

ABSTRACT

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF MARITAL SATISFACTION OF FORTY COUPLES AT THE AFRICA INLAND CHURCH, JERICHO, NAIROBI, WITH THE VIEW TO INFORM PREMARITAL COUNSELING PRACTICES IN KENYA

by

Joseph Mathiani Mbunga

The purpose of this research project was to conduct an exploratory study to assess the level of marital satisfaction of forty married couples (eighty individuals) at the Africa Inland Church Jericho, Nairobi, Kenya, with the view to inform premarital counseling practices in Kenya. This aim was accomplished through the use the revised Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MSI-R) to measure marital satisfaction in thirteen marriage interactive dimensions, namely: inconsistency, conventionalization, global distress, affective communication, problem-solving communication, aggression, time together, disagreement about finances, sexual dissatisfaction, role orientation, family history of distress, dissatisfaction with children, and conflict over child rearing.

A second instrument, the researcher-designed open-ended questionnaire was also used to assess the premarital counseling practices in Kenya.

The scores of the MSI-R and the findings of the researcher-designed open-ended questionnaires were used to assess marital satisfaction in Kenya which in return, would inform current premarital counseling practices in Kenya.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled
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JERICHO, NAIROBI, WITH THE VIEW TO INFORM
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by

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM

Globally marriage is a threatened entity. According to Darold L. Hill, in 1900, America experienced only one divorce in twenty marriages (1). Today, according to the 2004 U.S. Bureau of Census, 52 percent of all first marriages end in divorce. The state of California has even higher divorce rates where 75 percent of all first marriages are reported to end in divorce.

Furthermore, statistics show that 43 percent of first marriages end within fifteen years, and 75 percent of all divorced people remarry, most within three years. But even in the second marriages, 65 percent of them fail. Hill has the best description of the situation: “It is a non-stop cycle of divorce” (1). He predicts that 60 percent of first marriages of women currently in their thirties will end up in divorce. He further observes that the problems confronted in second marriages also often prompt those haunted by the memories of a first marriage to end the second marriage with divorce (1).

In Kenya the rate of divorce may not be as high as in the United States, but Kenya has its own bleak picture. An unconfirmed report says that 10 percent of all first marriages end in divorce or separation. The following two real stories, downloaded from one of the leading newspapers in Kenya, *the Standard Online Edition*, have classic representations of the deteriorating levels of marital harmony in Kenya today. The first story is about Kennedy, who accuses his wife of causing strain in their marriage because of her tendency to run away from home whenever a problem occurs in their marriage instead of seeking ways to resolve it:

I have been married for nine years, but it has been hell on earth. I married my wife and accepted to adopt the son she had with another man out of

wedlock. Since then we have had two more children, a boy and a girl. All this time, my wife keeps running away from our matrimonial home for periods of between two weeks to three months whenever she has good money to spend. We both work for the government, but she is in a well paying parastatal, while I am in the armed forces. In the latest disagreement, she ran away simply because I had questioned her logic in sending her mother Kenya shillings 10,000 (\$132) and my sick mother Kenya shillings 3,000 (\$40). She then accused me of being insensitive and unfaithful. She is now even questioning my love for my adopted son. I saw the boy, now in form two (tenth grade), through primary school (grade one to grade eight). My wife has no feelings for her own children as she keeps on running away and leaving them with me. I'm finding it increasingly difficult to cope with her and I am contemplating ending the union as it is straining me both mentally and physically. (Maina)

The second story is about Marion, a frustrated and degraded woman who has had a tough time balancing her roles as a wife, a mother, and a medical doctor with little help, if any, from her husband who is insensitive, egocentric, and stubbornly like many men in Africa, full of manly cultural chauvinism:

The children demand her undivided attention as will the husband who also expects her to look beautiful and trendy lest he finds a reason to stray. As a couple their marriage hangs by a string, and their sex life is dead as the dodo. Her husband blames her for her apparent lack of interest in intimacy, but she argues that when she gets home late in the evening, sex is usually the last thing on her mind. Her day begins at five every morning long before everyone in the house and prepares the ground for them. This involves preparing breakfast for the family, preparing children for school and seeing them off to bus stop where their school bus picks them. As the husband takes his shower, Marion will iron his clothes mainly his shirts, polish his shoes and get his packed lunch ready. After everyone has left she then starts on herself, taking care to look at her best. She gets to the office at 8 am and it is work all day till 6pm with an hour's break for lunch. Back at home, she has to make sure that the children have bathed and done their homework before embarking on the family's dinner. All the while the man, his feet up on a stool, is busy with the day's newspaper and the different television channels. He never lifts a hand to help except when he is agitated. Marion says that every day it is the same with him which has made her believe that being a man is the easiest thing in the world. After dinner, she makes sure that the children are well tucked into bed before reading bedtime stories. The husband believes such chores are essentially feminine and should always be done by his wife and not himself. Tired and completely drained, she will head for a quick shower

before going to bed where the husband will require her to fulfill her wifely duties. When she tries to tell him that she is too exhausted, he gets mad and accuses her of ignoring him. When she suggests that if he offered a helping hand once in a while things would be different, he threatens to teach her a lesson. In order to keep peace, she either lies that she has her periods or gives herself to him half-heartedly. For her it is never a show of affection, but a one-sided affair that is meaningless. When he is done she drifts into sleep dreading the day that is ahead. Marion says that if men wanted their wives to be excited about sex, then they should also be willing and available to help the wives they claim to love in and around the house. (Valentine)

Many married couples in Kenya have expectations that revolve around the false belief that love will get them through rough times, but according to Jim and Sally Conway, while love is important, it will not be enough if couples do not have the basic attitudes and skills they need for a successful marriage. Lasting marriages require partners who respect one another, who have gained knowledge about what makes marriage work, and who have developed skills that will enhance the relationship (39).

Having personally performed weddings for over five hundred couples in the past fourteen years in Kenya, after an average of two months of premarital counseling for each of the couples, my observation is that most couples in Kenya face their most serious challenges during the first five years of marriage, and the top problem areas include

- Balance of job and family,
- Frequency and quality of sexual relations,
- Joblessness,
- Lack of transparency and accountability in the management of finances,
- Abuse of alcohol,
- Lack of communication with spouse,
- Cultural stereotypes (household tasks and child rearing as for women's tasks)

- Unfaithfulness,
- Wife battering to silence them if they question unbecoming behaviors,
- Problems with parents or in-laws,
- Lack of time spent together,
- Childlessness, and
- General disrespect for women.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this research was to conduct an exploratory study of marital satisfaction of forty married couples at the Africa Inland Church, Nairobi, with the view to inform premarital counseling practices in Kenya.

Research Questions

This study was guided by three research questions.

Research Question # 1

What was the level of marital satisfaction among the forty couples who took the Marital Satisfaction Inventory, Revised survey?

Research Question # 2

How can the scores of the Marital Satisfaction Inventory, Revised inform current premarital counseling practices in Kenya?

Research Question # 3

How can the data from the researcher-designed open-ended questionnaire inform current premarital counseling practices in Kenya?

Definitions of Terms

The Marital Satisfaction Inventory Revised (MSI-R) does not have a simple definition of what *marital satisfaction* is. Instead, it attempts to combine the ratings of its thirteen scales into a global measure of marital satisfaction. However, Douglas K. Snyder, the author of the inventory, defines marital satisfaction: “Marital Satisfaction is a special case of relationship satisfaction, and is the degree to which partners in marriage assesses their approval of different aspects of their marital relationship” (813).

Premarital counseling is training provided through courses, seminars, or counseling that prepares couples for a successful marriage. The training often focuses on developing skills such as communication, conflict management, problem solving, and decision making. It might also include help in developing the knowledge, attitudes, expectations, and characteristics that are important in creating a satisfying relationship.

An important purpose of premarital counseling is to help each partner assess his or her personal readiness for marriage. It can also help couples become aware of the assets and liabilities of their relationship, which are important factors in deciding who and when to marry. As they evaluate these factors, couples have a chance to slow things down and think seriously about their relationship. In other words, premarital counseling allows couples to plan their marriage rather than just the wedding.

Other terms commonly used in reference to premarital counseling practice are marriage preparation, premarital guidance, and premarital education. In this study, however, these terms will be used interchangeably because, although these words may not be identical, the differences are negligible.

Context of the Study

The immediate context of this study was my home church, Africa Inland Church Jericho in Nairobi, Kenya. The church is part of the Africa Inland Church Nairobi Region, which is part of the larger Africa Inland Church, Kenya. Africa Inland Church is an evangelical church founded by the Africa Inland Mission (AIM) from the United States in 1895.

Africa Inland Church (AIC) Jericho started in the early 1970s in a middle-class suburb, east of Nairobi. It has a Sunday worship service attendance of slightly over two thousand people. Over 70 percent of the congregation is people forty years old and younger. Slightly over 40 percent of the members are married couples, ranging from one year of marriage, to those married for over fifty years. The leadership of the church is comprised of four pastors, thirty elders, and about ten deacons.

The church has three services running back-to-back on Sunday morning, beginning with the youth service at 8 a.m. followed by the English service at 9 a.m., and then the Kiswahili service which crowns the day at 11 a.m.

The church has two forums for married couples to meet monthly for fellowship. The first one comprise of couples who have been married between one and fifteen years. The second one is for couples who have been married between sixteen and thirty years. The monthly meetings provide couples with opportunities for worship, recreation, and learning from one another on matters of common interest. These interests include issues such as parenting, communication, child discipline, money management and investments, in-laws, and family worship.

Besides the married couples' monthly meetings, other forums in the church exist for the enhancement of spiritual growth for the entire local body of believers. These opportunities include the ladies' fellowship, discipleship fellowship, youth fellowship, a single adult fellowship, and two main church choirs, which not only sing during worship services but are also part of the small groups that participate in the regular spiritually nurturing activities of the church.

Methodology

This research used a mixed methods design (Greene 14). This approach uses both quantitative and qualitative methods of gathering data on the premise that the combination provides a better understanding of a research problem than one approach alone. The combined methods used in this research were the utilization of both the Marital Satisfaction Inventory-Revised and the researcher-designed structured and open-ended questionnaires. A careful analysis of the data provided in both the MSI-R and the questionnaires will give indication of the marital satisfaction of each of the participating couple and the specific areas of need that premarital counseling practices can address when preparing couples for marriage.

Participants

The participants were forty married couples who are members of AIC Jericho, Nairobi, Kenya. They have been married for between one and fifteen years. The couples were also required to be not only willing and available to take the survey but also able to understand the issues in the inventory and the questionnaires and respond to them appropriately. The current senior pastor, Rev. Mutinda Musyimi, and the assistant pastor,

Rev. Katoo Musya, were of great help in identifying the right couples to engage in the survey.

Instrumentation

The major instrument used was the Revised Marital Satisfaction Inventory developed by Snyder and used as a standard instrument to measure the level of marital satisfaction among married couples. The instrument has in total thirteen scales. Two of the scales, inconsistency (INC) and conventionalization (CNV), are validity scales while the remaining eleven scales assess the following eleven marriage related domains: global distress (GDS), which is intended to measure the individual's overall dissatisfaction with the relationship; affective Communication (AFC) to evaluate the individual's dissatisfaction with the amount of affection and understanding expressed by the partner; problem solving communication (PSC) to assess the couple's general ineffectiveness in resolving differences; aggression (AGG) to measure the level of intimidation and physical aggression experienced by the respondent from his or her partner; time together (TTO) to evaluate the couple's companionship as expressed in time shared in leisure activities; disagreement about finances (FIN) to measure relationship discord regarding the management of finances; sexual Dissatisfaction (SEX) to assess the dissatisfaction with the frequency and quality of intercourse; role orientation (ROR) to evaluate the respondent's advocacy for traditional orientation toward marital and parental gender roles; family history of distress (FAM) to reflect the disruption of relationships within the respondent's family of origin; dissatisfaction with children (DSC) to assess the relationship quality between the respondents and their children, as well as parental concerns regarding the emotional and behavioral well-being of one or more of the

children; and conflict over child-rearing (CCR) to evaluate the extent of conflict between partners regarding child rearing practices. The instrument is written at a sixth grade reading level and contains 150 questions intended for couples with children, but couples without children answer 129 questions. The questions are designed for true or false responses and can be administered within an average of twenty-five minutes. The instrument has been widely used with a reasonable measure of success by family and marriage researchers and counselors to determine marital satisfaction and specific areas of conflict in marriage as they embark on therapy or counseling.

Also a researcher-designed instrument, in the form of a one page questionnaire with three open-ended questions that were administered to the participants prior to the MSI-R. The first question sought to know whether or not the participants went through any form of premarital counseling as they prepared to get married and if so, with what kind of counseling practitioner. The second question asked the participants to mention five important things they learned in the premarital counseling, that have worked for them in their marriages. The third question asked the participants to mention four things on which any counseling practitioner charged with the responsibility of premarital counseling should focus during the counseling sessions that would bring about successful marriages.

Data Collection

Data was collected by having the forty couples (eighty people in total) fill out both the Marital Satisfaction Inventory Revised and the three-question questionnaire intended to assess the couples' premarital counseling experience and its impact on the respondents' marriages.

On the MSI-R instrument, each participant filled out the inventory by answering 150 true/false questions, or 129 questions if the couple had no children, covering thirteen broad areas with the following distribution: Inconsistency (twenty items), conventionalization (ten items), global distress (twenty- two items), affective communication (thirteen items), problem solving communication (nineteen items), aggression (ten items), time together (ten items), disagreement about finances (eleven items), sexual dissatisfaction (thirteen items), role orientation (twelve items), family history of distress (nine items), dissatisfaction with children (eleven items), conflict over child rearing (ten items).

Data Analysis

After all the survey forms and questionnaires were fully completed and returned, the next phase of analyzing the data began. The scores for each of the respondents were carefully recorded and displayed in the form of tables, to determine the resulting themes and patterns of marital satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

Generalizability

This study was limited in that it only concentrated on the forty couples in a church of over one thousand members. However, the findings may be similar and applicable to comparable churches of Africa Inland in Nairobi and other parts of Kenya, as well as other evangelical churches in Kenya.

Theological Foundation

The search for descriptive biblical passages focused on several defining principles of marriage. First, marriage is a divine institution. God instituted marriage in the Garden of Eden when he brought Adam and Eve together in the first marital union (Gen. 2:22-

23). God's blessing is upon marriage both before and after the first couple'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 to his wife, and they will become one flesh" (NIV).

Second, God did more than institute marriage. He also provided divine guidelines for a successful marriage. The marriage relationship is viewed as one of covenant. Two books of the Bible use the word *covenant* in relation to marriage (Prov. 2:17; Mal. 2:14). The marriage covenant is more than an agreement between two persons. God is a witness to the covenant as seen in Malachi 2:14: "[T]he 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 a 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 had tragic consequences.

Third, according to both testaments, God clearly declared marriage to be permanent (Gen. 2:24-25; Matt. 19:1-12). God instituted marriage. God witnessed 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 mother.

Fourth, marriage is frequently used in the Scriptures to illustrate the personal dimensions of God's covenant of love to Israel. An example is given in Jeremiah 2:2: "I remember the devotion of your youth how as bride you loved me and followed me through the desert." The use of the marital relationship to emphasize the holy relationship between God and his people is clearly expressed in the book of Hosea. God, the husband,

repudiated his marriage relationship with his wife, Israel (Hos. 2:2). God will betroth Israel to himself when she deserts her sinful practices (vv. 19-20). Then Israel will know the Lord in a deeply personal way.

The apostle Paul also cited marriage as an example of the relationship of the believer to Christ. In 2Corinthians 11:2 states, “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:

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. (Eph. 5:21-25)

The passage shows that the relationship between a man and a woman in the marriage relationship is as awesome and serious as the relationship between Christ and his Church.

Fifth, and finally, with the substantial biblical application of marital imagery, John uses the marriage relationship to explain a deep theological truth. The ultimate consummation is portrayed with marital images. John gave a prophetic word about the marriage of the Lamb and his bride: “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” (Rev. 19:7). In the closing verses of the New Testament, the imagery is still riveted on 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 emphasizes this relationship. This imagery is also applied to pastors. In Acts 20:28, the apostle Paul told the elders of Ephesus, “Guard yourselves and all the flocks of which the Holy Spirit has made 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 different church workers:

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 whole measure of the fullness of Christ. (Eph. 4:11-13, NIV).

The equipping should also include those who are intending to enter the institution of marriage. The equipping should include also those who are preparing for marriage so that they become mature and attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ in their marriage relationship and as they seek to serve and glorify God in the marriage relationship.

Given the magnificent and sacred emphasis on marriage in the word of God, the Lord requires unwavering dedication and commitment on the part of those who do marital preparation in the church, such as the pastors, teachers, and counselors. God would expect church workers to prepare couples so that they understand the nature and responsibility of such a sacred covenant. God undoubtedly would hold church workers responsible for marital covenants entered into out of ignorance.

The high regard that God has for the institution of marriage, clearly expressed in the Scriptures, should inform the church and the church workers of their role in counseling and guidance in this crucial area of the ministry.

In summary, although the Bible puts a considerable amount of emphasis on marriage, it gives no specific teaching on marital satisfaction or a premarital counseling practice model. One must, therefore, find the principles for satisfying marriage 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.

Overview of the Study

Chapter 2 contains the literature review associated with the two main topics under discussions namely, marital satisfaction and premarital counseling together with the relevant components under each of them. Under marital satisfaction, the sub topics covered includes faith in God, sexual intimacy, effective communication, conflict resolution, commitment to each other and the marriage, accountable financial management, having children and raising them well, love and appreciation, spending time with one's spouse, and one's roles and responsibilities. The sub topics covered under premarital counseling include the evolvement of the premarital counseling trends and a brief discussion on the current premarital counseling practices in Kenya. Chapter 3 covers the problem and purpose of the study, research questions, participants, the design of the study, instrumentation, reliability and validity, data collection, data analysis, and ethical procedures. Chapter 4 covers the details of the findings. Chapter 5 provides a summary of the conclusions derived from the interpretation of the data as well as practical applications of the conclusions and further study possibilities.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE

This literature review sought to understand the findings of the different authors and researchers on two concepts that are predominantly used in this study. The two concepts are *marital satisfaction* and *premarital counseling*. First, the concept of marital satisfaction and its different components that are perceived by various marriage and family help professionals as fertile ground for conceiving and harnessing marital satisfaction will be examined. Second, the concept of premarital counseling will be examined from its historical, theoretical, and practical developments from the 1920s to the 2000s.

Marital Satisfaction

Though *marital satisfaction* has been used in several studies on the family over the years, N. Glenn reports that for decades, the literature has been plagued with conceptual confusion and disagreement regarding its measurement (818-19). Research on marital satisfaction has been done under such headings as marital “quality,” “happiness,” “communication,” “adjustment,” “role strain and conflict,” and “integration” (Lewis and Spanier 50).

Despite the variety of approaches by researchers, their essential aim seems the same: isolation of the factors that generate fulfillment and instill a sense of well-being within dyadic relationships as well the factors that detract from these. R. Lewis and G. Spanier lend clarity to this aim in their enduring definition of marital satisfaction as the “subjective evaluation of a married couple’s relationship on a number of dimensions and evaluations” (50). For these researchers the range of such evaluations lies on a continuum

involving several attributes of marital interaction and functioning. As such, marital quality can range from high to medium to low, depending on the concentration/blend of these interactional patterns. High marital satisfaction is indicated by good adjustment, adequate communication, and a high level of marital happiness, interaction, and quality while low marital satisfaction results from the converse of these (50-51).

N. D. Glenn and K. B. Kramer argue in support of this position noting an undeniable and important relationship between parents' marital quality and the subsequent quality of marriage experienced by their children (822, 824). These researchers as well as S. McLanahan and L. Bumpass have demonstrated that women who spent part of their childhood in a single parent home are more likely to have their marriage break up (144). Findings by T. B. Holman, J. H. Larson, and S. L. Harmer, indicating a positive relationship between the quality of parents' marriage and the marital quality experienced by their adult children, lend support to this position (50). Specifically, Holman, Larson, and Harmer have shown a positive correlation between the homes in which husbands and wives were raised and their marital satisfaction and stability (50-51).

Another observation advanced by Lewis and Spanier relates to the relationship between the support the premarital couple receives from parents and in-laws and subsequent marital quality. Positive support greatly enhances positive marital quality. At least two researchers have corroborated the proposition (Cate, Huston, and Nesselroade 21; Kurdek 63).

The better acquainted couples are before their marriage, the higher their marital satisfaction (Birtchnell and Kennard 35; Kurdek 63). Alternatively the fewer the chances

spouses have before their marriage to get acquainted with one another, to iron out differences, and to facilitate consensus building, the greater the probability of conflict-ridden, low quality marriage.

J. H. Larson and T. B. Holman argue in support of cohabitation as it serves as a filter for those who are not compatible and as a basis of continuity for those who are. However, research by A. J. Cherlin (926), Glenn (825), and A. DeMaris and K. V. Rao (178) reveal findings to the contrary. When compared, those who cohabit before marriage are more likely to have a more unstable marriage life than those who do not cohabit before marriage.

The different authors, researchers, and even the Bible itself advance the following areas as crucial for marital satisfaction.

Faith in God

The Bible promises holistic blessings for marriages and families that put their trust in God. These blessings are not merely physical such as houses, money, and food, but are also blessings that touch on other realms of marriage and family such as happiness, peace, satisfaction in relationships, and enjoyment in the company of one another. I believe this idea was in the mind of the authors of the following Scripture passages:

Blessed are all who fear the Lord, who walk in his ways. You eat the fruit of your labor; blessings and prosperity will be yours. Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your sons will be like olive shoots around your table. Thus is the man blessed who fears the Lord. (Ps. 128:1-4)

A wife of noble character who can find? She is worthy far more than rubies. Her husband's has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value. She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life.... Her husband is respected at the city gate where he takes his seat among the

elders of the land... Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: Many women do noble things but you surpass them all. (Prov. 31:10-12, 23, 28-29).

In the above two Scripture passages, both physical and spiritual blessings were intended.

Conway and Conway say definitely a link exists between faith in God and marital satisfaction. A vital spiritual life provides couples with an avenue for strength, hope, and stability (82). People in such a relationship see God as a friend who cares about what people go through, a person they could talk to, and one who makes a difference in their lives and marriages. Conway and Conway continue to state that this link begins with each husband and wife entering a relationship with Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord of their lives (83) and coming to a personal faith in God characterized by the new birth, forgiveness of sins, and obedience to the word of God and with the ongoing empowerment and guidance of the Holy Spirit (84). They add that a spiritual life that is strong and alive gives the couple new godly perspective of themselves and others (84).

In his book, Wayne Mack emphasizes the need for an established and growing relationship with Jesus Christ for every husband and wife for them to experience God's best in their marriage. He says Jesus must be the couple's support in times of trouble, the trusted advisor and constant companion, the ultimate reason for their living, their sufficient all in all, and their enabler in keeping their marriage commitment when situations make life difficult (39). He exhorts every couple not only stay close to God but also personally to spend time each day in his word and in prayer and devote time as a couple to the regular practice of Bible study. They should also dedicate themselves to worship and meeting faithfully with other believers to encourage and to be encouraged, and to minister and to receive ministry (40). Mack summarizes his thoughts with these

words: “for your marital success: Your relationship with God is the most important relationship in your relationship with each other. Make sure you don’t neglect it” (40).

Gary Rosberg and Barbara Rosberg agree with this position when they say spiritual intimacy occurs when the husband and wife surrender their lives and relationship to the Lord. They bond and grow together spiritually when they live out their marriage relationship according to God’s ways and aim to please him in all things (253). They add that when a husband and wife are growing in their vertical relationships—individually with God—the horizontal relationship between them tends to come together as well (253). They also provide eight benefits of a vibrant spiritual life in a marriage.

