use to faculty of the School of Theology, Anderson College, Anderson, Indiana, April 1980), p. 1.

will be examined. First, an attempt will be made to identify the espoused theory of the pastors surveyed regarding marriage preparation in use in the local churches in the Wabash Conference of the Free Methodist Church. Second, a study will be done to determine the theory in use among these same pastors. The primary focus is to discover the pastoral practices used by pastors in marriage preparation and compare those practices to the espoused theory of these practitioners. Do the pastors view marriage preparation as highly important? Is this importance reflected in their practice? How many marriage preparation sessions are held with the couple? What is the length of each session? Are pre-marital inventories utilized? What subjects are discussed? Does the couple receive any assignments prior to the wedding? Is the couple called to Christian commitment? Are biblical and spiritual resources utilized?

A secondary focus will attempt to determine if a need exists for further marriage preparation training for pastors of the Wabash Conference. One possible model will be described. This model will be developed from a program used in the Engaged Discovery Weekend with Dr. David Seamands. The model will be placed in use in the Bedford, Indiana Free Methodist Church. The development of an Engaged Discovery Weekend program will be the contextual project of the study.

Limitations of the Study

This study will be limited to the pastors and associate pastors of the Wabash Conference where the writer serves as conference superintendent. Marriage preparation practices in other Free Methodist conferences or faith groups will not be studied. This limitation is consistent with the writer's specific responsibilities as conference superintendent to the Wabash Conference pastors.

The search of the biblical literature will relate only to those passages pertinent to marriage preparation and will not attempt to present a complete biblical view of marriage. The literature search of sources other than the biblical literature will be limited to sources provided since 1940. Research will primarily be limited to literature relevant to pastoral care of persons preparing for marriage. The focus of the literature search will relate to the scholarly work of pastoral care scholars and professionals.

This project will not attempt to uncover or diagnose the results or outcomes of the various pastoral practices in marriage preparation ministry. The study will not deal with any other implications of marriage preparation except what is practiced by the pastors and associate pastors of the Free Methodist Churches in the Wabash Conference.

Basic Assumptions

Several basic assumptions provide the building blocks of this study. First, the writer is firmly convinced God designed the marriage relationship. Marriage is God's idea. It is not the product of human planning, but of divine perfection. The biblical images of marriage clearly make divorce diametrically opposed to God's divine plan for marriage. A second assumption is that the prevention of divorce begins by providing good marriage preparation. Research by Edward Bader of the University of Toronto¹⁰ and David H. Olson of the University of Minnesota¹¹ confirms the validity of appropriate marriage preparation approaches in preventing divorce. In the light of the current divorce statistics, the prevention of divorce should begin with new energy directed toward better marriage preparation in the local church.

A third assumption is the belief that the pastor who unites the couple in marriage is logically the one to instruct them in the significance of this union. The pastor should also equip them with resources to resolve future marital conflict in constructive rather than

¹⁰Edward Bader, Robert Riddle and Carole Sinclair, Do Marriage Preparation Programs Really Help? A Five-Year Study, booklet provided by Edward Bader, (n.p. n.d.).

¹¹David H. Olson and others, "Effectiveness of Five Types of Pre-Marital Preparation Programs," (Minneapolis: PREPARE; Inc., n.d.) p. 1ff.

destructive ways. These assumptions provide the underlying principles in approaching the project.

Statement of the Problem

During the first year as conference superintendent, the writer's personal concern for better marriage preparation in the local churches of the Wabash Conference was significantly elevated. Personal contact was made with one of the pastors at his local parish. Having arrived late in the afternoon at the pastor's home, he indicated our appointment would be delayed. The pastor explained. A young couple had arrived at the parsonage earlier in the day requesting an immediate wedding. With detectable pride, the pastor affirmed, "I gave them a good half-hour of preparation and told them to return tonight for the wedding."

The wedding was soon to begin. The couple arrived. The bride was noticeably pregnant. Later it was learned the new husband and expectant father, was unemployed. The a pastor had united a couple in marriage with only scanty resources to assist them toward a fulfilling marital relationship. This isolated instance reinforced the writer's personal commitment to provide pastors with all the resources necessary to equip prospective husbands and wives with needed tools to build healthy marriages.

While visiting the conference pastors, several further problems became apparent. First, some pastors in the conference feel inadequately trained to effectively prepare couples for marriage. This puts pastors in a spiritual dilemma since they express a high need for more effective tools in marriage preparation. A few pastors in this conference have little or no college or seminary training for marriage preparation. Most training received taught them to be dispensers of facts about marriage. Application of those facts in the development of constructive marital relationships is woefully missing. As Dr. Howard Hendricks has said, "A mere accumulation of knowledge about marriage is not enough for marital success. Marriage partners must know how to succeed. Facts alone enable one only to sin more intelligently; interpretation must explain those facts for meaningful practice."¹² A deficiency in helping couples to develop skills for the integration of marriage information is a problem among some pastors.

A second problem also emerged. Some training in marriage preparation is based on a scientific model with an emphasis on imparting information to the couple. This tends to neglect a biblical/relational model which includes spiritual dynamics as well as relational strengths in

¹²Howard G. Hendricks and Jeanne Hendricks, "Preparing Young People for Christian Marriage," Bibliotheca Sacra, 128:248, July-September, 1971.

setting the agenda for a positive marriage relationship. When this problem is present in the pastor's ministry, he spends most of the marriage preparation time getting ready for a wedding ceremony instead of a life-long marriage. Details of the wedding day then take precedence over the development of the marriage.

A third problem indicated by some pastors is the actual number of sessions and the subsequent amount of time given to marriage preparation with each couple. Verbally, high significance was given to marriage preparation, however, in actual practice the theory in use appeared to reflect a low priority in this area of ministry. Some pastors believed several one-hour sessions should be given each couple, yet in reality, it appeared they spent much less time with each couple.

A final problem seemed evident. Some pastors seemed negatively influenced by both the pressures of time and the political structures of the church. These pressures appeared to manipulate the pastor into lowering his normal expectations of couples planning for a wedding. Pastors seemed vulnerable to the prospect of losing a wedding to a fellow pastor in the community. The threat of a church family leaving the church also seemed to pose a problem in negatively affecting the pastor's normal marriage preparation procedures. These pressures may prompt pastors to "sell the birthright of their ministry to

nurture marriages, for the pottage of conducting a wedding."¹³

The Hypotheses

Several hypotheses are posited relating to the problems stated above. These hypotheses will be employed in evaluating data received in the study. They will provide the organizational structure for the reporting of the statistical information. The testing of the hypotheses will be achieved through data gathered through the use of a survey of the pastors of the Wabash Conference. Justification of the hypotheses may not become apparent until a later chapter reporting the results of the survey.

The first hypothesis is that pastors of the Wabash Conference believe they are inadequately trained for marriage preparation and have high need for further training in marriage preparation.

A second hypothesis is that pastors of the Wabash Conference spend fewer than six, one-hour sessions with each couple in planning for marriage, and yet desire to spend at least six, one-hour sessions with them.

Another hypothesis is that few pastors in the conference use any evaluative tool, such as the Taylor-Johnson

¹³Robert Dulin, Jr., in speech at Congress on Family as reported in Christian Marriage Enrichment Newsletter, 2:4, October/November, 1976.

Temperament Analysis or marriage expectation inventories as a part of their marriage preparation ministry.

A fourth hypothesis is that pastors often lower their own normal requirements for marriage preparation when time pressure or political pressures within the church threaten them.

A final hypothesis is that conference pastors tend to spend more time with the content of facts about marriage in their marriage preparation sessions, rather than assisting the couple in developing resources for positive relationships with each other and with God.

Justification for the Study

Personal concern for the study arises out of the perceived need to establish a more effective marriage preparation ministry in the local churches of the Wabash Conference under the writer's supervision. Such a ministry should aid in the prevention of divorce as well as enhance the quality of marriages. Since research demonstrates¹⁴ quality marriage preparation can be a deterrent to divorce, providing pastors with needed resources may well contribute to the success of many marriage relationships in the future.

¹⁴H. Norman Wright, Premarital Counseling, A Guidebook for the Counselor (Chicago: Moody Press, 1981), p. 37ff.

Input from the research instrument should assist in making an objective appraisal of the need for further training among the pastors of the Wabash Conference in marriage preparation. It should also assist in documenting the need for the development of a marriage preparation manual for use among the pastors. The study may also give direction to the future professional training of pastors for ministry in the Wabash Conference.

The study is further justified because no study has been made to attempt an understanding of the need for marriage preparation education among the pastors of the Wabash Conference of the Free Methodist Church. A survey of Free Methodist literature indicates no denominational study has been undertaken to determine the potential need among pastors of the Free Methodist Church for further marriage preparation training.

A careful search of primary pastoral care journals also reveals a significant lack of attention to marriage preparation training for the local church pastor. The Journal of Pastoral Counseling had only one article on marriage preparation ministry from the year 1967 through 1985. The Journal of Pastoral Care had two articles written during the years 1947 through 1986. The Journal of Pastoral Practice devoted only one article to marriage preparation between the years of 1977 and 1985.

A refreshing series of articles appeared in the

December 1959 issue of Pastoral Psychology on the minister and premarital counseling. As helpful as the series is, it is now almost thirty years old and outdated in many of its suggestions.

While pastoral care journals give a significant amount of space to the cure of troubled marriage relationships, a noticeable absence of emphasis on preventive pastoral care further justifies this particular study of Free Methodist pastors.

Research Methodology

The primary research methodology is historical and descriptive. The first stage will be the historical. The historical stage of the research methodology will be a survey of marriage preparation literature written since 1940. All the major periodical indices, along with all the primary pastoral care journals will be surveyed to examine material written relating to marriage preparation. Also included in the historical stage will be a review of biblical literature. The focus in the biblical literature will be on descriptive passages giving marriage preparation principles and will not attempt to construct a theology of marriage.

The second stage of the research methodology will be the descriptive stage. A survey of the pastors of the Wabash Conference of the Free Methodist Church will be made to discover their marriage preparation practices. As a

part of the survey of the pastor's marriage preparation practices, a demographic survey of those same pastors will be included. A description of the marriage preparation practices of the pastors will be given. The survey of the pastors will test the basic hypotheses of this study. The survey will include the pastors and associate pastors in the Wabash Conference of the Free Methodist Church.

The survey instrument will be a six-page questionnaire circulated by mail to all the pastors. It will include a cover letter by our area bishop, Bishop David Foster, urging the cooperation of the pastors. A stamped, self-addressed envelope will also be enclosed for the return of the survey.

After the data is gathered from the survey, the information will be described, evaluated and conclusions drawn. The evidence gathered from the survey will further substantiate or negate the basic hypotheses of the study. The research will also include a description of a working model for marriage preparation in the local church. This model will arise out of the writer's experience with marriage preparation in a contextual setting.

Conclusions will be drawn from the descriptive data. Suggestions will also be made for further study. Recommendations for future directions in marriage preparation ministry in the local churches of the Wabash Conference will also be presented.

Contextual Setting

While the writer served as pastor of the Bedford Free Methodist Church in Bedford, Indiana, a model for marriage preparation in the local church was developed. This model was developed in cooperation with the local Congregational Reflection Group. The reflection group viewed improved marriage preparation ministry as an area of significant need in the local church. Some of the church's younger couples had gone through the trauma of divorce. The reflection group believed better marriage preparation would assist in creating better marriages.

The marriage preparation model developed and implemented in the Bedford Church will be more fully described in chapter six. The design arose out of several study sessions with the Bedford Church reflection group as well as several interviews with Dr. David Seamands, who then served as pastor of the United Methodist Church in Wilmore, Kentucky. The writer and his wife, Marjorie, attended an Engaged Discovery Weekend at the Wilmore Church on April 10-12, 1981. A second training time occurred for the writer and his wife, along with a lay couple from the Bedford Church, David and Susan Miller, at the "Engaged Discovery Weekend" at the Wilmore United Methodist Church, April 2-4, 1982. The Engaged Discovery Weekend was Pastor Seamands' plan for marriage preparation ministry in his local church. It was a group model for marriage

preparation. During the writer's participation in two of the weekends at the Wilmore Church, approximately forty couples planning for marriage were present for each of the weekends.

After receiving training and permission from David Seamands and his wife, Helen, the writer adapted the Engaged Discovery Weekend model and led the Bedford Church in sponsoring a similar marriage preparation weekend on April 23-25, 1982. The model, more fully described in chapter six, consisted of a group approach to marriage preparation. Couples planning for marriage were invited to attend. General sessions were held discussing the biblical basis for marriage, relationships in marriage, sex, role expectations, spiritual life, communication in marriage, commitment in marriage and the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis. A lay couple from the church provided leadership, along with a clergy couple.

Each general session was followed by a time of reflection. First, there was individual reflection. Second, there was private couple reflection on every aspect of married life. The weekend closed with a time of group worship on Sunday morning. Further details of this model of marriage preparation in the local church are included in chapter six. The appendix provides further detail for the interested reader (See Appendix E through J).

Chapter Descriptions

Chapter one will introduce the area of study, state the problem, establish the limitations of the project, give the basic assumptions, justify personal concern for the study and briefly describe the contextual setting. In the second chapter, a survey is made of the biblical literature to investigate passages descriptive of marriage preparation. The primary focus will be on the descriptive passages rather than the exclusively theological and didactic passages.

The third chapter will present a survey of recent marriage preparation literature. Findings in the major pastoral care journals written since 1940 will be summarized. The survey will also include a review of books written and other marriage preparation resources developed since 1940.

Chapter four will explain the design of the survey instrument. The development and the methodology utilized in the survey will be reported and described. It is hoped the reader can fully understand the process followed in the design of the survey, as well as the plan utilized in mailing the survey and organizing the data gathered from the questionnaire.

The data received from the survey of the Free Methodist pastors in the Wabash Conference will be reported and analyzed in chapter five. It will include an

evaluation of the statistical data. Demographic data will be reported and correlated with the survey findings.

Chapter six will present a model of marriage preparation for the local church. The Engaged Discovery Weekend designed during the writer's ministry at the Free Methodist Church in Bedford, Indiana will be described.

The final chapter, chapter seven, will compare the findings from the survey questionnaire with the hypotheses and infer the truth or falsity of each hypothesis. Conclusions will be made and suggestions given for further study in the pursuit of improved marriage preparation among pastors of the Wabash Conference of the Free Methodist Church.

The appendix will include a copy of the survey instrument and cover letters. Tables and graphs pertinent to the analysis of the data received from the survey will be placed both in some chapters and in the appendix. Edited materials from the marriage preparation model presented in chapter six will also be placed in the appendix.

Chapter 2

A SURVEY OF MARRIAGE PREPARATION IN BIBLICAL LITERATURE

The intent of this chapter is to survey the biblical literature to investigate passages descriptive of marriage preparation. The primary focus of the search of the biblical literature will be on the descriptive passages rather than the exclusively theological and didactic portions. Those passages having a most direct relationship to marriage preparation will receive primary attention.

The Creation Vision for Marriage

Marriage was instituted by God and reported by Moses in Genesis 1:27:

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God¹ he created him; male and female he created them.

The creation vision included a distinctive divine intent for both "male and female." Human personality was modeled in God's own image. Intentional creative powers were at work early in the creation account to establish the foundational stones of human sexuality and shape the future of marriage.

¹The Holy Bible: New International Version. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Bible Publishers, 1978. 1635 pp.

God's purpose is definitely delineated in Genesis 2:18, and 23:

And the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, for she was taken out of man."

God's primary purpose in creating woman was for the personal fulfillment of both the husband and the wife. Each would help the other. God's initial creative actions included the institution of marriage. Genesis 2:24 further highlights the divine intent for the permanence of this union between a man and a woman:

For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

There is no hint of an intent or plan for separating what God united. The marriage bond was seen as taking precedence over the parental bond. The Genesis record depicts the divine institution of marriage as a most sacred and permanent relationship. The joining of the male and the female is not reported as a divine accident. Leaving and cleaving was a primary human experience resulting in a permanent union of two into one flesh.

The relationship of a husband and wife was also viewed as an exclusive relationship. "A man will leave his father and mother, and shall be united to his wife. . . ." It is not "the men" or "his wives." Polygamy was clearly not a part of the creation vision for marriage.

The first marriage was planned by God. He was responsible for the marital union of Adam and Eve. The divine model for marriage was presented. This first marital union clearly established foundational principles for the subsequent biblical understanding of preparation for marriage.

Marriage Among the Old Testament Hebrews

Many of the Old Testament laws strongly imply monogamy as the acceptable form of marriage. In Exodus 20:17 the Old Testament tribes of Israel were commanded:

You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant. . .

In the regulations given to the treatment of Hebrew servants the references to marriage were always singular when referring to the marital state (Ex. 21:3ff). In Leviticus 18, the chapter contains instructions regarding sexual relationships. The assumed marital state is that of a sexual relationship with one person, not many. Other passages further emphasize fidelity in marriage and a commitment to one wife (Lev. 18:8, 16, 20; 20:10; 21:13; Num. 5:12f; Deut. 5:21; 22:22; 24:5). Faithlessness to the wife of one's youth and divorce is strongly condemned in a vigorous statement in Malachi 2:14,16:

. . . the Lord is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant. "I hate divorce," says the Lord God of Israel. . .

Married life was apparently a normal, expected event among the Hebrews. Of the three great events in the family life, birth, marriage, and death, marriage was regarded as most important. The Talmud declared, "Any Jew who has not a wife is no man."² Such a high view of marriage led to parental involvement in the selection of a mate. Apparently all the contractual and financial matters associated with marriage were decided by the parents or the guardians.

Marriage for the Jews was more than a festive occasion. Deeply religious Jews fasted and confessed their sins prior to the wedding. Marriage was almost regarded as a sacrament. Entry into the marital relationship seemed to convey the forgiveness of sins.³ A powerful comparison in the Bible between Jehovah and his people is also brought into the relationship of the groom and the bride. On the wedding day the bridal couple re-enacted the symbolism of the union of God with Israel. The marriage relationship underscored the serious nature of the wedding to the extent that every man who met a marriage procession was bound to rise and join it.⁴

²George B. Eager, "Marriage," The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (1952), III, 1996.

³Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, I (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), p. 353.

⁴Ibid. p. 353-354.

Although the consent of the prospective bride was sometimes sought (Gen. 24:8), the bride was not usually the one in final charge of her future. The Old Testament Hebrews seemed to view the woman as one under the mastery of her father and after marriage under her husband. Some hint of this is seen in Hosea 2:16 and Isaiah 62:4-5, although this is far from conclusive.

The bargaining instinct is dominant in many of the marriage preparation practices of the Bible. The father, as head of the household, usually instituted marriage plans for his son. This included selection of the bride. Abraham directed his servant to take a wife for his son (Gen. 24:4). Laban gave his daughters to Jacob (Gen. 29:23,28). Hamor bargained with Jacob to arrange a marriage between his son Shechem and Jacob's daughter Dinah (Gen. 34:8). Caleb promised to give his daughter to the man who conquered Debir (Josh. 15:16).

In one instance, it was the mother who made arrangements for the marriage of her son. Hagar got a wife for her son Ishmael from Egypt (Gen. 21:21). The leadership of a woman in planning for the marriage of a son or daughter evidently occurred when a father was absent from the family unit. This is also illustrated in the story of Ruth's marriage as arranged by her mother-in-law Naomi. The book of Ruth gives a detailed account of the efforts of a Hebrew woman to secure a husband for her widowed

daughter-in-law.

The dominance of the father in arranging for the marriage was the customary plan in the biblical accounts. The patriarchal or male influence in marriage plans may be further emphasized from the manner in which genealogical and census lists were recorded (Gen. 5; 10; 36:9-42; Num. 1-3:39; 26:5-62; Ruth 4:18-22; I Chr. 1-9; Ezra 2:3-61; 10:18-43). In the census data daughters were generally not named. Wives were usually named only to distinguish between the sons of the father.

Other biblical terms, such as ". . . Laban gave him his daughter to be his wife" (Gen. 29:28) and other similar statements (Gen. 34:8; Josh. 15:16-17; Judg. 1:12-13), as well as "they married any of them they chose" (Gen. 6:2; 11:29; 12:19; 20:2-3), tend to emphasize that a woman was an object acted upon, rather than an initiator of action in plans for marriage. The father apparently was the primary person who determined the daughter's marriage.

The husband was also dominant in making crucial decisions after marriage. He wrote the certificate of divorce if he was displeased with his wife (Deut. 24:1-4). The same flavor is found in Proverbs 12:4 where the writer declared, "A wife of noble character is her husband's crown, but a disgraceful wife is like decay in his bones." Compensation for injury to a pregnant woman was also determined by the husband in Exodus 21:22.

One Old Testament passage seems to soften the

conclusion which viewed women as subservient to the male in decisions regarding marriage. The lovely account of Rebekah's decision to become Isaac's wife is a tender illustration in Genesis 24. As Moses reported the negotiation of the marriage transaction, the high point of the story peaked with Rebekah's decision. "Will you go with this man?" her brother and mother asked. Rebekah responded, "I will go" in Genesis 24:58. Rebekah made the final choice about her future husband.

The Wedding Betrothal

Betrothal to the Old Testament Jews was a more serious transaction than engagement is to our western world. Betrothing a wife seems to be the equivalent of marrying her. This is sharply focused in Deuteronomy 22:23-27:

If a man happens to meet in a town a virgin pledged to be married and he sleeps with her, you shall take both of them to the gate of that town and stone them to death--the girl because she was in town and did not scream for help and the man because he violated another man's wife.

The emphasis of the "pledge to be married" was on faithfulness and permanence. The betrothal was so binding that if the marriage should not take place, the young woman could not be married to another man until she was liberated by a due process and a certificate of divorce.⁵

⁵Eager, op. cit., p. 1997.

In Deuteronomy 22:23-24, a man who performed the sexual act with a betrothed virgin was stoned to death because "he violated his neighbor's wife." In the same chapter, verse 28, intercourse with a virgin who is not betrothed involved, not death, but marriage to the girl and payment of a fine to her father.

A central feature of the betrothal was the "tribute" or marriage present paid to the parents. When Abraham's servant was sent on a mission to find a wife for his son, Isaac, he took ten camels with "all kinds of good things from his master" (Gen. 24:10). Gifts presented included a gold nose ring, two gold bracelets (v. 22), gold and silver jewelry, and articles of clothing given to Rebekah, as well as costly gifts given her brother and her mother (v. 53). The two wives of Jacob, Leah and Rachael, said of their father's action in giving them to Jacob, "Not only has he sold us, but he has used up what was paid for us" (Gen. 31:15).

In Genesis 34:12, Shechem pled with the father and brothers of Dinah to let him have her as his wife. In seeking their favor he said, "Make the price for the bride and the gift I am to bring as great as you like, and I'll pay whatever you ask me. Only give me the girl as my wife."

In Exodus 22:16-17 a man who seduced a virgin who was not pledged to be married and slept with her, must pay the "bride-price, and she shall be his wife." If the

father refused to make this a settlement of marriage, the offender must pay the father "the bride-price for virgins" (v. 17).

Saul required a hundred Philistine foreskins from David in order to pay the price for the Saul's daughter, Michal. David and his men went out and killed two hundred Philistines to meet the requirement as recorded in I Samuel 18:25-27. The serious nature of the betrothal is seen in David's request for Michal as his wife after the death of King Saul. Although she was married to Paltiel, son of Laish, Michal was taken away from Paltiel and given to David according to the betrothal agreement (II Sam. 3:13-16).