First, it keeps the marriage connected to God. A spiritual connection will not make a marriage perfect, but it keeps married partners in touch with the Author of marriage, who has the answers to the deepest marriage problems. Such a union has constant reminder of the true nature of the union—that it is not just between two persons but among three—husband, wife, and God.

Second, a vibrant spiritual life allows the husband and wife to connect at the deepest level. God created the husband and wife to come together at the deepest level of their being—soul and spirit. As they seek God together, their hunger for wholeness will be satisfied.

Third, it links the husband and wife with God’s purposes and plans for them. The book of Jeremiah records God telling his people, “[F]or I know the plans that I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope” (Jer. 29:11) (NASB).

Fourth, a vibrant spiritual life allows the husband and the wife to bless each other with God's love. In the Bible, God often uses the intimacy of the marriage relationship as a metaphor for his love for humankind (Jer. 31:32-33; Isa. 54:5-8; Hos. 2:16, 19-20). As a husband or wife, one can demonstrate what God's love for one's spouse looks like. A husband or wife can be God's voice and arms of love and care.

Fifth, it brings a couple's deepest values and desires into agreement. The Bible does not only communicate how to know God and to connect with one's spouse but also lays out principles for what is right and important in life. As the couple grows in spiritual intimacy and submits to the teachings of Scripture, their biggest goals and beliefs will be in harmony.

Sixth, a vibrant spiritual life opens the door to the deepest levels of communication. One of the fundamentals of intimacy is honesty about who one is. As the couple grows in spiritual intimacy and transparency, their communication will expand from the physical and emotional levels to include the spiritual element of their lives and relationship. Spiritual intimacy permits profound sharing that cannot be enjoyed at any other level.

Seventh, it empowers the marriage to survive. Every couple encounters circumstances, in which they feel overwhelmed, but the power of God is bigger than any situation the couple will ever face, and he can enable them to stand firm in the storm. A good number of Christian couples collapse under trials and conflicts, but this happens only after one or both partners compromise or abandon their core spiritual values.

Eighth, a vibrant spiritual life connects the couple to a support body of fellow disciples. A husband is the strength of his wife, and a wife is the strength of her husband,

but no marriage survives or thrives by itself. God has given his people, the church, the promise that he will stand with them when they struggle and celebrate with them in their triumph (Rosberg and Rosberg 255-256).

A study conducted by Jose Orathinkal and Alfons Vansteenwegen to establish the correlation between religiosity and marital satisfaction involved 787 participants from the Flanders region in Belgium, who were not randomly selected heterosexual married adults, of whom 424 were adults in their first marriage, and 363 were remarried. The participants included 396 women and 391 men within the range of eighteen months to fifty years of marriage. The study found that married couples who were more religiously oriented, frequently attended church, or those who performed religious duties faithfully, had higher rates of marital satisfaction than those who were not religious (498-499, 502).

Andrew J. Weaver and Carolyn L. Stapleton observe increasing evidence that for a significant number of people, commitment to a nurturing faith community enhances family life and marital stability. They continue to say that greater religious involvement has been associated with marriage satisfaction and positive adjustment to marriage in studies using large nationally representative populations (15).

V. R. Call and T. B. Heaton report the results of a national survey of 4,587 married couples that shows when spouses attended church or synagogue together regularly; they had the lowest risk of divorce among all married groups. This study suggests that shared participation in a faith community gives a couple a sense of purpose and mutual values, which increases family commitment and enhances an integrated social network of relatives and friends.

P. R. Amato and S. J. Rogers report the results of another twelve-year longitudinal study using a national sample of married persons. The report found a consistently negative association between divorce and marriage difficulties and frequency of church or synagogue attendance. Married couples that participated in worship reported lower levels of problems such as jealousy, moodiness, infidelity, irritating habits, foolish spending of money, and alcohol and drug use, than couples who did not participate in worship. The researchers suggest that couples who practice their faith may internalize behavioral norms taught in the religious community that are consistent with marital commitment.

A comprehensive study of married couples living in a Midwestern city, conducted by A. Mahoney and others, investigated the relationship between joint religious activities and faith-based belief about marriage with their marital functioning. They found that greater involvement in joint religious activities and increased perceptions of marriage as having a spiritual dimension were linked to better functioning in several nonreligious aspects of marital life. The data demonstrated a consistently positive relationship between couples incorporating religious beliefs and practices into marriage and marital satisfaction, collaboration, and few marital conflicts. This study strongly supports the efficacious effects of public and private faith involvement for couples.

In a study conducted by F. Kaslow and J. A. Robison, couples who had long-term marriages of between twenty-five and forty-six years were surveyed. They were given forty-four possible answers to the question of why they stayed together “during difficult times in their marriages.” The fifth most common choice (selected by about one in three) was that their commitment was based upon their “religious convictions about the sanctity

of marriage”(153). Nearly two in three of the couples indicated that similar religious beliefs had been essential to their marital satisfaction (153).

Sexual Intimacy

When a married couple is sexually satisfied, that joy will tend to spill out to all other areas of their lives. In one study Patricia J. Morokoff and Ruth Gililand conducted a cross-sectional survey to determine how sexual activity and satisfaction are related to marital satisfaction. They surveyed 165 men and women, measuring background, medical history, life experiences, life hassles, marital adjustment, and sexual functioning. The researchers found that marital satisfaction is closely related to several aspects of sexual functioning. Most significantly, sexual satisfaction, perception of spouses' sexual satisfaction, and frequency of sexual intercourse were positively correlated to marital satisfaction.

In another study Denise A. Donnelly in 1993 embarked on a study to determine which factors were related to sexually inactive marriages and whether such marriages are less happy and less satisfying than those with sexual activity. Donnelly interviewed 6,029 married people and measured nineteen independent variables including life satisfaction, religious fundamentalism, gender role traditionality, individualism, marital interaction, and marital happiness. She found that happiness and shared activity are inversely correlated with probability of separation and sexual inactivity. In other words, the lower the marital happiness and shared activity, the greater the chance of sexual inactivity and separation. Sexual inactivity was found to be associated with old age, the presence of small children, poor health, and, in males, the duration of marriage. Donnelly concluded

that sexually inactive marriages were not happy and satisfying marriages. The fact that a couple is not having sex could be an indicator that other problems exist in the marriage.

Tim Alan Gardner sees sexual intimacy as an act of worship, and couples that see it and approach it as such reap the richest benefits of joy and satisfaction in their marital relationship. His book is a rare resource, with insights unlike many books dwelling excessively only on sex techniques and physiology. His is different because it expounds in great depths on the spirituality of sex. Gardner explains that the “big O” is not orgasm, but oneness (47). He provides excellent biblical and cultural examples of why the union of husband and wife should, as the New Testament explains, represent the mystery of the relationship between Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:22-33).

Gardner shows that sexual intimacy is the one thing on earth that joins two people, husband and wife into one (5). Marital sex is presented as a beautiful, God-ordained act of intimacy that blesses the couple far beyond the bedroom walls, serves as an act of worship to God, and touches their hearts and souls in ways they never could have imagined (7). Gardner makes a striking claim that “data confirms if we grow in our understanding of sex as a God-given, holy event, we will also grow in our satisfaction with our mates and with our marriages” (5).

Tim and Beverly LaHaye have written a great resource, *The Act of Marriage*, that over the years has brought to millions of married couples around the globe a new vibrancy and marital satisfaction that only can come from a fulfilled sex life. The book is as useful to those already married as it is for those preparing for it. It is a resource with solid biblical teachings on the sanctity of marriage (11), the differences between what sex means to a man and what it means to a woman (21, 33); how men should prepare their

wives for fulfilling sex (59); and, how women should play a major role in guiding their husbands to what brings them the greatest pleasure and fulfillment in sexual intimacy (90). The book also covers such topics as “sane” family planning (182), impotency (155), unfulfilled women (102), and practical answers to common questions (234).

In 2000, LaHaye, LaHaye, and Mike Yorkey wrote a follow-up to the first book with many more materials added to it. The new materials include sexual desire and aging (21), the effects of menopause on a woman’s sex drive (38), how exercise and nutritional supplements improve sex life (172), male menopause (54), and erectile dysfunction and what can be done about it (104). The book is very helpful for couples who are aging but would like to keep the spark of their sex life shining as brightly as ever.

Douglas E. A. Rosenau argues that many Christians are shy about their sexuality, and are uncertain of how to make maximum use of it to give pleasure to their mates, he says, “I am determined that Christians reclaim God’s wonderful gift of sexuality” (11). He insists that sexuality is a gift from God, for Christians to enjoy and celebrate, not to deny or of which to be ashamed. The book goes into great lengths to explain the science of arousal (22), the menstrual cycle (53-54), and birth control (54-58). The author goes into detail about enhancing intimacy by breaking down barriers of inhibitions and encourages couples to be playful (118) and open to new sexual experiences (11). Entire chapters are devoted to sexual communication (86), sensuous massage (99), mutual pleasuring (129), what sex means to men (163) and to women (152) and, sexual hang-ups. The book is useful especially in terms of techniques and the practicality of sexual intimacy. However, the book tends to overemphasize pleasure rather than striking a balance between pleasure and the spiritual components of sexuality.

For couples to enjoy even greater fulfillment in sexual intimacy a broader study of human sexuality is necessary in order to gain a wider range of perspectives on the topic. One such resource comes from Janet Shibley Hyde and John D. Delamater. The book addresses human sexuality from a variety of disciplines, including biology, women's studies, sociology, anthropology, psychology, and health education. Although the book contains extensive coverage of research and theoretical findings on human sexuality, its informal tone coupled with many interesting pictorial illustrations make it easy to read by students and couples at any stage of life. Anyone seeking an understanding of human sexuality will find it very interesting. Important topics extensively covered in the book include sexual anatomy (68); the most current information on the newly approved methods of contraception (119, 155); a revised presentation of sexually transmitted diseases (458), recent research findings on HIV and AIDS (463); gender issues (313); differences between male and female sexuality (320-23); gender roles in sexual behavior (323); sexual disorders and sex therapy (433); female genital mutilation (74-75); and, sexuality and law (508). Readers should be warned that the book also contains a great deal of information on sexual deviations such as homosexuality, sodomy, pornography, prostitution, abortion, and others of which the Bible clearly does not approve.

Effective Communication

Many authors and marriage counselors agree that nothing brings joy and satisfaction in marriage like effective communication. Conway and Conway say that good communication means that each party has expressed his or her thoughts, feelings, and desires in a way that the other hears and understands. They insist that successful

marriages are built and maintained by successful communication (61). They give nine points describing good communication.

First, communication is dialogue, not a monologue, an exchange of ideas and opinions in an atmosphere of acceptance and understanding (Conway and Conway 68). In order for two people to communicate effectively, they must be willing to open up to one another. When couples expose themselves to one another, they are obviously risking damage to their innermost selves; yet without disclosing themselves, they are not genuinely communicating (69).

Second, communication is self-disclosure. Without a degree of self-disclosure, couples cheat themselves out of the benefits of good communication. Communication assumes disclosure to oneself and as well as to the other person. In order to reveal themselves to one another with integrity, they must acknowledge to themselves who they really are in terms of strengths, weaknesses, failures, and potential for growth, and everything that makes them who they are (Conway and Conway 69).

Third, communication is hard work. Communication is not an easy process and may even be highly threatening. True communication takes energy. It may cause one's adrenalin to go up, one's heart rate to increase, and one's palms to perspire (Conway and Conway 70), but the couple must keep working on it. (71).

Fourth, communication takes time. Being understood by another person will not happen with a solitary rushed experience of communication. Many encounters may be necessary for real communication to take place (Conway and Conway 71). If people were not changing, they would not have to keep working at the process of understanding each other, but changes are taking place in every individual each day. Unless the couple

takes time to understand each other, they may eventually come to realize that they have been living with each other as strangers (71).

Fifth, communication should reveal one's perspective. Couples should learn to express their feelings, thoughts, and observations as their personal perceptions. Instead of accusing one's spouse of being careless for forgetting a birthday, one should say, "I feel you don't care about me when you forgot my birthday." Such statement allows one's spouse to express the feeling of being neglected without accusing the other person of intentionally hurting them (Conway and Conway 71-72). The idea of using *I* messages is highly recommended by communication experts. Forming this habit takes time, but it is worthwhile. Complete communication has taken place when one's mate has also used *I* messages to express his or her point of view, and both are working on a solution (72).

Sixth, communication requires courtesy. Many people are more polite to total strangers than they are to their husbands or wives. While quoting the Bible and saying that people should speak the truth in love is good (Eph.4:15), many people put the emphasis on speaking the truth and forget the love part. Speaking the truth should be balanced with love, and speaking the truth should include positive affirmation as well as constructive sensitive criticism (Conway and Conway 72).

Seventh, communication involves body talk. Body language communicates more information to people than words do. Researchers have found that only 7 percent of communication is actually in the content of what is said verbally. Another 38 percent is communicated through body language: a twitch around the mouth, a slight wrinkle in the forehead, narrowing or widening of the eyes, tightening of jaw muscle, and a dilation of the eye pupil. (Conway and Conway 73).

Eighth, communication must happen at the right moment. At certain moments in their lives people are more open to learning and communicating. These are teaching and communication moments. Because the most effective communication takes place when the person is open, the one wanting to communicate must sense when the time is right. A spouse can aid in setting the right time by alerting one's mate that he or she wants to talk. Forced communication can be disastrous. If one spouse wants to talk when the other is not ready, he or she should be courteous enough to set a later time, and then prepare for a positive and profitable time to communicate (Conway and Conway 75).

Ninth, communication succeeds with positive regard. The most effective ingredient for effective marriage communication is positive regard for one's mate. Positive regard means, "I prize you, I value you. You are different, but that difference is a plus not a negative. I not only value what you do for me, I also value the qualities you have as a person" (Conway and Conway 75). People generally like people whom they understand. People also tend to like people who are like them. People also like people who accept, appreciate, and admire them, who meet their needs, who want to see them grow, and who want the best for their lives. Everyone is therefore challenged to be likeable and easy to appreciate (76). Conway and Conway admonish couples to follow this simple biblical principle: "[O]ur hearts follow the investment of our lives: where your treasure is, there will your heart be also (76).

H. Norman Wright, in his book *Communication: Key to Your Marriage* gives a definition of communication: "Communication is a process (either verbal or nonverbal) of sharing information with another person in such a way that he/she understands what you are saying. Talking and listening and understanding are all involved in the process of

communication” (52). He also shares five levels of communication that he thinks are necessary for real communication to take place (Wright, *Communication: Key to Your Marriage* 67-68).

Level five, communication is characterized by mainly cliché conversation such as, “How are you?” “I like your suit” or, “The weather today is great.” This level includes no inner personal sharing. Each person remains safely behind his or her screen.

Level four, communication has an individual content to tell others what someone else has said or done but with no personal commentary on these facts. They are just reported like the seven o’clock news bulletin. People report the facts, but avoid revealing how they feel about them.

Level three, communication expresses personal ideas and judgments. At this level real communication begins. The person is willing to step out of his or her solitary confinement and risk telling ideas and decisions. People are still cautious, however, and if they sense that what they are saying is not being accepted they will retreat.

Level two, communication involves the feelings and emotions. People share how they feel about facts, ideas, and judgments. The feelings underneath are revealed. If people are ready to share themselves with other people, they must get to the level of sharing their own feelings.

Level one, communication entails complete emotional, personal, and truthful communication. Absolute openness and honesty should be exercised. This level of communication may be difficult to achieve because it involves a risk of being rejected because of honesty, but it is absolutely worth the risk of doing it (67-68).

A renowned psychologist John Yzaguirre and his wife Claire Frazier Yzaguirre, a marriage and family therapist, share some interesting insights on the aspect of listening in communication. They say listening should be thought of as EASY an acronym that stands for Emptying yourself, Accepting your partner, Sensitivity, and Yielding.

The first step in listening is to empty one's thoughts, feelings, or plans while one's partner is talking. One needs to give their partner full attention and interest when he or she is talking. Showing attention and interest in nonverbal ways, such as eye contact, posture, and facial expressions demonstrates an exquisite, radical love. (Yzaguirre and Yzaguirre 98)

The second step in listening is acceptance. Let your partner feel that you accept him or her as different from you, and that you are willing to entertain different views, feelings, and experiences, without judgment, ridicule, or rejection. Facial expressions and posture need to reveal genuine openness and respect toward one's partner. Acceptance will allow one's partner to feel at home. True acceptance means appreciating a spouse just as he or she is. (Yzaguirre and Yzaguirre 99).

The third step in listening is to show sensitivity toward one's partner. Once the partner feels at home, the focus should be on understanding him or her. The temptation for one spouse to prepare a response while the partner is still talking is always high, but that only creates two simultaneous conversations, namely, what one partner is saying and the response the other is preparing to give (Yzaguirre and Yzaguirre 99).

The final step is listening without interrupting, which is yielding to one's partner until he or she finishes talking. Interrupting one's partner stops the communication process. By showing one's partner personal attention, genuine acceptance, willingness to

understand, and uninterrupted interest, he or she will share more freely and deeply (Yzaguirre and Yzaguirre 98-99). Yzaguirre and Yzaguirre say after using the acronym EASY to listen to one's spouse, a response should be given in the following manner.

First, is to acknowledge what one's partner share by assuring them that what they shared was understood through verbal feedback. Acknowledgement can be given in a way of restating in one's own words what was shared. This restating gives one's partner the opportunity to appreciate their understanding or, if that is not the case, to clarify what was shared. Their feedback can be a short sentence or an elaborate comment, depending on what the partner shared, but it should always convey their gratitude for his or her sharing (Yzaguirre and Yzaguirre 100).

Second, is to validate one's spouse. After he or she have acknowledged their spouse's sharing, it is important to validate the contents of their sharing. This can be done through a simple statement such as, "I am glad that you shared this with me because it helps me understand you better." To discount, trivialize, or ridicule what one's partner shares is a serious mistake. One's partner needs to feel valued and affirmed (Yzaguirre and Yzaguirre 101).

Third, a non critical response should be given to the partner. If one wants to give a specific comment, he or she should ensure that it comes across as an affirmation, not as a criticism (Yzaguirre and Yzaguirre 101).

Fourth, he or she should endeavor to ask relevant questions. What one's a partner share may prompt questions or the desire to know more. Yes or no questions, such as "Did you feel upset?" will end the communication quickly. An open-ended question, such as, "Tell me what made you upset?" will encourage more sharing. The communication

cycle is complete when both partners have had the opportunity to share, listen, give feedback, and feel valued (Yzaguirre and Yzaguirre 102).

Brant R. Burleson and Wayne H. Denton conducted a study in order to determine the relationship between communication skills and marital satisfaction. Thirty distressed couples and thirty non-distressed couples participated in the research. They completed tasks providing assessment of four communication skills and two aspects of marital satisfaction. The findings found a positive correlation between good communication skills and marital satisfaction and happiness (884).

Conflict Resolution

Marital satisfaction will be impossible if married couples are not able to resolve the myriad of misunderstandings and conflicts that will often cross their marital path effectively. Everett L. Worthington says, “Conflict in marriage is not only inevitable but necessary” (114). The question is not how to avoid conflict but how to resolve conflicts wisely and amicably. David P. Gushee adds that differences of opinion inevitably arise in marriage. Avoiding them is not an acceptable solution nor is giving in too easily to avoid hurting the other person’s feelings or end the argument. Honest communication is needed until the conflict can find a resolution that satisfies both parties. Both partners must take conflicts seriously and work hard to resolve them (115).

These sentiments were confirmed by a study conducted by Klaus A. Schneewind and Ann Katharina Gerhard. The study involved 180 couples, married for the first time, which were recruited from the marriage files of the Bavarian Bureau of Statistics. The results of the study indicated a strong correlation between effective conflict resolution skills and marital satisfaction (68). The results also attested to the importance of effective

conflict resolution for the development and maintenance of a couple's relationship quality over time (69).

Conway and Conway say most marriages begin with conflicting desires. Two people are attracted to each other but have different tastes, preferences, opinions, habits, life perspectives, standards, and values. Conflicts arise, and learning how to handle them is important in building a strong marriage (92). They give four causes of conflicts.

The first is differing viewpoints on the same issue. Although neither viewpoint is right or wrong, but just different, what one partner may hear from the other is, "I'm right and you're wrong." An example is in deciding when to go to bed at night. The wife would rather go early, but the husband may choose to go later. The best solution would obviously be to moderate their time preferences somewhat so that they can be together (Conway and Conway 96).

The second is the pressure of busy lives and schedules. In rushing to care for the many details of their lives, husbands and wives speak hurriedly, and this may come across as snapping at each other (Conway and Conway 97).

The third is the differing tastes. In marriage different tastes and preferences can sometimes be used as put-downs. The result is often that one partner feels that the other is selfish. An example is one partner choosing a TV program that the other does not like (Conway and Conway 97)

The fourth one is attack from the devil. Many marital conflicts may be simply attacks from the devil, whose mission has always been to steal, kill, and destroy anything good God has given to his people including our marriages (John 10:10); (Conway and Conway 97).

Yzaguire and Yzaguirre discuss the subject of conflict resolution in great depth. They first identify three steps in the process of solving conflicts. The first step is to stop and regain emotional control. The second step is to think—identify new behaviors that could resolve the conflict. The third step is to act—incorporate the new behaviors into your lives. Then they give ten skills necessary to resolve conflicts in marriage:

1. The first skill is to ensure that before embarking on resolving any conflict, the partners are in control of their emotions and have replaced any toxic thoughts. They should be reminded that it is a normal thing to feel frustrated, angry, anxious, or depressed when people are in a conflict.

2. The second skill is to define the conflict in behavioral terms. An example of a wrong statement would be, “You don’t really care about me and my opinion on how to spend the money.” A good statement would be, “I have a problem with you when you spend that kind of money without consulting with me first.”

3. The third skill is to acknowledge one’s contribution to the conflict. Often the problem is not what one did but what they failed to do that has contributed to a conflict with their partner.

4. The fourth skill is to identify behaviors that both partners need to practice to solve the conflict. Trying new behavior or increasing positive behaviors, not only get rid of or contain the conflict, but also show concretely that one values and loves their partner.

5. The fifth skill is to find a good time to discuss possible solutions. Conflict resolution requires hard work, and it should be planned for a time when both partners feel relaxed and unrushed.

6. The sixth skill is to offer one's suggestions to their partners without imposing them. Every conflict has many possible solutions. Neither of the partners knows the best one.

7. The seventh skill is to listen to one's partner respectfully as he or she gives their suggestions.

8. The eighth skill is to agree on the changes that both partners will make. They need to define clearly who is going to do what and when it is going to be done.

9. The ninth skill is to practice the behaviors for reasonable time. Mastering any new behavior requires practice. They need to decide how much time would be reasonable for a particular behavior.

10. The tenth skill is especially applicable if the conflict persists, they will need to try a different solution. Sometimes partners need to experiment with several options to find which is most effective at a particular moment (Yzaguirre and Yzaguirre 103).

Commitment to Each Other and the Marriage

For any marriage to thrive and enjoy its full potential, a clear sense of commitment to the marriage and to the marriage partner is mandatory. Conway and Conway say that couples who appreciate marital commitment are often the ones with the strongest marriages. A commitment to stay married is one of the three most important factors for making marriages last (41). They continue to say that commitment is the single strongest factor to hold a marriage together through the rough times. A commitment to stay married allows no other choice. When couples have made a commitment, the idea of divorce is simply not an option (42). Conway and Conway hold that true commitment must display the following eight characteristics:

1. Commitment is a choice to stay together come what may, to love and affirm each other, grow as persons, and make marriage an expression of desire for each other's happiness (46).

2. Commitment is a choice to be caretakers for each other, as well as for their marriage. When the sense of caretaker is not there or withdrawn, the marriage falls apart (47).

3. Strong marriages are those where both partners want to take care of each other and the marriage (47).

4. Commitment is a choice to be a *bonder*. When people say they have strong bonds with someone, they are talking about ties that link them together. They share common interests, and they have a history with each other. Marital bonding is special in that it contains exclusive and lifelong definitions, and this is the choice to stay married using everything in their power to strengthen the bonds between the marriage partners (48).

5. Commitment is trust. In marriage one person tells another, 'I promise' and the promise is kept, the obligation is fulfilled. It is like to ask for trust and trust is given. It is the cement that binds individuals. Without the ability of one person to rely on another, the social bond would not exist (49).

6. Commitment requires endurance. Human bodies and personalities have an extra source of physical and emotional energy we do not ordinarily use; but under circumstances of challenge, they are able to draw on that hidden source to finish a task to which they are committed. The capacity to finish a task that may seem superhuman, or above and beyond the call of duty, is called endurance. True marital commitment must

have a dimension of endurance, the ability to stick with the relationship through thick and thin. Endurance includes a determination to see the positive in the relationship and in the mate. The person with endurance focuses on the big picture and knows this is not all there is in life. (54). Commitment takes time. Building commitment in a marriage requires spending time together. Strong marriages are held together by understanding and meeting each other's needs. That understanding comes through taking sufficient time with each other to discuss problems, joys, dreams, goals, decisions, and family matters. This is to talk until each of the partners really knows how each thinks and feels about all areas of life and to keep up with the ways each is growing and changing (55).

7. Commitment involves self-development. A serious commitment to marriage means that the person will find ways to grow so as to offer to the spouse a person who is fresh and ever-growing to even greater maturity. When they grow as individuals, they themselves can more fully enjoy who they are, feeling successful and productive in life in general and in their marriage in particular (55).

8. Problems can build commitment. A test will come to one's commitment. The test may be people or circumstances, but one should never allow whatever comes to pressure him or her into momentary gratification that ultimately will have damaging effects on their long-term marriage relationship. Hardships should be used to crystallize the commitment and not to destroy it (58).

Accountability in the Management of Finances

On money and marital satisfaction, Errol E. Liverpool says, "marital happiness can be adversely affected through financial dissatisfaction" (59). Joan and Richard Hunt say that the way money is earned and used should be informed by Christian stewardship,

based upon the Christian belief that ultimately the world and everything in it belongs to God, who loans it to his people for their use and enjoyment (50). They continue to say that the handling of money in marriage involves two major functions. First are the executive function-decision tasks. The husband and wife need to agree on the way they will make decisions concerning the use of their money. They can decide that in certain categories, one of them will implement the decisions, as with buying groceries or gasoline. In other purchases, such as home furnishings or a car, they may decide that both must be fully involved. Second are the secretary function-treasurer tasks. These include the balancing of checkbooks, paying bills, writing checks, and keeping good records of income and expenditures. In deciding which partner will fulfill which function, the couple will need to consider which of them has more time, skill, and interest in each of the jobs. Any of these responsibilities could be handled by either the husband or the wife, provided they agree on the general procedures (50).

Hunt and Hunt further assert that the functions of the secretary-treasurer should always be separate from the executive decision functions. The assumption that the person who writes the checks automatically has the final say over how the way money is spent is misleading. Prompt payment of obligations and good recording keeping require the cooperation of both partners. This practice helps to eliminate many arguments over *where the money has gone*. A regular time each week or month to discuss details of income and spending is a good idea. This time can also be used to renew goals and discuss longer range expenditures and larger purchases (50).

Hunt and Hunt also encourage the use of a budget as a useful tool in family financial management (51). First, the couple must figure out their total annual income by

adding up income from the husband's and the wife's jobs and any other sources. Dividing the annual total by twelve gives the monthly average income. Once they obtain this total, they should consider the financial areas outlined the sample budget plan in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1. Sample Budget Planning Table

Spending plan	Budget Plan		Adjusted Amount	Actual Amounts (if available)
	Initial Amounts Husband	Wife		
Taxes & Social Security	_____	_____	_____	_____
Emergencies	_____	_____	_____	_____
Health & life insurance	_____	_____	_____	_____
Contributions: church & others	_____	_____	_____	_____
Housing & utilities	_____	_____	_____	_____
Food (including eating out)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Clothing	_____	_____	_____	_____
Personal money for wife	_____	_____	_____	_____
Personal money for husband	_____	_____	_____	_____
Transportation expenses	_____	_____	_____	_____
Purchases on credit	_____	_____	_____	_____
Leisure & recreation	_____	_____	_____	_____
Job- related expenses	_____	_____	_____	_____
Education	_____	_____	_____	_____
Savings	_____	_____	_____	_____
Other expenditure	_____	_____	_____	_____
TOTALS	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____

Also in marriage, a number of money related issues need a great deal of honest discussion and transparency lest they bring unnecessary ill feelings later. For example, every married couple should have up-to-date wills with terms agreeable to both partners. Hunt and Hunt emphasize that a will avoids complicated court procedures in the event of the death of one partner. Some partners may have property they want to keep legally separate after marriage. A lawyer should be consulted for the details (Hunt and Hunt 52).

They further warn that for some couples, credit installment payments and unpaid debts are problems. Some people may be impulse buyers, or they may have pre-wedding

debts that must be paid. Complete honesty should be observed about debts, loans, and other financial obligations that may become part of the marriage. Feelings about these matters need to be discussed openly (Hunt and Hunt 52).

If the couple plans to have children, the options they might have for working after the arrival of the baby should carefully be considered. One of the options could be whether or not one of them should stop working in order to care for the baby. The financial implications of the change and the possible adjustments to accommodate it should also be carefully considered (Hunt and Hunt 52).

Some partners have previous financial obligations to their children, parents, or other dependents (especially in Africa) that will affect availability of money in the marriage. In the case of such support payments, adjustments that put the views and the feelings of the partner into consideration should be made (Hunt and Hunt 52).

Children in Marriage

Depending on each married couple's orientation, a source of great satisfaction and joy can be found in bringing up and relating to children, but they can also be a source of pain and a great barrier to any meaningful marital satisfaction.

The Bible has much to say about children. Children are a gift from God to parents. They bring both privileges and responsibilities. Some of the privileges of having children include the following:

- The Bible describes them as a blessing, gift, reward and heritage to the parents (Ps. 127:3).
- They are perceived as providers of protection or defense for their parents (Ps. 127:5).

- They may be source of honor and pride for the parents' social standing (Ps. 127:4).
- They may be source of encouragement and inspiration for parents (Prov. 31:28).
- They are a tangible proof of the parents' success or failure in their God given duty of bringing up a godly offspring depending on how they turn out to be when they grow up (Gen.18:19; 1 Sam. 3:11-13).

The responsibilities of having children include:

- God's command to parents to teach and train their children in the fear and instruction of the Lord (Deut. 6:6-7; Prov. 22:6; Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21; 1 Tim. 3:4, 12; Tit. 2:4; Deut. 4:9; 31:13).
- Providing for all their physical, mental, psychological, social, and spiritual needs (1 Tim. 5:8; 2 Cor. 12:14).
- Parents' responsibility to administer correction involving discipline (Eph.6:4; 1Tim.3:4; Deut. 4:9; Prov. 19:18; 22:15; 23:13).

Hunt and Hunt have an in-depth talk about children in marriage. They say children make a huge difference in marriage for better or for worse, depending on the couple's emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual disposition. If the couple chooses to have children, their marriage, and other relationships becomes more complicated. Each of the partners becomes both partner to the other and parent to the child or children. With any three persons, in times of conflict, the temptation may be for two to take sides against the third person. When a sharp triangle exists, it may difficult to maintain a happy family circle (57).

Some people have children for the wrong reasons. Some conceive children as a way to prove their sexual potency or to solve marriage problems, but the truth is that children do not hold a marriage together. On the contrary, parenthood tests the commitment of spouses to each other and to their children. In many ways, the presence of children in the home places additional strain on the couple's relationship as partners (Hunt and Hunt 58).

A major key to successful parenthood is for the spouses to keep the marriage relationship fresh and alive as the basic bond of the family. When the marriage relationship comes first, they are able to keep the additional demands of parenting in better focus. Regular time alone together will help them maintain a growing and enjoyable relationship. Finding privacy is difficult, yet essential. Many couples schedule at least one night out each week as a couple. They arrange for good care for their children, and these occasions can be pleasant for both children and parents. Married partners should take time to encourage their love and romance as a couple, which, in return, provides a stronger basis for the love they can then share with their children. As the children mature and leave home, these activities will become even more significant (Hunt and Hunt 59).

Howard A. Eyrich addresses the question of infertility or childlessness, which few couples consider before it is a problem. Some couples' main justification for marriage is the bearing of children, and should they not come, couples are likely to be disappointed. Childlessness can be a source of dissatisfaction in marriage if it is not handled well. One of the solutions he proposes is adoption, which he urges couples to discuss thoroughly so that each of the partners is in total agreement (120).

Love and Appreciation

The apostle Peter paints a beautiful image of marital satisfaction for couples who submissively love and appreciate each other sincerely. He says that “a gentle and quiet spirit” should characterize love and appreciation in wives as they relate with their husbands. The husbands are exhorted to be “considerate” to their wives, treating them with the highest “respect” as they live with them (1Pet.3:1-7). This means that satisfying love in marriage should be demonstrated through mutual humility, consideration, and a deep sense of respect for one’s spouse.

Ed Wheat, in his book *Love Life for Every Married Couple* discusses the five concepts of love, as used in the Greek language of the New Testament times, and how they apply in marriage. He cautions though that couples cannot pick and choose the kind of love they prefer and discard the others. Each kind of love builds on the other, and each has its own special and significant place in marriage (62).

The first kind of love which does not appear in the New Testament is called *epithumia*. But although this kind of love does not appear in the New Testament its usage in the secular Greek has everything to do with love. It describes an important aspect of love between husband and wife. The word implies strong desire of any kind-good or bad. It means *to set the heart on something, to long for, rightfully or otherwise*. It can also mean to covet. When used in the Bible in the negative way, it is translated lust. When used in a positive way, it is translated desire, which is the meaning pursued here. In marriage, husband and wife should have a strong physical desire for each other that express itself in pleasurable lovemaking (Wheat, *Love Life for Every Married Couple* 63). This facet of love, known as physical desire, should never be ignored in marriage.

Sex is not the most important aspect of marriage, but it is a definite indicator of the health of the marriage. If tension exists in other areas of marriage, it will usually show up in the sex life of the couple. If sexual intimacy is unsatisfactory, the whole of the marriage relationship will be affected as a result (63).

The next Greek concept for love that does not also appear in the New Testament is *eros*. People might think of *eros* as fleshly because of the English word *erotic*, but this need not be the case. *Eros* is not always sensual, but it includes the idea of yearning to unite with and desire to possess the beloved. *Eros* is romantic, passionate, and sentimental. It is often the starting point for marriage, being the kind of love about which lovers write songs and poetry (Wheat, *Love Life* 64).

Eros has a problem, however, in that it needs help because it is changeable and cannot last a lifetime all by itself. Eros love, when enjoyed in the lasting context of Christian marriage, offers wonderful emotions and personal rewards that are the gift and creation of God himself. This kind of love is wholly emotional and cannot be summoned at will, but it appears as a sure response when all the other loves of marriage are set in motion (Wheat, *Love Life* 65).

The third kind of love is *storge*. This is love in the New Testament characterized by natural affection and sense of belonging such as demonstrated by parents and children or brothers and sisters in a family. *Storge* love in marriage meets the need all people have to belong, to be part of a close-knit circle where people care, and give the utmost loyalty to each other. When the world shows itself as a cold, hard place, *storge* offers emotional refuge. A marriage lacking this quality of love is like a house without a roof, where the

rains can pour in; but when present, *storge* provides an atmosphere of security in which the other loves of marriage can safely dwell and flourish (Wheat, *Love Life* 66).

The fourth love in marriage is described by the Greek verb *phileo*, which often appears in the New Testament. *Phileo* is the kind of love that cherishes and has a tender affection for the beloved but always expects a response. It is a love of relationships, comradeship, fellowship, communication, and friendship. While *eros* makes lovers, *phileo* makes dear friends, who enjoy thoughts, feelings, attitudes, plans, and dreams—the most intimate things they would share with no one else. They also share time and interests. *Phileo* can only be enjoyed in full by two people. A marriage with *phileo* is sure to be interesting and rewarding (Wheat, *Love life* 66).

The fifth and last kind of marriage love is *agape* love. This love is totally unselfish and has the capacity to give and keep on giving without expecting anything in return. *Agape* values and serves in contrast to *phileo*, which cherishes and enjoys. The New Testament often speaks of *agape*, for it was the love that prompted Christ to come to earth as a man to seek out and die a substitutionary death on the cross for the lost and sinful world. God loves all human beings with the *agape* love. In addition, he has *phileo* for those who are in relationship with him through Jesus Christ (Wheat, *Love Life* 67). *Agape* love is of particular significance to those trying to save their marriages and to restore the love they have lost. *Agape* love can be exercised as a choice of one's will and has no dependence on feelings. It is a love of action and not emotion. It focuses on what one does and says rather than how one feels (67).

A marriage possessing *agape* love can survive anything. *Agape* keeps a marriage going when natural love falters and dies. *Agape* love is plugged into an eternal power

source (God), and it can go on operating when every other kind of love fails. It loves no matter what. No matter how unlovable the person is, *agape* can keep flowing. *Agape* love is a mental attitude based on a deliberate choice of the will, and so one can begin right away to love his or her mate with an *agape* love, no matter how much indifference or rejection they might face (Wheat, *Love Life* 68).

Rosberg and Rosberg champion marriage for the cause of Christ by coaching couples on how to achieve a great marriage for a lifetime and for the next generation. The Rosbergs define the six kinds of love that will ensure a divorce-proof and forever marriage. The six kinds of love are as follows:

- Forgiving love-love that heals hurts and helps spouses feel accepted (65);
- Serving love-love that discovers and meets needs and helps spouses feel honored and understood (109);
- Persevering love-love that stays strong in tough times and helps spouses feel bonded and best friends for life (153);
- Guarding love-love that protects from threats and helps spouses feel safe and secure (189);
- Celebrating love-love that rejoices in the marriage relationship and helps spouses feel cherished and captivated (225); and,
- Renewing love-love that refreshes and supports the marriage bond and helps spouses feel confident and rooted (271).

Spending Time with One's Spouse

Perhaps no better way of developing lasting relationships that in return will bring tremendous marital joy and satisfaction in couples such as the habit of regularly spending time together with one another.

Emphasizing the importance of married couples spending time with one another, John M. Drescher says, “[A] happy marriage cannot exist on the crumbs or leftover scraps of time” (80). He continues to say that partners are constantly changing, so they need time together to stay acquainted with their best friend (80). He further adds that if married partners want their marriages to be maturing, caring, and growing love relationships, they will need to invest time in them. They will need to commit themselves to spending time together each day and to giving time to each other to renew their sense of love and togetherness (83).

William J. Doherty adds his voice to the need for couples to spend time together when he says that “many of us, especially when we are raising children and have busy jobs, live our marriages with a chronic sense of deficit about the time we spend together as a couple” and that “competitors for our daily time are far more assertive than we are about our marriage” (61). Children are an important part of families, but parenting responsibilities can limit one-on-one couple time. According to Kerry J. Dale’s study of dual-earner families, parents’ needs and satisfactions tend to take a back seat to the demands and needs of their children. Parents spend time caring for their children, participating in children’s activities, assisting with school work and projects, and playing games. Although parents value the pursuit of *quality* family time, their children’s needs and desires frequently set the agenda for how this time is spent. Thus, while spending

time together as a family is important, Dale emphasizes the beauty of spending time together, alone, with one's partner. The couple should make conscious efforts to set aside time or make dates to connect regularly (61-72).

According to one internet resource on family education, every good, healthy marriage needs time set aside for three general activities. These need to be scheduled on a regular basis and be treated with respect:

(1) time for planning; (2) time for resolving differences; and (3) time for fun. The resource adds that each of these times serve different purposes and each is equally important and if time is not made for each of these activities, soon symptoms will start showing in the marriage. ("Making Time to Be with Your Spouse")

Time for planning, resolving differences, and for fun, sounds very wholesome and focused for people who really care about the health and future of their relationship.

In another Internet resource, Carwin Dover of International Partnerships shares ten fascinating reasons to date one's spouse frequently:

1. Marriage relationships are dynamic. They are alive and always changing. They need to be fed and stimulated to stay alive.
2. Always new things emerge about one's spouse. Dating is a good way to create a safe environment. One's spouse is more likely to let him or her know what is new.
3. Dating one's spouse regularly is like investing in the future. The investment can only compare to a savings account which one adds a little to an existing account and watch it grow than to start a new one. The interest grows exponentially over time.
4. People get married because they dated. It only stands to reason that a good way to stay married is to keep dating.

5. Marriage can be compared to a set of tires. During the course of driving they wear and tear. Dating serves to maintain alignment, balance, and pressure. When such repair work and maintenance are done well in a marriage relationship, the marriage can be sure to last a lifetime.

6. Dating is an opportunity to focus. Day in and day out, distractions pull attention away from one's spouse. Dates help refocus on the person at the top of one's priority list.

7. A good date will often bring up premarriage memories. Recalling memories can generate anticipation for next date.

8. Scheduling for future dates well in advance is a very good idea. Dates lay the framework for future family gatherings. Great dates attract one's spouse and family to want to spend time with him or her.

9. Spending time in laughter together is good investment. If people laugh together they are also likely to hurt together if they must.

10. A date is one of the special ways to honor one's spouse.

Wheat strongly concurs by urging married couples to spend as much time alone together as possible. That they should plan for times when they are uninterrupted and then give each other the gift of their interested attention. He further urges couples when they have weightier matters to handle, to arrange longer periods so that both can warm up, let defenses that may have been temporarily erected come down, and then feel free to share their innermost selves (*Love Life* 141).

Roles and Responsibilities

When men and women understand the nature of their respective roles and responsibilities in marriage and the differences therein in the practice of the same, unnecessary frictions and conflicts which breed marital dissatisfaction will drastically be avoided and marriage life can be the most enjoyable. David Boehi, et al. describes the biblical understanding of the roles and responsibilities for men and women in marriage. They say in the marriage relationship, God calls the husband to be a servant-leader (169). This is the husband's core role. His leadership should model that of Jesus Christ. A servant-leader serves like Christ and loves like Christ. He is a mix of both servant and leader (169). Then they list qualities that a servant leader is not:

- He is not a lording leader, making all the decisions himself or selfishly seeking to control others so he can meet his own needs (169).
- He must not be outgoing and have a "rally-the-troops" personality (169).
- He is not a passive non-leader, disengaged relationally, giving little or no direction to his wife and family. (169).
- Being a servant leader does not mean a man cannot delegate or a wife cannot initiate (169).

Rather, being a servant-leader means the following:

- The husband assumes overall responsibility for the direction of his family, and takes the initiative to serve the needs of his wife and family (169).
- He assumes responsibility to maximize his wife's gifts and abilities (169).
- He pours out his life on his wife's behalf so she can become all that God intended (170).

- He denies himself and gives of his life on behalf of his wife and family (170).
- He takes the initiative to be the spiritual leader in the home, to pray, to worship at church, and to study God's Word (170).
- Take the initiative to see that finances are in order, needs are met and the wife feels financially secure (170).
- He takes the initiative to ask for forgiveness, resolve conflict and ensure the home is a place of encouragement and safety (170).

Boehi, et al continue to say that the wife's core role is that of a helper-home maker (Gen.2:18; Tit. 2:3-5). An accurate understanding of the role of a wife as helper shows how vital the role is in providing what the role of the husband needs to complete himself. Husbands have gaps in their lives that their wives are uniquely qualified to fill (174). The opposite of being a helper is being a competitor. A competitor can only do the opposite of filling gaps and supporting her husband's weak areas. A competitive wife stirs a man to aggression and retaliation or to withdrawal rather than caring and supporting his wife's needs (174).

Spouses can generate new life and satisfaction in their marital lives by developing an attitude of working together and sharing home and family responsibilities unselfishly. Neither of them should be left alone to handle all the work in the home by themselves without the helping hand of the other. Yuen Ching Candy summarizes the idea of shared roles and responsibilities:

A husband may think that doing housework and taking care of the children are the responsibilities of his wife alone. It is absolutely a misunderstanding, especially in today's society. Since women's abilities are recognized and they now have higher positions than before. A wife has lots of work to do and she has no time for everything. That's why husbands should experience doing housework, too. Keeping a house

presentable and cooking are chores, a husband should help his wife to do some but not just count on her to do everything.

So husbands have no choice but to start helping their wives in both house chores and in child rearing.

Pastor Earnest Thomas in a sermon based on Psalm 127 agrees with this argument by saying that every marriage relationship has its expected roles and responsibilities, and each couple should take time to define their roles (i.e., who does what). They should not participate in such roles and responsibilities based on another marriage but their own on the basis of strengths and weaknesses that exist in their marriage. They should distribute the workload ensuring that each partner shares the work in the marriage. Thomas adds that the wife should not expect the husband to be a superman or the husband to expect his wife to be a wonder woman. Each should be willing to help out.

Premarital Counseling

Premarital counseling has evolved a great deal from its humble beginnings in the 1920s up to the present moment. According to J. S. Carrol and W. J. Doherty, the first documented premarital intervention was in 1924 when Ernest Groves taught the first premarital course in preparation for family life at Boston University (106) but Robert F. Stahmann and William J. Hiebert (4) add that the first mention of premarital counseling as a significant process or a service of value in building emotional and physical health discussed in an article in the *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* in 1928. Carroll and Doherty further indicate that formal premarital education programs have been practiced as early as the 1930s with the first program developed at the Merrill-Palmer Institute in 1932 (106). E. Mudd, C. Freeman, and E. Rose added their voice to the historical foundations of premarital counseling in an article written in 1941 where they

report that a Philadelphia marriage council had established a standardized program with the stated purpose of helping young married and premarital couples gain “a better understanding of what companionship in married life involves and thus help them avoid some of the causes of marital difficulties” (98).

Despite these early beginnings, premarital counseling was still relatively uncommon until the 1970s. Stahmann and Hiebert report that, while the clergy have a long history of meeting with couples prior to their wedding, it is only in the last three decades that the focus of these meetings have shifted from education about the nature and meaning of the marriage rite itself, to education geared at preparing couples for marriage and how to successfully live it (9).

Carroll and Doherty observe that from the 1970s until the present, both clergy and other family professionals have expressed an increased interest in preparing couples for marriage through formal educational programs:

It is not a coincidence that this increase mirrored a parallel development increasing divorce rate in the United States during that time. Particularly within the last decade, family professionals from a variety of backgrounds have turned their attention to addressing the troubles in contemporary marriages. This “marriage movement” has included a number of widespread religious, scholarly, and legal initiatives to address the challenges poised to marriages today, including a renewed emphasis on premarital education. (105)

This interest has continued to date with even more new ways of doing premarital counseling and education.

J. Allan Peterson, the founder and president of the family concerns of Wheaton, Illinois, brought an impressive contribution of scholarship to the subject of marriage preparation in 1971. He provided an excellent resource at the time for pastors and counselors involved in premarital education.