In lieu of a betrothal payment, a groom might well serve the family of his intended wife in order to satisfy the payment. This is well illustrated in the story of Jacob in serving Laban for Rachael and Leah (Gen. 29:20, 28). This may also have been the plan when Moses went to live with the priest of Midian (Ex. 2:21). A further substitute plan is illustrated as Caleb promised his daughter Acsah to Othniel, since he had captured Kiriath Sepher (Josh. 15:17). Saul offered his daughter Merab to David for killing Goliath (I Sam. 17:25, I Sam. 18:17).

The Marriage Ceremony

There is little biblical evidence to describe any

exact ceremonies associated with weddings. The picture can only be painted as information is gathered from several old and new testament passages. Although the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah does not describe any formal marriage act beyond the betrothal (Gen. 24:3ff), other biblical passages associate grand celebrations with the wedding ceremony.

For the wedding, special attire was worn. The Song of Songs mentions Solomon's carriage, escorted by sixty warriors and the king wearing his crown, the crown "which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding" (S. of Songs 3:7, 11). The imagery in the Song of Songs implied a festive occasion as a part of the wedding. Isaiah rejoiced in the Lord for ". . . he has arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels" (Isa. 61:10). Ezekiel also emphasized the finery of the wedding in his allegory of unfaithful Jerusalem in Ezekiel 16:10-12:

I clothed you with an embroidered dress and put leather sandals on you. I dressed you in fine linen and covered you with costly garments. I adorned you with jewelry: I put bracelets on your arms and a necklace around your neck, and I put a ring on your nose, earrings on your ears and a beautiful crown on your head.

Evidently a veil was worn by the bride (Gen. 24:65). In Genesis 29:23,25, Laban's deception was disguised by Leah's veil on the wedding night when Jacob believed he was marrying Rachael. In the parable of the wedding banquet in Matthew 22:1-14, a participant in the

banquet was severely punished for not wearing "wedding clothes" (Matt. 22:11-13).

The bridegroom had his friend and attendants. When planning to marry the "Philistine woman in Timnah" (Judg. 14:2), Samson made a feast ". . . as was customary for bridegrooms. When he appeared, he was given thirty companions" (Judg. 14:10-11). Jesus spoke of them as "guests of the bridegroom" (Matt. 9:15; Mark 2:19; Luke 5:34).

The wedding procession was the first part of the actual wedding ceremony. The bridegroom's friends (John 3:39) apparently usually went by night to bring the bride and her attendants to the home of the groom (Matt. 9:15; John 3:29). The procession was accompanied by music (Jer. 7:34) as the wedding party moved to the bridegroom's house where a wedding feast was held.

The procession was marked by a festive spirit. The joy and importance of the occasion was underscored by the proverbial announcement, "Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him" (Matt. 25:6). In Jeremiah 7:34 the prophet forecast the time when God ". . . will bring an end to the sounds of joy and gladness and to the voices of bride and bridegroom in the towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem, for the land will become desolate." A similar theme is found in Revelation 18:23 when the tragic time will come when "The voice of the bridegroom and bride will never be heard in you again."

Apparently the procession occurred at night, perhaps to allow those busy in the day time hours to participate. The scenic effect of torches at night added to the beauty of the procession. The cry was taken up along the route and announced to those who were waiting with the bride to light the approach to the home and welcome the bridegroom with honor (Matt. 25:1-6). Some rabbinic sources indicate everyone rose to salute the procession, or join it, as if it were viewed as a religious duty.⁶

The marriage supper in the home of the groom followed the procession. There are inferences in the scriptures indicating the bridegroom was absent at the house of a relative or friend, where men congregated for the purpose of escorting the bridegroom home. When he indicated it was time to go, all rose up, and with torches provided to all, moved to his home where the feast took place. The earliest mention of the wedding feast is given in Genesis 29:22, as Laban prepared a feast for the giving of his daughter Leah to Jacob as his wife.

Other references to the marriage feast include the wedding at Cana of Galilee in John 2:1-11, the parable of the king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son in Matthew 22:1-14 and the story of the ten bridesmaids in Matthew 25:1-13. One such feast lasted for seven days

⁶Edersheim, op. cit., p. 354.

(Judg. 14:12). Music during the procession and perhaps during the banquet may be suggested in Psalm 78:63; Song of Songs and Ezekiel 33:32.

Formal proof of virginity may have been the final ritual before the consummation of the marriage occurred. This practice is described in Deuteronomy 22:13-19. If a man were to marry a girl and fail to find her to be a virgin, her parents "shall display the cloth before the elders of the town" (v. 17) as proof of their daughter's virginity. In Matthew 1:18-21, Joseph's decision to "divorce her (Mary) quietly" is of special interest. When Joseph discovered Mary was pregnant before he had taken her, he did not want to "expose her to public disgrace" (v. 19). According to Old Testament standards, failure to find proof of virginity would be cause for death (Deut. 22:21). The appearance to Joseph of an angel of the Lord through a dream, cancelled such a radical course of action (Matt. 1:20-21).

Toward a Theology of Marriage Preparation

The search of descriptive biblical passages allow several summation statements regarding marriage preparation. First, marriage is a divine institution. God originated marriage in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:22-23). God brought Adam and Eve together in the first marital union. God's blessing is upon marriage both before and

after Adam and Eve's spiritual failure (Gen. 1:28; 5:2; 17:16). God's pattern for marriage is clearly expressed in Genesis 2:24, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united unto his wife, and they will become one flesh."

A second conclusion may also be observed. God did more than institute marriage. The scriptures clearly provide divine guidelines for a successful marriage. The marriage relationship is viewed as one of covenant. Two biblical books use the word "covenant" in relation to marriage (Prov. 2:17; Mal. 2:14). The marriage transaction is more than an agreement between two persons. God is a witness to the covenant as seen in Malachi 2:14:

. . . the Lord is acting as a witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant.

The presence of God as witness elevates the relationship from a purely human venture to one with divine initiative and participation. The disregard for the divine dimensions of the marital relationship was viewed with tragic consequences.

Third, according to both testaments, God clearly declared marriage to be permanent (Gen. 2:24-25; Matt. 19:1-15). God instituted marriage. God witnessed the covenant of marriage. God declared the permanence of marriage. Marriage is a union of two persons as one flesh. This union takes precedence over the union with a father or

a mother.

Fourth, marriage is frequently used in the scriptures to illustrate the personal dimensions of God's covenant love to Israel. An example is given in Jeremiah 2:2:

"I remember the devotion of your youth, how as a bride you loved me and followed me through the desert. . ."

This use of the marital relationship to emphasize the holy relationship between God and his people is clearly expressed in the book of Hosea. Here, God, the husband, repudiated his marriage relation with his wife, Israel (Hos. 2:2). God will betroth Israel to himself when she deserts her sinful practices (vs. 19-20). Then Israel will "know the Lord" in a deeply personal way, just as a man knows his wife.

The apostle Paul also cited marriage as an example of the relationship of the believer to Christ. In II Corinthians 11:2 an example may be noted:

I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him.

Paul further illustrates the appropriate biblical relationships in marriage between husband and wife by exhorting in Ephesians 5:21-25:

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord, for the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. . .

Fifth, and finally, with the substantial biblical application of marital imagery, John also used the marriage relationship to explain deep theological truth. The ultimate consummation is viewed with marital images. John gave a prophetic word about the marriage of the Lamb and his bride in Revelation 19:7:

Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory!
For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his
bride has made herself ready.

In the closing verses of the New Testament canon the imagery is still riveted on the marriage relationship:

The Spirit and the bride say, come. And let him
who hears say, come. (Revelation 22:17).

The Old Testament canon opens with the institution of marriage. The New Testament canon closes with the powerful imagery of the marriage relationship. The Lamb invites his bride to the final wedding!

In Isaiah 40:11 and Ezekiel 34:14-15, God referred to himself as a shepherd caring for his lambs. Psalm 23 further emphasized this relationship. While God described his relationship to his people as that of a shepherd, the imagery is also applied to ministers. In Acts 20:28, the Apostle Paul told the elders at Ephesus:

Guard yourselves and all the flock of which the
Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds
of the church of God which he bought with his own
blood.

Paul's further word to the believers at Ephesus gave more emphasis to the caring and equipping role of the pastor:

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4:11-13).

Does not this shepherding mandate from the scriptures require substantial commitment to marriage preparation from the pastors of the church. The high regard for marriage clearly expressed in the scriptures should inform any pastor of his need for leadership in this most crucial area of ministry.

Summary

Although a considerable amount of emphasis is found in the Bible regarding marriage, no specific marriage preparation model is presented. One must find the principles for a model for marriage preparation from both the descriptive and didactic biblical passages. Marriage is regarded as a most serious undertaking, with major sections of the bible given to the description of biblical marriages as well as specific instructions about marriage.

Even though the scriptures do not outline any particular model for marriage preparation in the local church, one should not conclude that the bible has nothing to say about marriage preparation. Biblical principles are in place. Valuable principles for marriage preparation ministry are presented in the scriptures. The skilled

pastoral practitioner must interpret and apply those biblical principles to the contemporary situation.

With the magnificent and sacred emphasis on marriage in the Word of God, should not the church and its pastoral leaders place high priority in its ministry on the preparation of couples for marriage? Ought not pastoral leaders, serving as God's representatives, be properly prepared to unite a man and woman in marriage? Should the pastor not help the couple understand the nature and responsibility of such a sacred covenant? Does not God hold the pastor responsible for a marital covenant completed in ignorance?

Chapter 3

A SURVEY OF MARRIAGE PREPARATION LITERATURE FROM 1940 THROUGH 1987

The historical development of the marriage preparation literature will be traced in this chapter. In order to establish boundaries for the literature search, the survey includes literature published from 1940 through 1987. The survey is primarily limited to literature written from a Protestant perspective. For purely organizational purposes, the search of the literature is divided into ten-year periods.

The Years 1940 to 1949

Prior to World War II, the content of premarital preparation had a narrow emphasis. Most of the literature emphasized the nature and meaning of the wedding ritual itself, the Christian meaning of marriage, the practice of Christianity in the home and the wedding rehearsal.¹ The need for a preventive approach to marital distress began to emerge in 1940. Emily H. Mudd wrote a chapter entitled "The Premarital Interview: An Interpretation of Professional Attitudes and Procedures," in the Cyclopedia of

¹Michael Klassen, "Counseling for Quality: Some Considerations for Premarital Counseling in the Church," Journal of Pastoral Counseling, 18(1):73, 1980.

Medicine, Surgery, and Specialities. The book identified goals for increasing family stability, marital happiness and the quality of family relationships as reasons for a greater emphasis on pre-marital counseling.

In 1940, an evangelist, Oscar Lowry, wrote a book entitled, The Way of a Man With a Maid. The book gives practical advice to a young man on his relationships with females. The thinking of the author is clearly dated and stilted, but it is a beginning pastoral attempt to address the issue of preparation for marriage. The book is an illustrative of the perception of the need for marriage preparation in the church in the early 1940's.

A highly credible marriage preparation resource was published in 1940 by the MacMillan Company. An English pastor, A.S. Nash, edited a book entitled, Education for Marriage. The book includes contributions from such notables as Otto Piper and C.H. Dodd. Other pastors and psychologists also make contributions. The volume is too narrowly focused on techniques to use in preparing for marriage. It is evidence of a growing concern in the early 1940's for quality pastoral practice in marriage preparation.

Hervin U. Roop wrote a book, Homemaking--A Study of Mating, Marriage and Family Life, published in 1941. Written from the perspective of one who had served as a pastor, college psychology professor and college president,

solid Christian distinctives are offered. A section on "Pre-Marriage Factors" is given as well as a substantive chapter on actual details of the wedding.

An important development in 1941 was the formation of a temperament analysis by Roswell H. Johnson. Later revised by Robert M. Taylor in 1967, the instrument was identified as the "Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis." This resource, published by Psychological Publications of Los Angeles, became a widely-used tool among marriage preparation leaders.

In 1942, sociologist Henry A. Bowman of the University of Texas authored a book, Marriage for Moderns. The book became a text book used on many university and college campuses. While the book does not give primary attention to preparation for marriage, it does include chapters on partner selection. The book has seen five printings, establishing it as a solid educational text book. Though not written from a pastoral care perspective, it is an early valued resource.

Evelyn M. Duvall and Reuben Hill gave the church substantial support for marriage preparation with the publication of their book, When You Marry, published in 1945. The volume gives careful attention to the person contemplating marriage, with 164 pages of the 450-page work devoted to marriage preparation. The helpful "Marriage Prediction Scale" devised by Ernest W. Burgess and Leonard S. Cottrell is given in the appendix. Though the book is

clearly an older work, it is worthwhile reading for one eager to improve marriage preparation skills.

Psychological and sociological contributions to pre-marital preparation are located in a text authored by Howard Becker and Reuben Hill in 1948. Entitled, Family, Marriage and Parenthood, the book includes a helpful section on preparation for marriage.

Literature references to marriage preparation in the decade of the forties is sparse. Only four journals gave any substantive attention to this subject in this decade. In 1941 Emily H. Mudd, along with C.H. Freeman and E.K. Rose, wrote an article appearing in Mental Hygiene giving an illustration of premarital counseling in the "Philadelphia Marriage Counsel."²

In 1944, E.W. Burgess and Paul Wallin made a contribution in the American Journal of Sociology concerning marital adjustments as reflected in engagement adjustments.³ The Journal of Social Hygiene published an article in 1946 regarding mate selection⁴ and Mental

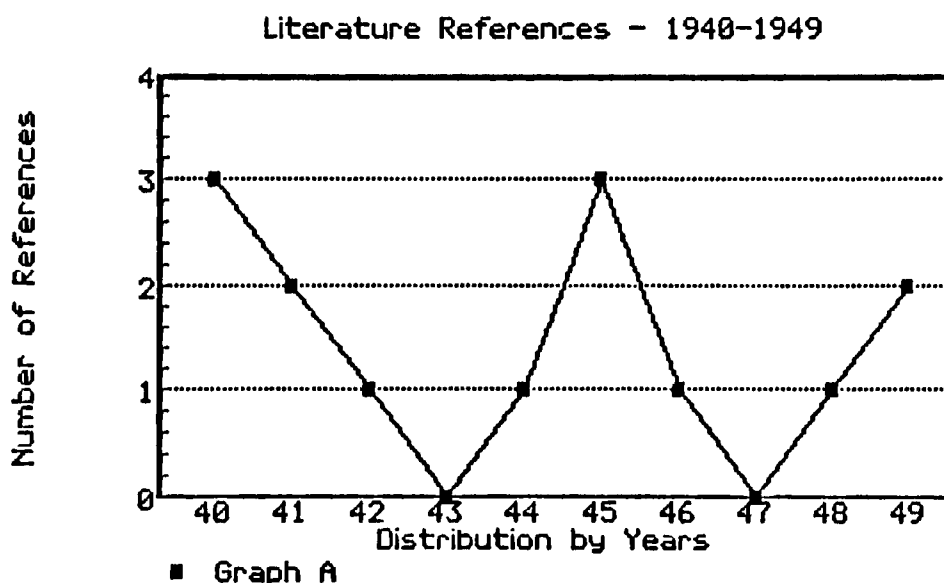
²Emily H. Mudd, C.H. Freeman and E.K. Rose, "Pre-marital Counseling in the Philadelphia Marriage Counsel," Mental Hygiene, 25(1):98-119, 1941.

³E.W. Burgess and Paul Wallin, "Predicting Marital Adjustments in Marriage from Adjustment in Engagement," American Journal of Sociology. 49:324-330, 1944.

⁴M. Komardovski, "What Do Young People Want in a Marriage Partner?", Journal of Social Hygiene, 32:440-444, 1946.

Hygiene addressed group premarital counseling in an article published in 1949.⁵

The decade of the forties provide a launching pad for a later emphasis on marriage preparation in the church. The decade has few literature contributions of direct value in the movement toward improved marriage preparation in the church. Most of the work done in this decade was written from a sociological perspective. The frequency of the primary marriage preparation literature references during this decade is illustrated in Graph A.



The Years 1950-1959

An early marriage manual, regarded by some professionals as a standard work, was authored by Abraham and

⁵L. Levine and J. Brodsky, "Group Premarital Counseling," Mental Hygiene, 33:577-587, 1949.

Hannah Stone and published in 1952. Simply entitled, A Marriage Manual, these two pioneers in the field of marriage preparation identified important foundational principles for future premarital resources.

Ernest W. Burgess of the University of Chicago and Paul Wallin of Stanford University made a vital contribution to the marriage preparation movement through the development of the Burgess-Wallin Marriage Prediction Inventory. A study of one thousand engaged couples was made from the years 1937 to 1939. A study of the same couples after marriage was conducted from 1940 to 1943. The findings from this research are carefully reported in the book Courtship, Engagement and Marriage, published in 1953 and authored by Ernest W. Burgess and Paul Wallin with Gladys Shultz. This study made an important impact on the marriage preparation movement as evidenced by substantial references to the study in subsequent years.

Sociologist, Robert O. Blood of the University of Michigan, authored a book, Anticipating Your Marriage, published in 1955. A second edition of the book was thoroughly rewritten and published in 1969. The trend away from the more cognitive approach to marriage preparation and toward a relationship-oriented emphasis is evident in this book.

The text, Education for Marriage, authored by James A. Peterson, appeared in 1956. This book was widely used

as a marriage preparation textbook at the college level. Three major sections of the book deal specifically with preparation for marriage. While some references are outdated, the book is still a good reference source.

Pastor John E. Riley authored a book titled, This Holy Estate - Guidance in Christian Homemaking. Published in 1957, the book's pastoral emphasis is apparent. Clear biblical foundations for marriage are affirmed. Practical suggestions are presented for the engaged couple. The book is written from the perspective of a pastor eager to impart information to the couple. The book is illustrative of an attempt to address marriage preparation concerns from more than a sociological perspective.

The year 1958 was a banner year with the publication of valuable resources for the pastor in the field of marriage preparation. David Mace, a pioneer in the field, authored the book, Success in Marriage. This volume clearly enunciates the author's early commitment to quality marriage preparation. Wayne E. Oates, another veteran in the pastoral care profession, also authored Premarital Pastoral Care and Counseling published in 1958. Useful suggestions are given for the pastor. In 1958 the National Council of the Churches of Christ published a book authored by Granger Westberg, Premarital Counseling. The Methodist Publishing House also published a Pastor's Manual for Premarital Counseling in the same year. The year 1958 appears as a major turning point in the response of the

church to improved marriage preparation ministry.

Dwight H. Small's book, Design for Christian Marriage, published by Fleming H. Revell in 1959, further emphasized the turning point in the emphasis on pastoral marriage preparation. Two major sections of his book deal with concepts of Christian marriage and problems in Christian courtship. The issues of infatuation and petting as well as biblical principles of lordship and commitment are major topics in this book. While the practical premarital issues tend to be spiritualized, the book indicates a positive trend toward preventive pastoral care in marriage preparation.

In 1959, one of the major pastoral care journals, Pastoral Psychology devoted an entire issue to the subject of premarital counseling. This is the first pastoral care journal giving substantive attention to premarital counseling in the church. Paul E. Johnson, guest editor for the special emphasis, gave the rationale for this unprecedented emphasis. He cited the mounting divorce rate as a primary cause, as well as the meager attention given to marriage preparation in a society where so much education is otherwise required.⁶

In this December 1959 issue of Pastoral Psychology, nine excellent articles appeared from various professionals

⁶Paul E. Johnson, "The Minister and Premarital Counseling," Pastoral Psychology, 10(99):7, 1959.

with specific emphasis on the minister and premarital counseling. Roy W. Fairchild, Professor of Christian Education at San Francisco Theological Seminary submitted an article on "Variety in Premarital Interviewing." He concluded there is great difficulty in measuring the effectiveness, if any, of extensive preparation for marriage.⁷ He cited a family ministry survey of 3,541 Presbyterian pastors with the following findings:

1. The average pastor doesn't have many occasions for premarital interviewing.
2. When he does premarital interviewing, the average pastor leans heavily upon the use of literature.
3. The most popular "interview guide" is the marriage service itself.
4. What pastors regard as appropriate topics for the premarital interview differs widely.⁸

In this same issue of Pastoral Psychology, Waller B. Wiser, a Methodist clergyman, reported the results of a marriage preparation survey with 91 respondents from Methodist churches in the Baltimore Conference. Here are the most relevant findings reported:

1. Five and one half percent of the ministers reported a definite marriage preparation program.
2. Sixty-eight percent reported they conducted one interview before the marriage. Twenty-four percent reported they conducted two interviews before the marriage.
3. Eight weeks prior to the wedding was the maximum time reported by ministers for beginning their marriage preparation.

⁷Roy W. Fairchild, "Variety in Premarital Interviewing," Pastoral Psychology, 10(99):10, 1959.

⁸Ibid, p. 11.

4. Eighty-five percent of the ministers reported spending from thirty minutes to one and one-half hours in each of the marriage preparation interviews.
5. Ninety-eight percent of the ministers reported they felt the church had a definite responsibility for preparing people for marriage.
6. Ninety-two percent of the ministers indicated the following subjects as most representative of the topics covered in the interview:

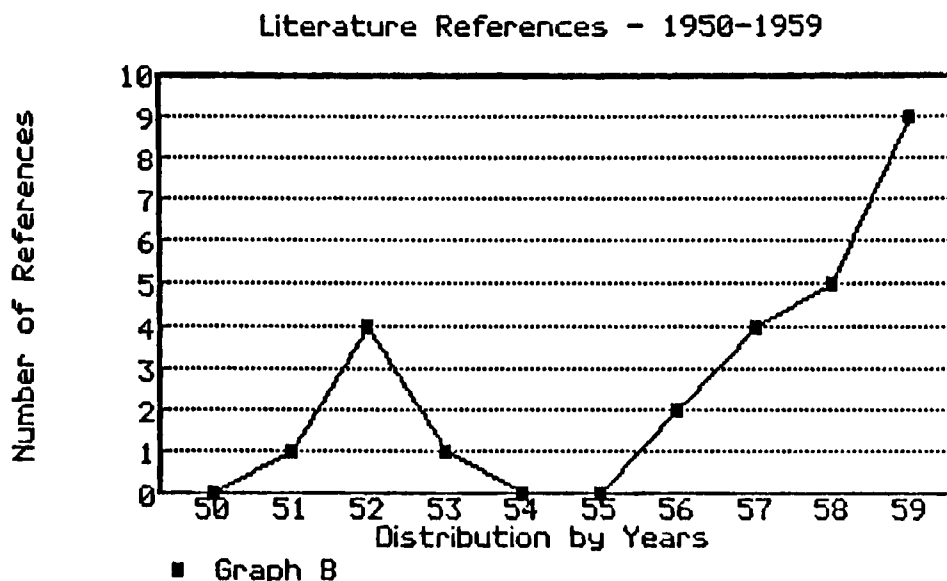
Spiritual basis for marriage
Finances
Couples and parents living together
Relation of sex to love
Size of family including birth control⁹

Both the survey of Presbyterian and Methodist clergy indicate a new emphasis as the church began shifting gears from a strictly remedial attitude toward a preventive approach in dealing with widespread marriage failure.