Dr. David Mace introduced one of the most valuable resources of all time to the marriage preparation arena in 1972 through his book *Getting Ready for Marriage*. He believed the 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 preparation to placing attention primarily on personal and interpersonal dynamics and the facilitation of behavioral change was viewed as a desirable new approach. Ever since, Mace has been a widely respected authority in the field of marriage and marriage preparation. He summarizes these concerns and suggestions for marriage preparation in his article "Education and Preparation for Marriage: New Approaches." Claude A. Guldners added emphasis to the need for a greater relationship between premarital and "neo-marital" counseling, which suggests attention to the couples following the wedding, does not appear to have caught on among marital care professionals. However, his concern for integration of counseling both prior to and following the wedding is reflected in subsequent authors (e.g., Mace and Mace 267).

Millard J. Bienvenu, Sr. 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-ages, premarital couples on their communication interaction resulted in a forty-item scale differentiating between good and poor communication.

Wright's book *Premarital Counseling* was first published in 1977, and revised in 1981. The book has been a rich resource in providing useful ideas on both the content and the structure of the premarital counseling sessions, as well as comparing and contrasting

individual couples' counseling with group counseling. Together with Mace, Wright has been viewed as an authority in his own right in premarital education and marriage enrichment.

Howard A. Eyrick's useful book on premarital counseling was published in 1978. It is one of a few works with substantial reference to a theology of premarital counseling. Eyrick sees nothing that lends more credence to the theology of premarital counseling than the fact that marriage is a divine institution, divinely delineated, that God himself originated (Gen.2: 18, 22-23). He officiated at the first ceremony in the Garden of Eden. The institution predates the fall, and God affirms it by his frequent blessing after the Fall. If marriage was instituted by God, the pastor, who in a real sense speaks for God in establishing the covenant between a man and a woman, should be extremely careful and reasonably certain that the couple whom he or she joins understands the nature and responsibility of marriage. The pastor should be concerned that they are cognizant of the practical implications and demands of the state into which he thrusts them. God holds the pastor responsible for a covenant executed ignorantly (Eyrick 20).

A key figure emerging in the 1970s was David H. Olson, a professor of family social sciences at the University of Minnesota. His contribution was the creation of objective, scientifically evaluated marriage and family inventories. The most helpful marriage preparation inventory created with primary input from Olson was PREPARE, first published in 1979 by PREPARE-ENRICH of Minneapolis. It is a systematically developed inventory that gives a comprehensive picture of a couple's relationship strengths, as well as problematic areas.

Although the PREPARE inventory was by its very nature technical, regular seminars are held for interested pastors and counselors to familiarize themselves with its use. Comprehensive computer printouts analyzing each couple's relationship strengths and work areas are available for a nominal charge. PREPARE has gone through several revisions since its inception and is an excellent tool for marriage preparation ministry.

Three useful marriage preparation resources were introduced into the market in the 1980s. The first one was Stahmann and Hiebert's book *Premarital Counseling*, which not only lays a firm foundation for future efforts of integrating theology and psychology but also addresses the 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. The book was revised and refined in 1997.

The second book, *Love Life for Every Married Couple*, was written by Ed Wheat, a physician and certified sex therapist. While the book is primarily for married couples, it could be a required reading for those anticipating marriage as well. It helps couples to improve their marriage through sharing, touching, appreciating, and focusing healing attention on the mate.

The third book, *Straight Talk to Men and Their Wives*, is by James C. Dobson. In this book, Dobson assists couples in clarifying male and female roles in the home.

An article by Edward Bader, et al. a professor in the Department of Family and Community Medicine at the University of Toronto, made an immense contribution to the marriage preparation efforts. The article gave an extensive report of the work of a group of Canadian researchers who did a research with couples who had gone through a

premarital counseling program. The data gathered supported the hypothesis that spouses who participated in 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 marriage preparation programs would more readily seek help in resolving individual or marital problems than those who did not.

In 1981 Wheat made another valuable contribution through the production of his cassette series *Sex Technique and Sex Problems in Marriage*. The series addresses important issues in marital sexual life such as anatomy of the female and male reproductive systems, the four phases of sexual response, and premature ejaculation and its resolution. Wheat produced a follow-up cassette in 1982, entitled *Before the Wedding Night*, as a resource for couples planning for marriage. It is a great tool to allay fears many people have about sex when they are getting married.

Cyril Barber and Aldyth Barber published their book in 1981. The book identifies biblical principles for a successful marriage. The marriages of the patriarchs are discussed by the authors. The focus on biblical models for marriage is a helpful attempt to anchor marriage preparation and marriage counseling in Scripture.

Olson clearly identifies the need for marriage preparation, citing various studies validate marriage preparation, and he makes a plea to involve lay couples as opposed to clergy or professional counselors in Christian premarital services.

David A. Seamands, benchmark work from 1984 deals with paralyzed relationships, and it is an excellent resource to aid couples in working through areas needing emotional healing. It is especially helpful for people preparing for marriage who

need to get rid of their emotional and spiritual baggage, which is likely to influence their marriages negatively if left unresolved.

Donald M. Joy's work, published in 1985, is another book expressing the value of marriage preparation. Joy argues that intimacy with others was built into the fabric of all human beings by God himself. Then he goes on to explain the twelve steps of bonding that occur naturally throughout the world in human relationships. The book also explores the formation of relationship issues surrounding dating and marriage and the prevention of inappropriate bonds. Chapter 3, "Pair Bonding: What God Joins Together," should be a required reading assignment for those preparing for marriage.

Wright wrote the book *So You're Getting Married*, which was published in 1985, to address couples planning for marriage. It was a valuable addition to the marriage preparation literature at the time.

In 1986, after fifty-three years of marriage and many important contributions to the marriage preparation movement, David and Vera Mace authored a book together. One important emphasis the Maces make in the book is that the church needs to pay special attention in ministering to the married couples in their first year of marriage because it is the most volatile.

In 1987, Wayne Mack published his work. The book is designed to include both teachings on important premarital topics and question and answer sections intended for mates to work on their own before sessions with the premarital counselor. Looking at each mate's responses in their workbooks, the counselor can easily discern the areas where counseling may be required. Also in 1987, Stahmann and Hiebert completed an excellent premarital book entitled *Premarital Counselor: the Professional's Handbook*.

The book provides a helpful overview of premarital counseling. The chapter on family of origin is the most useful.

In 1992 Wright revised and expanded his earlier book *Premarital Counseling* and renamed it *The Premarital Counseling Handbook*. While keeping much of the material from his earlier book, he added more materials to cover newly emerging issues of concern. These included such difficult issues as in-laws (210), cross-cultural marriages (241), and remarriage (255). For couples who had gone through unsuccessful marriages before, the book explains typical causes for sour relationships and how to overcome them.

In 1999, Charles W. Taylor wrote a small book that is deeply rooted in the traditions of the church. In the book, Taylor brings both the resources of faith and the contemporary psychology to the crucial arena of premarital guidance. On methodology Taylor favors group counseling with multiple topics and a skill training approach (33). Structured interviews, workbooks, premarital inventories, and combined approaches are discussed. He provides helpful guidance for churches in establishing congregational policies for both premarital counseling and design of the wedding service itself (83). Another useful part of the book is the appendix, which contains reviews of some of the most frequently used tools in premarital guidance work such as workbooks, premarital inventories, and courses. The book is an ideal resource for counselors and congregational wedding committees.

Scott M. Stanley sees four benefits why couples preparing for marriage should undertake premarital education:

1. Premarital education allows couples to slow down in their plan, which in return fosters more objective reflection on the relationship. Stanley says that when properly done, the delay gives couples more time to deliberate on their union in marriage even if only for a month or two (273). Delay and deliberation can also help couples discover dynamics and weaknesses that may lead them not to marry at all, saving them the agony of marital distress and divorce itself (273).

2. With so many couples who give too little weight to the decision to marry, efforts at premarital education for couples preparing for marriage underscores for them the message that marriage is important and worthy of their commitment (274).

3. Through the experience of premarital education, the couple learns that people exist who can help them or refer them for further help, if they face difficulties later in life. When a couple has a positive premarital educational experience, they will be more likely later, if need be, to seek the advice of the person who helped them through their initial premarital education or of others (275).

4. The premarital education has its primary effect on the couples. In nationwide polling data, researchers found that those who had taken premarital education were less likely to think of divorce and were more likely to have confidence in their ability to handle their future in marriage (275).

In another article in 2003, in response to whether marriage preparation was effective, Carrol and Doherty say that couples who participate in premarital programs experience a 30 percent increase in marital success over those who do not participate. They reported improved communication, better conflict management skills, higher dedication to one's mate, greater emphasis on the positive aspects of a relationship, and

improved overall relationship quality (107). These benefits also extended to couples who enter marriage with greater risks, such as coming from homes with divorced parents or high levels of conflict (108).

Current Premarital Counseling Practices in Kenya

Premarital counseling practices in Kenya basically fall under three major models of counseling, namely, the African traditional model, secular counseling model, which draws almost entirely from psychology and other humanistic disciplines, and the religious model, which is not exclusively Christian but includes other major religions such as Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism. This research, however, only focus on Christianity and especially evangelical Christianity in particular.

African Traditional Model

Africans are community-oriented people. They tend to think and act on the basis of how their decisions will impact the community. Phrases such as “It takes a village to raise a child” and “I am, because you are,” reflect the African way of life. Africans also know that no community without marriage and family because the community itself owes its origin, existence, and propagation to the twin institutions of marriage and family. Given this reality, marriage and family takes a central part in the consciousness and the daily occupation of the African life. Faced with this reality, each family in the community endeavors to passionately instruct its members, especially the young men and women in the family (premarital counseling), on the weighty matters of good marriage and family and how the import of such matters influence directly or indirectly the well-being of both the immediate family and the larger community.

Richard Gehman, who was a missionary in Kenya for a long time, did a lot of research on African customs and traditions. In his book he says Africans customarily provided counseling before and after marriage (21). During initiation ceremonies, an older “counselor” offered counseling. The grandmother, mother, or other older female relatives traditionally counseled the daughters, and the uncle, father, or other older male relatives counseled the younger sons of the family (21). Gehman continues to say that counseling for marriage preparation was given through three major avenues. One was through apprenticeship, simply watching others do something and then doing the same thing. Girls for example, learned how to cook, care for the babies, care for the home, and work in the farm by watching their mothers, so that much of the girls’ training for the responsibilities of marriage came through daily associations with their mothers (64). As boys cared for the domestic animals, hunted, watched their fathers place beehives on high trees, harvest honey, and fishing, they learned how to do the men’s work (64).

The second avenue of preparation for marriage was actual teaching. Grandparents did a lot of teaching in this regard. In the evenings during meal times, girls carry their food to their grandmothers’ houses to eat there as they listen to teachings on life in general but more often than not, the lessons would be on personal issues such marriage, sexuality, women’s menses, fertility, families with whom they are related and should never marry, romance, choosing the right man for a husband, procedures for marriage such as how to care for their husbands and children, and how to maintain a marriage (Gehman 65).

The third avenue for marriage preparation was during the initiation ceremonies. The initiation ceremony was the time when a girl became a woman and a boy became a

man. Initiation ceremonies were and are like a license, giving young men and women the right to marry. They provide the final training required to enable persons to marry (Gehman 65). The initiation combined several procedures together for both boys and girls, including the physical operation of circumcision, various tests of physical endurance, teachings on how an adult man should care for his wife and family, and the performance of various rites and ceremonies (65). The girls, on their part, learned how to handle their husbands and home and what to do when they encounter conflicts and misunderstandings with their husbands and relatives (65).

In an article, Mathews Tshapaka Kapolo gives a fair description of what an African model of premarital counseling looks like. He says parents, uncles, aunts, and grandparents form a group of responsible relatives, like a family council, that instructs young folks in family affairs. These responsible relatives function as keepers of family boundaries, counselors, and peacekeepers (130). He says that according to the African family system, parents and all adults in the family have a great responsibility to instruct the youth in all matters of life, including marriage and family, work and service to others, and roles and responsibilities to their immediate families as well as to the larger community. Family formation begins with the process of finding a marriage partner, a process that includes parents and community members as well as the couple:

He begins to ask her fellow-villagers all about her habits and any reasons that may have kept her from already being married off among her people. When he has heard all there is to hear, he goes home to tell his relatives." I have," he says, "I have seen a girl at such-and-such village, the child of so-and-so, and I would like you quickly to go and request her for me." (131)

This dialogue was very crucial because it symbolized the beginning of a search for a bride for the young man if the negotiations would succeed.

Africans also believe that family of origin has great influence on people. Before the parents of the young man begin their preparations to go to the girl's home to see her parents and ask them for her hand in marriage to their son, very serious questioning and scrutiny of habits and general behavior of the family of origin is conducted through quiet inquiries from people who know them well. The quiet enquiries ensure that their son gets a wife who will bring a positive influence to their family from her family of origin (Kapolo 131). A good relationship, they believe, is needed not only between the two young people who are intending to marry but between their families as well. Marriage in the African family system is not only between the two young people who intend to marry, but between the families from which the individuals come. Such a relationship is clearly emphasized at the marriage ceremony where the responsible relatives assigned to give words of counsel (premarital counseling) do it not only to the two young people getting married (the new couple) but also to their parents (family of origin; 131). The words of counsel to the young husband-to-be might be something such as the following:

Listen, oh husband: you have lived with your father and mother. They brought you to birth, they nourished and fed you, they clothed you and looked after you well until you matured, right up to the point when you desired and sought a wife. To-day here is the wife that Mulungu [God] has given you. She is also just as yourself: she has lived with her old folks who brought her to birth, fed and cared for her, as was the case with you. To-day, you note her beauty and, desiring her, have caused her to separate from those people of hers so that she may truly be yours. You ought to pay heed to my words; both to hear and to act by them. The instructor(s) then gives specific "laws of good living" which would be directed to both the husband and wife. After the instructor(s) is finished giving counsel to the couple, words of counsel are given to the parents of the newlywed couple. They are encouraged to continue their parental guidance to the new family. This does not mean that the parents should dominate the new family, but that they should respect it and assist them where necessary so that their marriage would succeed. (131)

Although the primary recipient of the counsel is the husband-to-be, some of the words would spill out to the bride as well.

The counseling to the new couple and their parents shows first that a new family has been established, yet the new family remains part of the larger family, the community. Second, this counsel clearly defines the responsibilities of husband and wife to one another as a subsystem within the extended family. Third, the counsel defines the boundaries of the families of origin and the larger community (extended family) and lists the responsibilities of the parents to continue caring for the new family. Fourth, the boundary of mutual respect and friendship between the two families of origin is mandated. All three parties-husband, wife, and parents-have been told to pursue the happiness and success of the new family (Kapolo132). African traditional family counselors believed that prevention is better than cure. Traditional African counseling, therefore, begins with proper instruction before the marriage takes place. Such instruction will remain as lifelong guidance for the new family (132).

Christian Premarital Counseling Model

The second model of premarital counseling in Kenya today is the Christian model, used by pastors, youth leaders, and church counselors in order to prepare prospective couples under their charge for marriage. The model is Christian because most of the principles and ideals taught in such programs are based on the Word of God. The main problem with the Christian model in Kenya is the lack of a standardized curriculum that would ensure all the practitioners are teaching standard ideas that have been discussed, tested and agreed upon as needed for people preparing for marriage. This

situation leaves every Christian practitioner using whatever material comes to him or her in the name of Christian premarital counseling.

Secular Counseling Model

The third model of premarital counseling found in Kenya is secular counseling which wishes to dissociate itself from any religious affiliation or use of religion in counseling. They hold the view that psychotherapy has muscle enough to stand on its own without religion. The approach these practitioners have would still be to cover almost all the topics covered by the Christian practitioners except those topics with religious connotations, or direct reference to religious holy books like the Bible or the Koran.

In summary, since the early 1940s, premarital counseling has been taken more seriously than before. Until the late 1960s, the premarital counseling models were heavily oriented toward the transmission of knowledge about marriage, but from the mid-1970s, marriage preparation models started to emphasize the process dimensions of human interrelationships rather than a primary emphasis on content characteristics. Aaron L. Rutledge was one of the first people to point to that new direction (7, 19). In the 1980s, the marriage enrichment models movement emerged. The main contribution of this movement was to sharpen the focus for the goals of premarital counseling and promoting the marital quality of the couple's future marriage (Klassen 77-78). Continuing in the 1980s, increased emphasis on post-wedding pastoral care was evident. The research of Bader and his associates at the University of Toronto substantiated the need for this addition. The marriage literature further suggests that post-wedding counseling will take priority over pre-wedding counseling in both duration and importance (Mace and Mace

267). Also in the 1980s, the emphasis on the use of lay couples as opposed to clergy or professional counselors, in marriage preparation gained currency. Olson particularly made a plea to involve lay couples in premarital services (65-75). A major problem within the marriage preparation movement has been the difficulty in the development of a systematic evaluative tool to determine the effectiveness of any particular marriage preparation model. The five-year study of Bader et al. was an early attempt to address the problem. The research of Olson and others who gave birth to PREPARE-ENRICH was particularly valuable in this regard.

In Kenya, three models of premarital counseling have been in use for the people preparing to get married.

The first one is the African traditional model which draws from the African traditional understanding and practice of marriage and family.

The second one is the Christian model which draws from the biblical and Christian understanding of marriage and family. Most Christian counselors in Kenya do not hesitate to integrate psychological principles in counseling so long as they do not contradict clear teaching of the Word of God.

The third one is the secular model which uses psychology alone in counseling without incorporating any religious or spiritual input in their practice.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This study was designed as a mixed methods exploratory research study, utilizing a revised standardized marital satisfaction inventory and a researcher-designed questionnaire to gather data. The purpose of the study was to explore marital satisfaction of forty married couples at the Africa Inland Church Jericho, Nairobi, Kenya, with the view toward informing premarital counseling practices in Kenya. This purpose was accomplished by conducting a survey using the MSI-R autoforms with each of the forty couples. Participants answered questions in eleven different areas of their married life and scores in each of the areas reflected strengths or weaknesses in their marriages in those particular areas.

Research Questions

This study was guided by three research questions in the following order.

Research Question # 1

What was the level of marital satisfaction among the forty couples who took the Marital Satisfaction Inventory, Revised survey?

Using MSI-R thirteen areas of marriage life were measured to assess marital satisfaction or dissatisfaction. These thirteen areas of assessment covered in the survey were inconsistency (twenty items); conventionalization (ten items); global distress (twenty-two items); affective communication (thirteen items); problem-solving communication (nineteen items); aggression (ten items); time together (ten items); disagreement about finances (eleven items); sexual dissatisfaction (thirteen items); role

orientation (twelve items); family history of distress (nine items); dissatisfaction with children (eleven items); and, conflict over child rearing (ten items).

Research Question # 2

How can the scores of the Marital Satisfaction Inventory, Revised inform current premarital counseling practices in Kenya?

This second research question was answered by a close examination of the couples' responses measured against the MSI-R scales' continuum of low, moderate and high dissatisfaction.

Research Question # 3

How can the data from the researcher-designed open-ended questionnaire inform current premarital counseling practices in Kenya?

This third question sought to know how the participants had been helped by the current premarital counseling practices in Kenya and what things they thought were the most important for inclusion in premarital counseling discussions.

Participants

After I presented the letter of introduction from the director of the Doctor Ministry Program at Asbury Theological Seminary, explaining the research I intended to do at the church, to the senior pastor, Rev. Mutinda Musyimi, and his assistant, Rev. Katoo Musyi, we had a meeting where we agreed that the couples who participated in the survey would have the following characteristics:

- They would be forty in number, making a total of eighty people.
- They would have been married between one and fifteen years.

- They would have at least a high school certificate to be able to understand and respond appropriately to the issues raised in the survey questionnaires.
- They would be legally married with a marriage certificate as evidence.
- They would be known members of Africa Inland Church Jericho, Nairobi, Kenya.
- I would personally contact and request the participation of both the husband and the wife to get their consent before participating.
- If possible, all the couples were registered members of the Young Couples Fellowship.
- The leaders of the fellowship would have the contacts of all their members and would give the information to me if requested.

Design of the Study

The format employed in this research was the mixed-methods design that utilized both the Marital Satisfaction Inventory, Revised autoscore forms and also a researcher-designed questionnaire to enable the participants share their views on premarital counseling practices in Kenya (Greene 14). The tabulations and interpretations of the completed forms provided an indication of marital satisfaction of each participating couple and the specific areas of need where premarital counselors should pay special attention when preparing couples for marriage.

Instrumentation

The primary instrument used in this study was the Marital Satisfaction Inventory, Revised developed by Snyder in 1997. The instrument is widely used to assess the nature and extent of conflict within the marital relationship. Each partner responds to 150

true/false items or 129 items if the couple has no children, which cover eleven dimensions of marital interaction. Two additional scales, inconsistency and conventionalization, measure the individuals' consistency in responding to items' content and individuals' tendencies to distort the appraisal of their relationship in a socially desirable direction respectively. The thirteen scales are (1) inconsistency (INC), measures the individuals' consistency in responding to items' content; (2) conventionalization (CNV), assesses the individuals' tendencies to distort the appraisal of their relationship in a socially desirable direction; (3) global distress (GDS), measures individuals' overall dissatisfaction with their relationship; (4) affective communication (AFC), evaluates individuals' dissatisfaction with the amount of affection and understanding expressed by their partner; (5) problem-solving communication (PSC), assesses the couple's general ineffectiveness in resolving differences; (6) aggression (AGG), measures the level of intimidation and physical aggression experienced by the respondents from their partners; (7) time together (TTO), evaluates the couple's companionships as expressed in time shared in leisure activities; (8) disagreement about finances (FIN), measures relationship discord regarding the management of finances; (9) sexual dissatisfaction (SEX), assesses dissatisfaction with the frequency and quality of intercourse and other sexual activity; (10) role orientation (ROR), evaluates the respondents' advocacy for traditional versus nontraditional orientation toward marital and parental gender roles; (11) family history of distress (FAM), reflects the disruption of relationships within the respondents' family of origin; (12) dissatisfaction with children (DSC), assesses the relationship quality between respondents and their children, as well as parental concerns regarding the emotional and behavioral well-being of one or more of the children; and, (13) conflict over child rearing

(CCR), evaluates the extent of conflict between partners regarding child-rearing practices.

The MSI-R divides respondents' scores into three categories: low, moderate, and high. The scores are presented as T-Scores with a mean of approximately 50 and a standard deviation of approximately 10.

For nine of the scales—global distress, affective communication, problem-solving communication, aggression, time together, disagreement about finances, sexual dissatisfaction, dissatisfaction with children rearing—a score of 0-50T is considered low, which translates to mean that individuals are satisfied with their marriage. A score of 51T-60T falls into the moderate category with the clinical implication indicating some level of relationship conflict in the marriage. A score of above 60T reflects extensive relational dissatisfaction.

For the scale of family history of distress, the T-Scores were created through a normalizing transformation process as distinguished from the linear one. For this scale, individuals with a score below 45T report a history of satisfying relationships within their family of origin. Participants with moderate scores (45-55T) report significant tensions in their families of origin and often describe conflicted relations with parents or siblings. Scores of above 55T indicate extensive conflicts in the family of origin.

For the scale of role orientation, a low score (below 50T) indicates a highly traditional orientation toward marital and parental gender roles, emphasizing men's dominance in decision making and as primary wage earners. Men who obtain low ROR scores tend to assume a lower portion of house care or child-rearing responsibilities. Women who obtain low ROR scores tend to invest themselves more fully in their roles as

wives and mothers at home. The inequality of the partners influence in decision-making may contribute to difficulties in conflict resolution based on negotiations and compromise. Moderate ROR scores (50T-60T) reflect a greater flexibility in the sharing of traditional roles. High ROR scores (above 60) indicate a less traditional view of marital and traditional roles. Decision making is likely to be shared fully, as are housework and child-rearing responsibilities. The ROR scale is not a measure of relationship distress per se, but the potential for relational conflict regarding marital or parental roles may be inferred by partners' differences on this scale. Because this scale does not measure relationship distress, its value has more relevance in a clinical setting where discussion is key to understanding its impact on the marital relationship.

Reliability and Validity

The MSI-R has proven its reliability using Cronbach's alpha coefficient of internal consistency ranging from .70 (DSC) to .93 (GDS) with a mean coefficient of .82. The test/retest reliability coefficients for the individual scales range from .74 (GDS, FIN, CCR) to .88 (ROR).

The MSI-R was standardized on a sample of 2,040 people (1,020 intact couples) ranging in age from late teens through early 90s and approximating the U.S. population in regard to geographic region, education, and ethnicity, according to 1994 Bureau of the Census (Snyder and Rice 216).

In order to extend the empirical validity established for the original MSI and accrued during fifteen years of research to the revised scales, correlations tests confirm the high interrelation validity between the original and revised scales ranging from .94 to .98 with a median of 95.5 (56).

Data Collection

The initial contact with AIC Jericho, Nairobi regarding this study came through a letter from the director of the Doctor of Ministry department at Asbury Theological Seminary that I presented to the senior pastor Rev. Mutinda Musyimi, explaining the project as part of the requirements for the completion of Doctor of Ministry studies at the seminary and requesting that I be allowed to conduct the study at AIC Jericho. With the assistance of both the senior pastor and the assistant pastor, I was able to identify and seek permission from each of the forty couples I needed for my project, through a letter informing them of the study and asking them to participate.

Meeting with all forty couples at once, was not possible and so I had to schedule different meetings for groups of couples who were available together at a given time. Most of these meetings were held in an office in the church that was made available for me to use, courtesy of the senior pastor.

Before administering the MSI-R autoforms, I took time to explain the rationale behind the study and the context in which the results would be used, thus allaying the fears and concerns that might inhibit their responses and affect the ultimate outcome of the survey. In order to disguise their identities and to encourage the couples to give honest and truthful information about them, each couple was given a pair of MSI-R forms and the open-ended one-page researcher-designed questionnaire with no names on them, and they were told not to write their names. Instead, for the purpose of ensuring that during the data analysis phase that each pair of forms were filled by a particular couple and not by any other, the forms were marked prior to the meeting in a series of twin numbers, A and B for each pair of forms: A for the husband and B for the wife, from pair

No.1 to pair No. 40. For example for pair No.1, the husband's number would be 1A and the wife would be 1B.

Data collection, both through the MSI-R and the researcher-designed, open-ended questionnaire of three questions, captured the participants' views on premarital counseling practices in Kenya. Owing to the fact that the researcher-designed questionnaire was, in comparison to the MSI-R, very short, it was administered to the participants before the MSI-R. On the MSI-R inventory, the forty couples completed the inventories by answering 150 true/false questions (or 129 true/false questions if the couple had no children).

After every respondent completed and returned their surveys, they were carefully checked to ensure that all the parts including the preliminaries such as age, number of children, years of education and years of marriage, occupation, and gender of each participant was filled out correctly. When all the surveys were completed, I carefully packed them to await data analysis later in the U.S.

Data Analysis

After all the surveys were completed and returned, the next phase of analyzing the data began. First, the respondents' scores for all the eleven scales of the Marital Satisfaction Inventory forms were carefully recorded and necessary calculations made for all the scales. Second, the findings of the open-ended questionnaires were also recorded. Furthermore, guided by the premise that men and women experience marital satisfaction or dissatisfaction differently, data from the MSI-R comparing them on the all the eleven scales was presented in both prose and tables. Although data from the open-ended questionnaires came in under many sub topics, most of which were repetition of the same

things only with different wording, words or phrases that had the same or similar meaning were grouped together under fifteen distinctively different topics.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations included maintaining confidentiality by handling peoples' information with care and respect, not sharing any information from the couples with any unauthorized people, and not using the information in any way that could cause the reputation of the couples who participated in the survey to be adversely and negatively defamed. One way of doing that was to make sure that after every survey was conducted and completed, the filled forms and questionnaires were carefully inspected to ensure that they were filled correctly after which they were neatly folded and locked together in a special storage in the house awaiting my travel back to the U.S. The other part of the goal was fulfilled by ensuring that none of the filled forms and questionnaires had any names or any form of familiar marks on them which would easily reveal the identification and consequently, the information regarding any of the participants.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to conduct an exploratory study of marital satisfaction of forty married couples at the Africa Inland Church, Jericho, Nairobi, with the view to inform premarital counseling practices in Kenya. This aim was accomplished by conducting an intensive survey at this church in the months of June, July and half of August 2009. The main thrust of this chapter is to present a careful, logical and orderly report of the findings generated from the survey in Nairobi, Kenya.

The survey had two different sets of questionnaires: an open-ended, researcher-designed one with three questions, and the Marital Satisfaction Inventory, Revised. The open-ended questionnaire probed three areas. First, the questionnaire sought to know whether or not the participants went through any form of premarital counseling as they prepared to get married, and if so, who conducted this counseling. Second, participants were asked to identify five important things that they learned in their premarital counseling that have positively impacted their marriages. Third, the participants were asked to name four things on which any counseling practitioner should focus during the counseling sessions in order for couples to have successful marriages.

The second questionnaire was the Marital Satisfaction Inventory, Revised, which provided the bulk of the study and had 150 questions for participants with children and 129 questions for participants without children.

Demographics of the Participants

All the participants were Kenyans. All but one couple had been married in church and had not been in any other marriage before their current one. They were all recognized

members of the Africa Inland Church Jericho, Nairobi, Kenya. The couple who had been married the longest had been married for fifteen years, while the couple with the newest marriage had only been married for three months. The oldest man in the group was 46 years old, and the oldest woman was 42. The youngest man in the group was 27, while the youngest woman was 25 years old. The average age for the men in the group was 36, while the average age for the women was 32 years. The educational levels of the participants were mixed. One man had a PhD degree. Four men had master's degrees, and four had bachelor's degrees. Among the women, one had master's degree and four bachelor's degrees. None of the participants had less than a high school certificate. Concerning children, thirty of the couples had children with an average of two per couple, while ten couples had no children. The oldest child among the children whose parents participated in the survey was twenty years old, and the youngest was three weeks old. Regarding employment, eight men were not formally employed, and they were either looking for formal employment or they had settled in business. Among the women, fifteen of them were not formally employed. Some were either stay-at-home mothers, and some were in small businesses.

Research Questions

This study was guided by three research questions

Research Question # 1

What was the level of marital satisfaction among the forty couples who took the Marital Satisfaction inventory, Revised survey?

Research Question # 2

How can the scores of the Marital Satisfaction Inventory, Revised inform current premarital counseling practices in Kenya?

Research Question # 3

How can the data from the researcher-designed open-ended questionnaire inform current premarital counseling practices in Kenya?

Responses to Research Question # 1

The first research question was answered by comparing the MSI-R scores for the women with those of the men. The scores were presented in a continuum of *satisfied*, *moderate dissatisfaction* and *high dissatisfaction* for each of the eleven scales of the MSI-R. The scores for the inconsistency (INC) and conventionalization (CNV) scales were not shown throughout the study because both are validity scales used to assess the validity and consistency of the respondents in answering questions and are not used by the instrument to measure marital satisfaction.

The units used by the MSI-R to measure marital satisfaction are called T-scores, which have a mean of approximately 50 and a standard deviation of approximately 10. For the other nine scales—global distress, affective communication, problem-solving communication, aggression, time together, disagreement about finances, sexual dissatisfaction, dissatisfaction with children rearing—a score of 0-50T is considered low, which indicates that individuals are satisfied with their marriage. A score of 50T-60T falls into the moderate category, with the clinical implication of some level of relationship conflict in the marriage. A score of above 60T reflects extensive relational dissatisfaction.

Further, the scores were used as aggregate scores for all the men and women who took the survey, and were not in any way meant to determine whether a particular man and woman from a particular marriage saw marriage the same way. That could be done but would have been beyond the scope of this study.

The following are the scores of the eleven MSI-R scales presented for each in the continuum of satisfied for those with low scores (below 50T), moderate dissatisfaction for those with medium (between 50-60T) scores and high dissatisfaction for those with high scores (above 60T).

Global Distress Scale

The Global distress scale (GDS) measures individuals' overall dissatisfaction with the relationship and has proven to be the best single indicator of global relationship affect among the MSI-R scales. The scale's items content reflects general dissatisfaction or unhappiness in the relationship. The items on the scale cover three aspects of related content: pessimism regarding future of the relationship, general relationship dissatisfaction, and unfavorable comparison to other relationships.

Low scores on GDS (below 50T; satisfied) reflect relationships that are satisfying and the respondents in such relationships view their partners as good friends. They may depict their relationship as a major source of gratification. Low scores also depict a strong commitment to the relationship. Moderate scores on GDS (from 50T-60T; moderate dissatisfaction) reflect significant levels of relationship conflict.

High scores on GDS (above 60T; high dissatisfaction) reflect extensive relationship dissatisfaction. Conflicts are likely to be of long duration and generalized across diverse areas of the couple's interactions.

Table 4.1 shows the scores for the GDS where seven women out of the forty who took the survey indicated that they were satisfied (below 50T) with the global or overall dissatisfaction of their marriages. Twenty-eight indicated that they had moderate dissatisfaction (50T-60T) and five of them indicated that they had high dissatisfaction (above 60T), with their marriages as compared on the same scale to five men out of forty who took the survey who indicated that they were satisfied with their marriages. Thirty-three were moderately dissatisfied with their marriages and five were highly dissatisfied with theirs.

In summary, the scores show that on the global distress scale, more women than men (seven women against five men) were satisfied (scores below 50T), more men than women (thirty-three men against twenty-eight women) had moderately dissatisfied (scores between 50T-60T), and an equal number of women and men (five women and five men) experienced highly dissatisfied (scores above 60T).

A total number of nine people comprising of seven women and two men were satisfied.

A total of seventy one people were dissatisfied. This number comprised of thirty-three men and twenty eight women with moderate dissatisfaction five women and five men with high dissatisfaction.

Table 4.1. Comparison of the Global Distress Scores for Women and Men

Scale GDS	Women			Men		
	Satisfied (<50T)	Moderately Dissatisfied (50-60T)	Highly Dissatisfied (>60T)	Satisfied (<50T)	Moderately Dissatisfied (50-60T)	Highly Dissatisfied (>60T)
	7	28	5	2	33	5

Affective Communication Scale

The affective communication scale (AFC) evaluates the respondents' dissatisfaction with the amount of affection and understanding expressed by spouses. Among the MSI-R scales, it is the best single measure of emotional intimacy experienced in the relationship. The item's content in the scale covers lack of affection and support and lack of empathy or mutual disclosure.

Low scores on AFC (below 50T; satisfied) recorded by respondents reflect that their relationships are happy and fulfilling and describe their partners as loving and supportive. Moderate scores on AFC (from 50T-60T; moderate satisfaction) recorded by respondents reflect at least moderate distress regarding the amount of affection expressed by their spouses. They often feel emotionally distant from their spouses and may feel unappreciated or misunderstood. High scores on AFC (above 60T; high dissatisfaction) indicate more extensive dissatisfaction with the amount of love and affection expressed in the relationship.

Table 4.2 shows the scores for the AFC scale. Twenty-six women out of the forty who took the survey indicated that they were satisfied (below 50T) with the affection and understanding received from their husbands. Eleven indicated that they experienced moderate dissatisfaction (50T-60T) in the same scale and three indicated high dissatisfaction (above 60T). Compared to the men in the same scale, seventeen out of forty indicated they were satisfied with the affection and understanding they got from their wives, eighteen of them indicated they received moderate dissatisfaction with

affection and understanding, and five indicated high dissatisfaction in the affection and understanding received from their wives.

In summary, on the affective communication scale, more women than men (twenty-six women and seventeen men) were satisfied (below 50T) with the affection and understanding received from their spouses. More men than women (eighteen men against eleven women) reported moderate dissatisfaction (between 50T-60T), and more men than women (five men against three women) had high dissatisfaction (above 60T).

A total number of forty three people comprising of twenty six women and seventeen men were satisfied.

A total number of thirty-seven people recorded dissatisfaction. This number comprised of eighteen men and eleven women with moderate dissatisfaction and five men and three women with high dissatisfaction.

Table 4.2. Comparison of the Affective Communication Scores for Women and Men

Scale	Women			Men		
	Satisfied (<50T)	Moderately Dissatisfied (50-60T)	Highly Dissatisfied (>60T)	Satisfied (<50T)	Moderately Dissatisfied (50-60T)	Highly Dissatisfied (>60T)
AFC	26	11	3	17	18	5

Problem-Solving Communication Scale

The Problem Solving Communication scale (PSC) assesses the couple's general ineffectiveness in resolving differences and measures overt discord rather than underlying feelings of estrangement. The three aspects of the content covered by this scale are failure to resolve even minor differences, lack of specific problem-solving skills, and over reactivity of partner and inability to discuss sensitive topics.

Low scores on PSC (below 50T; satisfied) represent individuals who report little overt disharmony in their relationships. The couple is likely to be committed to resolving differences when they occur and to be reasonably effective in doing so. Moderate scores on PSC (from 50T-60T moderate dissatisfaction) typically reflect a somewhat protracted history of relationship difficulties characterized by frequent arguments. High scores on PSC (above 60T; high dissatisfaction) indicate an extensive history of unresolved relationship conflicts, which are common. Very ugly arguments are frequent.

Table 4.3 shows the scores for the problem-solving communication scale where twenty out of the forty women who took the survey indicated satisfaction with the way they and their husbands exercised their problem-solving skills to resolve problems between them. Sixteen of them reported moderate dissatisfaction in the way problems were solved in their marriages, and four of them indicated high dissatisfaction with the same.

In comparison with the women, nineteen out of forty men indicated that they were satisfied with their problem solving-communication with their wives. Seventeen reported moderate dissatisfaction with it, and four indicated high dissatisfaction with it.

In summary, on the problem-solving scale, the scores showed a similar distribution of women when compared to men on all three levels of satisfaction. Twenty women against nineteen men indicated that they were satisfied (below 50T). Sixteen women versus seventeen men indicated that they had moderate dissatisfaction (50T-60T), and four women four men indicated high dissatisfaction (above 60T).

A total number of thirty-nine people, comprised of twenty women and nineteen men, were satisfied with affective communication in their marriages.

A total number of forty-one people recorded dissatisfaction with the affective communication in their marriages. This number comprised of sixteen women and seventeen men with moderate dissatisfaction and four men and four women with high dissatisfaction.

Table 4.3. Comparison of the Problem-Solving Scores for Women and Men

Scale PSC	Women			Men		
	Satisfied (<50T)	Moderately Dissatisfied (50-60T)	Highly Dissatisfied (>60T)	Satisfied (<50T)	Moderately Dissatisfied (50-60T)	Highly Dissatisfied (>60T)
	20	16	4	19	17	4

Aggression scale

The Aggression scale (AGG) assesses the level of intimidation and physical aggression experienced by respondents from their marriage partners. Intimidation can be demonstrated by yelling when angry, slamming things, and throwing objects at the respondents. Physical aggression can be demonstrated by pushing, shoving, or physically injuring the partner.

Low scores on AGG (below 50T; satisfaction) describe an absence of physical aggression or intimidation by marriage partners beyond occasional screaming or yelling. Moderate scores on AGG (from 50T-60T; moderate dissatisfaction) typically reflect nonphysical intimidation as well as low levels of physical aggression without more severe demonstrations of physical aggression like violent kicking or hitting. High scores on AGG (above 60T) indicate the presence of serious physical, emotional, and mental intimidation, which includes violence such as kicking, hitting, choking, beating, raping, burning and even the possibility of killing a marriage partner.

Table 4.4 shows the scores for the aggression (AGG) scale, where nineteen women out of the forty who took the survey indicated that they were satisfied that no form of intimidation or physical aggression experienced from their husbands. Sixteen indicated moderate dissatisfaction with the level of intimidation and physical aggression from their husbands, and five indicated high dissatisfaction. This number compared to twenty-two men out of the forty who indicated that they were satisfied that no form of intimidation and physical aggression from their wives. Eleven indicated moderate dissatisfaction with the level of intimidation and physical aggression from their wives, and seven indicated high dissatisfaction with it.

In summary, on the aggression scale, scores showed that more men than women were satisfied with the infrequency or non-aggressive state of their marriages (below 50T; twenty-two men versus nineteen women). More women than men had moderate dissatisfaction (between 50T-60T; sixteen women versus eleven men), and more men than women (seven men versus five women) showed high dissatisfaction (above 60T) due to aggression shown them by their wives.

A total number of forty-one people were satisfied with the state of nonaggressive state of their marriages. This number comprised of twenty- two men and nineteen women.

A total number of thirty-nine people were dissatisfied with the aggressive state of their marriages. This number comprised of sixteen women and eleven men with moderate dissatisfaction plus seven men and five women with high dissatisfaction with the aggression in their marriages.

Table 4.4 Comparison of the Aggression Scores for Women and Men

Scale AGG	Women			Men		
	Satisfied (<50T)	Moderately Dissatisfied (50-60T)	Highly Dissatisfied (>60T)	Satisfied (<50T)	Moderately Dissatisfied (50-60T)	Highly Dissatisfied (>60T)
	19	16	5	22	11	7

Time Together Scale

The time together scale (TTO) evaluates the couple's companionship as expressed in terms of time they spend together in leisure activities, fun, and togetherness. This scale measures the couple's friendship as reflected in behavioral intimacy, in comparison to emotional intimacy as assessed by the affective communication scale or sexual intimacy as measured by the sexual dissatisfaction scale. Its contents are covered in the lack of shared leisure activities and lack of shared common interests.

Low scores in TTO (below 50T; satisfied) reflect respondents who describe their partners as being good friends and fun to be with, generally reporting feelings of being satisfied with the time they spend together in leisure activities. They also share a variety of common interests and seek each other's company in a variety of activities both in and out of the home. Moderate scores in TTO (from 50T-60T; moderate dissatisfaction) indicate the presence of moderate dissatisfaction with the time spent with a marriage partner. When accompanied by elevated on the AFC scale, moderate TTO scores are more likely to reflect feelings of isolation and alienation from the partner. High scores in TTO (from 60T; high dissatisfaction) reflect complaints extending beyond insufficient time for shared leisure activity to include concerns regarding lack of common interests

and friends, and feelings of emotional distance from the marriage partner. Accompanying deficits in emotional and sexual intimacy are common.

Table 4.5 shows the scores for TTO where sixteen women out of forty who took the survey indicated that they were satisfied with their companionship with their husbands as expressed in terms of the time spent together in leisure activities. Seventeen of them indicated moderate dissatisfaction, and seven indicated high dissatisfaction. In comparison, fourteen men out of forty who took the survey indicated that they were satisfied. Nineteen indicated moderate dissatisfaction, and seven indicated high dissatisfaction.

In summary, on the time together scale, scores showed that more women than men (sixteen women versus fourteen men) were satisfied (below 50T), more men than women (nineteen men versus seventeen women) were moderately dissatisfied (between 50T-60T), and an equal number of women and men (seven women and seven men) were highly dissatisfied (above 60T).

A total number of thirty people were satisfied. This number comprised of sixteen women and fourteen men.

A total number of fifty people were dissatisfied. This number comprised of nineteen men and seventeen women with moderate dissatisfaction plus seven men and seven women with high dissatisfaction.

Table 4.5. Comparison of the Time Together Scores for Women and Men

Scale	Women			Men		
	Satisfied (<50T)	Moderately Dissatisfied (50-60T)	Highly Dissatisfied (>60T)	Satisfied (<50T)	Moderately Dissatisfied (50-60T)	Highly Dissatisfied (>60T)
TTO	16	17	7	14	19	7

Disagreement about finances scale

The disagreement about finances scale (FIN) assesses relationship discord regarding the management of finances. The three areas covered by the scale are concerns regarding finances, a lack of confidence in the partner's handling of finances, and arguments with the partner over finances. Low scores on FIN (below 50T satisfied) indicate that finances are an area of relative agreement in the couple's relationship. Issues of finances are handled with sensitivity and transparency. Moderate scores on FIN (from 50T-60T; moderate dissatisfaction) indicate that disagreements about finances are a significant relationship concern for the couple. Arguments about money and financial priorities are commonplace in the marriage. High scores on FIN (above 60T; high dissatisfaction) indicate that finances are likely to represent a major source of relationship conflict, and arguments in this domain are intense.

Table 4.6 shows the scores for the FIN scale where fourteen women out of the forty who took the survey indicated that they were satisfied that no relationship discord with their husbands regarding the management of finances. Eighteen indicated they had moderate dissatisfaction, and eight said they experienced high dissatisfaction. In comparison, nineteen men indicated that they were satisfied that no relationship discord

with their wives regarding the management of finances. Thirteen indicated moderate dissatisfaction, and eight men indicated high dissatisfaction.

In summary, on the disagreement about finances scale, more men than women (nineteen men versus fourteen women) were satisfied (below 50T) that no relationship discord with their wives regarding the management of finances. More women than men (eighteen women versus thirteen men) were moderately dissatisfied (between 50T-60T), and an equal number of women and men (eight women and eight men) were highly dissatisfied (above 60T).

A total number of thirty-three people were satisfied. This number comprised of fourteen women and nineteen men.

A total number of forty-five people were dissatisfied. This number comprised of eighteen women and thirteen men with moderate dissatisfaction plus seven women and seven men with high dissatisfaction.

Table 4.6 Comparison of the Disagreements on Finances Scores for Women and Men

Scale	Women			Men		
	Satisfied (<50T)	Moderately Dissatisfied (50-60T)	Highly Dissatisfied (>60T)	Satisfied (<50T)	Moderately Dissatisfied (50-60T)	Highly Dissatisfied (>60T)
FIN	14	18	8	19	13	8

Sexual dissatisfaction scale

The sexual dissatisfaction scale (SEX) assesses dissatisfaction with the frequency and quality of intercourse and other sexual activity. The content of the scale covers the general dissatisfaction with the sexual relationship, the partner's lack of interest in the sexual relationship, and inadequate affection during sexual exchanges.

Low scores (below 50T) on the SEX scale (satisfied) reflect a general positive attitude toward the overall quality of the couple's sexual relationship. Disagreements regarding the frequency or specific content of sexual behaviors are not common.

Moderate scores (from 50T-60T moderate dissatisfaction) on the SEX scale reflect the presence of concern regarding the sexual relationship and its role as a significant source of relationship discontent. Individuals who obtain moderate SEX scores typically express dissatisfaction with the frequency of both sexual relations and non sexual expression of affection and intimacy. Communication difficulties with the spouse about sex are common. High scores (60T) on the SEX scale (high dissatisfaction) indicate extensive dissatisfaction with the sexual relationship and the frequency of sexual intercourse.

Table 4.7 shows the scores for the SEX scale. Twenty out of the forty women who took the survey indicated that they were satisfied with the frequency and the quality of sexual intercourse with their husbands. Fourteen women indicated moderate dissatisfaction, and six indicated high dissatisfaction. In comparison, twenty men out of the forty that took the survey indicated that they were satisfied. Seventeen men indicated they that they experienced moderate dissatisfaction, and three indicated high dissatisfaction.

In summary, on the sexual dissatisfaction scale, equal numbers of men and women (twenty women and twenty men) were satisfied (below 50T). More men than women (seventeen men versus fourteen women) indicated moderate dissatisfaction (between 50T-60T), and more women than men (six women versus three men) were highly dissatisfied (above 60T).

A total number of forty people were satisfied. This number comprised of twenty women and twenty men.

A total number of forty people were dissatisfied. This number comprised of seventeen men and fourteen women with moderate dissatisfaction plus six women and three men with high dissatisfaction.