Other helpful articles in this important journal's emphasis include an article by Paul E. Johnson on emotional problems in premarital counseling, an excellent article by Evelyn M. Duvall on premarital sex, and the need for teamwork in premarital counseling written by a medical doctor, Andrew D. Elia. While this series of articles in Pastoral Psychology is excellent, it is regrettable to note an absence of any further emphasis on marriage preparation in subsequent issues of this journal. Although this series is excellent, the contributions are now almost thirty years old and in need of further emphasis. Graph B assists in

⁹Waller B. Wiser, "Launching a Program of Premarital Counseling," Pastoral Psychology, 10:15-16, 1959.

an understanding of the marriage preparation literature trends in the decade of the fifties.



The Years 1960-1969

A very important book arrived on the scene in 1961 authored by Charles William Stewart entitled, The Minister as Marriage Counselor. While the primary emphasis of the book is on the marriage relationship, two excellent chapters are devoted to premarital help for the minister. Both the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis and Family Life Publications are emphasized as helpful resources. This volume took another substantial step in pointing the way to improved preventive pastoral care in addressing the issue of troubled marital relationships.

The years of the sixties produced several other

valuable helps for the marriage preparation pastoral care giver. Evelyn M. Duvall wrote her book, Why Wait Until Marriage? She presented powerful arguments against premarital sexual relationships and built a strong case for maintaining high standards. One of her famous statements was, "Marriage is more than a bed for the night. It is a home for the years."¹⁰ This volume contains timeless truths and still holds value as a resource for young people.

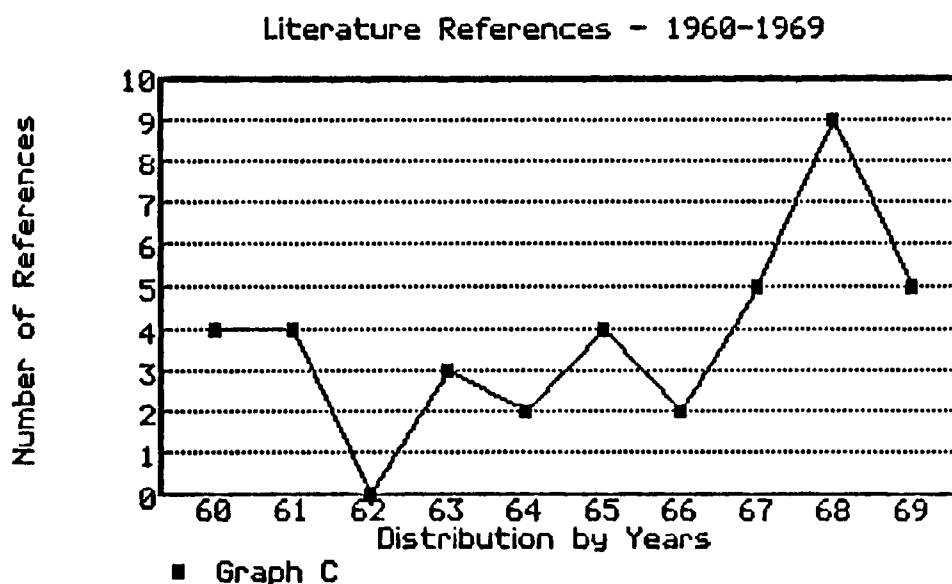
Premarital Counseling by Aaron L. Rutledge was published in 1966 and became another practical reference work for pastoral leaders. Rutledge was clearly convinced that group counseling was the method of choice for working with engaged couples. With great optimism he stated, "Premarital counseling is the greatest educational and clinical opportunity in the life of a person--still time to effect adult personality changes and at the same time invest in soon-to-be-born children: a chance to influence both the chicken and the egg."¹¹ It is unfortunate the book is now out of print and does not include the research and theory development of recent years. The work is quoted in several subsequent journals.

¹⁰Evelyn M. Duvall, "Premarital Sex--The Counselor's Challenge," Pastoral Psychology, 10(99):32, 1959.

¹¹Aaron L. Rutledge, Premarital Counseling (Cambridge: Schenkman Publishing Company, 1966), p. viii.

James Christiansen's work titled The Minister's Marriage Handbook also appeared in 1966. Its value has been evident in that it was significantly revised and republished in 1985. This is a most helpful handbook with a substantial section on marriage preparation followed by practical guidelines for the wedding day.

The pace of marriage preparation literature picked up as the period of the sixties came to a close. The flurry of activity is evident in Graph C.



Excellent books Premarital Guidance by Russell L. Dicks, Preparing for Marriage by Paul Popenoe, and On Being Married Soon by Harold Shyrock were all published in 1968.

One of the most influential publications of the late sixties was the book by William J. Lederer and Don D. Jackson entitled The Mirages of Marriage. Published in

1968, it was the product of two men who saw marriage as a system in which partners act and react to each other. The authors believed marriage problems could not be resolved by working with the partners as separate individuals. While only one chapter of the book is specifically oriented to marriage preparation, the book became a benchmark in the application of a systems concept to marriage preparation. The conclusions developed in this book may have encouraged a further emphasis on conjoint marriage preparation.

In 1968 Gerald K. Hill, pastor of the Dover Plains Methodist Church in Dover Plains, New York, reported the initial findings in his research on premarital counseling practices and attitudes among 1,045 Methodist ministers. Here are his major findings from the data:

1. When asked if there was specific emphasis on premarital counseling in any of their training, 558 (53%) said there had been, while 410 (39%) said no such emphasis had been made.
2. Seventy-three percent of the respondents (759) reported a major difficulty and frustration was the fact that couples contact them ¹²too close to the date they have already chosen.

Hill attempted to make a case for a group premarital plan based on a model given by Aaron L. Rutledge in the book noted above.

¹²Gerald K. Hill, "Some Thoughts on Group Education for Engaged Couples," Pastoral Psychology, 19(184):16-17.

The Years 1970-1979

The proliferation of writings in the pastoral marriage preparation literature became strongly pronounced in the decade of the 1970's. The United Methodist Church published a pastor's manual for premarital counseling, To Love and To Cherish in 1970. Howard and Charlotte Clinebell also authored The Intimate Marriage in 1970. While this book was primarily concerned with the enrichment of marriage, it has a positive value for marriage preparation as well.

Howard and Jeanne Hendricks also helped set the pace for the decade of the seventies with their article, "Preparing Young People for Christian Marriage," appearing in Bibliotheca Sacra in 1971.¹³ While the article is more diagnostic than prognostic, it does identify the crucial need for marriage preparation and suggests general ideas for implementation in the local church.

The Marriage Affair, edited by J. Allan Peterson, was first published in 1971. Founder and president of Family Concern of Wheaton, Illinois, the editor brought an impressive concentration of scholarship to the subject of marriage preparation and the improvement of marriage. Contributors include Paul Popenoe, Paul Tournier, Letha

¹³Howard Hendricks and Jeanne Hendricks, "Preparing Young People for Christian Marriage," Bibliotheca Sacra, 128(511):245-262, 1971.

Scanzoni, David Mace, Evelyn Duvall and Howard and Charlotte Clinebell. The book has gone through twelve printings and is an excellent resource for the pastor.

Another small book by Howard Clinebell, Growth Counseling for Marriage Enrichment, published in 1975, is a continuation in the emphasis on pastoral premarital counseling. Clinebell encouraged direction away from the use of the term "counseling" in marriage preparation. He suggested the use of the word "counseling" implied one was working with problem couples and should be avoided by pastors. Instead of a problem-oriented approach, Clinebell Clinebell suggested a "growth perspective" with emphasis on personalized training and coaching in relationship-building skills.¹⁴

In 1972 three strategic resources were added to the growing list of marriage preparation references. David Belgum's book, Engagement, the book Getting Ready for Marriage by David Mace and Becoming Partners by Carl Rogers were published. While both the Belgum and Rogers books are helpful, the book by David Mace is by far the most valuable of the three. Dr. Mace believed the current crisis in marriage substantiated a need to move from a remedial to a preventive approach in dealing with marital failure. A shift from a knowledge-oriented approach in marriage pre-

¹⁴Howard Clinebell, Growth Counseling for Marriage Enrichment (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), p. 48.

paration to primary attention on personal and interpersonal dynamics and the facilitation of behavior change was viewed as a desirable new approach. David Mace became a widely-respected scholar in the field of marriage and marriage preparation. A summation of his concerns and suggestions for marriage preparation are found in the fall issue of the 1975 Pastoral Psychology journal.¹⁵ David Mace also wrote We Can Have Better Marriages in 1974.

The avalanche of publications in the seventies make it difficult, within the strictures of this survey, to do justice to all the books published as well as all the articles appearing in the journals. The name of David J. Rolfe emerges in this decade. His Marriage Preparation Manual published in 1975 should not be overlooked as a helpful resource. The manual presents a review of information couples need to be able to effectively process in their relationship. The primary emphasis is on application of information by the couple to their relationship. Several journal articles by David Rolfe are also worthy of note. In 1974 he wrote, "Premarriage Assessment of Teenage Couples" for the Journal of Family Counseling. Then in 1977 the article "Premarriage Contracts: An Aid to Couples Living with Parents" appeared in The Family Coordinator.

¹⁵David R. Mace, "Education and Preparation for Marriage: New Approaches," Pastoral Psychology, 24(228):9-16, 1975.

Millard J. Bienvenu developed the Premarital Communication Inventory in response to a noticeable absence of any resource for the measurement of premarital communication. His study of 184 college-age premarital couples on their communication interaction resulted in a forty-item scale differentiating between good and poor communication. The findings are reported in the January 1975 issue of The Family Coordinator. The inventory was published as a public affairs pamphlet in 1974.¹⁶

John H. Curtis and Michael E. Miller encouraged a new direction for both premarital and marital counseling in the January 1974 issue of The Family Coordinator. Citing the growing number of troubled marriages and the inadequate number of professionals available to provide redemptive intervention, the authors urged the modification of the medical and educational models to include the use of para-professionals.

Claude A. Guldner's article in the summer 1977 issue of Pastoral Psychology, added an increased emphasis to the need for a greater relationship between premarital and "neomarital" counseling. His use of the term "neomarital"¹⁷ to suggest attention to the couple following the

¹⁶ Millard J. Bienvenu, Sr., Talking It Over Before Marriage (New York: Public Affairs Committee, 1974).

¹⁷ Claude A. Guldner, "Marriage Preparation and Marriage Enrichment: The Preventive Approach," Pastoral Psychology, 25(4):p. 251.

wedding does not appear to have "caught on" among pastoral care professionals. However, his concern for integration of counseling both prior to and following the wedding is reflected in subsequent journals. This article reflects a refinement of his earlier article in The Family Coordinator in 1971, "The Post-Marital: An Alternative to Pre-Marital Counseling."

H. Norman Wright's book, Premarital Counseling--A Guidebook For The Counselor, was first published in 1977. A revised edition was printed in 1982. The book has gone through five printings and is most useful for any pastor involved in marriage preparation. Wright gives practical guidelines for conducting the pre-marital sessions with the couple. Topics for discussion are presented. A section on group marriage preparation is excellent. The appendix lists examples of several useful resources.

Although Wright's book on premarital counseling is of value in assisting the pastor in marriage preparation, two other companion books authored by him include, Communication: Key to Your Marriage, published in 1974 and The Pillars of Marriage, published in 1979. Along with David Mace, the name of H. Norman Wright is one highly respected among pastoral care professionals. He is viewed by many as an authority in marriage preparation as well as marriage enrichment.

In 1976 H. Norman Wright conducted a research study of premarital counseling done in one thousand churches.

Four hundred and seven returned useable surveys. The average number of sessions required for premarital counseling was three. The researcher found that those who had at least six premarital sessions felt they benefited from the experience, while those who had fewer sessions did not find the experience that beneficial.¹⁸

Another valuable resource prepared by H. Norman Wright in 1977 is the multimedia learning kit, Communication and Conflict Resolution in Marriage. Complete with overhead transparencies, the kit has practical helps for both marriage preparation and marriage enrichment.

Before You Say "I Do", was published in 1978. Wes Roberts and H. Norman Wright are the authors. It is a marriage preparation study manual designed for use by an engaged couple in either home study or by a pastor with an engaged couple. A companion cassette is available for use with the manual. Since the manual was produced in 1978 a superb video cassette series has been produced by the same title.

Several other marriage preparation manuals were published in the late nineteen seventies. Clifford and Joyce Penner produced a multimedia learning kit in 1977

¹⁸H. Norman Wright, "Premarital Counseling: A Followup Study," (Unpublished Manuscript, Christian Marriage Enrichment, 8000 East Girard, Denver, Colorado, 1981).

entitled, Sexual Fulfillment in Marriage. It contains overhead transparencies and duplicating masters. This resource could be of specific help to the pastor in an emphasis on the sexual dimensions of marriage preparation.

Inter-Varsity Press printed A Handbook for Engaged Couples in 1977, authored by Robert and Alice Fryling. This is a communications workbook suitable for couples who view their engagement as a serious commitment.

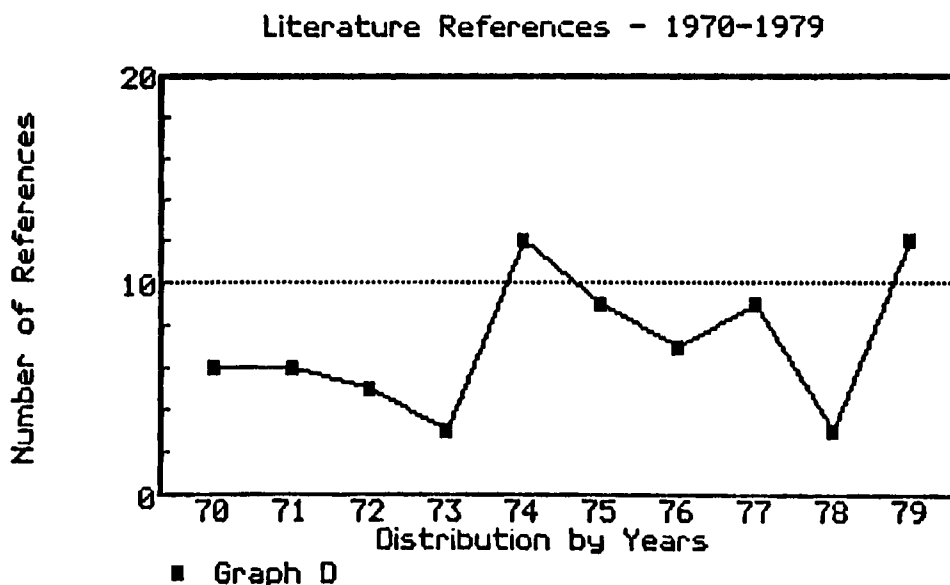
The book, Three To Get Ready, by Howard A. Eyrich was published in 1978 and has gone through two printings. The book is biblical and practical. It is one of the few books or articles having any substantial reference to a theology of premarital counseling. The appendices include valuable materials for scriptural responses to the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis.

Another major influence emerging in the decade of the seventies was that of David H. Olson, Professor of Family Social Sciences at the University of Minnesota. His major contribution has been in the creation of objective, scientifically evaluated marriage and family inventories. The most helpful marriage preparation inventory created with primary input from David H. Olson is entitled, "PREPARE." First published in 1979 by PREPARE-ENRICH of Minneapolis, it is a systematically-developed inventory giving a comprehensive picture of a couple's relationship strengths as well as problematic areas. The high

reliability and validity of PREPARE is described in detail in a doctoral dissertation by David G. Fournier.¹⁹

Although the PREPARE inventory is a bit technical in nature, seminars are now regularly provided to train interested pastors. Comprehensive computer printouts analyzing each couple's relationship strengths and work areas are available for a nominal charge. This instrument has gone through several revisions since it was first published and is an excellent resource for any pastor's marriage preparation ministry.

The decade of the seventies was productive for the marriage preparation emphasis in the church. Graph D helps underscore this positive trend.



¹⁹David G. Fournier, "Validation of PREPARE: A Premarital Counseling Inventory." (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1979), p. 60-62.

The Years 1980-1987

Three very helpful marriage preparation resources became available in 1980. Robert F. Stahmann and William J. Hiebert authored a book simply entitled Premarital Counseling. The authors explain procedures and techniques for conjoint-couple and group premarital counseling. The book includes helpful chapters on the use of the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis in marriage preparation. Practical applications and examples are given to various suggested procedures.

A second volume published in 1980, Love Life For Every Married Couple, was written by Ed Wheat, a physician and certified sex therapist. While the book is primarily for the married couple, this book could well be required reading for those anticipating marriage.

James Dobson's book, Straight Talk to Men and Their Wives, also was published in 1980. This is another volume not directly related to marriage preparation, but could be placed on the pastor's required reading list for couples anticipating marriage. Dr. Dobson assists couples in clarifying male and female roles in the home.

One of the most substantial contributions of the journals in 1980 was an article appearing in the April 1980 issue of the Journal of Marital and Family Therapy. Edward Bader, a professor in the Department of Family and Community Medicine at the University of Toronto, gave an

extensive report of the work of a group of Canadian researchers. The article was entitled, "Do Marriage Preparation Programs Really Work? A Canadian Experiment." The data gathered supported the hypothesis that spouses who took part in this specific marriage preparation program would be less likely to engage in destructive conflict than those who had not taken part. The research also validated the hypothesis that spouses who participated in the marriage preparation program would more readily seek help in resolving individual or marital problems than those who did not take part.²⁰

Edward Bader supplied this writer with an unpublished copy of the five-year study. Further findings indicated that small group discussions held prior to the marriage and again after six months of marriage do have a positive effect. The couples ability to confront marital conflict, constructively resolve conflicts, as well as seek help in resolving conflict was significantly higher among couples who participated in post-wedding sessions as well as pre-wedding sessions.²¹ This study is a strong factor encouraging structured marriage ministry following

²⁰Edward Bader, et. al. "Do Marriage Preparation Programs Really Work? A Canadian Experiment," Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 6(2):171-179, 1980.

²¹Edward Bader, Robert Riddle and Carol Sinclair, "Do Marriage Preparation Programs Really Help? A Five Year Study" (Unpublished Source provided by Edward Bader).

the wedding as well as prior to the wedding. Jimmy R. Ross emphasized the post-ceremony session should occur six to eight weeks following the wedding as well as a check up at six, twelve and eighteen month intervals.²²

In 1981 Ed Wheat made another valuable contribution through the production of his cassette series, "Sex Technique and Sex Problems in Marriage."²³ Favorable endorsement has been given this three-hour sex counsel from persons such as James Dobson, H. Norman Wright, Howard Hendricks and many other authorities. While the cassettes are directed primarily to the married couple, David Seamands successfully used this as a suggested resource with couples preparing for marriage in his Engaged Discovery Weekend.²⁴ The cassette series, "Before the Wedding Night," is a follow-up resource produced in 1982 by Ed Wheat specifically for couples planning for marriage.²⁵

Your Marriage Has Real Possibilities, published in 1981, is a book identifying biblical principles for a successful marriage. The marriages of the patriarchs are

²²Jimmy R. Ross, "Educating for Marriage," Brethren Life and Thought, 25:121-124, 1980.

²³Ed Wheat, Sex Techniques and Sex Problems in Marriage (Springdale, Ak: Scripture Counsel, Inc., 1981), 2 cassettes.

²⁴David Seamands, Personal Interview, United Methodist Church, Wilmore, Kentucky, March 26, 1981.

²⁵Ed Wheat, Before the Wedding Night (Springdale, Ak: Bible Believers Cassettes, 1982), 2 cassettes.

discussed by authors Cyril and Aldyth Barber. The focus on biblical models for marriage is a helpful attempt to anchor marriage preparation and marriage counseling in the scriptures.

In 1983 David Mace edited Prevention in Family Services. One of the best features of this book on prevention is a chapter by Luciano L'Abate entitled "Prevention as a Profession." Another most useful chapter is written by David H. Olson of the University of Minnesota entitled, "How Effective Is Marriage Preparation?" Dr. Olson clearly identified the need for marriage preparation, cites various studies that have validated marriage preparation and makes a plea to involve lay couples in premarital services. The emphasis on the use of lay couples is suggested in several sources in the early eighties.²⁶

The use of scientifically-designed inventories to assist in the prediction of marriage conflict is emphasized in the book, Marriage and Family Assessment. Published in 1983, chapter twelve is written by David G. Fournier, David H. Olson and Joan M. Druckman. The chapter specifically identifies the value of the PREPARE-ENRICH inventories in assessing pre-marital relationships. The relationship diagnosis applied in these inventories is found

²⁶David H. Olson, "How Effective is Marriage Preparation?" Prevention in Family Services, (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1983), pp. 65-75.

methodologically sound and conceptually consistent with theoretical concepts of marital systems. The combination of objective computer processing, pertinent subject content and vast couple response summaries identify this assessment tool of substantial value to the pastor. Thousands of couples have successfully utilized the PREPARE-ENRICH Inventories.²⁷

Healing for Damaged Emotions, written by David A. Seamands, was published in 1984. Every marriage preparation professional should be acquainted with this practical resource in dealing with paralyzed relationships. The book is an excellent resource to aid couples in working through areas needing emotional healing.

The 1985 spring issue of Pastoral Psychology includes one of David J. Rolfe's most important contributions to marriage preparation in identifying resources for the improvement of marriage preparation skills. Resources for the marriage preparation are reviewed and the distinctions between premarital counseling and marriage preparation are delineated. Skills are suggested to improve the pastor's effectiveness in this ministry.

Donald Joy's book, Bonding: Relationships In The Image of God, published in 1985, is another in a series of

²⁷David G. Fournier, David H. Olson and Joan Druckman, "Assessing Marital and Premarital Relationships: The PREPARE-ENRICH Inventories," Marriage and Family Assessment (Beverly Hills: Sage Publishing, 1983), p. 249.

recent books with value for pastoral marriage preparation. The mystery of pair bonding is linked to biblical morality. Chapter three in the book, "Pair Bonding! What God Joins Together," is another possible required reading assignment for engaged couples.

In 1985, Roger H. Ferris, a Seventh-Day Adventist clergyman, completed his study of premarital preparation in his denomination. Dr. Ferris discovered most of the premarital literature has focused on a medical model, assuming a dysfunction within the individual that needs resolution in counseling before the time of the marriage. He also concluded that the time from engagement until approximately four to six months after marriage is essentially not a teachable time.²⁸ Utilizing a random sample of seven hundred married couples, he uncovered the need for an educational content design for marriage preparation in his denomination.²⁹

H. Norman Wright wrote So You're Getting Married which was published in 1985. It includes material from several of his books and is a valuable addition to the marriage preparation literature. The book is primarily addressed to the couple planning for marriage. It is

²⁸Roger H. Ferris, Personal Letter, May 19, 1982.

²⁹Roger H. Ferris, "Premarital Preparation: An Educational Design for Seventh-Day Adventists in the United States" (Ed.D. Dissertation, Andrews University, 1985).

another excellent book to be included on a recommended reading list for engaged couples.