Table 4.7. Comparison of the Sexual Dissatisfaction Scores for the Women and Men

Scale SEX	Women			Men		
	Satisfied (<50T)	Moderately Dissatisfied (50-60T)	Highly Dissatisfied (>60T)	Satisfied (<50T)	Moderately Dissatisfied (50-60T)	Highly Dissatisfied (>60T)
	20	14	6	20	17	3

Role orientation scale

The Role Orientation scale (ROR) evaluates the extent to which the respondent professes a traditional versus nontraditional orientation toward marital and parental gender roles. Items are scored in the nontraditional direction, so that high scores on this scale reflect more egalitarian views (views that all humans have equal social and political rights). The scale is not a measure of current relationship distress; rather a measure of the potential for relationship conflict regarding marital or parental roles may be inferred by partners' differences on this scale. Three aspects of these role distinctions are division of household and child care responsibilities, equality of status and influence and equality of career opportunity and importance.

Low scores (below 50T) indicate a satisfaction with a highly traditional orientation toward marital and parental gender roles, emphasizing men's dominance in decision making and as primary wage earners. Men who obtain low ROR scores tend to

assume a lower proportion of housework or child-rearing responsibilities. Women who obtain low ROR scores tend to invest themselves more in their roles as wives and mothers at home. Moderate ROR scores (50T-60T; moderate dissatisfaction) reflect a greater flexibility in the couple's view of gender roles. Women with scores in this range are likely to espouse greater opportunities for women outside the home, although they may stop short of advocating role reversal men are more likely to share decisions with their wives, although they may assert final authority in important decisions. High ROR scores (above 60T; high dissatisfaction) indicate a less traditional view of marital and parental roles. Decision making is likely to be shared equally, as are house care and child-rearing responsibilities. Among respondents with high ROR scores, a woman's career gains status in comparison with her role as mother and may take preference over the maternal role. Men are likely to view their roles within the home as having equal priority to their own career opportunities.

Table 4.8 shows scores on the ROR scale where twenty-five women out of the forty who took the survey indicated that they were satisfied with the traditional views of gender within marriage and parenthood. Fourteen of them indicated moderate dissatisfaction with the traditional view of the role of wife and mother and would like to see more willingness from their husbands to share household chores and child-rearing responsibilities, as well as more flexibility to explore employment and business opportunities outside the home. Two women indicated high dissatisfaction with the traditional mind-set and yearned for change in their roles for themselves and their husbands. In comparison, fourteen men out of the forty indicated that they were satisfied with their wives taking more of the traditional orientation in household and child-rearing

responsibilities. Twenty-four indicated moderate dissatisfaction with the traditional orientation, desiring to see their wives with more opportunities to work outside the home and exhibiting a willingness to share housework and child-rearing responsibilities. Two indicated high dissatisfaction with the traditional view of gender within marriage and family.

In summary, on the ROR more women than men (twenty-five women versus fourteen men) were satisfied with their roles within the family (below 50T). More men than women (twenty-four men versus fourteen women) had moderate dissatisfaction (between 50T-60T) with traditional roles within the family, and equal number of women and men (two women versus two men) indicated high dissatisfaction (above 60T) with the traditional views of marriage and family.

A total number of thirty-eight people were satisfied. This number comprised of twenty-four women and fourteen men.

A total number of forty-two people were dissatisfied. This number comprised of twenty-four men and fourteen women with moderate dissatisfaction plus two men and two women with high dissatisfaction.

Table 4.8 Comparison of the Role Orientation Scores for Women and Men

Scale ROR	Women			Men		
	Satisfied (<50T)	Moderately Dissatisfied (50-60T)	Highly Dissatisfied (>60T)	Satisfied (<50T)	Moderately Dissatisfied (50-60T)	Highly Dissatisfied (>60T)
	24	14	2	14	24	2

Family History of Distress Scale

Family History of Distress scale (FAM) assesses the level of disruption of relationships within the respondent's family of origin. Its premise is that either unresolved conflicts evolving from the family of origin or an absence of adequate parental models may contribute significantly to distress in the current relationship.

Low scores in this scale (below 45T) reflect a history of satisfying relationships within the respondent's family of origin. Respondents from such families report a fairly happy childhood and positive feelings toward their siblings and parents. They also describe their parents' marriages as being relatively free from distress and the parents as being positive models for expression of affection and resolution of differences. Moderate scores on FAM (from 45T-55T) reflect significant tension in their families of origin and often describe conflicted relationships with their parents or siblings. The parents' marriage may have been characterized by difficulties in expressing affection or resolving differences. High scores on FAM (above 55T) indicate extensive conflict in the family of origin. Individuals who obtain high scores on this scale commonly describe alienation from parents, siblings, or both. Disrupted relationships among extended family members are also common.

Table 4.9 shows that of the scores on the FAM nine women out of the forty surveyed indicated that they were satisfied with the happy relationships they enjoyed with their parents, siblings, and members of the extended families in the their families of origin. Twenty women indicated moderate dissatisfaction with their families of origin due to significant tensions they experienced as they were growing up, and eleven indicated

high dissatisfaction due to extensive conflict experienced during their years with their families of origin. In comparison, six men out of the forty who took the survey indicated satisfaction with the happy relationships they had in their families of origin. Twenty-seven indicated moderate dissatisfaction with their families of origin due to significant tension experienced as they were growing up. Seven indicated high dissatisfaction with the extensive conflict they encountered in their families of origin.

In summary, on the FAM, more women than men (nine women versus six men) were satisfied (below 45T) with the apparent happy relationships in their families of origin more men than women (twenty-seven men versus twenty women) had moderate dissatisfaction (between 45T-55T) with their families of origin, and more women than men (eleven women seven men) had high dissatisfaction with their families of origin (above 55T).

A total number of fifteen people were satisfied. This number comprised of nine women and six men.

A total number of sixty-five people were dissatisfied. This number comprised of twenty women and twenty-seven men with moderate dissatisfaction, plus eleven women and seven men with high dissatisfaction.

Table 4.9. Comparison of the Family History of Distress Scores for Women and Men

Scale	Women			Men		
FAM	Satisfied (<50T)	Moderately Dissatisfied (50-60T)	Highly Dissatisfied (>60T)	Satisfied (<50T)	Moderately Dissatisfied (50-60T)	Highly Dissatisfied (>60T)
	9	20	11	6	27	7

Dissatisfaction with Children Scale

The dissatisfaction with children scale (DSC) assesses respondents' concerns regarding the emotional and behavioral adjustment of their children, the quality of the parent-child relationships and the negative impact of child rearing on the respondents' marriages.

Low scores on DSC reflect a generally satisfying relationship with children. Respondents with low scores describe themselves as being good parents and are likely to be viewed in the same way by their spouses. Children are viewed as a joy to the respondents and as a source of fulfillment. They are unlikely to present major behavioral challenges or symptoms of serious emotional distress. Moderate scores (from 50T-60T) on the DSC represent significant distress in their own relationships with their children. They may report disappointment with their children's behavior or dissatisfaction with the general demands of child rearing. Their children may be reported to exhibit emotional and behavioral problems. Distress in the couple's own relationship may be regarded as resulting in part from child-rearing difficulties. High DSC scores (above 60T) indicate severe levels of distress in respondents' relationships with their children. They regard themselves as ineffective parents and often experience a lack of intimacy with their children. Demands of child rearing are viewed as major stressors and are likely to contribute to stress in the couple's own relationship.

Table 4.10 shows that on the on DSC, thirteen women out of the forty who took the survey indicated that they were satisfied with their children. Fourteen of them indicated moderate dissatisfaction in the matter of relationships with their children, and

three indicated they were high dissatisfaction with their children. In comparison, eleven men out of the forty that took the survey were satisfied with their children. Fifteen of them indicated moderate dissatisfaction with them, and four indicated high dissatisfaction.

In summary, on the DSC, more women than men (thirteen women versus eleven men) were satisfied (below 50T) with their children. More men than women (fifteen men versus fourteen women) indicated moderate dissatisfaction (between 50T-60T) with their children, and more men than women (four men three women) indicated high dissatisfaction (above 60T).

A total number of twenty-four people were satisfied. This number comprised of thirteen women and eleven men.

A total number of thirty-six people were dissatisfied. This number comprised of fifteen men and fourteen women with moderate dissatisfaction, plus four men and three women with high dissatisfaction.

Table 4.10. Comparison of the Dissatisfaction with Children Scores for Women and Men

Scale DSC	Women			Men		
	Satisfied (<50T)	Moderately Dissatisfied (50-60T)	Highly Dissatisfied (>60T)	Satisfied (<50T)	Moderately Dissatisfied (50-60T)	Highly Dissatisfied (>60T)
	13	14	3	11	15	4

Conflict over Child Rearing Scale

The Conflict over Child-Rearing scale (CRR) evaluates the extent of conflict between spouses regarding child-rearing practices. In contrast to the DSC, the CCR emphasizes the spouses' own relationship in regard to children, rather than the parent-

child relationship. The scale covers content in three areas: the partner's failure to assume child-rearing responsibilities, relationship distress from child rearing, and partners' disagreement regarding their children's discipline, privileges, and responsibilities.

Low scores (below 50T) on the CCR (satisfaction) describe generally positive interactions of the respondents with their partners regarding their children. Both parents participate in child-rearing activities and in reaching decisions regarding discipline and their children's privileges and responsibilities. Moderate scores (from 50T-60T) on CCR (moderate dissatisfaction) indicate significant conflict between partners regarding the children. Conflicts around division of child care responsibilities are common. Partners may also experience significant disagreements regarding discipline and their children's privileges and responsibilities. High scores (above 60T) on CCR (high dissatisfaction) describe extensive conflict in the partners' interactions regarding children. Children are likely to be viewed as a major stressor in couples' relationships, and negative sentiment toward the partners' specific to child-rearing responsibilities, is likely.

Table 4.11 shows that on the CCR, seven women out of the forty who took the survey indicated that they were satisfied with minimal or no conflict between them and their husbands regarding child-rearing practices. Twenty of them indicated moderate dissatisfaction, and three indicated high dissatisfaction. In comparison, fourteen men indicated that they were satisfied with minimal or no conflict between them and their wives because of their children. Thirteen indicated moderate dissatisfaction, and three indicated high dissatisfaction.

In summary, on the conflict over child rearing scale, more men than women (fourteen men against seven women) were satisfied (below 50T). More women than men

(twenty women versus thirteen men) indicated moderate dissatisfaction (between 50T-60T), and an equal number of women and men (three women and three men) indicated high dissatisfaction (above 60T).

A total number of twenty-one people were satisfied. This number comprised of fourteen men and seven women.

A total number of thirty-nine people were dissatisfied. This number comprised of twenty women and thirteen men with moderate dissatisfaction, plus three women and three men with high dissatisfaction.

Table 4.11. Comparison of the Conflict over Child Rearing Scores for Women and Men

Scale GDS	Women			Men		
	Satisfied (<50T)	Moderately Dissatisfied (50-60T)	Highly Dissatisfied (>60T)	Satisfied (<50T)	Moderately Dissatisfied (50-60T)	Highly Dissatisfied (>60T)
	7	20	3	14	13	3

Responses to Research Question # 2

The second research question was answered through the scores generated from the MSI-R administered to the participants. These scores inform the Current premarital counseling practices in Kenya by pointing out some of the issues with which married couples in Kenya are grappling and showing the critical areas of married life on which premarital counseling practitioners should concentrate during the process of designing premarital counseling curricular, and in the actual premarital counseling sessions.

The following are the scores of the eleven Marital Satisfaction Inventory scales:

On the global distress scale, seven women and five men who took the survey obtained low scores indicating the following about their marriages:

- Their overall view of their marriages was satisfactory.
- They viewed their marriage partners as good friends.
- Their marriages were a source of gratification.
- They had strong commitment to their marriages.

In the survey thirty-three men and twenty-eight women recorded moderate scores on the GDS scale, indicating the following about their marriages:

- They reflected significant levels of relationship conflicts.
- They may report frequent arguments.
- They have difficulties resolving differences.
- They have an extended history of relationship conflict.
- They describe substantial disappointment in the in the relationship and have

serious doubts as to the future of the marriage.

In the survey, five women and five men obtained high scores on GDS, indicating the following for their marriages:

- Their marriages reflect extensive relationship dissatisfaction.
- They have conflicts with their partners of long duration and have generalized

across diverse areas of the couple's interactions.

- They have anger toward their partners.
- They may describe their partners as uncaring and overly critical.
- They have substantial disappointment in the relationships and have serious

doubts as to the future of the marriages.

On the affective communication scale, twenty-six women and seven men who took the survey had low scores indicating the following about the state of their marriages:

- They are happy and fulfilled and they would describe their partners as loving and supportive.
- They felt understood by their partners.
- They consider their partners as close friends and would not hesitate to confide in them.
- They share intimate and potentially conflicting feelings with ease.

In the survey eighteen men and eleven women recorded moderate scores, which would translate to moderate dissatisfaction expressed as the following:

- Their marriages had at least moderate distress regarding the amount of affection expressed by the spouses.
- They often felt emotionally distant from their spouses.
- They felt unappreciated and misunderstood.
- They had inner yearning for their partners to be more open with their feelings.
- They were reluctant to confide with their marriage partners.

In the survey five men and three women recorded high scores on the AFC scale indicating the following about their marriages:

- Their marriage partners are emotionally distant and uncaring.
- They would be reluctant to share intimate feelings or seek support from them.
- They feel unappreciated and misunderstood by their marriage partners.
- They have serious deficits in affection and emotional intimacy.
- They have immense difficulties in resolving differences.

- They experience general atmosphere of alienation and mistrust.

On the problem-solving communication scale, twenty women and nineteen men scored low on the scale, which indicates the following about their marriages:

- They have little overt disharmony with their spouses.
- The couples are committed to solving problems in their marriages and are effective in doing so.
- They describe their marriage partners as fair and receptive to compromise.

In the survey sixteen women and seventeen men obtain moderate scores on the PSC scale indicating the following in regard to their marriages:

- A protracted history of relationship difficulties characterized by frequent arguments.
- Poor handling of disagreements in their marriages so that the disagreements degenerate into major conflicts.
- Marriage partners perceive each other as being overly sensitive or critical.
- Marriage partners often accuse each other of taking hard-line positions and unresponsive to legitimate concerns or complaints

In the survey four women and four men obtained high scores on the PSC scale, indicating the following:

- They had an extensive history of unresolved relationship conflicts.
- They had frequent arguments between the spouses.
- They had a presence of unconstructive communication characterized by reciprocity of negative affect and failure to acknowledge each other's views.
- They had attribution of negative intentions to the partner's behavior.

- Each partner accused the other as being emotionally hurtful or abusive.
- They accused each other of being uncompromising and paint a bleak future to the relationship

On the aggression scale twenty-two men and nineteen women had low scores indicating they were satisfied about the absence of physical aggression or intimidation beyond occasional screaming or yelling from their marriage partners.

In the survey sixteen women and eleven men had moderate scores on the AGG scale indicating the following about their marriages:

- They had nonphysical intimidation as well as low levels of physical aggression, which include screaming or yelling, directing violence against an object, threats by the partner to hit or throw objects at the respondent, and grabbing or slapping the respondent.
 - They had infrequent occurrences of more severe levels of physical aggression such as violent kicking, hitting with a fist, throwing, beating, choking or forced sex or violent rape.
- In the survey, seven men and five women had high scores on the AGG scale, indicating the following about their marriages:
- They had high frequency of physical aggression such as pushing, grabbing, or slapping.
 - The respondent suffered frequent kicking and objects thrown at them by their partners with the intention to harm.
 - They were forced to engage in sexual relations.
 - The respondents may have experienced having been thrown violently.

- They experienced frequent physical beating or strangled by the partner.

On the time together scale, sixteen women and fourteen men had low scores indicating the following about their marriages:

- They perceive their partners as being good friends and fun to be with.
- They have feelings of being satisfied with the time they share together in leisure activities.
- They share a variety of common interests.
- They seek each other's company in a variety of activities both in and out of the home.

In the survey, nineteen men and seventeen women obtained moderate scores on the TTO scale indicating that they had moderate presence of dissatisfaction with the time, or no time at all, spent together in leisure activities and fun.

In the survey seven women and seven men recorded high scores on the TTO scale indicating the following:

- They had complaints extending beyond not just having sufficient time for shared leisure activities and fun, to include lack of common interests or common friends.
- They had feelings of emotional distance from their marriage partners.

On the disagreements about finances scale, nineteen men and fourteen women recorded low scores indicating the following:

- Finances constituted an area of relative agreement in the couples' relationship.
- Issues of finances are handled with all transparency and accountability.
- The couples were happy with the way they handled their finances.

In the survey eighteen women and thirteen men recorded moderate scores on the FIN scale indicating the following about their marriages:

- Disagreements about finances are a significant relationship concern for the couples.
- Arguments about money were common in their marriages.

In the survey eight women and eight men recorded high scores on the FIN scale meaning the following for their marriages:

- Finances were likely to represent a major source of relationship conflict in their marriages.
- Arguments in the money domain are intense in their marriages.

On sexual dissatisfaction scale, twenty women and twenty men recorded low scores indicating the following about their marriages:

- They were happy and satisfied with their sex lives.
- A generally positive attitude toward the overall quality of the couple's sexual relationship existed.
- Disagreements regarding the frequency or specific content of sexual behaviors were not issues of concern for these marriages.

In the survey seventeen men and fourteen women received moderate scores on the SEX scale indicating the following about their marriages:

- They had concerns regarding sexual relationship and its role as a significant source of relationship discontent.
- They had dissatisfaction with the frequency of both sexual relations and nonsexual expression of affection and intimacy.

➤ They had communication difficulties between the spouses about their sex lives.

In the survey, six women and three men recorded high scores on the SEX scale indicating the following about their marriages:

- They have extensive dissatisfaction with the sexual relationship and the frequency of sexual exchanges in their marriages.
- They are likely to describe their partners as uninterested or not caring about the sexual relationship.
- Their sexual encounters are described as unsatisfying.
- They are likely to describe partners as unaffectionate and emotionally distant.

On the role orientation scale, twenty-five women and fourteen men obtained low scores indicating the following about their marriages:

- Women will tend to invest themselves more in their roles as wives and mothers at home.
- Women's work outside the home will likely be viewed as a secondary occupation.
- Men will tend to assume a lower proportion of housework and child-rearing responsibilities.
- Men are likely to have dominance in decision making and be the primary wage earners.

In the survey twenty-four men and fourteen women obtained moderate scores on the ROR scale, which meant the following for their marriages:

- Men are likely to show greater flexibility and willingness to share housework and parenting responsibilities.

- Women are likely to espouse greater employment and business opportunities outside the home.

- Men are more likely to share decisions with their wives although still holding the final authority in more crucial decisions.

In the survey, two men and two women recorded high scores on the ROR scale indicating the following about their marriages:

- They are experiencing a departure from the traditional view of marital and parental roles.

- Decision making is likely to be shared more fully, as are housework and child-rearing responsibilities.

- The woman's career has gained greater status in comparison with her role as mother and wife.

- The men are likely to view their roles within the home as having equal priority to their own career opportunities.

On the family history of distress, nine women and six men recorded low scores, which meant the following for their marriages:

- They have a history of satisfying relationships within the respondent's families of origin.

- They had a fairly happy childhood and positive feelings toward their siblings and parents.

- They describe their parents' marriages as being relatively free from distress and the parents as being positive models for expression of affection and resolution of differences.

- They have a high probability that marriages among close relatives and extended families are relatively happy.

In the survey, twenty-seven men and twenty women recorded moderate scores on the FAM scale indicating the following for their marriages:

- They have significant tensions in their families of origin.
- They are likely to have had relationship conflicts with their parents and siblings.
- The parents' marriages are likely to have been characterized by difficulties in expressing affection or resolving differences.

In the survey, eleven women and seven men obtained high scores on the FAM scale indicating the following in their marriages:

- They have extensive conflicts in their families of origin.
- The respondents and their parents are likely alienated.
- They may also be alienated from their siblings.
- They may reflect disrupted relationships among extended family members.

On the dissatisfaction with children scale, thirteen women and eleven men obtained low scores, which indicated the following about their marriages:

- They generally have satisfying relationships with their children.
- They are likely to describe themselves as good parents and be viewed the same way by their spouses.

- They view children as a joy to them and a real source of fulfillment.
- Their children are not likely to present major behavioral management or symptoms of serious emotional distress.

In the survey, fifteen men and fourteen women recorded moderate scores on the DSC scale indicating the following about their marriages:

- They have significant distress in their relationships with their children.
- They are likely to report disappointment with the children's behavior or dissatisfaction with the general demands of child rearing.
- Children may be reported to exhibit emotional and behavioral problems.
- Distress in the couple's own relationship may be regarded as resulting, in part, from child-rearing difficulties.

The results of the survey indicated that four men and three women obtained high scores on the DSC scale indicating the following for their marriages:

- They have extensive levels of distress in their relationships with their children.
- They are likely to regard themselves as ineffective parents.
- They experience a sense of lack of intimacy with their children.
- Demands of child-rearing may be viewed as major stressors and likely to contribute to stress in the couple's own relationship.

On the conflict over child-rearing, the results of the survey indicated that fourteen men and seven women obtained low scores, which indicated the following for their marriages:

- They generally have positive interactions with their partners regarding their children.

➤ Both parents actively participated in child-rearing activities and in decisions regarding discipline, privileges, and responsibilities.

Results of the survey indicated that twenty women and thirteen men recorded moderate scores on the CCR scale, which meant the following for their marriages:

- They have significant conflicts between partners regarding the children.
- They have significant conflicts around division of child care responsibilities.
- They have significant disagreements regarding discipline and their children's privileges and responsibilities.

The results of the survey indicated that three women and three men recorded high scores on the CCR scale indicating the following about their marriages:

- They have extensive conflicts in the partners' interactions regarding children.
- Children are likely to be viewed as a major stressor in the couple's relationship.
- Negative sentiments could be voiced toward the partner specific to child-rearing responsibilities.

Responses to Research Question # 3

The third research question was answered by examining the data given by the couples who took the survey in response to the three questions of the researcher-designed open-ended questionnaire which sought information concerning premarital counseling practices in Kenya. The first question of the questionnaire sought to know whether or not the participants went through any form of premarital counseling as they prepared for marriage and, if so, what kind of counseling practitioner administered the counseling. All forty couples, without exception, responded that they had one form of premarital

counseling or the other, and the majority indicated that the pastor did the counseling. A very small number mentioned other people such as an elderly couple or an elder in the church.

The second question asked the participants to mention five important things they learned in the premarital counseling that have worked for them in their marriages.

The third question asked them to mention four things any counseling practitioner charged with the responsibility of premarital counseling should focus on during the counseling sessions for them to have successful marriages.

Most of the lessons the participants indicated as having learned during the premarital counseling sessions were the same things they listed as important practices for successful marriages and should be given due attention during premarital counseling sessions. Again, the responses both men and women gave to questions two and three were strikingly similar, and that the same things that they learned during premarital counseling were the same things that were important to them and that they recommended as part of the premarital counseling discussions. On this premise, therefore, all the items from questions two and three were listed and regrouped, putting together in one word or phrase things that were stated differently by different participants but having the same meaning. Examples were prayerfulness, trusting in God, dependence on God, putting God first, the fear of the Lord, all brought together under one title *active faith in God*. Other examples were trusting one another, faithfulness, and trustworthiness, which became *faithfulness*. Out of the regrouping and clustering together of words and phrases with close or same meaning that were mentioned at by least seven people, which was

close to 10 percent of the eighty people who took the survey, the following fifteen themes or subtitles were formed.

Communication topped the list of what participants thought were very important for successful marriage and should be thoroughly discussed during premarital counseling sessions. It was mentioned by sixty-three out of the eighty participants, or 78 percent.

Active Faith in God was mentioned in the survey by fifty-one participants, or 63 percent, as being very important for any successful and growing marriage and needed thorough discussions during premarital counseling sessions.

A growing love for one another was mentioned in the survey by forty-seven participants, or 59 percent, who endorsed the importance to have an ever-growing love for one another for success in marriage and should be discussed well during premarital counseling sessions.

Faithfulness to each other was mentioned by forty-five participants 56 percent as an important component for success in marriage and deserved attention during premarital counseling sessions.

Accountable handling of finances was mentioned in the survey by thirty-two participants 40 percent as an important component for successful marriage and needs thorough discussion during premarital counseling sessions.

Satisfying sex was mentioned in the survey by twenty-eight participants, 35 percent, as an important component for any successful marriage, deserving attention during the premarital counseling sessions.

Commitment to one's spouse and marriage was seen as a very important component to any successful marriage. It was mentioned by twenty-eight participants, 35 percent and was recommended to take high priority in premarital counseling sessions.

Conflict Resolution was mentioned by twenty-five participants, 31 percent, as an important component to ensure success in marriage and, therefore, should be given careful attention during premarital counseling sessions.

Respect for one's spouse was mentioned as an important component for a successful marriage by twenty participants, 25 percent, as needing careful attention during premarital counseling phase.

Wisdom in handling in-laws was viewed as an important component in ensuring a successful marriage. This item was mentioned by seventeen participants, representing 21 percent, and all agreed that it needed to be exhaustively discussed during premarital counseling sessions.

Conscious resolve to understand one's spouse was presented as an important component for any marriage to succeed. It was mentioned in the survey by seventeen participants, 21 percent, and highly recommended for thorough discussions during premarital counseling sessions.

Spending time together was seen as an important component of a successful marriage and was mentioned in the survey by sixteen participants, 20 percent. They all felt strongly that it needed thorough discussions during premarital counseling sessions.

Unity in raising happy children was seen as an excellent goal for happily married couples. The item was mentioned by fifteen participants, 19 percent, and all of them

agreed it was an important item that needed special attention during premarital counseling sessions.

Submission to one another was indicated as very important for any successful marriage relationship. It was mentioned by fifteen participants, 19 percent of all those who took the survey. They all agreed that it needed thorough discussion during premarital counseling sessions and more so because it is one of the most misunderstood concepts in marriage.

Roles and Responsibilities for the husband and the wife toward each other in marriage and in the family as a whole were indicated as important components for a happy marriage. They were mentioned by seven participants, 9 percent. They were also recommended for more in-depth discussions during the premarital sessions.

Summary of the Major Findings

The following list gives the major findings of this study:

1. The overall rating for the global distress of the couples was dissatisfaction.
2. The overall rating for the affective communication of the couples was satisfaction.
3. The overall rating for the problem solving of the couples was dissatisfaction.
4. The overall rating for aggression among the couples was satisfaction, characterized by peace and nonaggression for the most part of their marital life.
5. The overall rating for time together among the couples was serious dissatisfaction with both quality time and availability of their spouses for the same.
6. The overall rating for disagreements about finances among the couples was dissatisfaction.

7. The overall rating for the quality of sexual intimacy among the couples received equal rating for those satisfied and the dissatisfied.

8. The overall rating for the role orientation among couples was dissatisfaction with the traditional marital and parental roles of the spouses.

9. The overall rating of the couple's family history of distress was dissatisfaction with the issues of distress surrounding their families of origin.

10. The overall rating of the couple's relationships with their children was dissatisfaction.

11. The overall rating about how child-rearing stress affected their marriages was dissatisfaction.

12. As to how MSI-R scores informed the premarital counseling practices in Kenya, enough evidence exists pointing to substantial relational difficulties that should be addressed at the premarital counseling level.

13. Through the open-ended questionnaire, the couples mentioned and recommended the following fifteen items that they believed were important and needed to be incorporated in the premarital counseling programs in Kenya:

- Communication,
- Active faith in God,
- A growing love for one another,
- Faithfulness to each other,
- Accountable handling of finances,
- Satisfying sex,
- Commitment to one's spouse and marriage,

- Conflict resolution,
- Respect for one's spouse,
- Wisdom in handling in-laws,
- Conscious resolve to understand one's spouse,
- Spending time together,
- Unity in raising happy children,
- Submission to one another, and
- Roles and responsibilities.

This data reveal significant levels of dissatisfaction in Kenyan marriages, pointing to the importance of premarital counseling. Further, the data identifies particular areas that may be essential in preparing couples for marriage.

In Chapter 5, the implications of the study, its limitations, unexpected observations, application of the study in the Kenyan context and recommendations for further research, will be explored in greater detail.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This study was born out of a desire to find a biblically based, research-proven and culturally applicable premarital counseling practice for so many people in Kenya, especially young people, who envision marriage some day but would like to be adequately prepared for it before they are ready to say “I do.” A substantial number of them who have heard about this particular study are eager and looking forward to the findings and recommendations that will come out of it.

Major Findings

The following is a discussion of the main findings of this study. The areas to be covered include the implications of the study, its limitations, unexpected observations, application of the study in the Kenyan context and recommendations for further research.

Global Distress

One of the most striking discoveries made in this research was that most of the participants experienced a substantial degree of dissatisfaction in their marriages. The results of the survey on the global distress scale shows that seventy one participants out of the eighty that took the survey, expressed a global dissatisfaction with their marriages. The overall figure was inclusive of those who registered moderate dissatisfaction, and the few who registered high dissatisfaction where the total number comprised of thirty-eight men and thirty-three women. Only nine people indicated global satisfaction with their marriages.

According to Research Question # 2, which asked how the scores of the MSI-R informed the premarital counseling practices in Kenya, the results in Chapter 4 shows

that the overall picture of dissatisfaction in the global scale reflected many Kenyan marriages, whereby significant levels of relationship conflicts, frequent arguments, difficulties in resolving differences and a rather extended history of relationship conflicts exist. Further, for the few who registered high dissatisfaction, that reflects a small number of married couples in Kenya with extensive relationship dissatisfaction, conflicts with their partners of long duration and likely generalized across multiple areas of the couple's interaction, intense anger at their partners, describing their partners as uncaring and overly critical, substantial disappointment in their marriages, and serious doubts as to the future of their marriages.

Affective Communication

On the affective communication rating of the couples, the findings indicate that the overall rating across the couples was satisfaction. The number of respondents that indicated satisfaction with their affective communication was forty-three which comprised of twenty-six women and seventeen men. Those who were dissatisfied accounted for thirty-seven respondents. However, observation is made that the difference between the slim lead of those who indicated satisfaction on this scale and those who showed dissatisfaction was only a mere six respondents; therefore, the impact may not be significant. The import of this observation is that in Kenya marriages that are satisfied with their affective communication are as many as those dissatisfied with the same, and further work needs to be done on this area at the premarital counseling phase to improve the levels of affective communication in marriages.

The response to Research Question # 2 concerning how the scores of the MSI-R informed the premarital counseling practices in Kenya showed that respondents who

registered scores that reflected satisfaction were generally happy and fulfilled and would describe their spouses as loving and supportive as well as feeling understood by them. They also likely considered their spouses close friends and would not hesitate to confide in them. They felt the freedom to share intimate and, sometimes, potentially conflicting feelings with their spouses with ease.

However, the need for further work on the affective communication was corroborated by two complementary items to affective communication idea mentioned by the couples in response to the open-ended questionnaire. The first complementary item mentioned by sixty-three people, which was equivalent to 78 percent of the respondents, was communication who thought it was very important for successful marriage and should be discussed well during premarital counseling sessions. Conway and Conway, commenting on the importance of communication in marriage, say good communication means that each one has expressed his or her thoughts, feelings, and desires in a way that the other hears and understands. They insist that successful marriages are built and maintained by successful communication (61).

Wright agrees with these sentiments when he refers to communication as a process either verbal or nonverbal of sharing information with another in such a way that he or she understands what one is saying. He continues to say that talking and listening and understanding are all involved in the process of communication (*Communication* 52).

The second complementary item was growing love for one another, mentioned in the survey by forty seven respondents representing 59 percent of the total participants who agreed that for a successful marriage; an ever-growing love for one another is a must and should be discussed well during premarital counseling sessions.

Mace corroborates the importance of growing love in marriage in his discussion relating *phileo* and *agape* love in marriage. *Phileo* is characterized by emotions and feelings and therefore with great capacity to empathize while *agape* love is characterized by being totally unselfish and does not depend on feelings. When the two types of love are combined in marriage, they perfectly complete the love picture (*Getting Ready for Marriage* 67).

Problem-Solving Communication

On the problem-solving communication for the couples, the overall finding was that couples were dissatisfied in the way problems were solved in their marriages. Combined scores of moderate and high dissatisfaction were registered on this item by forty-one respondents, twenty one men and twenty women. These results however, exceeded over those respondents who registered satisfaction and accounted for thirty-nine respondents, twenty women and nineteen men, by only two people. The interpretation of these results is that although those who were dissatisfied with the problem solving in their marriages in Kenya were slightly more, a strong presence of those who are satisfied with their marriages exist on this same scale as well.

According to the responses to Research Question # 2 which asked how the scores of the MSI-R informed the premarital counseling practices in Kenya, keen observation shows that combined moderate and high dissatisfaction on the problem-solving scale reflected marriages in Kenya that are experiencing protracted histories of relationship difficulties, characterized by frequent arguments. In the event that these arguments are handled poorly, they have the potential to evolve into major conflicts. Again, among the few who were in the high dissatisfaction category, marriages were already experiencing

extensive unresolved relationships, non constructive communication, and explosive states of things where minor disagreements easily precipitate major conflicts. Respondents may already be describing their spouses as emotionally hurtful and abusive. Both spouses are likely viewing each other as uncompromising, and they may be having serious doubts about the future of their marriage.

Worthington sees conflict in marriage as both inevitable and necessary and because married couples cannot avoid conflicts, they should think more of how to resolve them constantly in the marriage (114). Gushee supports the fact that differences in opinion are unavoidable in marriage and adds that failure to resolve them promptly or give in too easily to avoid hurting the feelings of the other person, does not help either. Confronting the matter honestly and pursuing it until both spouses are happy with it, is the solution (115).

In response to the third question of the open-ended questionnaire in Chapter 4, when the respondents were asked to mention four things premarital counseling practitioners should remember to tell the couples preparing for marriage if they were to be successful, conflict resolution was mentioned by twenty-five people representing 31 percent of the total respondents as important for marriages to succeed in Kenya and should be given its due attention during premarital counseling.

Aggression

The overall rating of the couples on aggression in their marriages was satisfaction that was registered by forty-one respondents comprising of twenty-two men and nineteen women. Thirty-nine respondents, twenty-one women and eighteen men, registered dissatisfaction. Out of the thirty-nine who were dissatisfied, sixteen women and eleven

men indicated moderate dissatisfaction, and seven men and five women indicated high dissatisfaction.

Satisfaction on this scale indicated that just slightly over one-half of married couples in Kenya were satisfied with their marital environment where no scenes of violence and aggression from their marriage partners were experienced. However, observation is made that satisfaction was registered by forty-one respondents, as compared to thirty-nine respondents who indicated dissatisfaction with the level of aggression from their marriage partners. This result was an indication that close to one-half of married couples in Kenya experienced aggression from their marriage partners as well.

According to the responses given to Research Question # 2 on how the scores of the MSI-R informed premarital counseling practices in Kenya, satisfaction on the aggression scale reflected absence of physical aggression or intimidation by marriage partners beyond occasional screaming or yelling. This situation was true for slightly over one-half of the married couples in Kenya. For those who were dissatisfied with the level of aggression and intimidation by their partners, the same responses indicated that the respondents suffered from their marriage partners nonphysical intimidation as well as low levels of physical aggression, which included screaming, yelling, directing violence against an object, threats by the partner to hit or throw objects at the respondents, and grabbing or slapping them. Occasionally, the aggression is also more serious such as kicking or hitting the respondents with a fist, or throwing, beating, or forcing the respondents to engage in sexual relations against their will. High dissatisfaction, which was recorded by a small number of seven men and five women on the aggression scale,

reflected for a small number of married couples in Kenya with a high frequency of physical aggression including pushing, grabbing, or slapping. The assault may include frequent kicking, throwing objects at the respondent with the intention to harm. Forced sex is frequently experienced, as is being thrown violently, frequent physical beating, strangling, or being beaten to death.

Time Together With One's Spouse

The overall rating of the couples' time together in marriage was dissatisfaction. This indication was made by fifty of the respondents, representing twenty six men and twenty four women, 63 percent of the respondents. Among fifty respondents, nineteen men and seventeen women registered moderate dissatisfaction with their time together, while seven men and seven women registered high dissatisfaction with the same. These figures reflect that in Kenya 63 percent of people that are dissatisfied with the length and quality of time spent together with their spouses. Interestingly, the men were more dissatisfied in this regard than the women although with just a small margin of two people. Ordinarily, in Kenya the responses are reversed.

In Chapter 4, in answer to Research Question #2 on how the scores of the MSI-R informed the premarital counseling practices in Kenya, the results showed that moderate dissatisfaction on time together reflected a lack of sufficient time for shared leisure activities and fun and when considered in the light of lack of affectionate communication, it reflects feelings of isolation and alienation from the partner. High dissatisfaction on its part extends the situation beyond complaints of insufficient time for shared leisure activities and fun to include concerns regarding lack of common interests or friends and

feelings of emotional distance from the spouse. Absence of behavioral intimacy on this scale may be accompanied by deficits in emotional and sexual intimacy as well.

Drescher emphasizing the importance for spouses in marriage to spend time together asserts that if married partners want their marriages to be mature, caring and growing love relationships, they will need to invest time in them. They must commit themselves to spending time together each day and to giving time to each other to renew their sense of love and togetherness. He crowns this argument by stressing that, “a happy marriage cannot exist on the crumbs or leftover scraps of time” (83).

Disagreements over Finances

On disagreements over finances by the couples, the overall finding was dissatisfaction with the way finances were handled in their marriages. Forty-five respondents indicated dissatisfaction on this scale comprising of twenty-five men and twenty women. These results combined both those who had moderate dissatisfaction, and they formed the majority, and those who had high dissatisfaction. Not everyone was dissatisfied, though. Thirty-three respondents, nineteen men and fourteen women, were satisfied with financial handling in their marriages. What this dissatisfaction meant was that over one-half of marriages in Kenya are suffering relationship discord occasioned by the way finances are handled in their marriages.

Those with moderate dissatisfaction reflected that disagreements about finances were a significant relationship concern for couples while those with high dissatisfaction reflected that finances represented a major source of relationship conflict in their marriages. It also suggests that arguments about money domain are intense and common.

In response to third question of the open-ended questionnaire where the respondents were asked to mention four things that should be discussed in premarital counseling, responsible handling of finances was mentioned as one of the most important things for discussion during premarital counseling sessions and was mentioned by thirty two participants representing 40 percent of the respondents..

Making a point on the relationship between happiness in marriage and the practice of accountable management of finances in marriage, Liverpool stresses that marital satisfaction and harmony can be adversely ruined through financial dissatisfaction (59).

Gehman, sees the true source of the problem of money in marriage as *money madness* which according to him, is about greed and covetousness. Couples needs to learn that money was meant to be a means to an end and not the end in itself. God has provided money to assist the family and not to benefit one individual in the family (211).

Sexual Intimacy in Marriage

On sexual intimacy in marriage, the couples had equal numbers of those satisfied with their marital sexual intimacy and those who were not. Those who were satisfied included twenty men and twenty women. Those who reported moderate dissatisfaction numbered seventeen men and fourteen women, six women and three men reported high dissatisfaction. These figures show that the number of marriages in Kenya satisfied with their sexual lives is the same as the number of marriages dissatisfied with their sexual lives. Further, they show that satisfaction is shared equally between men and women. However, they show variance where seventeen men and fourteen women registered moderate dissatisfaction, and six women and three men registered high dissatisfaction.

In response to Research Question # 3 when respondents were asked on the open-ended question questionnaire to mention four things that should be discussed in premarital counseling, satisfying sex was mentioned by twenty-eight respondents, representing 35 percent.

According to the responses given to the Research Question # 2 on how the scores of the MSI-R informed premarital counseling practices in Kenya, the couples who indicated satisfaction in the sex scale generally were happy and satisfied with their sexual intimacy. General positive attitude existed toward the overall quality of the couple's sexual relationship. Disagreements regarding the frequency or specific content of sexual behaviors were not issues of concern in these marriages.

However, for the couples who registered dissatisfaction in their sexual intimacy, varying levels of sexual problems were most likely. Among those who registered moderate dissatisfaction, they indicated concern regarding the sexual relationship and its role as a significant source of relationship discontent. Such individuals expressed their dissatisfaction with not only the frequency of sexual relations but also nonsexual expression of affection and intimacy. Such scenario is also an indication signifying communication difficulties with their spouses about their sex lives. High dissatisfaction indicated extensive dissatisfaction with the sexual relationship and the frequency of sexual exchanges in their marriages. They are likely to describe their spouses as uninterested or not caring about the sexual relationship. They are likely to describe them as not being sexually satisfying, and emotionally distant. They also stated they no longer had feelings for their spouses.

The literature discusses the difference in marriage if the sexual lives of the married couples are fulfilled as well as when they are not. When married couples are sexually satisfied, the joy of their lives tends to spill out to all other areas of their lives. Rosenau insists that sexuality is a gift from God for married couples to enjoy and celebrate, not to deny and be ashamed of (22).

Donnelly on a study she conducted in 1993 interviewing 6,029 married people to determine the difference in marital satisfaction between those who had sex regularly and those who did not, reports that couples who had regular sex in their marriages showed a much higher degree of satisfaction than the married partners who did not.

Gardner says that sexual intimacy is one thing on the earth that joins two people, husband and wife into one (5). He continues to say that marital sex is beautiful, God ordained life of intimacy that blesses the couple far beyond the bedroom walls and serves as an act of worship (7). He crowns the discussion by making a very striking statement that, “data confirms if we grow in our understanding of sex as a God-given, holy event, we will also grow in our satisfaction with our mates and with our marriages” (5).

Role Orientation

On role orientation for the couples, the overall rating was dissatisfaction with traditional roles in marriage and family. Forty-two respondents comprising of twenty-six men and sixteen women registered their dissatisfaction on this scale. Out of this number, twenty-four men and fourteen women indicated moderate dissatisfaction, and two men and two women indicated high dissatisfaction on the same scale.

The overall rating of dissatisfaction on role orientation by forty-two participants, over 50 percent of the respondents on the scale, suggests that over 50 percent of Kenyan

marriages are dissatisfied with the traditional roles within marriage and family. The traditional orientation with which couples were dissatisfied emphasizes men's dominance in decision making and as the primary bread winners. Also in this mind-set, men tend to assume a lower proportion of house care and child-rearing responsibilities. Women, on their part in the traditional mind-set, tend to have an imbalance between their roles as wives and mothers at home and full-time employment and business enterprises outside the home, tending to lean more toward the former than the latter.

The majority of the respondents registered moderate dissatisfaction with the traditional orientation and would prefer a moderated middle path between the traditional orientation and the extreme departure from it, which is here described as high dissatisfaction. The moderated middle path reflects that in Kenya greater flexibility now exists with husbands and wives sharing traditional roles in house chores and child-rearing responsibilities. Women now more than in any other time in history engages in greater opportunities outside the home. Among the men, more willingness is evident than ever before to share decisions with their wives, although the husbands still have the authority for the final decision but, unlike before, with the input of their wives in mind.

High dissatisfaction, which is an extreme departure from the traditional role orientation, attracted only four respondents, two men and two women. This response is an indication that in Kenya, people have not yet abandoned the traditional views on role orientation in marriage and family. Moreover, women's careers have not yet gained status in comparison with their role as mothers, and may not take preference over their maternal role.

In response to Research Question # 3, seven people 9 percent of all the participants in the survey, mentioned roles and responsibilities as a key issue for premarital counseling and as an important component of a happy marriage.

Family History of Distress

The overall rating of the couples on their family history of distress was an extensive state of dissatisfaction with the levels of distress they experienced in their families of origin as they were growing up and the potential it has to influence their present marriages negatively. The results of the survey showed that dissatisfaction on the scale was indicated by sixty-five respondents, thirty-four men and thirty-one women. Out of this sample, twenty-seven men and twenty women recorded moderate dissatisfaction while seven men and eleven women recorded high dissatisfaction. These scores suggest that over 80 percent of married couples were not happy with the distress experienced in their families of origin as they were growing up, and they feared that their backgrounds might negatively impact their present marriages.

Given the high scores indicating dissatisfaction with the family histories of origin in response to the Research Question # 2 in the survey, premarital counselors should seek to understand couple's families of origin and the way these dynamics may influence how they function in relation to their own future spouses.

Dissatisfaction with Children

The overall rating of the couples' relationship with their own children was dissatisfaction. Dissatisfaction was indicated by thirty-six respondents in the survey, eighteen men and seventeen women representing 45 percent of the respondents. Of these, fifteen men and fourteen women indicated moderate dissatisfaction, and four men and

three women indicated high dissatisfaction. These results reflected a remarkable presence of dissatisfaction with children among marriages in Kenya.

The interpretation of these results implies that 45 percent of married couples in Kenya have significant distress in relationships with their own children. They may have reported disappointment with their children's behavior or the general demands of child rearing. One or more children may have emotional or behavioral problems, and the couple's own relationship may be strained by children-rearing difficulties.

A small number of respondents, four men and three women, recorded high dissatisfaction with their children, which suggests that a small number of the married couples in Kenya have greater levels of distress than usual in their relationships with their children. They may have regarded themselves as ineffective parents and often lack closeness to their children. The demands of child rearing may be viewed as major stressors and as likely to contribute to stress in the couple's own marital relationship.

In response to Research Question # 3, unity in raising happy children was seen as an excellent goal for happily married couples. The item was mentioned by fifteen participants out of the eighty who took the survey, representing 19 percent of the total participants. All of them agreed it was an important item that needed special attention during premarital counseling sessions.

The Bible does not only view children as the parents' special gift (Ps. 127:3), source of encouragement and inspiration (Prov. 31:28), protection and defense (Ps. 127:5), but also a tremendous responsibility on them. God instructs parents to teach their children the fear of God (Gen. 18:19; Ps. 78:5-7; Deut. 6:6-7; Prov. 22:6; Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21; 1 Tim. 3:4), provide for their needs (1 Tim. 5:8; 11 Cor. 12:14) and instill

discipline in them, but always, in love (Eph. 6:4; 1 Tim. 3:4; Deut. 4:9; Prov. 19:18; 22:15; 23:13).

Jack O. and Judith K. Balswick exhorts parents to adhere to the twin topics of cultivating positive self esteem in their children and loving them unconditionally as the keys for developing responsible and well-behaved children. They say the best way for self esteem to develop in children is to see it first modeled by the parents in their own relationship. Parents who have high self-esteem and who model a mutual consideration and cooperation in their marital relationship will establish a climate where self-esteem is nourished and developed in their children (141). They further say unconditional love should be shown not only in the parents' commitment to be responsible and faithful in their child-rearing tasks, but also in verbal and behavioral demonstrations of affection for their children. They continue to say the children will then begin to recognize that they are loved not only for what they do, but for who they are. This recognition gives a sense of security and increases the incentive to be cooperative and helpful family members (141).