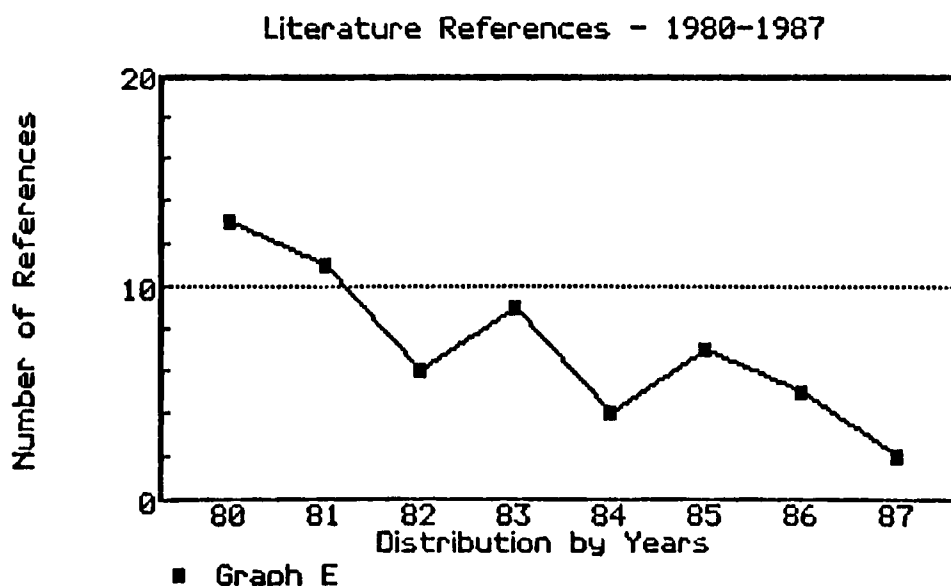
After fifty-three years of marriage and many important contributions to the marriage preparation movement, David and Vera Mace authored the book, The Sacred Fire: Christian Marriage Through the Ages. The book was published in 1986 and is a splendid volume for any pastor to add to the impressive list of marriage preparation resources from David and Vera Mace. The Mace's call for increased emphasis on the first year of marriage as the most critical for ministry from the church to the couple.

Dr. Howard Markman of the Center for Marital and Family Studies at the University of Denver conducted a ten-year study of one hundred and sixty five couples. He attempted to discover the components of marital success in his study. One of the most significant findings of the study related to the value of a marriage prevention plan. In Markman's study, couples from the Denver area who were in their first marriages and had been married five to six years were included. Before marriage 21 of the couples were put through a five-week program to learn problem-solving skills. Only one couple in this group divorced within the five to six-year time. In contrast to this group, 21 percent of those in the untrained control group divorced within the five to six-year period. Markman concluded that premarital counseling teaching problem-

solving and communication skills can increase the possibility of marital success.³⁰ Although Markman's research continues, some of his research was reported in 1987.

Dr. Robert Stahmann and Dr. William Hiebert completed an excellent premarital handbook entitled, Premarital Counselor: The Professional's Handbook. Published in 1987, the book provides a helpful overview of premarital counseling. The chapter on family of origin is most useful.

The decade of the eighties produced several very helpful marriage preparation resources. Graph E indicates a downward trend in literature contributions during the decade. Is the emphasis on marriage preparation waning, or do we already have adequate resources?



³⁰ Karen S. Peterson, "Seek Counsel Before 'I Do's,'" USA Today, October 29, 1987, Section D, p. 1.

Summary of Marriage Preparation Literature

Several trends may be observed in the marriage preparation literature since 1940. There are indications that premarital counseling is now being taken more seriously in the decade of the eighties than was evident in the forties. According to surveys earlier cited, pastors are now requiring more marriage preparation sessions. This is one evidence of a movement toward greater emphasis on marriage preparation.

An enrichment model is now being utilized in contrast to an earlier model with primary attention to the imparting of instruction to the engaged couple. Many of the early models for marriage preparation were more heavily oriented toward the transmission of knowledge about marriage. Most of the current marriage preparation models emphasize the process dimensions of human relationships rather than a primary emphasis on the content characteristics. Aaron Rutledge was quick to point out the need for this new direction in his book, Pre-Marital Counseling.³¹

David Mace sees a weakness in many of the recent enrichment models. He believes many of them do not give adequate priority to the components of commitment and conflict resolution, resulting in reducing the positive

³¹Aaron L. Rutledge, Pre-Marital Counseling, (Cambridge: Schenkman Publishing Company, 1966), p. 7, 19.

impact of marriage preparation.³² The trend toward enrichment models has assisted in a sharpening focus for the goals of premarital counseling and promoting the marital quality of the couple's future marriage.³³

The language of the premarital counseling movement has begun to move away from the use of the diagnostic term "counseling" to the use of "marriage preparation," or "pre-marital preparation." Rather than assuming a dysfunction in the couple's relationship through the use of the word "counseling," the description "marriage preparation" or "pre-marital preparation" is now more appropriate.

A further increasing emphasis is on post-wedding pastoral care. The research of Earnest Bader and his associates at the University of Toronto substantiate the need for this emphasis. There is some suggestion in the literature that post-wedding counseling will take priority over pre-wedding counseling in both duration and importance.³⁴ David and Vera Mace have added their voices to this growing concern. They believe the year prior to the marriage is a primary time for establishing friendships with the couple, while the first year of marriage is

³²David Mace, "Education and Preparation for Marriage," Pastoral Psychology, 24(228):12-14, 1975.

³³Michael Klassen, op. cit., p. 77-78.

³⁴Walter R. Schumm and Wallace Denton, "Trends in Premarital Counseling," Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 5(4):29, 1979.

the critical time for intensive marital care from the church.³⁵

A major problem within the marriage preparation movement has been a difficulty in the development of a systematic evaluative tool to determine the effectiveness of any particular marriage preparation model. An increasing amount of research is now emerging to address this problem. The five-year study of Edward Bader of the University of Toronto was an early attempt to address this problem. The more recent research of David H. Olson of the University of Minnesota is particularly valuable. Howard Markman's research at the University of Denver is also adding important data to the validity of particular types of marriage preparation models.

Many wonderful resources have been produced for the pastor in the last twenty years. Research to evaluate the value of marriage preparation substantiates the need for a continuing effort by pastors to improve their skills in this most fruitful ministry to families.

³⁵David and Vera Mace. The Sacred Fire: Christian Marriage Through the Ages (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986), p. 267.

Chapter 4

DESIGN OF THE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

The historical stage of the research for this study has been reported in chapters two and three. The descriptive stage of the research is centered in the development and implementation of a questionnaire mailed to the pastors of the Wabash Conference of the Free Methodist Church. The questionnaire was designed to survey the attitudes and practices of these pastors regarding marriage preparation. The development of the questionnaire is reported and described in this chapter. The methodology utilized in mailing the questionnaire and tabulating the results is also specified.

Rationale for a Mailed Questionnaire

The decision was made to utilize a mailed questionnaire as the primary data-collection instrument. The reasons for the use of a mailed questionnaire, rather than a personal interview questionnaire, was based on the following premises:

1. Since the writer is the conference superintendent primarily responsible for the appointment of each pastor to his church, it was assumed the respondents might provide unreliable data through the use of a personal

interview. A pastor might sense a need to "look good" in the eyes of his superior. The presence of the superintendent as the interviewer could create "administrative pressure," and result in an erroneous collection of data.

2. The use of the mailed survey questionnaire was further justified to assist in establishing privacy. It was concluded that respondents would have less cause for fear that information given would be used against him or her as a matter of the pastor's professional record. Steps were taken to assure the respondent that no survey would be singled out for individual study. No survey was identified or coded to determine the identity of any person's response. With the greater assurance of anonymity it was assumed the respondents would be more willing to provide answers that violate socially-accepted ministerial norms.

3. Considerable savings of time and money were also viewed as positive reasons for the use of a mailed questionnaire in contrast to personal interviews or other types of data gathering. With the wide geographical distribution of pastors throughout Indiana and eastern Illinois, the cost of travel and the time involved in personal interviews were viewed as significant obstacles.

In view of these advantages of a mailed questionnaire, the data-gathering instrument began to take shape. An attempt will be made to describe the development of the questionnaire in sequential stages.

The Scope of the Questionnaire

The next stage in the development of the questionnaire was to establish its scope. Researchers report that most questionnaires contain wasted questions.¹ An attempt was made to avoid any tendency to conclude that since the survey was being conducted, a few unrelated marginal questions would be asked to help inform another research area.

The research instrument utilized in this study applied only to the ministers under appointment in the Wabash Conference of the Free Methodist Church. There were seventy-nine ministers under appointment in that conference.

Parameters of the survey were established to seek information pertinent only to the marriage preparation practices of the respondents surveyed. No attempt was made to gather data about marriage counseling or any other area of pastoral care. The survey was also restricted to a description of each pastor's marriage preparation ministry, as well as a description of the pastor's understanding of an ideal marriage preparation ministry.

Demographic data was asked of each pastor to check out the possibility of any correlation between the marriage

¹Kenneth D. Bailey, Methods of Social Research (New York: The Free Press, 1982), p. 114.

preparation practices and needs of the pastor and levels of educational background, number of weddings each year, years of marriage, years of ministry, religious commitment at the time of the pastor's wedding, and marriage preparation received by the pastor prior to his own wedding.

The purpose of the questionnaire was to test the basic hypotheses of this study. The conclusions drawn from the gathered data would either confirm or negate these hypotheses.

Questionnaire Relevance to Respondents

With the formulation of the concepts and hypotheses in this study, the next link in the research chain was the development of the data-collection questionnaire. The instrument was designed with its relevance to the respondents as a primary factor. One goal of the study was to construct the questionnaire so the pastors who participated would find this a valuable experience. The importance of making the research project relevant to the pastors was viewed as crucial to the success of the total project.

The attempt to clarify, explain and justify the goals of the study was made through two cover letters that accompanied the questionnaire. The writer's area bishop, David Foster, wrote a cover letter stating:

With an increasing need for quality marriage preparation in our churches, it is important we are fully equipped for this most significant ministry.

I personally urge your prompt attention in filling out the survey and returning it to Superintendent Hill. He has my full support for this project.²

The bishop's cover letter undoubtedly helped underscore the importance of each pastor's response to the success of the project. The writer also justified the questionnaire in his cover letter to the pastors:

Each of us have deep concern for quality marriage preparation. This survey arises out of this concern. The survey is undertaken to understand our pastoral marriage preparation procedures. It will also attempt to survey the level of need for further training or awareness³ of resources in this area of our pastoral work.

A further incentive for the relevance of the study to each pastoral respondent was the promise of the distribution of the questionnaire results after the analysis of the data was completed. This promise was made on the assumption that it would help allay any feeling on the part of the respondent that he or she was viewed as "alienated labor" who would never see the fruits of his or her endeavors. It was also believed such an offer would further validate the worth of the pastor's personal response with the promise of "partial payment" for the time given to filling out the questionnaire.

Description of Questionnaire Response Categories

The basic format of the questionnaire was a series

²See Appendix A for Bishop David Foster's letter.

³See Appendix B for Darold Hill's letter.

of predominantly closed questions.⁴ A closed question was defined by this study as a question in which the respondent selects one or more of the specific categories provided by the researcher without opportunity for comment by the respondent. Most of the questions in this survey were of the "closed" variety. The priority of the closed-question approach was justified for the following reasons:

1. The answers are standard and can be compared from respondent to respondent.
2. The answers are much easier to code and analyze.
3. The respondent is usually clearer about the meaning of the question.
4. The answers are relatively complete and a minimum of irrelevant responses are received.
5. Questions relating to variable sensitive areas generally get fuller cooperation from closed questions.
6. Closed questions are much easier for a respondent to answer.⁵

The closed questions were constructed to give the respondent a numerical choice through the use of a numerical continuum with a scale from 1 to 6. Throughout the survey the number 1 was given the lowest value and the number 6 the highest value. The use of six numbers was used to conclude that each response of 4 or higher was a positive response, while a response of 3 or lower was a negative response.

The open-question approach was not totally disre-

⁴See Appendix C to Examine Questionnaire.

⁵Bailey, op. cit., p. 123-124.

garded, since there were some categories where all the possible answers might not be properly anticipated by the questionnaire. An open-ended question was understood by this study as a question where response categories are not specified. Through the use of open questions the respondent was given opportunity to further clarify the response given.

There were a total of 76 questions in this questionnaire. Opening questions dealt with age, marital status, educational background, years of service as a minister and the level of marriage preparation the pastor received prior to his wedding. Sixty-eight of the responses were closed questions with 8 of the responses open-ended. The first section of the questionnaire was biographical information. There were 8 potential responses dealing with background information on the respondent.

The second section was devoted to a description of the respondent's marriage preparation ministry and included 46 possible responses. Four of the questions gave opportunity for the respondent to further clarify the response with a written explanation.

The third section of the questionnaire was a description of the pastor's perceptions of the ingredients of an ideal marriage preparation ministry. Nineteen possible responses were given. Further opportunity was given for any additional comments by the pastor.

The final section gave the respondent opportunity for three open-ended summary statements. Questions related to the pastor's primary goal in marriage preparation as well as the pastor's biggest frustration and greatest need in preparing couples for marriage. With the open-ended questions a wide variety of responses was anticipated.

In the design of the questions, it was assumed that after the prospective respondents were convinced that the purpose of the study was relevant, they must also be convinced that all the questions in the questionnaire were relevant to the stated goals of the study. Attempts were made to avoid questions with double meanings, ambiguous questions, abstract or leading questions. The basic rule followed was to provide all possible answers in the close-ended questions in as clear and uncluttered a fashion as possible.

The questions were also designed with the realization that a respondent might look upon the questionnaire as a reflection on one's pastoral performance. An attempt was made to design the survey to assure anonymity. No signatures were required. The stamped, return-addressed envelope included with the survey was not coded in any attempt to identify the respondents. The cover letter also assured confidentiality. No pastor's survey form would be singled out for individual study. The statistical data would be analyzed in groupings for reporting purposes.

Validity of Questionnaire in Testing Hypotheses

The question of validity must be put to the questionnaire to assess its reliability in testing the underlying hypotheses giving energy to the direction of this study. The hypotheses tested through data gathered from this questionnaire were as follows:

1. Pastors of the Wabash Conference believe they are inadequately trained for marriage preparation and have a high need for further training in marriage preparation.
2. Pastors of the Wabash Conference spend fewer than six, one-hour sessions with each couple in planning for marriage, and yet desire to spend at least six, one-hour sessions with them.
3. Few pastors in the conference use any evaluative tool, such as the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis, or marriage expectation inventories as a part of their marriage preparation ministry.
4. Pastors often lower their own normal requirements for marriage preparation when time pressure or political pressures within the church threaten them.
5. Conference pastors tend to spend more time planning for the details of the wedding and with the content of facts about marriage in their marriage preparation sessions, rather than assisting the couple in developing resources for positive relationships with each other and with God.

In the following paragraphs each hypothesis is identified as well as a description of the questions in the survey that attempted to verify or nullify the hypothesis. Most of the data gathered was viewed as an integral unit of information having broad implications for

the total project, rather than individual bits of information relating only to one of the hypotheses.

First, the questions were identified that attempted to specifically test the hypothesis that pastors feel they are inadequately trained and have a high need for further training in marriage preparation. It was hoped some of the biographical information gathered would reveal helpful data to assist in the validation or invalidation of this first hypothesis. Any correlations were noted between a pastor's age, marital status, educational background, years of service as a minister, the marriage preparation received from the church when he was married, and the level of the religious commitment of both the pastor and spouse, to the pastor's sense of need for further training in marriage preparation. This information was requested in Section A of the questionnaire with 8 responses sought from the respondent.

The biographical background information was also correlated with the pastor's description of his marriage preparation ministry in Section B of the questionnaire. A total of 46 responses were requested of the respondent in this section. Question 6 in Section B, specifically asked, "How do you regard the value of any training for marriage preparation you may have received in your ministerial training?" Question 8 in Section B also asked the question, "How do you view the effectiveness of your

marriage preparation ministry?" Question 15 asked, "Do you believe you have a need for further training in marriage preparation ministry?" In each of these questions the pastor was asked to respond by circling one of the numbers provided to assist in determining any need for additional training in marriage preparation.

Two open-ended questions in the Summary Statement section of the survey further provided information to test hypothesis one. The questions were, "My biggest frustration in marriage preparation is: _____." and "My greatest need in preparing couples for marriage is: _____."

Hypothesis two stated that pastors of the Wabash Conference spend fewer than six, one-hour sessions with each couple in planning for marriage, and yet, desire to spend at least six one-hour sessions with them. This hypothesis was tested with the data received from questions in Section B of the survey. Question two inquired, "How many marriage preparation sessions do you require for a couple planning a wedding?" The respondent checked any numerical value from 1 session to 8 sessions. A line was also provided for any explanation that might differ from the idea of personalized pastoral sessions with a couple.

Question three followed up question two by attempting to determine the actual length of each session. "What is the normal time you spend with each couple in each of your sessions?" The pastor checked time blocks from 30

minutes each up to two hours each. A blank space was also provided for any explanation that might differ from the stated question.

The final question to test this hypothesis came in Section C. The pastor was asked to give a description of an "Ideal Marriage Preparation Ministry." Response one asked the pastor to identify the numerical value he would place on "A minimum of six, one-hour sessions with the couple prior to the wedding," as descriptive of an ideal ingredient in the time spent with each couple in marriage preparation.

Hypothesis three stated that few pastors use any evaluative tool, such as the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis or marriage expectation inventories as a part of their marriage preparation ministry. Question twelve in Section B asked, "Do you require the use of tools like the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis or Marriage Expectation Inventories?" The response was assigned a numerical value from 1 through 6, from "frequently" to "never." Question eleven in the same section also assisted in testing this hypothesis. It asked, "Do you make assignments for the couple to work on at home, such as listening to cassette recordings, reading of books or other resources?"

Because hypothesis four was more difficult to test, several questions were written to relate to the issue. The hypothesis was that pastors often lower their own

normal requirements for marriage preparation when time pressure or political pressures within the church threaten them. Question nine in Section B inquired, "Are you ever pressured by time or other factors to reduce the amount of time you spend with a couple in marriage preparation?" Question ten then asked, "Do you alter your own marriage preparation procedures with a couple depending on the level of their understanding of marriage?"

Question thirteen further attempted to identify the circumstances under which a pastor would refuse to perform a wedding ceremony. Ten possible circumstances were cited and a blank space provided to give further opportunity for the respondent to identify any other reasons.

A final question, number fourteen, additionally sought to establish the conditions under which a pastor would reduce the number of sessions or the amount of time he would spend in marriage preparation with a given couple. Eight possible conditions were suggested and opportunity given the pastor to cite any other conditions in the blank space provided.

The concluding hypothesis was that pastors tend to spend more time preparing for the wedding and the content of facts about marriage in their marriage preparation sessions, than in assisting the couple in developing resources for positive relationships with each other and with God. Several questions were written to attempt a test of this hypothesis. Question five in Section B asked,

"How much of your marriage preparation time is spent in actual preparation for the wedding service?" Question seven requested the respondent to identify the level of importance given to thirteen different subject areas in their marriage preparation ministry. Questions eleven and twelve inquired about home assignments, the use of marriage inventories and temperament analyses. The number of sessions and the kind of subject matter covered gave primary data for this hypothesis.

Section C of the questionnaire was designed to compare and contrast the pastor's description of his own marriage preparation ministry in Section B, to the pastor's perception of an "ideal marriage preparation ministry." A correlation between espoused theory and theory in practice was attempted to further underscore distinctions between a content-oriented approach and a relationship-oriented approach to marriage preparation.

The open-ended questions in the concluding section also provided data for this hypothesis. Each pastor was asked to respond in one sentence or less to the following statements:

1. My primary goal in marriage preparation is:
2. My biggest frustration in marriage preparation is:
3. My greatest need in preparing couples for marriage is:

This questionnaire was developed after careful study of Kenneth Bailey's book, Methods of Social Research.

After several further consultations with Dr. Fred VanTatenhove, the writer's faculty advisory at Asbury Theological Seminary, and Mr. Dennis Whitaker, Chairman of the writer's Congregational Reflection Group the questionnaire was completed and ready for mailing. The final instrument was six pages in length.

Instructions for the Respondents

The two cover letters, referred to earlier, accompanied the questionnaire. An appropriately stamped, addressed envelope also was enclosed with the survey to help facilitate a response. The instructions at the heading of the questionnaire stated, "Your candid response is crucial to the success of the survey. Your response will be tabulated in groupings of data and will not be singled out for individual study."

The specific instructions for completing the survey were included in each section. The heading included a general statement of the purpose of the survey. In each section the instructions were carefully given. Whenever any doubt might exist, specific directions were given. Examples are as follows: "For each of the questions below, please check the response most accurately descriptive of you." "Circle most appropriate number." "Other (Please Explain)." "Please circle the number most accurately descriptive of your pastoral practice."

At the conclusion of the questionnaire, these further instructions were given: "Please mail this completed form in the enclosed, stamped envelope to:

Superintendent Darold L. Hill
P.O. Box 40
Mooreville, Indiana 46158"

Methodology for Mailing and Tabulating Questionnaires

The questionnaire was mailed on December 3, 1986. A total of 79 questionnaires were mailed by first-class mail. The packet mailed included the two cover letters, the questionnaire and a stamped, self-addressed envelope for the return of the questionnaire. The total cost of the mailing was \$61.62. A sample questionnaire was mailed to Bishop David Foster, as well as to Dr. Fred VanTatenhove for their information. The pastors were encouraged to mail their response by December 15.

Seven days after the questionnaires were mailed a total of 34 had been returned. Each of the returned questionnaires was assigned a number. By December 31, the count of returned questionnaires was 60. On January 1, 1987, a follow-up letter was mailed to all the pastors receiving the original letter and questionnaire.⁶ The letter further assured any who had not yet returned the survey that it was still not too late for a timely return.

⁶See Appendix D for copy of Follow-up Letter.

On January 23, 1987 the last of the returned questionnaires arrived. Seventy-nine surveys were mailed. Seventy-two were returned, with four questionnaires from associate pastors. These four pastors did not fill out the questionnaire because they were not directly involved in marriage preparation. If the response of the four associate pastors is considered, the percentage of the sample returned was 91 percent.

The following table indicates the timing of the response pattern following the mailing date of December 3, 1986:

Table 1
Timing of Questionnaire Returns

Date of Response	Total Response	Percent of Sample
December 10, 1986	34	43
December 11, 1986	39	49
December 12, 1986	44	56
December 13, 1986	48	61
December 15, 1986	52	66
December 17, 1986	56	71
December 18, 1986	57	72
December 26, 1986	58	73
December 31, 1986	60	76
January 1, 1987	Follow-up Letter Mailed	
January 8, 1987		78
January 19, 1987		80
January 23, 1987		91

Within seven days of the mailing of the questionnaire 43 percent of the respondents had returned their questionnaire. The follow-up letter also seemed to prompt

the return of 11 more questionnaires, or 14 percent of the original number of questionnaires mailed.

Results of each survey were entered in a computer data collection program designed to summarize and analyze the data. These data results are reported in the next chapter.

Summary

One goal in the development of the questionnaire was the construction of an instrument that would minimize non-response, while ensuring that the collection of the data would be complete and accurate. The questions were devised in an attempt to be relevant, clearly stated and easily answered.

The primary goal in the questionnaire design was the phrasing of questions designed to test the various hypotheses posited by the study. The next chapter includes an analysis of the data received from the questionnaire. As was indicated earlier, a complete copy of the questionnaire developed in this study is located in Appendix C for further examination and study.

Chapter 5

REPORT AND ANALYSIS OF SURVEY DATA

The data received from the Wabash Conference Marriage Preparation Survey is reported and analyzed in this chapter. The organization for reporting the data and its analysis will follow the structural sequence of the questionnaire. Each major section of the chapter first includes descriptive statistics followed by a brief analysis of the data.