Conflict over Child Rearing

The overall rating of the couples' conflict over child rearing was dissatisfaction. Dissatisfaction was indicated by thirty- nine respondents, equivalent to 49 percent, comprising of twenty-three women and sixteen men. Out of these, twenty women and thirteen men indicated moderate dissatisfaction with the level of conflict they had with their spouses over child-rearing. Three women and three men indicated high dissatisfaction with the same. These results reflected that close to one half of the married couples in Kenya experience significant conflict between spouses regarding their children.

According to the responses given to the Research Question # 2, the thirty-three participants who recorded moderate dissatisfaction experience were likely to have significant conflict between the spouses regarding their children, conflicts around division of childcare responsibilities are likely to be common. They may also experience significant disagreements regarding discipline and children's privileges and responsibilities. The six participants that recorded high dissatisfaction reflected a small population of married couples in Kenya who are highly dissatisfied with the conflict with their spouse over child rearing. High dissatisfaction is demonstrated through extensive conflict in the spouses' interactions regarding children. On the whole, children are likely to be viewed as major stressor in the couples' relationships and negative sentiments toward the spouses in connection to child rearing responsibilities are most likely.

Items Mentioned and Recommended by Couples for Premarital Counseling

In response to Research Question # 3, the fifteen items couples mentioned were communication, active faith in God, growing love for one another, faithfulness to each other, responsible handling of finances, satisfying sex, commitment to one's spouse and the marriage, conflict resolution, respect for one's spouse, wisdom in handling in-laws, conscious resolve to understand one's spouse, spending time together; unity in raising happy children, submission to one another, and roles and responsibilities.

Eight of the items, communication, growing love for one another, responsible handling of finances, satisfying sex, conflict resolution, spending time together, unity in raising children, and roles and responsibilities, overlapped with the thirteen items of the Marital Satisfaction Inventory, Revised, and so I included their discussion within the framework of the MSI-R. The other items are discussed in the following sections.

Active Faith in God

Active faith in God was mentioned in the survey by fifty-one participants representing 63 percent, as being very important for any successful and growing marriage. This observation means that in Kenya, many married couples believe that marriage is an institution whose origin is God, and therefore see him as the ultimate source of power and wisdom needed for satisfaction and success in marriage.

Faithfulness to One Another

Faithfulness to each other was mentioned by forty-five participants 56 percent, as an important component for success in marriage and as important for premarital counseling sessions. A lot is said in the Bible about faithfulness and warning against immorality, which has high potential to destroy marriage and bring terrible devastation to the people concerned. In his attempt to relate the biblical idea of “leaving, cleaving and becoming one flesh” (Gen. 2:24) to fidelity and faithfulness in marriage, William J. McRae says that “to cleave” in Hebrew means “to cling to,” “stick to,” or “to be glued to,” which clearly implies three truths that have largely been lost in secular society (51).

First, marriage is a monogamous relationship. The man is to cleave not to his *wives* but to his wife. This directive is against polygamy. A careful study of polygamous marriage reveals tragic consequences that often result from such unions. Marriage is a union of two and only two.

Second, marriage is an exclusive relationship. God says, “You shall not commit adultery” (Exod. 20:14); “Fornicators and adulterers God will judge” (Heb.13:4), “abstain from sexual immorality” (1 Thes. 4:3) Fidelity within marriage and chastity before marriage is the Christian directive for sexuality. Thirty-eight times in the Bible,

God forbids premarital or extramarital sex. People may wonder why God speaks in no uncertain terms against immorality. He means well for all his people (McRae 51). He adds that by forbidding sexual immorality God wanted to protect five areas of human lives:

1. He wants to protect human kind's physical health from diseases such as STDs, HIV, and AIDS.
2. He wants to protect humanity's mental and emotional health. The Bible exhorts about the need to maintain clean thought life, undefiled by immoral thoughts.
3. He wants to protect marriages.
4. He wants to protect human relationship with himself. Sexual immorality always leads to such guilt in one's heart that the first thing that goes is the person's communion with God.
5. He wants to protect society.

Commitment to One's Spouse and the Marriage

Commitment to one's spouse and marriage was seen as a very important component to any successful marriage. It was mentioned by twenty-eight participants, 35 percent, and was recommended to take high priority in premarital counseling sessions. This observation means that in Kenya a substantial population of married couples sees commitment to one's married partner and the marriage as an important anchor for stability, satisfaction, and success in marriage.

Respect for One Another

Respect for one another was mentioned as an important component for a successful marriage by twenty participants, 25 percent, who strongly believed it needed

careful attention during the premarital counseling phase. This indication was a fair representation of married couples in Kenya who see the importance of spouses respecting each other and as an important factor for satisfaction and success in marriage.

Wisdom in Handling In-Laws

Wisdom in handling in-laws was viewed as an important component in ensuring a successful marriage. It was mentioned by seventeen participants 21 percent, and all agreed that it needed to be exhaustively discussed during premarital counseling sessions. In Kenya many marriages, especially among nonbelievers, have been badly disrupted and at times forced to dissolve because of interference from in-laws and some malicious relatives who would rejoice to see the failure of the targeted marriages. In most of the cases where in-laws interfere with the marriages of their sons or daughters-in-law, the situation involved an insufficient dowry, or maybe none at all, is paid for their daughter by the son-in-law and his family and hence the agitation to force the husband's family to pay. Sometimes things can be taken too far, to a point of taking their daughter back to her family where she would stay until the dowry is paid in full or they have evidence of commitment and a schedule to pay the dowry. This experience is dreaded by many young married couples or those looking forward to marriage and the reason why the couples who took the survey were concerned that in-laws should be handled with care and wisdom because they can cause havoc in the marriage if not handled well.

Conscious Resolve to Understand One's Spouse

Conscious resolve to understand one's spouse presented as an important component for any marriage to succeed. Seventeen participants, 21 percent, recommended it for thorough discussions in premarital counseling sessions. These figures

indicated that awareness exists in Kenya that marriages are relationship ventures, and for individuals to relate well and have their marriages succeed, spouses must commit themselves to understanding one another.

Submission to One Another

Submission to one another was indicated as very important for any successful marriage relationship. It was mentioned by fifteen participants, 19 percent, of all those who took the survey. They all agreed that it needed thorough discussion during premarital counseling sessions because it was one of the most misunderstood concepts in marriage. The figures indicated that a fair number of married couples in Kenya know and appreciate not only the biblical teaching for husbands to love their wives and wives to submit to their husbands but also for both of them to submit to one another (Eph. 5:21-33).

Limitations of the Study

This study had a number of limiting factors, which may have hindered it from achieving the best of results. These factors included a relatively small sample of the population, participants coming only from the church, the study being conducted only with urban people, and participants' honesty toward topics generally considered taboo, and the MSI-R instrument used.

Small Sample

All the data used in this study was drawn from a small sample of forty couples who participated in the survey, a number that may be too small to represent the diverse opinions of thousands of married couples in Kenya. Perhaps if the sample had been

wider, a larger range of opinions would have been caught to influence the results differently from these given.

The Participants Only from the Church

This study was conducted with participants from church who confessed Christ as Savior and Lord of their lives and who hopefully ordered their lives, marriages, and families in accordance to the instructions of the living Word of God. As committed believers, they would also be expected to have yielded their lives to the empowering and guidance of the Holy Spirit so that the way they live their daily lives as individuals and as couples reflected the Spirit-filled lives and the manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit, which is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22-23). One wonders what kind of responses would have come from people outside the church such as non-believers or people of other faiths and how their responses would have influenced the ultimate results of the study. I believe the study is missing the perspective of such people outside the church who would have presented things from their different stand points.

The Study's Concentration in the Urban

The study concentrated only on the people in the urban area of Nairobi and only reflects the opinions and sentiments of the urban dwellers, not the rural people who may see things from a very different perspective over a variety of things. For example, husbands in rural Kenya would express their love and affection for their wives differently than urban husbands. In a rural area, a husband would be considered very affectionate and loving if he brought her a kilogram of meat, a nice dress, or a pair of new shoes, whereas a bouquet of red roses would be appreciated more by the urban women.

Some Participants' Honesty with Topics Generally Considered Taboo

Although most of the participants would be comfortable discussing and expressing their opinions on any topic in the world, but for a small segment of the participating population, I doubted whether they would really open up and share their real feelings concerning matters in the survey that were generally considered a taboo to talk about among many communities in Africa, especially in public, even when they were only writing them down rather than openly discussing them. Such matters would include sexuality in general and sexual intimacy in particular, touching on such topics as foreplay, orgasm, or how the clitoris could be worked to give a wife real pleasure during sex.

The Instrument Used

The main instrument used in this study was the Marital Satisfaction Inventory Revised which, as far as I know, was being used for the very first time in this part of the world. Although it utilized fifth grade level American English, the English was still different and, for some, more difficult than the English generally spoken in Kenya, which leans more toward British English. Some of the terminologies were unfamiliar to some people, or used differently from British English usage. As a result very high probability exist that some people may have misunderstood some questions and gave answers that they would otherwise not have given if they had the correct understanding of the question.

Unexpected Observations

The following unexpected observations were made as the study progressed.

First, among all forty couples that took the survey no husband and wife together expressed full satisfaction with their marriage on all the scales of the Marital Satisfaction Inventory, Revised.

The second unexpected observation was that sexual intimacy received equal rating between those who were satisfied and those who were dissatisfied. One would think that because of the kind of publicity and advertising sex receives in the media, it would be highly ranked in a survey such as the MSI-R with more clear-cut results than this study indicated.

The third unexpected observation was that couples were satisfied with the affective communication scale, but dissatisfied with the time together and sex scales. I thought time together would influence affective communication and the quality of their sex, decreasing or increasing satisfaction depending on the amount and quality of time together.

The fourth unexpected observation was that couples registered dissatisfaction with children, given the deep, sacrificial love most Africans have for their children.

Recommendations

For marriages to succeed in Kenya and enjoy maximum satisfaction, everyone intending to get married should complete premarital counseling. The premarital counseling programs themselves should have the following built-in elements, to ensure success in every area of marriage.

1. *Affective communication*—Prospective couples should be trained in how to give and receive affective communication, so that spouses would not suffer dissatisfaction due to lack of affection and understanding from their spouses. This kind of dissatisfaction has the potential to lead to a variety of complications and, ultimately to the death of marriages.

2. *Problem-solving communication*—Those preparing to get married should be equipped with the skills to solve problems that arise in marriage. Such skills prevent overt discord in relationships that disrupts overall peace and enjoyment of marriage.

3. *Aggression-free marriages*—Prospective couples should be equipped with the relevant knowledge of the consequences of aggression, violence, and intimidation in marriage. They should also be made aware of their rights and practical things to do should a spouse become abusive, making marriage intolerable.

4. *Time together*—Prospective couples should learn the importance of spending time with their spouses and the rich dividends that they are bound to reap in their marriages if spending time together is practiced and sustained all their lives.

5. *Accountable handling of finances*—Prospective couples should learn how to handle their finances responsibly so that their money will serve them well and be a blessing rather than being a source of conflict.

6. *Sexual satisfaction and enjoyment*—Prospective couples should be equipped with the knowledge and skills that will enable them to satisfy each other sexually in marriage.

7. *Proper role orientation*—Prospective couples should be aware of the responsibilities involved in marriage and parenting, and the need for spouses to

participate adequately in and share these responsibilities, preventing a feeling of one spouse being overburdened, which can put a strain on the marriage.

8. *Family history of distress*—Prospective couples should be assisted in learning and relating how their family history of distress can affect their own marriage relationship and what to do to avoid repeating the same.

9. *Healthy relationships with children*—Prospective couples should be able to learn the dynamics of child-parent relationships, and how to maintain healthy relationships with them.

10. *Stress-free parenthood*—Prospective couples should be equipped with skills of healthy parenting so that stress occasioned by parenthood does not impact negatively on their own marriage.

11. *Faith in God*—For those who are Christians, discussions of the place and role of God in the origin of marriage and its workings in the present should be natural. For clients who are not Christians, counselors should use their discretion on whether to share faith-related matters or not and, if so, how much.

12. *Faithfulness*—Prospective couples should learn the consequences of unfaithfulness and the need always to be faithful to one another for a happy marriage.

13. *Commitment to one's spouse and the marriage*—Prospective couples should be made to understand that nothing in this world succeeds without commitment, and marriage, above all else, requires commitment of a higher degree by both spouses.

14. *Respect for one another*—Prospective couples should learn the importance of respecting one another as a basic requirement for success in any human relationship and marriage taking its top position as one of the most important human relationships.

15. *Wisdom in handling in-laws*—Prospective couples should learn the biblical mandate to respect and honor parents/parents-in-law, but, parents-in-law and all the relatives should also learn that their children over eighteen years of age have rights that should be respected and safeguarded.

16. *Conscious resolve to understand one's spouse*—Prospective couples should learn the need to learn their spouses intentionally and to understand their likes and dislikes, so that they are able to treat them with understanding and sensitivity.

17. *Submission to one another*—Prospective couples will need to learn the biblical command for spouses to submit to each other in the fear of Christ (Eph. 5:21).

Suggestions for Further Study

As this study progressed, two specific issues that require further investigation emerged. The first one is the need to conduct another study that would have a broader sample, which would not concentrate only in the urban areas but would also stretch out to the rural areas, and one that would not just be for Christians but would also include nonbelievers and people of other faiths.

Secondly, this study was conducted in retrospect, meaning that couples were asked to remember their premarital counseling experience, which for some happened many years ago and some details may have faded away, and apply it to their present marriage relationships rather than working with them on a present premarital counseling experience. So the suggestion is that another study be conducted rather than working in retrospect, conduct one with a present premarital counseling perspective. For example, conducting premarital counseling with a number of couples and following them up

closely for a reasonable period of time to observe the implementation of the skills learned during the counseling sessions.

Postscript

As I come to the close of this study, the question on how it will be implemented in Kenya still lingers in my mind. At least three possibilities for implementation will be open for me as a way forward. One way will be to write a premarital counseling manual, drawing from this study, for use by the premarital counseling practitioners in counseling those preparing for marriage. The second one could be to write premarital counseling books, using the findings of this study, for reading by couples preparing for marriage and practitioners in premarital counseling. The third possibility could be to write a premarital counseling trainer's manual out of the findings of this study for my own use as I train pastors, counselors, and others in premarital counseling. At some point also, I may be able to implement all three possibilities in piece meal mode, depending on the availability of time and resources to do so.

APPENDIX A

Open-Ended Questionnaire

Number-----

Gender-----

Before you answer the questions on the MSI-R, please answer the following questions as truthfully as you can.

1. As you prepared to get married, did you have any form of Premarital Counseling? **YES--- NO----** **If yes**, who did it with you? (Please tick at the appropriate place)(**A**) A Pastor--- (**B**) A Professional Counselor----(**C**) An elder in the church----(**D**) A couple in the church----(**E**) Other---(Please explain)-----

2. During your premarital counseling sessions with this person(s), please mention 5 important things you learned that make a successful marriage.

I. -----

II. -----

III. -----

IV. -----

V. -----

3. Please mention 4 things any person (pastor, professional counselor etc) charged with the responsibility of counseling those soon to be married must be sure to tell them if they were to be successful in marriage.

I. -----

II. -----

III. -----

IV. -----

APPENDIX B

List of Things Couples Learned during Premarital Counseling

Things Women learned during Premarital Counseling Sessions	Things Men learned during Premarital Counseling Sessions
Communication	Respect for one another
Trust in each other	Fear of the Lord
Being faithful to God	Help one another
Learning each never stops	Share love
Wife should submit and husband love	Listen to one another
Honesty	Faithfulness
Understanding each other	Handling finances together
Loving each other	Growing love
Reasoning you differences together	Handling relatives
Learning to say “sorry”	How to raise godly children
Communication	Faithfulness
Fulfilling sex	Praying together
Companionship	Solving situations together
Respect	Run to the Lord with every situation
Understanding	Communication
Communication	Openness
Fulfilling sex	Friendship
Love for one another	Hold financial discussions
Handling finances well	Honesty
Faithfulness	Love
Communication	Forgiveness
Mutual sexual satisfaction	Trustworthiness
Submission	Praying together
Handling in-laws with wisdom	Budgeting together
Good communication	Enjoyable sexual life
Bringing up godly children	Challenges of money
Sexual fulfillment	Handling in-laws and friends
Handling finances	Faithfulness
To each other	Respect
Submission to one another	Obedience
Respect	Inviting God in your marriage
Put God first	Respect
Pray together as a family	Honesty
Reading God’s word together	Faithfulness
Praying together	Sharing life together
Honoring each other	Handling finances with wisdom
Respecting our bodies	Sexuality
Appreciating one another	Faithfulness
Having Christ at the center of your life and marriage	Communication
Make decisions together	Love for one another
Patience with each other	Faith in God

Things Women learned during Premarital Counseling Sessions	Things Men learned during Premarital Counseling Sessions
Get time for just the two of you alone	Parenting with grace
We can have the marriage we want	Faithfulness
Good communication	Understanding each other
Husband to love genuinely	Forgiveness
Striving for a God fearing family	Communication
Submitting to each other	Openness
Openly addressing issues	Communication
Trusting God always	Understanding your partner
Praying together as a family	Appreciating your partner
Faithfulness	Loving your partner
Forgiveness	Commitment to your partner
Love	Selflessness
Submissiveness	Praying together
Being tolerant	Forgiveness
Being transparent	Discussing issues together
Being there for one another	Trusting each other
Marriage is a give and take venture	Dependence on God
Good communication	Being friends with your mate
Patience and tolerance	Faithfulness
Faithfulness and loving unconditionally	Honesty
Understanding each other	Transparency and openness
Forgiving each other	Forgiveness
Communication	Sexual satisfaction
Praying together	Respect for one another
Consulting each always	Good communication
Listening each other	Relating well with your in-laws
Good communication	Bringing up children
Living a transparent life	Being open with finances
Submission to one another	Sex preparation
Learn perseverance	Communication
Respect for each other	Financial issues
Planning together	How to handle in-laws
Obedience	How to bring up children
Communication	Fellowship with Christ in marriage
Sharing burdens	God's purpose for marriage
Fulfilling sex	Roles and responsibilities
Solving problems	Solving conflicts
Faithfulness	Handling finances
Love for one another	The Christian home
To be prayerful	Financial accountability
Respect for parents	Dealing with in-laws
Forgive one another	Conflict resolution
Marriage is about trust	Relationship with children
Respect for each other	Handling friendships

Things Women learned during Premarital Counseling Sessions	Things Men learned during Premarital Counseling Sessions
Praying together	Love is a choice
Working out things together	Submission is crucial
Being faithful	Faithfulness
Open handling of finances	Honesty
Communication	Communication
Keeping good relations with in-laws	Love for your wife
Being a prayerful woman	Wives should submit
Fulfilling sex	Our relationship should center on God
Openness with one another	Communication
Trust	Handling in-laws with wisdom
Understanding each other	Love for one another
Caring for one another	Understanding one another
God should be first in your marriage	Respect for one another
Open communication in your marriage	Obedience
Respect for one another	Faithfulness
Fulfilling sex	Praying together
We should submit to one another	Enjoying sex for satisfaction
Marriage is from God	Communication
Good communication	Love
Fulfilling sex	Trust
Learning God's word	Love
Love for your husband	Emotional support
Communication	Respect
Be a peace maker	Roles/duties for each partner
Serve your mate	Forgiveness
Trust	Understanding
Honesty	Accepting each other's weaknesses
Commitment	Praying together
Prayer	Openness
Communication	Good communication
Commitment	Faithfulness
Respect for each other	Working hard to support your marriage
	Depending on God

APPENDIX C

List of things men and women recommended for Premarital Counseling Sessions

Things Women Recommended for Premarital Counseling	Things Men Recommended for Premarital Counseling
Trusting one another	Emphasize the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom
Roles and responsibilities in marriage	Love one another
Conflict resolution	Take responsibility for your mate
Financial management	Protect your mate
Communication	Have faith in God
Satisfying sex	Take care of parents
Creating time to be together alone	Develop careers and character
Learning to say “sorry when you wrong”	Problems will always show up in marriage
Insist on Gen.2:24	Be faithful to your mate
Love	Respect each other
Sex	Develop a fulfilling sex
Communication	Develop transparency in handling finances
Solving problems	Handling in-laws with wisdom
Mutual sexual satisfaction	Love one another
Submission	Communicate with your mate
Faithfulness	Obedience
Transparency	Forgiveness
Communication	Faithfulness
Handling in-laws with wisdom	Handle finances well
Good communication	Honesty is important
Spending time with your mate	Learn to forgive
Love for one another	Faithfulness
Respect for one another	Hygiene
Importance of marriage	Fulfilling sex
Parenting	Communication
Relationship with in-laws	Financial management
Companionship	Respect for your mate
Marriage is a give and take venture	How to handle in in-laws
Marriage may not always make you happy	Honesty
Avoid sex before marriage	Fear of the Lord

Things Women Recommended for Premarital Counseling	Things Men Recommended for Premarital Counseling
Respect one another	Communication
Importance of marriage	Handling finances
Parenting	Sexuality
Relationship with in-laws	Love for your mate
Companionship	Faithfulness
Marriage is a give and take venture	Forgiveness
Marriage may not always make you happy	Listening in to one another
Avoid sex before marriage	Communication in marriage
Respect one another	Raising a Christian family
To always be faithful to your mate	Handling conflicts in marriage
Consulting over everything in your marriage	Handling finances
Seek God first in your marriage	How to deal with sexual dysfunction
Learn tolerance	Communication with your mate
Fulfilling sex	Understanding your mate
Communication	Loving your mate
How to bring up children	Forgiveness
To be sure you have made the right choice of a mate	Compromising
Handling finances	Listening to each other
Forgiveness	Praying together
Prayerfulness	Handling finances
Financial support for in-laws	Faithfulness
True love	Handling in-laws
Commitment	Be friends with your mate
Learn to understand your mate	Communication
Being there for each other	Good communication
Trust	Sex
Respect for your mate	Dealing with early pregnancy
Respect for your mate	Conflict resolution
Communication	Forgiveness
Humility	Raising good children
God should come first in your marriage	Sexual satisfaction
Communication	Solving conflicts
Learn to appreciate your differences	Love your partner
Cultivate joy in your marriage	Faithfulness

Things Women Recommended for Premarital Counseling	Things Men Recommended for Premarital Counseling
Love each other unconditionally	Submission
Fulfilling each other sexually	Pray together
Communication	Give room for further studies and career development
Commitment	Family planning
Marry your best friend	Investments
Divorce is not in the plan of God	Past relationships
Marriage is God's plan	Communication
Learn to be faithful to your mate	Financial management
Practice forgiveness	Place of God in marriage
Learn to be patient with your mate	Unity in marriage
Love as Christ loved the church	Christina living in the home
Respect for one another	Loving unconditionally
Be trustworthy	Helping each other
Submission to one another	Mindful of each other
You will be each other's keeper	Trust
Praying about everything	Wisdom in handling members of the extended family
Handling relatives and in-laws	Maintaining integrity
Conflict resolution	Seek God's guidance
Openness	Husbands and wives are made differently
Prayerfulness	Learn to forgive
Having times alone to talk	Children are gifts from the Lord
Plan to have outings just the two of you	Accept correction from your mate
Revisit the reasons why marriage was created	Transparency in financial matters
Satisfying sex	Contentment with what you have
Love one another	Handling conflicts
Accept your partner's weaknesses	Purpose for marriage
Openness to your partner	Duties and responsibilities
Faithfulness	Respect the privacy of your mate
Honesty	Communication
Patience	Investments
Keep growing spiritually, emotionally, mentally and professionally.	Honesty
Sex	Respect for parents

Things Women Recommended for Premarital Counseling	Things Men Recommended for Premarital Counseling
How to live with your in-laws	
Devotions for just the two of you	
Handling finances	
Preparing for old age	
Love for God	
Love for one another	
Submission	
Finances	
Praying together	
To be open to one another	

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