Seventy-nine surveys were mailed. Seventy-one were returned. Four of the returned surveys were from associate pastors not directly involved in marriage preparation who reported they did not fill out the questionnaire. The statistical data from the sixty-eight pastors who filled out the questionnaire is reported.

Because of the frequent use of a continuum scale in receiving and reporting the data it is necessary to describe the manner in which the results were interpreted. The scale was constructed using a numerical continuum of 1 to 6. A response of 3 or lower was interpreted to indicate a negative response. A response of four or higher was interpreted as a positive response. The strength of each respondent's positive or negative response was dependent on the numerical value circled in response to any given

question. Since fractions of percentage points were not critical to the nature of this study, in the reporting of percentage factors each figure was rounded off to the nearest percentage point.

Biographical Data

The background biographical data from the pastors was the first major section of the questionnaire. The first responses sought the age category of each respondent, the marital status and the number of years married. The following table reports the data received:

Table 2
Respondent's Age Categories, Years Married

Age Groups	N	%	Years Married	N	%
25-35	24	35	1-10	18	27
36-45	21	31	11-20	20	30
46-55	7	10	21-30	11	16
56-65	12	18	31-40	12	18
66-Up	4	6	40-Up	6	9
N =	68	100%	N =	67	100%

Sixty-six percent of the pastors responding were age forty-five or younger. Fifty-seven percent of the pastors were married 20 or fewer years. Sixty-seven pastors were

married, while one was single.

The educational background of the respondents was divided into four broad categories: "High School Graduate," "Bible School Graduate," "College Graduate" and "Seminary Graduate." The pastors were asked to check each category that related to them. Space was also provided to identify any other educational background. Twenty-eight had seminary degrees, 27 were college graduates, 6 attended a bible school program, while 7 had completed only a high school degree (See Table 3 on page 173).

Since the number of years spent in pastoral ministry might be an indication of the quality of one's marriage preparation ministry or an indication of need for further training, the years of ministerial service was requested. The results (Table 3) showed that of the 66 responses, 65 percent had 20 years or less of pastoral experience.

Question number five asked the pastors to indicate if they had received some form of marriage preparation from the church prior to their own wedding. Table 4 reveals that 32, or 48 percent, of the pastors indicated "Yes," while 35, or 52 percent, responded with a "No." Well over half the respondents indicated they had received no marriage preparation from the church prior to their own wedding. It is important to note that of the 16 pastors in age categories 56 and above, only one indicated receiving any form of marriage preparation from the church.

Of the pastors age 55 and under, 31 received some form of marriage preparation, while 20 did not. Of the 22 pastors in the age category 25-35, 16 reported receiving preparation, while 7 did not. A dramatic increase in the number of persons reporting marriage preparation in the categories age 45 and under, may well indicate an increased emphasis on marriage preparation from the church in the last twenty years.

Table 4

Age Groupings - Marriage Preparation from Church

Age Category	Number	Yes	No
25-35	23	16	7
36-45	21	10	11
46-55	7	5	2
56-65	12	1	11
66-Up	4	0	4

N=67

Those who received some form of marriage preparation from the church prior to their own wedding were asked to evaluate its helpfulness. A numerical continuum was provided for the response. Thirty-two reported they had received some form of marriage preparation from the church. Thirty-one percent (N=10) rated the value below average in helpfulness, while 69 percent (N=22) rated the value as being above average. The results are reported in Table 5:

Table 5
Helpfulness of Marriage Preparation

Response Scale		N in each	%
Low	1	3	9
	2	2	6
	3	5	16
	4	8	25
	5	10	31
High	6	4	13
N =		32	100%

The last information requested in the biographical section of the questionnaire related to the level of the spiritual commitment of the pastor and spouse at the time of their marriage. The pastor was asked to evaluate both the level of his religious commitment, as well as the level of the spouse's commitment.

Table 6 shows that at the time of marriage, 15, or 22 percent of the pastors, reported their spiritual commitment was below average, while 52, or 78 percent, reported a high level of religious commitment. The pastor's ratings for the spouse revealed 11, or 16 percent, with low spiritual commitment, while 56, or 84 percent, are reported as having high spiritual commitment.

Table 6
Religious Commitment at time of Marriage

Response Scale:	Low				High		N
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Pastor:	6	4	5	8	15	29	67
Spouse:	4	2	5	8	17	31	67
N =	10	6	10	16	32	60	134

Table 7 compares the two response categories of the level of spiritual commitment for those receiving marriage preparation from the church at the time of marriage and those who did not receive any preparation:

Table 7
Reported Level of Religious Commitment

Response Scale		With Preparation		Without Preparation		% in Each
		Pastor	Spouse	Pastor	Spouse	
Low	1	2	0	4	4	7
	2	3	1	1	1	4
	3	1	0	4	5	7
	4	3	6	5	2	13
	5	9	11	6	6	24
High	6	14	14	15	17	45
N =		32	32	35	35	100%

It is interesting to note the high degree of spiritual commitment on the part of the spouse among those who received marriage preparation from the church prior to their wedding. A total of 97 percent of the respondents receiving preparation from the church indicated their spouse had a high level of commitment, in contrast to 71 percent of the spouses of those who did not receive marriage preparation from the church. The percentage differential between pastors who did and did not receive preparation from the church is only 7 percent, compared to a 26 percent differential for spouses in the same categories. This concludes the section reporting and briefly analyzing the biographical data. The information described here will be correlated with the statistics presented in following sections.

Pastor's Marriage Preparation Description

The pastors were asked fifteen questions in the section seeking a description of their marriage preparation practice. The data is reported in the sequence that the questions were placed in the questionnaire.

The first question requested information on the number of weddings normally conducted annually. Table 8 indicates the breakdown of responses. Fifty-nine percent of the pastors reported officiating at five or fewer weddings annually, while 27 percent reported officiating at 6 to 10 weddings annually. A total of 86 percent

reported conducting ten or fewer weddings annually.

Table 8
Number of Weddings Annually

Number:	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-Up	N
Pastors:	38	17	4	2	1	2	64
Percent:	59	27	6	3	2	3	100%

The second and third questions sought to locate data on the number of sessions the pastors required for marriage preparation as well as the average length of those sessions. Table 9 reports the number of sessions required.

Table 9
Number of Preparation Sessions Required

Sessions:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	N=
Pastors:	7	10	25	10	4	6	0	0	62
Percent:	11	16	40	16	7	10	0	0	100%

Sixty-seven percent of the pastors indicated they required three or fewer sessions with each couple. Thirty-three percent required four or more sessions. Only six pastors required six sessions.

Sixty-eight percent of the pastors reported spending an average of one hour per session with each

couple planning for marriage. Twenty-six percent indicated spending an average of one and one-half hour per session, while 6 percent indicated spending only thirty minutes per session. Table 10 table further identifies the time the pastors reported spending with each couple in planning for marriage.

Table 10
Pastors' Time Spent with the Couple

Pastors -	Length/Number of Sessions -	Total Time
3 require	- 1 thirty-minute session	30 minutes
2 require	- 2 thirty-minute sessions	1 hour
2 require	- 1 one-hour session	1 hour
8 require	- 2 one-hour sessions	2 hours
18 require	- 3 one-hour sessions	3 hours
5 require	- 4 one-hour sessions	4 hours
4 require	- 5 one-hour sessions	5 hours
5 require	- 6 one-hour sessions	6 hours
2 require	- 1 one and one-half hour session	1 1/2 hour
1 requires	- 2 one and one-half hour sessions	3 hours
7 require	- 3 one and one-half hour sessions	4 1/2 hours
5 require	- 4 one and one-half hour sessions	6 hours
1 requires	- 6 one and one-half hour sessions	9 hours

This information revealed that 57 percent of the pastors spend three hours or less with each couple in preparation for marriage.

Seventy-two percent indicated they met only with the couple jointly, with 28 percent reporting they met both jointly with the couple and with the bride and groom separately. None of the pastors reported any group sessions for marriage preparation.

Another survey question attempted to discover the actual amount of time taken from the marriage preparation sessions in planning for the details of the wedding. Three pastors indicated most of their time with the couple was spent planning for the wedding. Thirteen pastors reported half of the marriage preparation time was spent on actual wedding details, while forty-seven pastors reported spending very little of their marriage preparation time planning wedding details.

One is inclined to question the validity of the responses to this question in light of the previous data provided regarding the actual amount of time given to each couple for marriage preparation. Sixty-seven percent of the pastors required three marriage preparation sessions or less. Seventy-four percent normally spend one hour or less per session. Fifty-seven percent spend a total of three hours or less with each couple. With such meager time commitment to marriage preparation, it is difficult to understand how 75 percent of the pastors spend "very little

time" with actual wedding details. On the basis of the data reported from several other questions, it may easily be inferred substantially more time is required for actual wedding details than most pastors reported.

The pastors were then asked to place a value on any ministerial training they might have received to equip them for marriage preparation. Seven pastors indicated they had received no training. Several indicated they had received only minimal training. Table 11 reports the results from those who indicated receiving some form of marriage preparation training.

Table 11

Value of Training for Marriage Preparation

Scale:	Low					High	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Responses:	4	15	9	10	13	5	N=56
Percentages:	7	27	16	18	23	9	100%

Exactly 50 percent of the pastors placed a low value on their training, and 50 percent placed a better than average value on their training. The evidence suggests a significant omission in the ministerial training of Free Methodist pastors in the Wabash Conference.

Table 12 reports the data from the pastors' description of the content of subjects normally covered with

couples in the marriage preparation sessions.

Table 12
Value Given to Subject Content

Scale:	(Frequency)						N
	Low 1	2	3	4	5	High 6	
Planning Budget	3	9	18	12	15	6	63
Managing Stress	1	2	10	15	25	10	63
Couple Communication	0	0	1	8	24	29	62
Sexual Expectations	3	11	18	10	12	8	62
Spiritual Development	0	0	5	15	19	24	63
Commitment to Christ	0	2	3	8	22	28	63
Role Expectations	0	5	6	23	19	10	63
Birth Control	24	13	9	9	4	0	59
Understanding Self	4	5	17	16	13	6	61
Understanding Spouse	1	2	16	16	21	7	63
Biblical Standards	0	3	3	12	17	28	63
Relationship-In-laws	5	7	15	17	12	7	63
Family History	15	8	11	16	6	5	61

In evaluating the data, a summary of the pastors' description of the content emphases in the marriage preparation is useful. Couple communication topped the list of various subjects considered most important in the survey. Ninety-eight percent of the pastors rated couple communication as the topic most normally discussed with a

couple. With equal ratings of importance in second and third place, were the subjects of "Spiritual Development" and "Personal Commitment to Christ" both getting a 92 percent rating. "Biblical Standards for Marriage" was reported as a subject of fourth highest significance with a 90 percent rating. "Role Expectations" was next with an 83 percent score. Next came "Managing Marital Stress" with 79 percent, "Understanding of Spouse" with 70 percent, "Understanding of Self" with 57 percent, "Planning a Family Budget" with 52 percent, "Sexual Expectations" 48 percent, "Family History from Both Persons" 27 percent, and finally, "Birth Control Information" with a low rating of 22 percent in emphasis.

Couple communication rated 6 percentage points ahead of the subjects of personal commitment to Christ and spiritual development. A 70 percent rating was given to the understanding of the spouse, while only a 57 percent rating was reported on the subject of understanding self. Fewer than half of the pastors reported any discussion of sexual expectations, family history or birth control.

The next several questions attempted to gather information to determine any possible situations that might pressure the pastor to reduce or alter his marriage preparation methodology. The questions also related to the pastors' view of the effectiveness of their marriage preparation ministry. Tables 13 and 14 present the data.

Table 13

Factors Related to Pressure to Change Practices

Scale:	Frequently	1	2	3	4	5	6	Never
Pressure to Reduce Time with Couple	51%	2	11	19	12	16	3	49%
								N= 63
Frequency of Altering Their Procedures	55%	3	14	18	16	13	0	45%
								N= 64

Table 14

Pastors' Frequency in Utilizing Resources

Scale:	Frequently	1	2	3	4	5	6	Never
Frequency of Making Home Assignments	59%	15	12	11	8	7	11	41%
								N=64
Use of TJTA Resource or Marriage Inventory	41%	12	9	5	2	5	31	59%
								N=64

More than half the pastors reported being pressured by time or other factors to reduce the amount of time spent with a couple. Fifty-five percent of the pastors reported they frequently alter their marriage preparation procedures with couples, depending on the couples' understanding of marriage. Furthermore, only 59 percent of the pastors make

assignments for the couple to work on at home, such as listening to cassette recordings, reading of books or other resources. Fifty-nine percent never use any tools like the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis or marriage expectation inventories. One may question the effectiveness of such marriage preparation when these resources are neglected in a pastor's ministry. Most pastors, however, reported a positive view of the effectiveness of their marriage preparation ministry. Seventy-three percent of the ministers regarded their ministry as being above average.

The final portion of the description of pastoral preparation of couples for marriage attempted to determine the circumstances under which the respondent would refuse to perform a wedding ceremony. The following list ranks the reasons when pastors refuse to perform the ceremony.

Circumstances to Refuse Performing a Wedding Ceremony

- 63% Couple does not allow enough time for marriage preparation prior to their wedding day
- 59% Couple refuses to follow my marriage preparation expectations
- 33% Couple has unrealistic expectations
- 32% One of the persons is not a Christian
- 29% Both of the persons are divorcees
- 27% One of the persons is a divorcee
- 24% Couple is living together and sexually active
- 16% Couple has poor communication skills
- 8% Prospective bride is pregnant
- 5% Both of the persons are not Christians

The pastors identified the most frequent reason for refusing to perform a wedding ceremony as being when a couple does not allow enough time for marriage preparation prior to the date of the wedding. Thirty-two percent of

the pastors indicated they would refuse to marry a couple if one of the persons was not a Christian, while 5 percent would refuse to marry a couple if both were not Christians.

While earlier data on the content of the marriage preparation sessions indicated couple communication skills ranked number one in importance of subject matter by 95 percent of the pastors, only 16 percent would refuse to perform a wedding because the couple had poor communication skills. Divorce in the history of the couple did not rank high on the list of reasons for refusing a wedding. Twenty-nine percent of the pastors would refuse to marry a couple if both had previously been married, while 28 percent would refuse if one of the persons was a divorcee.

The next major question identified the circumstances under which a pastor would reduce the number of sessions or amount of time spent with a couple in preparation for marriage. The circumstances are ranked in the order most frequently mentioned by the pastors.

Circumstances Prompting a Reduction in Sessions

- 78% Personal knowledge of the couple, need for marriage preparation not quite as high
- 37% Both persons have a definite Christian commitment
- 30% The prospective bridegroom is home from the army and the couple wants a quick wedding
- 22% The couple's wedding date is too close to permit my normal number of sessions
- 6% The prospective bride is pregnant and the couple wants a quick wedding
- 3% Both persons are children of members in the church
- 3% One of the persons is a child of a member of the church
- 3% The couple resists some of my expectations

Personal knowledge of the couple ranked as the top reason for reducing the amount of time with a couple with 78 percent of the pastors giving this reason. No other reason came in as a close second. Both persons having a definite Christian commitment ranked second with a 37 percent response. Thirty percent of the pastors would reduce the amount of time with a couple if the groom was home from the army and the couple wanted a quick wedding.

The final question in the section sought to discover any sense of need by the pastors for further training in marriage preparation. Table 15 shows that 77 percent of the pastors sensed a great need for more preparation while 23 percent sensed little need for more preparation.

Table 15

Need for Further Marriage Preparation Training

Scale:	No Need	1	2	3	4	5	6	Great Need
Pastors:	23%	2	6	7	12	24	14	77%
N=65								

While 73% of the pastors earlier reported they viewed their marriage preparation ministry as effective, the data reported here indicates a high need for further training.

Pastors' Description of an Ideal Preparation Ministry

The concluding major section of the questionnaire sought a description from each pastor as to the ingredients of an effective marriage preparation ministry. The pastors were asked to place a value on seven statements of methodology which might be viewed as crucial ingredients of an ideal ministry. The results are given in Table 16.

Table 16

Description of Ideal Preparation Methodology

Scale	Low	1	2	3	4	5	6	High	N
Six, 1-hour sessions	51%	0	11	17	10	9	8	49%	55
Session before and after the wedding	22%	1	3	10	16	16	17	78%	63
One session with each individual	27%	4	6	13	13	17	10	63%	63
Use of resources to evaluate marital success	28%	2	9	6	15	21	8	72%	61
Exploration of spiritual	2%	0	1	0	12	20	32	98%	65
Use of resources to evaluate self insight	23%	2	4	8	11	27	10	77%	62
Use of assignments	27%	2	3	12	16	20	11	73%	64

Exploration of the couple's spiritual life was valued with greatest importance. Fifty-one percent placed a low value on a minimum of six, one-hour sessions. All other areas received favorable ratings in the 60 to 70 percentile range.

Data from the concluding section of the ideal ministry description is reported in Table 17.

Table 17
Subject Content in Ideal Marriage Preparation

Scale	Low %	1	2	3	4	5	6	High %	N
Relationship to Self/Spouse	2%	0	1	0	6	31	24	98%	62
Role Expectations	3%	0	1	1	6	27	28	97%	63
Biblical Standards for Marriage	0%	0	0	0	2	21	42	100%	65
Personal Commitment to Christ	0%	0	0	0	2	15	47	100%	64
Birth Control	52%	8	11	14	15	12	3	48%	63
Sexual Expectations in Marriage	21%	1	5	7	14	21	15	79%	63
Couple Communication	0%	0	0	0	5	23	36	100%	64
Stress Management in Marriage	2%	0	0	1	9	36	17	98%	63
Money Management	0%	0	0	0	11	32	21	100%	64
Relationships to In-laws	11%	0	1	6	18	30	9	89%	64
Family History	38%	6	5	13	21	11	7	62%	63

This final portion of the ideal description section sought to uncover the level of importance the pastors would assign to various topics for possible discussion in the marriage preparation sessions. The data from Table 17 indicates pastors gave personal commitment to Christ the highest rating of all the subjects for discussion. A 100 percent favorable rating was given with 47 pastors circling a number 6.

In second place was biblical standards for marriage with another 100 percent rating with 42 pastors circling a number 6. In third place was couple communication with another 100 percent rating and 36 pastors circling the number 6. Money management in marriage was in fourth place in emphasis with a 100 percent rating and the number 6 chosen by 21 pastors.

Of lowest significance for discussion with couples preparing for marriage was birth control information with a 48 percent favorable rating. Assigned the next place of lowest value was a family history of both persons with a 62 percent favorable rating followed by sexual expectations in marriage with a 79 percent favorable rating. Other high point subjects for discussion were relationships to in-laws at 89 percent, role expectations at 97 percent, relationships to self and future spouse at 98 percent and stress management at 98 percent.

Table 18 reveals comparisons between espoused pastoral theory and pastoral practices.

Table 18
Pastoral Practice Contrasted with Espoused Theory

Descriptive Content	Pastoral Practice	Espoused Ideal
Number of Sessions	67% require 3 or fewer	49% desire 6 1-hr. sessions
Individual Sessions with each person	28% require	63% require
Use of Resources	42% utilize	72% utilize
Home Assignments	59% require	73% require
Couple Communication	98% discuss	100% discuss
Biblical Standards for Marriage	90% discuss	100% discuss
Role Expectations	83% discuss	97% discuss
Understanding of Self	57% discuss	98% discuss
Marital Stress	79% discuss	98% discuss
Money Management	52% discuss	100% discuss
Family History of Both Persons	27% require	62% discuss
Sexual Expectations	48% discuss	79% discuss
Birth Control	22% discuss	48% discuss

Several contrasts were most striking between pastoral practice and the pastors' espoused theory regarding an ideal marriage preparation program. The

topics relating to the spiritual dimensions of marriage were rated significantly higher in the ideal description. Role expectations, marital stress, understanding of self, money management, sexual expectations, family history and birth control topics were rated much higher in the pastors' descriptive ideal.

Pastors' Summary Statements

At the conclusion of the questionnaire, the pastors were requested to complete in one sentence or less the following sentences:

1. My primary goal in marriage preparation is. . .
2. My biggest frustration in marriage preparation is. . .
3. My greatest need in preparing couples for marriage is. . .

The primary goals reported by the pastors in their marriage preparation programs were substantially different. An attempt was made to place these goals in similar report groupings. Thirty-three percent of the goals were knowledge-oriented goals, that is, the pastor sought to impart knowledge about marriage to the couple. The pastors expressed a high need to inform the couple about biblical standards for marriage. Another primary goal was that of helping the couple prepare for a lifetime of Christ-centered commitment. Other frequently-mentioned goals were the desire to make known the key ingredients for successful marriage and prepare the couple for building a life where

growth could occur. The most frequently-mentioned goals are ranked in Table 19.

Table 19
Primary Goal of Pastor's Marriage Preparation

Responses	Percent	Stated Goal
12	19%	Help couple understand biblical standards for Christian marriage
12	19%	Help couple prepare for lifetime Christ-centered commitment
8	13%	Make known the key ingredients for successful marriage
6	10%	Prepare couple for building a life where growth can occur
N=63		

In responding to the inquiry about the pastors' biggest frustration in marriage preparation, 28 percent of the pastors identified the couples' low view of Christian marriage as a source of great frustration. Twenty-eight percent also reported frustration with couples who had a low view of their need for marriage preparation and resisted or reluctantly followed the pastor's guidance. Finding adequate time for marriage preparation was a source of frustration to 19 percent of the pastors.

In responding to the question as to the pastors' greatest need in preparing couples for marriage, 42 indicated a need for further training in marriage

preparation as well as a desire for valuable resource material. Thirteen percent indicated their greatest need was to find more time for this valuable ministry.

Summary of Statistical Findings

Seventy-three percent of the pastors reported a high view of their effectiveness in marriage preparation, and yet provide the following information descriptive of their pastoral practices:

- 55% of the pastors frequently alter their procedures depending on the level of the couples' understanding of marriage
- 51% frequently are pressured to reduce the amount of time spent with the couple
- 57% spend three or fewer hours with the couple
- 59% seldom or never use any resource material such as the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis or marriage expectation inventories
- 41% seldom or never make any home assignments
- 43% do not discuss understanding of self in marriage preparation sessions
- 48% do not discuss management of money in preparation sessions
- 52% do not discuss sexual expectations in marriage
- 73% do not gather any information on family history
- 78% do not discuss birth control
- 77% express a "great need" for further training

Twenty-eight pastors reported they had received marriage preparation of low value in their ministerial training. An additional seven pastors indicated they had received no training. Seventy-seven percent of the pastors indicated a great need for further training. The need for additional training is further emphasized from the pastors' description of their marriage preparation ministry in contrast to their description of an ideal marriage

preparation ministry.

The distinctions between pastoral practice and the pastors' description of an ideal marriage preparation stand in significant contrast in several crucial areas of marriage preparation. As one studies the amount of time pastors spend with couples, as well as the subject matter and methodology in practice, one may conclude that pastors tend to be more content-oriented instead of relationship-oriented in their specific sessions with a couple.

The pastors' call for further help is justified by the data gathered. The closed-question responses revealed a great need for additional training. The open-ended questions at the end of the questionnaire also verified this need with a substantial level of frustration expressed by the pastors about their marriage preparation ministry and the need for help.

A concluding comparison of the marriage preparation practices of Free Methodist pastors with the Methodist pastors reported in the Waller B. Wiser study provides valuable data. Table 20 compares the responses of the Wabash Conference pastors in 1986, with the responses of the Methodist pastors surveyed by Waller B. Wiser in 1959 as reported in chapter four on pages 46 and 47.

The Free Methodist pastors reported requiring more sessions with the couple. While 68 percent of the

Methodist pastors in 1959 conducted only one interview with a couple, 73 percent of the Free Methodist pastors surveyed twenty-seven years later, in 1986, reported requiring three or more sessions with a couple. This is encouraging data and may reflect the increasing emphasis on marriage preparation in recent years. Ninety-two percent of the Methodist pastors in 1959 reported an emphasis of 92 percent on finances, but only 52 percent of the Free Methodist pastors reported such an emphasis in 1986. In 1959 the Methodist pastors also placed a much higher value on sexual relationships and birth control than did the Free Methodist pastors in 1986.

Table 20

Comparison of Methodist and Free Methodist Pastors

Description	Methodist % in 1959	Free Methodist % in 1986
1 session required	68	11
2 sessions required	24	16
3 sessions or more required	0	73
Discussion of spiritual basis for marriage	92	92
Discussion of finance	92	52
Discussion of sexual expectations	92	48
Discussion of birth control	92	22

Chapter 6

A GROUP MARRIAGE PREPARATION MODEL

Statistical data from the questionnaire revealed that 19 percent of the pastors reported finding adequate time for marriage preparation was their biggest frustration. Forty-two percent expressed their greatest need was for further training or awareness of marriage preparation resources. Seventy-seven percent indicated a strong interest in further training in marriage preparation.

None of the pastors reported using any group model for marriage preparation. This chapter will present a group marriage preparation model adapted by this writer for ministry in the local church. The group model could be an answer in providing improved marriage preparation as well as easing the problem of time pressure experienced by many pastors.

Background of this Group Model

While pastor of the Bedford, Indiana Free Methodist Church, the writer developed a deepening unrest about his own marriage preparation ministry. The breakup of family units through divorce was increasing in the local parish. A few couples united in marriage by the writer later found their marriages in deep distress. Some ended in divorce.

Problem marriages within the local church family also became increasingly evident as the writer served as a pastoral care giver.

Individual concern was translated into group concern as the Bedford church Congregational Reflection Group worked with the pastor in identifying answers to the problem of destructive stress in marital relationships. A decision was made on February 12, 1981 to encourage the development of a specialized ministry to engaged couples as a preventive attempt to creatively minister to couples in crisis. The reflection group agreed to serve as an advisory group.

The model presented in this chapter began to emerge in response to the underlying conviction that "better marriage preparation creates better marriages." A preventive approach seemed highly desirable. It was also assumed that marital failure was not primarily caused by physical or psychological problems. It was believed marital problems were the consequence of a combination of spiritual problems and a lack of proper preparation for marriage from the church. An attempt was made to develop a marriage preparation ministry providing optimal conditions for the development of spiritual resources in marriage preparation. Also, the enhancing of couple relationships prior to the wedding day was a major goal.

Several interviews were conducted with Dr. David Seamands, who was pastor of the Wilmore, Kentucky United

Methodist Church. Dr. Seamands had adapted a Catholic group model of marriage preparation called "Engaged Encounter." With the permission of the Catholic leaders of Engaged Encounter, Pastor Seamands applied an adapted model in a protestant church with apparent success. Calling his model an "Engaged Discovery Weekend," Dr. Seamands gave instant encouragement to the development of a similar model in the Bedford church. He further gave permission for the revision and use of materials he had developed at the Wilmore church.

As the Bedford model began to emerge, Dr. Ray Fitzgerald, chaplain at the University of Kentucky Medical Center in Lexington, Kentucky and Mrs. Ruth Gray, a family therapist in Bedford, Indiana, gave further suggestions. The emerging model was further refined with the counsel of Dr. Fred VanTatenhove, professor at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky. The counsel of the Congregational Reflection Group at the Bedford church also provided crucial practical assistance.

Design Methodology of the Model

The design and refinement of the model occurred over a period of slightly more than one year. After months of work with the Bedford church's Congregational Reflection Group, the writer, along with his wife, attended an Engaged Discovery Weekend at the Wilmore United Methodist Church.

Pastor Seamands gave the invitation to attend as official observers.

The first-hand observation of the Engaged Discovery model at the Wilmore church on April 10-12, 1981 was most helpful in sharpening the focus of a model for the Bedford church. With the further permission of Pastor Seamands, ideas and materials from his group model began to assist in shaping the design of the Bedford group model.

On July 21, 1981, the Bedford reflection group arrived at several major decisions. Three important ones are noted:

1. The Bedford church should sponsor an Engaged Discovery Weekend in April of 1982.
2. Adaptations of the Catholic Engaged Encounter and the Wilmore Engaged Discovery should be made.
3. The weekend should include an invitation to all engaged couples in the churches of the Wabash Conference.

The Bedford reflection group further began giving input as to the specific subject content, methodology and agenda for the Engaged Discovery Weekend. After several meetings the group agreed the following subject areas should be included in the weekend:

1. The biblical basis for marriage.
2. Building a realistic financial budget.
3. Relationships, to God, to each other, to family.
4. Sexuality in marriage.
5. Role expectations in marriage.
6. Spiritual life as a couple.
7. Couple communication.
8. Use of the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis.

Each of the above subjects were to be presented by the pastor and his wife along with a lay couple from the church. The format of the weekend would be a series of presentations to the group of engaged couples enrolled for the weekend. The group sessions would be followed with reflection by the couple, first separate from each other, then jointly with each other. Important to the success of the design was a second visit to the Wilmore, Kentucky Engaged Discovery Weekend on April 2-4, 1982. The writer, his wife and a lay couple from the Bedford church participated both as observers and helpers. This further exposure strengthened ideas for the Bedford group marriage preparation model.

The chronological stages of the design development for the group model can be traced in the following sequence of events:

Design Time Line

October 4, 1980	Bedford Congregational Reflection Group Organizes
November 25, 1980	Reflection Group Assesses Church Needs
February 12, 1981	Reflection Group Moves Toward Development of Marriage Preparation Model
April 10-12, 1981	Writer and Spouse Attend Engaged Discovery at Wilmore United Methodist Church
July 21, 1981	Reflection Group Decides Bedford Church Should Host an Engaged Discovery Weekend
November 19, 1981	Content and Methodology of Model Confirmed
April 2-4, 1982	Writer, Spouse and Lay Couple Attend Engaged Discovery Weekend at Wilmore
April 23-25, 1982	Bedford Engaged Discovery Weekend Held

Description of the Model

The success or failure of the group model hinged on the couples who give leadership to the presentation sessions, according to David Seamands. The methodology utilized and the content of the presentation sessions was also of critical importance.

The leadership of the group model involved both a pastoral and a lay couple. The pastor and his wife joined the lay couple in guiding the agenda for the weekend. The lay couple was selected on the basis of the following criteria:

1. They must be married at least five years.
2. They must have an active Christian marriage.
3. They must have attended an Engaged Discovery Weekend or a Marriage Enrichment Weekend.
4. They must believe in constant communication and dialogue.
5. They must have no history of divorce in their own marital background.
6. They must be active participants in the life of the church.
7. They must have a positive Christian witness.
8. They must be willing to give an entire weekend to Engaged Discovery.
9. They must be willing to be open and honest in the sharing of personal experiences.
10. They must have a secure relationship with each other.

The primary goals for the weekend were as follows:

1. To give witness to marriage as a realistic and positive vocation.
2. To provide an opportunity for each engaged couple to experience unity and spiritual oneness.
3. To allow couples to explore their commitment to each other.
4. To facilitate communication.
5. To assist a couple in planning their marriage, not simply a wedding.

The format of the weekend consisted of general presentation sessions when all the engaged couples were present, along with the pastoral and lay couples. Each of the team leaders shared a portion of each presentation time. The presentation time with the entire group was followed by personal questions printed on a hand-out sheet on the related content of the session. Each couple then found a private place, first to reflect individually and then reflect and dialogue with each other as a couple.

The writer developed a fifty-five-page manual as a resource for the Engaged Discovery Weekend. A manuscript was included in the manual for the use of each of the presenters in the general presentation sessions. An abbreviated description of the content of the various sessions is presented in this chapter.

The following outline of the weekend's agenda will assist the reader in a better understanding of the format and content of the weekend of Engaged Discovery. The numbers indicated by a "10/10/10" or similar numerical arrangement indicate the amounts of time allocated for each segment of the discussion subject. For instance, in the "10/10/10" time designation, 10 minutes was allowed for the general session, 10 minutes for private, personal reflection, and then 10 minutes of couple reflection on the discussion subject. The schedule for the Engaged Discovery Weekend is included to provide a clearer understanding of organizational structure of the weekend.

Engaged Discovery Weekend
Bedford, Indiana
April 23-25, 1982

Friday, April 23

7:00	P.M.	Getting Acquainted	
7:30-8:00	P.M.	Introduction I	10/10/10
8:00-8:30	P.M.	Introduction II	10/10/10
8:30-9:00	P.M.	Snack Break Provided by Couples	
9:00- ?		Presentation of the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis	

Saturday, April 24

8:15-8:30	A.M.	Worship	
8:30-9:30	A.M.	Communication in Marriage	30/15/20
9:30-10:30	A.M.	Four Stages of Growing Love	20/20/20
10:30-10:45	A.M.	Snack Break Provided by Couples	
10:45-11:45	A.M.	Symptoms of Spiritual Divorce	20/20/20
11:45-1:30	P.M.	Lunch Provided by Church	
1:30-2:30	P.M.	Relationships in Marriage	20/20/20
2:30-3:30	P.M.	Sex in Marriage	20/20/20
3:30-6:15	P.M.	Break	
6:15-7:00	P.M.	Banquet Provided by Church	
7:00-7:30	P.M.	Film: "Johnny Lingo"	
7:30-8:00	P.M.	Question and Answer Time	
8:00-8:30	P.M.	Snack Time	
8:30-9:15	P.M.	Unity	

Sunday, April 25

9:00-10:00	A.M.	Worship in Sanctuary	
10:00-12:00	Noon	Marriage as Commitment	30/30/30
12:00	Noon	Lunch Provided by Church	
12:45	P.M.	Couples' Communion Service	

A few brief paragraphs describing each of the various content sessions of the weekend is given here. The description of the content of each presentation session is given in the order in which the sessions were conducted.

Introduction I and II

The beginning introduction sessions acquainted the couples with the goals for the weekend as well as the

process followed. Emphasis was placed on the communication goals for the experience. The team was introduced. Notebooks were presented to each couple. In "Introduction I" the couple was asked to respond to three questions on a printed sheet.

- a. Why am I here?
- b. What do I hope to gain from this weekend?
- c. How do I hope to achieve this?

The couples spent ten minutes in the general session, then ten minutes alone followed by ten minutes together in dialogue over the questions asked and their responses. In "Introduction II" the same time was given for each couple to respond to the following two questions:

- a. What one thing has brought us together?
- b. Why am I getting married?

Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis

The general presentation of the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis included a discussion of the goals of the profile and how it should be interpreted. Prior to the evening each couple had filled out the question-response sheet. An explanation of the TJTA profile sheet was given through the use of an illustration on the overhead projector. During the presentation each person was given a blank profile sheet. They were requested to fill out their own anticipated profile results. The results of each person's profile was privately shared with the engaged couple as well as their couple or "criss-cross" profile.

Each team member spent time with each person and each couple in assisting them in an understanding of the results of the profile.

One hour was given for the individual and couple reflection on the TJTA results. Here are the questions each person and each couple was asked to consider:

- a. What am I discovering about myself?
- b. What am I discovering about my future husband or wife?
- c. How does the TJTA profile aid in confirming our plans to marry?
- d. How does the TJTA profile reveal potential problems in our relationship?
- e. Do we need to discuss any of the "urgent" areas with a counselor?
- f. In what areas do I need to work as an individual?
- g. In what areas do we need to work as a couple?

Communication in Marriage

After a devotional time on Saturday morning, the first session opened with a presentation on "Communication in Marriage." The skill of developing communication in marriage was presented as a most important art for each couple. A communication model was presented through the use of an overhead projector. The first emphasis was on the message sent through words, gestures, symbols and body language. The next point emphasized was the need for feedback to clarify what the receiver heard and saw, including emotional aspects. This was followed by a clarification from the original sender of any unclear feedback from the receiver. A model for resolving conflict

in marriage was then presented.

Each person then spent fifteen minutes alone followed by twenty minutes together as a couple in consideration of the following items:

- a. How will I develop total honesty with my partner?
- b. What are possible areas of conflict for us?
- c. Describe your ability to listen.
- d. Describe your fiance's ability to listen.
- e. How will I bring conflict out in the open to keep communication channels open?
- f. I feel most comfortable with you when. . .
(complete)
- g. I feel most uncomfortable with you when. . .
(complete)
- h. I find it most difficult to reveal these things about myself. . . (complete)

The Four Stages of a Growing Love

The presentation session on "The Four Stages of a Growing Love" attempted to open up the area of realistic expectations in marriage. The four stages were identified as follows:

1. The Dreamworld Stage
Everything is possible. You are confident you can work out all your problems. If you find something undesirable in your partner, you are certain you can change him/her later on.
2. The Disillusionment Stage
The honeymoon is ended. You find out what your partner really is like. Areas of disagreement begin to emerge. Sexual tensions appear.
3. The Despairing Stage
If you stay together and do not dialogue with each other about your honest feelings, things will get worse. You will feel trapped. Despair will overcome you and lead to divorce

unless you find ways to resolve the problems.

4. The Discovery Stage

You finally find a way out. You realize each other's limitations. You confront the problems. You begin to grow in God's plan for you.

The couple was given a handout sheet with a response requested to the following questions:

- a. What do I hope to change in my fiancé after the wedding?
- b. Am I going into marriage thinking ours might fail? If so, why?
- c. What does unfaithfulness in marriage mean to me?
- d. What will I do if my expectations in marriage are not met?
- e. Have we faced problems together? How?
- f. What stage of a growing love are we going through now? (Dreamworld? Disillusionment? Despair? Discovery?)

Symptoms of Spiritual Divorce

Spiritual divorce was identified as a condition where a couple stays married, but stops loving each other. It was further described as a state of undeclared truce which might or might not lead to separation or divorce. The symptoms were described to alert the couples to any impending marital catastrophe.

The symptoms were described as dissatisfaction, escape, and conflict. Common areas of dissatisfaction were identified as sexual relationships, personal habits and role expectations. Escape mechanisms were also discussed. Indifference, superficial answers to difficult problems, lying, sleeping in every morning, excessive work habits and

avoidance of common household tasks were viewed as methods of escape.

Conflict was also reviewed as a potential symptom of spiritual divorce. Discussion centered on spending habits, spiritual differences, choice of friends, sex, in-laws, and a lack of tenderness. The couples were given one hour to reflect on this presentation. They were asked to spend thirty minutes alone, then thirty minutes together as a couple in reflecting on the following areas on the printed handout sheet:

a. Dissatisfaction

Are you happy with the amount and kind of affection your fiancé shows you? What do you expect?

Are you unhappy with any of your fiancé's personal habits? Manners? Dress? Income? Kind of job? Family? Friends? Educational level? General appearance?

Are there any other things which annoy you? Why?

b. Escape

Do I need more than eight hours sleep?

Am I lying about anything in my past?

How much television do I watch?

Do I need time out with the boys/girls?

Do I need time for my own interests?

Athletic events? Hobbies?

Does my fiancé agree with my priorities about these things?

c. Conflict

Are we in serious disagreement about our family, religious convictions, politics, race or sex?

Do we plan together?

Who is really planning our wedding day?

Do I think only men should do certain things and only women should do other things?

What? Why?

Do we quarrel? About what?

Do I trust someone else more than him? Her?

Am I going into marriage thinking it might be a failure? Why?

Building Basic Relationship Skills

The session on relationships discussed the relationship of the couple to each other, to others and to God. Two overhead transparencies were developed to diagram the marriage relationship and identify basic relationship skills. The various marriage relationship possibilities were described as follows:

- a. The husband and wife both comply with marital expectations and roles.
- b. The husband and marriage largely comply with the wife's expectations.
- c. The wife and marriage largely comply with the husband's expectations.
- d. The husband and wife remain as individuals and yet both adapt to the marriage relationship.

Discussion also centered on the relationship of the couple to parents, other members of the family, friends and children. A transparency described the love triangle, with God at the top of the triangle and the husband and wife at the lower horizontal levels of the triangle. This triangle attempted to emphasize the couple's relationship to God. The following reflection questions on relationships were distributed to the couple for consideration:

- a. What do I see in my fiancée that will help me become a better Christian?
- b. With whose family will we spend Thanksgiving, Christmas and other special occasions?
- c. What friendships will we keep?
- d. What will I gain as a result of marriage?
- e. What will I surrender through marriage?
- f. Am I certain about my relationship with God?
- g. Am I certain about my partner's relationship with God?
- h. Do we have the spiritual basis for true oneness in our marriage?

The couple was urged to conclude their personal reflection time together by praying briefly for each other.

Sex in Marriage

In developing the session on "Sex in Marriage" an early distinction was made between "sex" and "sexuality." Sex was identified as a single, physical act while sexuality was understood as the human relationship identifying a man and a woman. The Christian message of human sex and sexuality was presented as follows:

1. Sexuality is a part of God's creation.
2. The husband-wife sexual relationship is a frequent symbol of God's relationship with His people.
3. Biblical writers assume that a married couple will enjoy sexual pleasure.

Levels of sexual intimacy were presented as well as a discussion of myths about sexuality. The common myths were identified.

1. A man's sex drive is greater than a woman's.
2. Sex during the honeymoon will be great.
3. Men know all there is to know about sex.
4. Because a man can be fully aroused in a minute or two, he has no physical need for preliminary love-making.
5. Reaching a sexual climax at the same time should be the ultimate goal of a sexual relationship.
6. Many marriages break up because of a poor sex life.
7. Both persons must achieve orgasm during every sexual encounter.
8. A couple must have sex every night.

After the general presentation, the printed handout sheets included the following questions for the couples' time of reflection:

- a. Is there anything about our present physical relationship about which I am worried?
- b. What will I do if my sexual expectations in marriage are not met?
- c. How would I feel if I found out we could not have children? About myself? About my partner? About our sex life?
- d. How would I feel about an unplanned pregnancy after marriage?
- e. How do I feel about birth control? Is it the primary responsibility of the husband or wife?
- f. Do I have a complete understanding of male and female anatomy?
- g. Do I have any physical problems which may hinder sexual intimacy?
- h. Are we planning to marry out of any sense of guilt?

Unity

The concluding session on Saturday evening was called "Unity." The session emphasized the concept that happiness is not the ultimate goal of marriage, but rather unity. Unity was expressed as a daily decision to love and a mutual growing process. A Christ candle was placed in the center of the room. Each person was given a candle. The leadership couples first lighted their candles from the Christ candle and shared some brief personal experience when they sensed real unity. Each engaged couple was then invited to light their candle and give a brief illustration of unity in their life.

Marriage as Commitment

The concluding session after the Sunday morning worship service was entitled, "Marriage as Commitment."

This session attempted to summarize the key ingredients of a successful marriage. The primary emphasis of the session was on the spiritual content of marital commitment. The need for commitment to each other was viewed as ideally possible only through a personal commitment to Christ.

Each couple was given a balloon. They were asked to inflate it then throw it up and keep it in the air. A comparison was made between the balloon and marriage. Just as it took both persons to keep the balloon in the air, a deep unifying commitment to a Christian marriage was required of both persons to make the marriage successful.

The emphasis was on the commitment it takes to keep the marriage relationship alive and growing. The major portion of the time was spent in encouraging the couples to develop a marriage covenant with each other. They were asked to write out a simple marriage covenant, including their definition of marriage. A sample checklist with suggested expectations of marriage was given to each person to get them started in the writing of a covenant.

Couples' Communion Service

The weekend closed with a simple communion service. The leadership couples and the engaged couples joined in a circle. After a brief ritual, the bread and the cup were passed from one couple to the other. The group joined hands for a time of closing prayer.

Implementation of the Model

The selection and the training of the lay couple was a most important decision. After considerable reflection along, with a recommendation from the Bedford Congregational Reflection Group, David and Susan Miller were selected. They met all the criteria required, including their willingness to devote an entire weekend to the Engaged Discovery group model.

After the selection of the Millers, a second trip was made to the Wilmore United Methodist Church and Pastor David Seamand's Engaged Discovery Weekend on April 2-4, 1982. There can be no substitute for seeing the model in operation by a skilled pastoral couple and carefully selected lay couples. The benefits of training by first-hand observation were of immense value.

A second important factor was the granting of five hundred dollars from the official board of the Bedford Free Methodist Church to underwrite the costs of the beginning of the Engaged Discovery Model as a ministry of the church. The church board responded very favorably to the inclusion of such a ministry as a line item in the local church budget on an annual basis, if it seemed productive.

Permission was granted by Conference Superintendent Roger Johnson, for letters to be mailed to all Wabash Conference pastors informing them of the up-coming Engaged Discovery Weekend at the Bedford Church. Letters were

mailed to the pastors on December 31, 1981. A descriptive brochure was enclosed in the letter along with a postal card for the pastor to return indicating if he had engaged couples he would be willing to encourage as participants in the weekend (See Appendix E and F).

A second letter was mailed on March 12, 1982 further encouraging the pastors to get engaged couples registered for the experience (See Appendix G). Only one pastor in the conference responded. Pastor Elmer Riggs of the Bloomington, Indiana church responded positively and was responsible for the attendance of two couples.

Letters of instruction and brochures were mailed to all interested engaged couples (See Appendix H). When the date of the Engaged Discovery Weekend arrived, five couples were registered. Each couple had already completed the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis. Local church people served as weekend hosts to the couples coming from the Bloomington Church. A committee was selected to prepare the Saturday evening banquet.

The general presentation sessions were held in the lower level of the church in the fellowship hall. Each participant received a beautifully-decorated folder with a hand-painted rosebud on the cover. The folder included a copy of the schedule, samples of the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis, plus other informational sheets.

Rose buds were placed on each participant's table. The unfolding petals of the rose became symbolic of the

growing relationship of each of the couples. As the rosebud opened, it was hoped its symbolism would be indicative of each couple opening up in deepening ways to each other.

The weekend began at 7:00 P.M. on Friday evening, April 23 and concluded on Sunday, April 25. Evaluation sheets were distributed at the closing session for each couple to make suggestions for future marriage preparation events (See Appendix I).

Evaluation of the Model

Evaluation of the Engaged Discovery Weekend came first from those who participated in the event. An evaluation form was designed for an early and quick response from the engaged couples who attended. The immediate couple response was very favorable. The individual responses were indicated for each presentation session on a continuum scale, with the number 1 indicating a poor rating and the number 5 indicating a rating of the highest value. In each area, with one exception, all the participants rated the experience as very valuable with the circling of either a four or a five. The exception noted was the presentation on the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis which received a number three rating by two persons.

In the comment section of the evaluation, the

couples further noted they felt the weekend was too heavily structured with limited time for informal feedback in the general sessions from the participants. The rather rigid lecture method of presenting the various topics should be modified. Some felt an earlier time in the spring would be more helpful to couples planning an early summer wedding. Two of the couples suggested the weekend conclude on Saturday evening with a worship experience, instead of the Sunday group activities.

The second evaluation came from the weekend's leadership couples. The team generally reacted positively to the weekend and recommended the Bedford Church continue its financial and leadership support for this kind of marriage preparation ministry. The leadership couples made the following observations and suggestions for the future:

1. The Engaged Discovery Weekend is a viable model for preparing couples for marriage.
2. An earlier date would be preferable, such as late February or early March.
3. More opportunity for group interaction in the general sessions would provide greater dynamic and energy to the weekend.
4. A session on budget building and finance would be a helpful addition.
5. A total of ten couples participating in the weekend would add greater effectiveness to the experience. The smallness of the group, with five couples present, seemed to inhibit the effectiveness of the general sessions.
6. A deeper commitment on the part of Wabash Conference pastors to this marriage preparation plan would develop greater participation in future years.

The leadership couples further reflected on the meaning of a lower rating of a number three given by two participants to the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis group presentation session. It was concluded more time should be given to explaining the analysis with opportunity for group discussion prior to the individual interpretative sessions with each couple. It was further concluded a slight resistance to any form of evaluation of the couple might pose some threat to some persons and therefore would be viewed as a negative feature of the weekend.

In a report by the Engaged Discovery Weekend team to the local church Congregational Reflection Group, it was decided the weekend should become an annual event in the life of the church. A projected date for another weekend was established for the spring of 1983. Greater publicity in conference churches, as well as invitations to all area local churches, was suggested to attract a greater number of participants.

Summary

The group model for marriage preparation may be helpful in addressing the frustration expressed by several pastors in regard to the priority of effective marriage preparation in a pressure-packed ministry. The pressure of time was indicated by several pastors as a frustration as reported in the previous chapter's data. Some form of group marriage preparation could be of great value to the

pastor in resolving time pressure.

The advantages of the Engaged Discovery Weekend for the local church are many. A pastor could save many hours spent in marriage preparation and yet greatly improve his marriage preparation ministry. The advantage of involving laypersons in such a ministry prepares them for positive future relationships with engaged couples who attend. Trained laypersons could also greatly assist the pastor in resolving time pressures. The absolute priority of the pastor to a concentrated period of time with a couple may also be viewed as an advantage.

Another positive feature of the Engaged Discovery Weekend is the separation of any kind of wedding planning from the weekend experience. The focus is totally on the preparation for marriage, rather than preparation for a wedding. The pastor could well involve lay couples in meeting with engaged couples in working out the details of the actual wedding and free the pastor for other ministry.

Potential disadvantages should also be noted. Several smaller churches might find it difficult or impossible to bring enough couples together for this kind of marriage preparation plan. This would require the pooling of couples from several area churches for the group model's effectiveness. Such a plan would require a high level of trust from the area pastors in delegating an important portion of their ministry to some other pastor.

The group model does not allow for any substantial amount of personal time between the pastor and the engaged couple during the weekend. This problem could be resolved through a follow-up session by the pastor, possibly in a more informal setting in the pastor's home, with the pastor's spouse part of the session.

While this particular group model for marriage preparation may not interest some pastors, it has the potential for correcting some of the problems and frustrations pastors revealed in the data reported in the previous chapter. Since none of the pastors of the Wabash Conference of the Free Methodist Church reported any use of a group method of marriage preparation, the Engaged Discovery Weekend model may be regarded as a viable option for implementation by Wabash Conference pastors.

Chapter 7

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The major goal of this concluding chapter is to compare the data gathered from the survey questionnaire of the pastors of the Wabash Conference with the hypotheses of this study. This comparison will help determine the validity of those hypotheses. Conclusions will be drawn and recommendations made for further studies of marriage preparation among pastors of the Wabash Conference of the Free Methodist Church.

Hypotheses and Research Data

The reader should be aware that the statistical data presented in this study were primarily inferential statistics. While one could take the data provided and summarize a substantial amount of descriptive analysis, the goal of this chapter is to justify or nullify the various hypotheses set forth in chapter one.

The statistical data gathered from the questionnaire provided the evidence for the truth or falsity of the hypotheses. Since this study was concerned with the testing of the truth or falsity of the hypotheses it was hoped significant inferences and conclusions might be drawn from the data.

Although the hypotheses may not be proven or disproven beyond any shadow of doubt, the statistical theory of probability does allow the proving or disproving of the hypotheses within a normal margin of error.¹ The distribution of the results of the scores of any of the data would hopefully assist in determining the probability of error in rejecting or failing to reject the hypotheses.

Five hypotheses for this study were reported in chapter one. Each of the hypotheses are now re-stated in the order in which they were made. Data from the survey questionnaire will then be compared to the hypotheses. On the basis of the statistical data, conclusions were drawn regarding the hypotheses.

Hypothesis One

The first hypothesis was that pastors of the Wabash Conference believe they are inadequately trained for marriage preparation and have high need for further training in marriage preparation.

This hypothesis appeared to have strong support from the respondent's data. Seven respondents indicated they had received no training for marriage preparation. Several reported only minimal training. Fifty percent of the pastors placed a below-average value on their training for marriage preparation.

¹Kenneth Bailey, Methods of Social Research, op. cit., p. 402.

Further evidence to support this hypothesis was gathered from the pastor's response to an inquiry regarding the level of their need for further marriage training preparation. Seventy-seven percent of the respondents expressed a great need for further training. The sharp contrasts between the pastors' description of their marriage preparation ministry and their description of an ideal marriage preparation minister was viewed as additional evidence to substantiate the pastors' expressed need for further training.

One of the open-ended questions at the close of the questionnaire requested the pastors to complete the sentence, "My greatest need in preparing couples for marriage is. . . ." The most frequently expressed "greatest need" was the need for further training in marriage preparation or an increased awareness of resources. Forty-two percent of the pastors reported further training as their greatest need. It can be concluded beyond any reasonable doubt that pastors of the Wabash Conference see themselves without the proper training and resources for the preparation of couples for one of life's greatest adventures and challenges.

Hypothesis Two

The second hypothesis was that pastors of the Wabash Conference spend fewer than six, one-hour sessions

with each couple in planning for marriage, and yet desire to spend at least six, one-hour sessions with them.

Sixty-seven percent of the pastors surveyed indicated they required three or fewer sessions with each couple. Thirty-three percent required four or more sessions. Only six pastors required six sessions. None of the pastors required more than six sessions.

As to the actual length of the marriage preparation sessions, 68 percent reported spending an average of one hour per session. Twenty-six percent reported spending an average of one and one-half hour per session, while 6 percent indicated spending thirty minutes per session. The data further revealed that 57 percent of the pastors spend three hours or less in preparing each couple for both the details of the wedding and the life of marriage.

The first part of the hypothesis was substantiated. Wabash Conference pastors spend substantially less than six, one-hour sessions in marriage preparation with each couple. The second portion of the hypothesis was not supported by the evidence. Only 49 percent of the pastors reported that six, one-hour marriage preparation sessions with a couple would be viewed as part of an ideal ministry. Fifty-one percent rated the value of six, one-hour sessions as being of lower than average value in an ideal marriage preparation ministry.

Although the second part of the hypothesis was

disproven by the majority report of the pastors, it is still significant to realize 49 percent of the pastors did view six, one-hour sessions as being of above-average value in their description of the ideal. In view of the substantiation of hypothesis one regarding the highly expressed need for further training, one might further hypothesize that further training would assist the pastors in seeing the need for more frequent and longer marriage preparation sessions.

Hypothesis Three

The third hypothesis stated that few pastors in the conference use any evaluative tool, such as the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis or marriage expectation inventories as a part of their marriage preparation ministry. Forty-one percent of the pastors reported they required the use of a resource like the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis or a marriage expectation inventory. Fifty-nine percent reported they never used any such resources as requirements in their marriage preparation ministry.

In the description of an ideal marriage preparation ministry, 72 percent of the pastors indicated the use of resources to evaluate the success of the marriage was highly desirable. Seventy-seven percent of the pastors believed the use of resources to evaluate levels of

self insight was highly important. This sharp contrast between pastoral practice and the pastoral ideal assisted in underscoring the validity of the hypothesis.

The hypothesis is conditioned by the statement that ". . . few pastors in the conference use any evaluative tool. . . ." While a majority of 59 percent do not use any evaluative tool, an impressive 41 percent do use some evaluative tool as a resource. The hypothesis has merit, but should be amended to read that ". . . a majority of pastors in the conference do not use any evaluative tool." The hypothesis could be regarded as invalid or valid depending on one's interpretation of the word, "few." The lack of the use of evaluative resources is definitively documented by the survey data.

Hypothesis Four

The fourth hypothesis was that pastors often lower their own normal requirements for marriage preparation when time pressure or political pressures within the church threaten them. This hypothesis was viewed as difficult to prove or disprove beyond any doubt of statistical probability. It was assumed a pastor might not freely admit to the lowering of his own marriage preparation expectations due to any form of pressure. Would the pastor view a lowering of his marriage preparation requirements as unprofessional and therefore submit unreliable data? Because of this potential problem in securing reliable

data, several questions attempted to secure information as to the pastors' practices regarding time or political pressures.

The first question to address this hypothesis was, "Are you ever pressured by time or other factors to reduce the amount of time you spend with a couple in marriage preparation?" Of the 63 pastors responding to this question, 32, or 51 percent, indicated they frequently felt pressured, while 31, or 49 percent, indicated they did not feel pressured. This data substantiated the validity of the presence of pressure on the pastors to reduce time spent with a couple.

A second question asked, "Do you alter your own marriage preparation procedures with a couple depending on the level of their understanding of marriage?" Fifty-five percent of the pastors indicated they frequently altered their procedures, while 45 percent indicated they did not alter their procedures. The data gathered from this question also lended support to the hypothesis.

A third question asked the pastors to identify, from a list of ten possible situations, the circumstances under which they would refuse to perform the wedding ceremony for a couple. A majority of pastors reported they would not marry a couple for the following two reasons:

1. Couple does not allow enough time for marriage preparation prior to their wedding day.

2. Couple refuses to follow my marriage preparation expectations.

This information supports the conclusion that pastors do not change their practices in marriage preparation if these two conditions exist with a couple. However, a further examination of the data revealed only 5 percent of the pastors would refuse to marry the couple if both persons were not Christians. Only 16 percent would refuse if the couple had poor communication skills. Only 8 percent would refuse if the bride was pregnant.

A considerable degree of contrast was detected between the pastor's description of the subject matter considered most important in the marriage preparation sessions and the reasons for which they would refuse to marry a couple. For instance, while couple communication was rated by 98 percent of the pastors as a subject necessary to discuss in the sessions, only 16 percent would refuse to marry the couple if poor communication skills were evident. While 92 percent of the pastors rated spiritual development and personal commitment to Christ as subjects important to discuss in the marriage preparation sessions, only 5 percent would refuse to marry a couple if both were not Christians. While the pastors had a high regard for spiritual commitment, spiritual development and couple communication, few of them would allow couple problems in these areas to keep them from marrying the couple.

A final question attempted to gather additional evidence to prove or disprove this hypothesis. Pastors were requested to check from a list of eight probable situations which would prompt the pastor to reduce the number of sessions or amount of time spent in marriage preparation with a couple. An amazing 78 percent of the pastors indicated that personal knowledge of the couple would indicate the need for marriage preparation was not quite as high. Thirty-seven percent of the pastors would reduce the time or sessions if both persons had a definite Christian commitment. Thirty percent of the pastors conceded they would reduce the time and sessions if the prospective bridegroom was home from the army and the couple wanted a quick wedding.

One may question whether the pressure to reduce the sessions and time came from the reality of time pressures or political pressures within the church. The statistical evidence verified the presence of time pressures. Many pastors were obviously overcome by the pressure to finalize the wedding for a couple.

Only 3 percent of the pastors indicated they would reduce the number of sessions if both persons were children of members of the church. Only 3 percent indicated they would reduce the number of sessions if one of the persons seeking marriage was the child of a church member. This data tends to shift the pressure on pastors to reduce preparation sessions away from political pressures in the

church.

The questionnaire was weak in determining the precise source of the pressure prompting pastors to lower their requirements for marriage preparation. The distinction between pressure time factors or political factors in the local church was not clearly determined by the nature of the questions asked the pastors. The statistical data did verify substantial evidence that pastors often lower their own normal requirements for marriage preparation.

Hypothesis Five

The concluding hypothesis stated that conference pastors tend to spend more time with the content of facts about marriage in their marriage preparation sessions, rather than assisting the couple in developing resources for positive relationships with each other and with God.

This was a difficult hypothesis to prove or disprove from purely statistical data. Several questions in the survey attempted to uncover objective data to test this hypothesis. The researcher was aware of a potential need for some respondents to "do their best" in describing their marriage preparation ministry and possibly report inaccurate data. In order to make comparisons between the consistency of responses within the questionnaire, nine questions were distributed throughout the instrument.

The first two questions sought to learn the amount of time normally given to marriage preparation with each couple. It might be inferred that a pastor spending a minimal amount of time with a couple would of necessity be primarily concerned with the organizing of a wedding service, rather than exploring resources to establish creative marital relationships. Sixty-seven percent of the pastors required three or fewer preparation sessions. Fifty-seven percent spent three hours or less with each couple in planning for marriage.

A follow-up question sought to discover the actual amount of time in the marriage preparation session devoted to the details of wedding planning. Three pastors indicated most of their time was spent with wedding-day details. Thirteen pastors reported spending half of their time on wedding-day details. Forty-seven pastors reported spending very little time on details of the wedding. The results revealed 25 percent of the pastors spent at least half of their marriage preparation time discussing wedding details, while 75 percent reported giving very little time. Since most pastors reported giving only three hours to marriage preparation per couple, it is reasonable to infer that a significant amount of that time would need to be spent on actual details for the wedding.

The description of the content of the marriage preparation sessions supported the conclusion that many crucial marital relationships were ignored by a majority of

pastors. Only 22 percent of the pastors discussed birth control. Only 27 percent seek any family history. Only 48 percent discuss sexual expectations in marriage. Only 52 percent discuss planning a family budget. Only 57 percent address the issue of self understanding in marriage. Fifty-nine percent of the pastors reported never using any tools like Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis or marriage expectation inventories. This data was supportive of the hypothesis.

The final evidence tending to support the hypothesis, related to the pastors' completion of an incomplete and open-ended sentence, "My primary goal in marriage preparation is. . . ." Thirty-three percent of the goals were knowledge-oriented goals. The pastors sought to impart knowledge about marriage to the couple rather than draw on resources to cultivate a positive marital relationship.

The final hypothesis was still open to some question as to its validity after careful review of the data. While there were substantial reasons to conclude its validity, the hypothesis was difficult to prove beyond any reasonable doubt through the kind of survey questionnaire developed for this study. The data presented does indicate enough evidence to suggest a further refinement of the hypothesis and the possible use of a personal survey interview would assist in its conclusiveness.

Conclusions

One may conclude that most of the hypotheses in this study were confirmed by the data. Pastors of the Wabash Conference of the Free Methodist Church believe they are inadequately trained for marriage preparation and have a high need for further training. This conclusion is deduced from the data indicating some pastors received no training and most pastors reported the training received was of minimal help. It was further confirmed by most pastors expressing a high need for further training in marriage preparation ministry.

Pastors of the Wabash Conference do spend fewer than six, one-hour sessions with each couple in planning for marriage. Pastors, however, do not highly regard the value of spending six, one-hour sessions in marriage preparation with a couple.

A strong majority of pastors do not use evaluative tools like the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis or marriage expectation inventories. Wabash Conference pastors reported a high need for additional marriage preparation resources.

A majority of the pastors feel pressured by time or other factors to reduce the amount of time spent with a couple in marriage preparation. A strong majority frequently alter their marriage preparation procedures. Most of the pastors reduce the amount of time spent with a

couple in marriage preparation, if they personally know the couple. The pressure to reduce the quality and quantity of marriage preparation comes from time pressure or other factors. The survey did not attempt to identify the precise source of such pressure.

Wabash Conference pastors tend to spend more time with facts about marriage in their preparation ministry, than in assisting the couple in developing resources for positive relationships with each other and with God. This conclusion was inferred from a wide variety of information gathered from the survey.

Recommendations for Further Study

Wabash Conference pastors have a high need for further training in marriage preparation. Pastors' seminars need to be developed to assist in meeting this need. Effective resource materials should be identified and made available to the pastors. Marriage preparation training should also be given a higher priority in the ministerial training of future Free Methodist pastors of the Wabash Conference.

Future research could profitably explore the marriage preparation models most effectively used in local Free Methodist Church settings. Implementation of the group marriage preparation model presented in this study as the Engaged Discovery Weekend might well become a

useful marriage preparation resource in the Wabash Conference.

This study made no attempt to discover if pastors investigated the needs of pre-marital couples, as perceived by the couples themselves, so the pastors could orient their marriage preparation sessions according to couple need. A lack of any such research in the marriage preparation literature may reflect an erroneous conclusion that the pastor's perception of the engaged couple's needs is of greater importance than the couple's perception of their needs. Do pastors generally view themselves as final authorities on marital living?

Future researchers could make a profitable study of engaged couples' perceived needs in marriage preparation from the church. Several pastors in this study indicated a high level of frustration over engaged couples' low view of marriage as well as couples' resistance to any form of marriage preparation from the church. Is it possible pastors are often irrelevant in their perception of couple need at the point of marriage preparation? Research attempting to compare the engaged couple's perceived needs with those perceived by the local pastor could be of immense value to the marriage preparation movement.

A further recommendation for study is the creation of a model for a marriage preparation ministry combining pre-wedding marriage preparation ministry with a post-

wedding marriage enrichment ministry. The research reported in earlier chapters suggests there is increased effectiveness in such an approach.² David and Vera Mace, pioneers in the call for the church to provide better methods of preparing couples for marriage, are now calling for special attention to the first year of marriage.³ David Mace now views the year prior to marriage as a time to gain the couple's confidence and friendship and the first year of marriage as the critical time for marriage ministry. The design of an effective premarital-newlywed marriage model is an area of great need. Most of the marriage preparation models studied by this researcher gave little evidence of any substantial connection between premarital and marital enrichment.

A final recommendation for consideration relates to the use of laypersons in marriage preparation ministry. The development of a marriage preparation model with the involvement of lay couples is another great need. Many pastors cited time pressure as their biggest frustration in marriage preparation. Lay couples are apparently an under-used valuable resource in marriage preparation. The

²David G. Fournier and David H. Olson, "Programs for Premarital and Newlywed Couples," Psychoeducational Approaches to Family Therapy and Counseling. New York: Springer Publishing Company, 1986, p. 219.

³David and Vera Mace. The Sacred Fire: Christian Marriage Through the Ages (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986), p. 267.

involvement of lay couples in marriage preparation could greatly assist the pastor in easing the time pressures. Lay couples could also assist in greatly improving marriage preparation in the local church. Lay couples could use their own experiences to share both the joys and frustrations of marriage with young couples. By working with engaged couples before marriage, lay couples could also serve as a useful resource and support for couples after the wedding. Couples could administer and interpret pre-marital inventories, as well as lead a couples' group in preparation for marriage. Pastors and lay couples could form an intentional marriage preparation ministry in the local church that would provide a redemptive offense in preventing unfulfilled marriages as well as the prevention of divorce.

Marriage preparation should be viewed as a priority to help marriages get off to a good start. The prevention of divorce begins by providing good marriage preparation in the local church. Research should continue to seek the most effective means of marriage preparation models for the local church. Marriage preparation is an important investment for both the pastor, the church and the engaged couple.

May the God who designed the marriage relationship give the pastoral and lay leaders of the Wabash Conference of the Free Methodist Church the vision and the courage to move ahead in improved and redemptive marriage preparation

ministry. The consequences of improved marriage preparation should become increasingly evident. The quality of marital life should produce a harvest of healthy family and marital relationships as the seeds of proper marriage preparation are sown in the lives of engaged couples.

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STATISTICAL TABLES

Table 1

Timing of Questionnaire Returns

Date of Response	Total Response	Percent of Sample
December 10, 1986	34	43
December 11, 1986	39	49
December 12, 1986	44	56
December 13, 1986	48	61
December 15, 1986	52	66
December 17, 1986	56	71
December 18, 1986	57	72
December 26, 1986	58	73
December 31, 1986	60	76
January 1, 1987	Follow-up Letter Mailed	
January 8, 1987	62	78
January 19, 1987	63	80
January 23, 1987	71	91

Table 2

Respondent's Age Categories, Years Married

Age Groups	N	%	Years Married	N	%
25-35	24	35	1-10	18	27
36-45	21	31	11-20	20	30
46-55	7	10	21-30	11	16
56-65	12	18	31-40	12	18
66-Up	4	6	40-Up	6	9
N =	68	100%	N =	67	100%

Table 3

Pastors' Levels of Education

Education-	High School	Bible School	College	Seminary	N=
Pastors -	7	6	27	28	68

Years of Service as a Minister

Years:	1-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-up	Totals
N =	28	15	9	11	3	68
% =	42	23	14	17	5	100%

Table 4

Age Groupings - Marriage Preparation from Church

Age Category	Number	Yes	No
25-35	23	16	7
36-45	21	10	11
46-55	7	5	2
56-65	12	1	11
66-Up	4	0	4

N=67

Table 5
Helpfulness of Marriage Preparation

Response Scale		N in each	%
Low	1	3	9
	2	2	6
	3	5	16
	4	8	25
	5	10	31
High	6	4	13
N =		32	100%

Table 6
Religious Commitment at time of Marriage

Response Scale:	Low				High		N
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Pastor:	6	4	5	8	15	29	67
Spouse:	4	2	5	8	17	31	67
N =	10	6	10	16	32	60	134

Table 7
Reported Level of Religious Commitment

Response Scale		With Preparation		Without Preparation		N in Each
		Pastor	Spouse	Pastor	Spouse	
Low	1	2	0	4	4	10
	2	3	1	1	1	6
	3	1	0	4	5	10
	4	3	6	5	2	16
	5	9	11	6	6	32
High	6	14	14	15	17	60
N =		32	32	35	35	134

Table 8
Number of Weddings Annually

Number:	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-Up	N
Pastors:	38	17	4	2	1	2	64
Percent:	59	27	6	3	2	3	100%

Table 9

Number of Preparation Sessions Required

Sessions:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	N=
Pastors:	7	10	25	10	4	6	0	0	62
Percent:	11	16	40	16	7	10	0	0	100%

Table 10

Pastors' Time Spent with the Couple

Pastors -	Length/Number of Sessions -	Total Time
3 require	- 1 thirty-minute session	30 minutes
2 require	- 2 thirty-minute sessions	1 hour
2 require	- 1 one-hour session	1 hour
8 require	- 2 one-hour sessions	2 hours
18 require	- 3 one-hour sessions	3 hours
5 require	- 4 one-hour sessions	4 hours
4 require	- 5 one-hour sessions	5 hours
5 require	- 6 one-hour sessions	6 hours
2 require	- 1 one and one-half hour session	1 1/2 hour
1 requires	- 2 one and one-half hour sessions	3 hours
7 require	- 3 one and one-half hour sessions	4 1/2 hours
5 require	- 4 one and one-half hour sessions	6 hours
1 requires	- 6 one and one-half hour sessions	9 hours

Table 11
Value of Training for Marriage Preparation

Scale:	Low 1	2	3	4	5	High 6	
Responses:	4	15	9	10	13	5	N=56
Percentages:	7	27	16	18	23	9	100%

Table 12
Value Given to Subject Content

Scale:	Low 1	(Frequency) 2	3	4	5	High 6	N
Planning Budget	3	9	18	12	15	6	63
Managing Stress	1	2	10	15	25	10	63
Couple Communication	0	0	1	8	24	29	62
Sexual Expectations	3	11	18	10	12	8	62
Spiritual Development	0	0	5	15	19	24	63
Commitment to Christ	0	2	3	8	22	28	63
Role Expectations	0	5	6	23	19	10	63
Birth Control	24	13	9	9	4	0	59
Understanding Self	4	5	17	16	13	6	61
Understanding Spouse	1	2	16	16	21	7	63
Biblical Standards	0	3	3	12	17	28	63
Relationship-In-laws	5	7	15	17	12	7	63
Family History	15	8	11	16	6	5	61

Table 16

Description of Ideal Preparation Methodology

Scale	Low	1	2	3	4	5	6	High	N
Six, 1-hour sessions	51%	0	11	17	10	9	8	49%	55
Session before and after the wedding	22%	1	3	10	16	16	17	78%	63
One session with each individual	27%	4	6	13	13	17	10	63%	63
Use of resources to evaluate marital success	28%	2	9	6	15	21	8	72%	61
Exploration of spiritual	2%	0	1	0	12	20	32	98%	65
Use of resources to evaluate self insight	23%	2	4	8	11	27	10	77%	62
Use of assignments	27%	2	3	12	16	20	11	73%	64

Table 17

Subject Content in Ideal Marriage Preparation

Scale	Low %	1	2	3	4	5	6	High %	N
Relationship to Self/Spouse	2%	0	1	0	6	31	24	98%	62
Role Expectations	3%	0	1	1	6	27	28	97%	63
Biblical Standards for Marriage	0%	0	0	0	2	21	42	100%	65
Personal Commitment to Christ	0%	0	0	0	2	15	47	100%	64
Birth Control	52%	8	11	14	15	12	3	48%	63
Sexual Expectations in Marriage	21%	1	5	7	14	21	15	79%	63
Couple Communication	0%	0	0	0	5	23	36	100%	64
Stress Management in Marriage	2%	0	0	1	9	36	17	98%	63
Money Management	0%	0	0	0	11	32	21	100%	64
Relationships to In-laws	11%	0	1	6	18	30	9	89%	64
Family History	38%	6	5	13	21	11	7	62%	63

Table 18

Pastoral Practice Contrasted with Espoused Theory

Descriptive Content	Pastoral Practice	Espoused Ideal
Number of Sessions	67% require 3 or fewer	48% desire 6 1-hr. sessions
Individual Sessions with each person	28% require	63% require
Use of Resources	42% utilize	72% utilize
Home Assignments	59% require	73% require
Couple Communication	98% discuss	100% discuss
Biblical Standards for Marriage	90% discuss	100% discuss
Role Expectations	83% discuss	97% discuss
Understanding of Self	57% discuss	98% discuss
Marital Stress	79% discuss	98% discuss
Money Management	52% discuss	100% discuss
Family History of Both Persons	27% require	62% discuss
Sexual Expectations	48% discuss	79% discuss
Birth Control	22% discuss	48% discuss

Table 19

Primary Goal of Pastor's Marriage Preparation

Responses	Percent	Stated Goal
12	19%	Help couple understand biblical standards for Christian marriage
12	19%	Help couple prepare for lifetime Christ-centered commitment
8	13%	Make known the key ingredients for successful marriage
6	10%	Prepare couple for building a life where growth can occur
N=63		

Table 20

Comparison of Methodist and Free Methodist Pastors

Description	Methodist % in 1959	Free Methodist % in 1986
1 session required	68	11
2 sessions required	24	16
3 sessions or more required	0	73
Discussion of spiritual basis for marriage	92	92
Discussion of finance	92	52
Discussion of sexual expectations	92	48
Discussion of birth control	92	22

APPENDIX A

Area Bishop's Cover Letter

December 3, 1986

To: Pastors of the Wabash Conference
From: Bishop David Foster

Enclosed you will find a letter of explanation and a marriage preparation survey being conducted by your conference superintendent, Darold L. Hill. This survey is being done as a part of his Doctor of Ministry work at Asbury Theological Seminary.

With an increasing need for quality marriage preparation in our churches, it is important we are fully equipped for this most significant ministry. Darold is attempting to make a contribution to this ministry.

I personally urge your prompt attention in filling out the survey and returning it to Superintendent Hill. He has my full support for this project.

The results of the survey will be distributed after the analysis of the data is completed.

Your cooperation is especially important to me and to your superintendent.

Sincerely yours,

David Foster
Area Bishop

Enclosures

APPENDIX B

Researcher's Cover Letter

December 3, 1986

To: All Wabash Conference Ministers
From: Darold L. Hill

Enclosed you will find a Marriage Preparation Survey. This survey is part of the work I am doing on my Doctor of Ministry project at Asbury Theological Seminary.

Also enclosed is a letter from our area bishop, David Foster, urging your prompt response.

Each of us have deep concern for quality marriage relationships. This survey arises out of this concern. The survey is undertaken to understand our pastoral marriage preparation procedures. It will also attempt to survey the level of need for further training or awareness of resources in this area of our pastoral work.

Please give careful attention in filling out the survey. Your absolute candor is crucial. Your responses will not be singled out for individual study.

Enclosed you will also find a stamped, addressed envelope for your response. Please return the survey no later than December 15. Why not take time and fill it out right now?

A full report will be made to each of you as soon as a complete analysis of the data is prepared.

Sincerely in Christ,

Darold L. Hill

Enclosures: Letter from Bishop Foster
Marriage Preparation Survey
Stamped, Addressed Reply Envelope

APPENDIX C

Wabash Conference Pastoral MarriagePreparation Survey

This survey is being conducted to attempt an understanding of marriage preparation procedures among the pastors of the Wabash Conference. **Your candid response is crucial** to the success of the survey. Your response will be tabulated in groupings of data and will not be singled out for individual study.

For each of the questions below, please check the response most accurately descriptive of you.

A. BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

1. Your Age: ☐ 25-25 ☐ 36-45 ☐ 46-55
 ☐ 56-65 ☐ 66-Older

2. Your Marital Status: ☐ Single ☐ Married

If you are married, please indicate approximate number of years:

☐ 1-10 Years ☐ 11-20 Years ☐ 21-30 Years
☐ 31-40 Years ☐ 41-Up

3. Your Educational Background: (Check all that relate to you)

☐ High School Graduate ☐ College Graduate
☐ Bible School Graduate ☐ Seminary Graduate
☐ Other (Please Specify): _____

4. Years of Service as a Minister:

☐ 1-10 Years ☐ 11-20 Years ☐ 21-30 Years
☐ 31-40 Years ☐ 41 Years or More

5. Did you receive some form of marriage preparation from the church prior to your own wedding?

☐ Yes ☐ No

6. If you checked "Yes" to question number 5, do you regard the marriage preparation as helpful?
(Circle most appropriate number)

Not Helpful Very Helpful
1 2 3 4 5 6

7. What was the level of your religious commitment when you were married?

LOW HIGH
1 2 3 4 5 6

8. What was the level of your spouse's religious commitment when you were married?

LOW HIGH
1 2 3 4 5 6

B. DESCRIPTION OF YOUR MARRIAGE PREPARATION MINISTRY

1. How many weddings do you normally conduct annually?

_____ 1-5 _____ 6-10 _____ 11-15 _____ 16-20
_____ 21-25 _____ 26 or more

2. How many marriage preparation sessions do you require for a couple planning a wedding?

_____ 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6
_____ 7 _____ 8

Other (Please Explain): _____

3. What is the normal time you spend with each couple in each of your sessions?

_____ 30 minutes _____ 1 hour _____ 1 1/2 hour

_____ 2 hours Other (Please Explain): _____

4. Which of the following statements best characterize your method of meeting with the couple?

_____ I meet with the prospective bride and groom separately.

_____ I meet with the prospective bride and groom jointly.

_____ I meet with the prospective bride and groom both separately as individuals and jointly as a couple.

_____ I meet with the prospective bride and groom along with other couples planning for marriage.

Other (Please Explain): _____

5. How much of your marriage preparation time is spent in actual preparation for the wedding service?

____ Very Little ____ About Half ____ Most

6. How do you regard the value of any training for marriage preparation you may have received in your ministerial training?

LOW VALUE HIGH VALUE
1 2 3 4 5 6

7. Which of the following areas do you normally cover with the couple? (Please circle the number most accurately descriptive of your pastoral practice.)

		<u>LOW</u>				<u>HIGH</u>	
		1	2	3	4	5	6
a. Planning a family budget.....		1	2	3	4	5	6
b. Managing marital stress.....		1	2	3	4	5	6
c. Couple communication.....		1	2	3	4	5	6
d. Sexual expectations.....		1	2	3	4	5	6
e. Spiritual development.....		1	2	3	4	5	6
f. Personal commitment to Christ....		1	2	3	4	5	6
g. Role expectations.....		1	2	3	4	5	6
h. Birth control information.....		1	2	3	4	5	6
i. Understanding of self.....		1	2	3	4	5	6
j. Understanding of spouse.....		1	2	3	4	5	6
k. Biblical standards for marriage..		1	2	3	4	5	6
l. Relationship to in-laws.....		1	2	3	4	5	6
m. Family history.....		1	2	3	4	5	6

8. How do you view the effectiveness of your marriage preparation ministry?

INEFFECTIVE EFFECTIVE
1 2 3 4 5 6

9. Are you ever pressured by time or other factors to reduce the amount of time you spend with a couple in marriage preparation?

FREQUENTLY NEVER
1 2 3 4 5 6

10. Do you alter your own marriage preparation procedures with a couple depending on the level of their understanding of marriage?

FREQUENTLY

NEVER

1 2 3 4 5 6

11. Do you make assignments for the couple to work on at home, such as listening to cassette recordings, reading of books or other resources?

FREQUENTLY

NEVER

1 2 3 4 5 6

12. Do you require the use of tools like the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis or Marriage Expectation Inventories?

FREQUENTLY

NEVER

1 2 3 4 5 6

13. Under what circumstances would you refuse to perform the wedding ceremony of a couple? (Check which ones may apply)

_____ Couple has unrealistic marriage expectations

_____ Couple has poor communication skills

_____ One of the persons is not a Christian

_____ Both of the persons are not Christians

_____ One of the persons is a divorcee

_____ Both of the persons are divorcees

_____ Couple refuses to follow my marriage preparation expectations

_____ Couple does not allow enough time for marriage preparation prior to their wedding day

_____ Prospective bride is pregnant

_____ Couple is living together and sexually involved with each other

_____ Other (Please specify): _____

14. Under what circumstances would you reduce the number of sessions or the amount of time you spend in marriage preparation with a couple? (Check which ones apply)

_____ Personal knowledge of the couple, need for marriage preparation not quite as high

_____ Both persons have a definite Christian commitment

_____ One of the persons is a child of a church member

_____ Both persons are children of members in the church

_____ The prospective bride is pregnant and the couple wants a quick wedding

_____ The prospective bridegroom is home from the army and the couple wants a quick wedding

_____ The couple's wedding date is too close to permit my normal number of sessions

_____ The couple resists some of my expectations of couple's preparing for marriage

_____ Other (Please specify): _____

15. Do you believe you have a need for further training in marriage preparation ministry? (Circle the number most accurately descriptive of your need)

NO NEED

GREAT NEED

1 2 3 4 5 6

C. DESCRIPTION OF AN IDEAL MARRIAGE PREPARATION MINISTRY

Please circle the number most accurately descriptive of your opinion of the ingredients of an ideal marriage preparation ministry:

	<u>LOW</u>				<u>HIGH</u>	
1. A minimum of six, one-hour sessions with the couple.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Plans for meeting with the couple after the wedding.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. At least one session with each person apart from the other person.....	1	2	3	4	5	6

(Your description of an ideal preparation ministry)

	<u>LOW</u>					<u>HIGH</u>	
4. Use of resources to evaluate the possible success or failure of the marriage.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	
5. Exploration of the couple's spiritual life.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	
6. Use of resources to evaluate levels of self-insight in both persons.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	
7. Use of assignments, such as cassettes, books, marriage prediction inventories, etc..	1	2	3	4	5	6	
8. The following areas should be included in the marriage preparation sessions with the couple:							
	<u>LOW</u>					<u>HIGH</u>	
a. Relationships to self and future spouse.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	
b. Role expectations in marriage.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	
c. Biblical standards for marriage.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	
d. Personal commitment to Christ.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	
e. Birth control information...	1	2	3	4	5	6	
f. Sexual expectations in marriage.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	
h. Couple communication in marriage.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	
i. Stress management in marriage.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	
j. Relationships to in-laws....	1	2	3	4	5	6	
k. A family history of both persons.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	

Other Areas: _____

D. SUMMARY STATEMENTS

In one sentence or less, please respond to the following:

1. My primary goal in marriage preparation is: _____

2. My biggest frustration in marriage preparation is: _____

3. My greatest need in preparing couples for marriage is: _____

ANY FURTHER COMMENTS:

Please mail this completed form in the enclosed, stamped envelope to:

Superintendent Darold L. Hill
P.O. Box 40
Mooreville, Indiana 46158

APPENDIX D

Survey Follow-Up Letter

January 1, 1987

Dear Pastors:

On December 3, 1986, I placed a letter and a questionnaire in the mail to each of you regarding marriage preparation in the Wabash Conference.

Did you receive the questionnaire? Have you filled it out and returned it to me?

I am mailing all of you this reminder letter since the questionnaires were not coded to determine the identity of those who have responded.

If you have not mailed your response, please do so now. It is still not too late to include your information in the total collection of data.

Thanks so much for your help.

Sincerely in the Lord,

Darold L. Hill

APPENDIX E

Engaged Discovery Letter to Pastors

December 31, 1981

Dear Pastors:

Many of you realize I am involved in the Doctor of Ministry program at Asbury Theological Seminary.

One of the rewards of involvement in the D.Min. program is a sharpened concern for improved ministry to those in our churches who are planning for marriage. My conviction is that better marriage preparation results in better marriages.

Next spring, April 23-25, the Bedford church is sponsoring an "Engaged Discovery Weekend." I am enclosing a brochure more fully describing the objectives of the weekend experience.

Do you have engaged couples, or seriously dating couples, you would urge to attend? The experience will be limited to twenty couples. I would be pleased if you would encourage any engaged couple in your church to attend. It is my hope this weekend will become a part of regular ministry in our local church.

Enclosed is a postcard giving you an opportunity to respond.

Sincerely in Christ,

Darold L. Hill

Enclosures: Descriptive brochure
Response postcard

DLH:pg

APPENDIX F

Engaged Discovery Brochure Information**WHAT IS ENGAGED DISCOVERY?**

It is a weekend of marriage preparation to give engaged couples the opportunity to dialogue honestly and intensively about their prospective lives together, their strengths and weaknesses, desires, goals and attitudes. The dialogue will be in a face to face way.

The weekend is based on dialogue-communication between two partners.

WHAT HAPPENS AT A DISCOVERY?

Through a series of ideas presented by a team consisting of the pastor and his wife and one other married couple, the engaged couple is stimulated to dialogue privately with each other on all aspects of married life. The Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis provides a basis for personal reflections. Times of socializing, a Sweet-heart Banquet and worship experiences also are an important part of the weekend.

WHEN DOES IT BEGIN?

The Discovery begins at 7:00 on Friday evening and ends at approximately 1:30 on Sunday afternoon. An overnight stay on Friday and Saturday is required to keep the couple within the atmosphere of the Discovery.

WHERE DOES IT BEGIN?

The Fellowship Hall
Free Methodist Church
640 R Street
Bedford, Indiana 47421
Phone: 812/275-5939

WHAT IS THE COST?

\$15.00 for each couple.

This includes registration, the fee for the TJTA, the Saturday night banquet and the Sunday noon luncheon.

WHAT ABOUT LODGING?

The church will provide overnight lodging on Friday and Saturday for those making their wishes known. Lodging will be in the homes of our church people.

WHEN DO WE SIGN UP?

All registrations must be in the church office no later than one month prior to the date of the discovery in order for the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis to be completed and evaluated.

March 23 is the deadline for registration.

The maximum number of participants will be 20 couples.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CALL OR WRITE:

Marjorie Hill
2116 Windwood Drive
Bedford, Indiana 47421

Phone: 812/275-4361

(Sample of information on registration side)

REGISTRATION FOR ENGAGED DISCOVERY WEEKEND

Bedford Free Methodist Church
640 R Street
Bedford, Indiana 47421

Please include us in the upcoming Engaged Discovery Weekend, April 23-25. Our \$15.00 fee is enclosed.

HIM Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____ Zip Code _____

HER Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____ Zip Code _____

Yes _____ No _____ Please arrange housing for us.

Probable Wedding Date _____

(Make check payable to Bedford Free Methodist Church.)

APPENDIX G

Follow-up Letter to Pastors Regarding
Engaged Discovery Weekend

March 12, 1982

Dear Pastors:

Early this year I wrote you about the possibility of couples coming from your church to participate in our Engaged Discovery Weekend here at Bedford, April 23-25. There are still openings for the weekend.

This weekend has been carefully designed by our local church with adaptations from the Catholic Engaged Encounter and Dr. David Seamands' Engaged Discovery Weekend at the Wilmore United Methodist Church. The weekend has had input from my faculty advisory at Asbury Seminary as well as a family therapist from Bloomington. It should prove useful to any couple planning for marriage.

Enclosed is another copy of the brochure I mailed you earlier. If you have interested couples, they should register soon. The enrollment is limited to twenty couples.

The weekend begins on Friday evening, April 23 and concludes early Sunday afternoon, April 25.

Specific details will be mailed to all interested couples.

Sincerely in Christ,

Darold L. Hill

Enclosure

DLH/pg

APPENDIX H

Letter to Engaged Couples

April 1, 1982

Dear Dave,

We are so happy you and Barbara are planning to attend the upcoming Engaged Discovery Weekend at Bedford, April 23-25. With the weekend fast approaching, here is some information to assist you in preparation:

TJTA: Enclosed is the TJTA question booklet and answer sheets. Instructions are attached. Please return the answer sheets as soon as possible. You may bring the booklet when you come to the weekend. You and Barbara will be sharing this information with each other on Friday evening.

WHAT TO BRING: Two dozen homemade cookies for each couple, to be used for snack breaks. A bag of chips or wheat thins or fruit. A pen or pencil.

CLOTHING: Casual and comfortable! Slacks or jeans are in order. Dress will be informal except for the banquet on Saturday evening and Sunday worship.

MEALS: There will be a Saturday evening banquet and Sunday noon lunch provided. The rest of the time you will be on your own. There will be snack breaks.

TIME: We will begin on Friday evening at 7:00 p.m. We will conclude on Sunday at 1:30 p.m. Plan on total commitment to the weekend. You will cheat each other by missing any of the sessions.

We are looking forward to having you and Barbara participate in this weekend. See you in a few days!

With deep joy,

Darold and Marg Hill

Enclosures: TJTA Booklet and Response Sheet

APPENDIX I

Engaged Discovery Weekend Schedule

Engaged Discovery Weekend
Bedford, Indiana
April 23-25, 1982

Friday, April 23

7:00	P.M.	Getting Acquainted	
7:30-8:00	P.M.	Introduction I	10/10/10
8:00-8:30	P.M.	Introduction II	10/10/10
8:30-9:00	P.M.	Snack Break Provided by Couples	
9:00- ?		Presentation of the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis	

Saturday, April 24

8:15-8:30	A.M.	Worship	
8:30-9:30	A.M.	Communication in Marriage	30/15/20
9:30-10:30	A.M.	Four Stages of Growing Love	20/20/20
10:30-10:45	A.M.	Snack Break Provided by Couples	
10:45-11:45	A.M.	Symptoms of Spiritual Divorce	20/20/20
11:45-1:30	P.M.	Lunch Provided by Church	
1:30-2:30	P.M.	Relationships in Marriage	20/20/20
2:30-3:30	P.M.	Sex in Marriage	20/20/20
3:30-6:15	P.M.	Break	
6:15-7:00	P.M.	Banquet Provided by Church	
7:00-7:30	P.M.	Film: "Johnny Lingo"	
7:30-8:00	P.M.	Question and Answer Time	
8:00-8:30	P.M.	Snack Time	
8:30-9:15	P.M.	Unity	

Sunday, April 25

9:00-10:00	A.M.	Worship in Sanctuary	
10:00-12:00	Noon	Marriage as Commitment	30/30/30
12:00	Noon	Lunch Provided by Church	
12:45	P.M.	Couples' Communion Service	

APPENDIX J

Engaged Discovery Weekend Evaluation Form

Please candidly give us your immediate evaluation of your experience at Engaged Discovery Weekend. Circle the number most accurately registering your opinion.

FRIDAY SESSIONS

LOW HIGH

Introductory Sessions.....	1	2	3	4	5
Taylor-Johnson Analysis.....	1	2	3	4	5
Audio-Visual Materials.....	1	2	3	4	5
Relevance to my Marriage Plans.....	1	2	3	4	5

SATURDAY SESSIONS

Communication in Marriage.....	1	2	3	4	5
Four Stages of a Growing Love.....	1	2	3	4	5
Symptoms of Spiritual Divorce.....	1	2	3	4	5
Relationships.....	1	2	3	4	5
Sex and Sexuality.....	1	2	3	4	5
The film "Johnny Lingo".....	1	2	3	4	5
Unity.....	1	2	3	4	5

SUNDAY SESSIONS

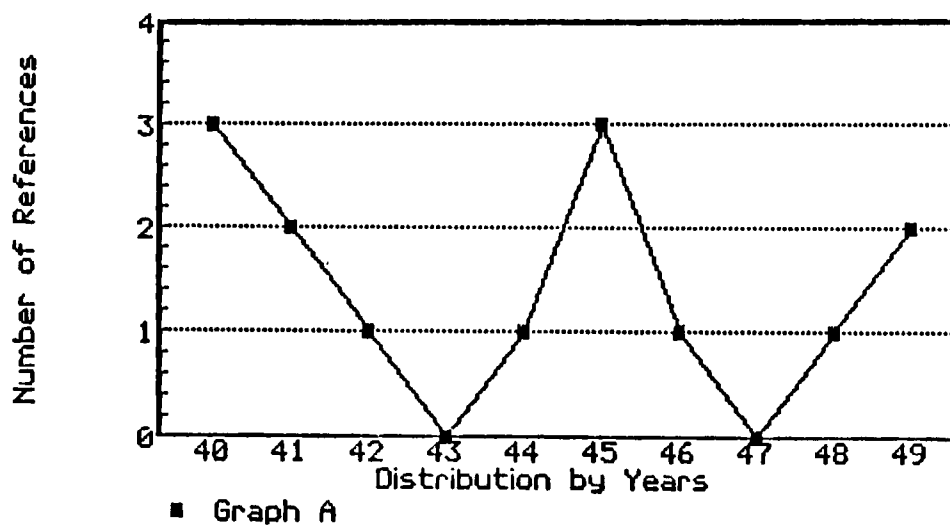
Marriage as Covenant.....	1	2	3	4	5
Couple's Communion.....	1	2	3	4	5
General Quality of the Weekend.....	1	2	3	4	5
Leaders' Effectiveness.....	1	2	3	4	5
Content of the Weekend.....	1	2	3	4	5

COMMENTS: Use opposite side for suggestions, comments.

APPENDIX K

Graphs of Literature References

Literature References - 1940-1949



Literature References - 1950-1959

