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DEVELOPING A MARRIAGE MENTORING TRAINING
PROGRAM AT INTER-CITY BAPTIST CHURCH IN
ALLEN PARK, MICHIGAN

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DEVELOPING A MARRIAGE MENTORING TRAINING
PROGRAM AT INTER-CITY BAPTIST CHURCH IN
ALLEN PARK, MICHIGAN

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I dedicate this project to my wife, Carrie Conn, who through many years of my formal education has patiently loved, supported, and encouraged me to study and excel in the ministry of the Word. You are a precious treasure to me and truly a gift from the Lord.

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PREFACE

First, I am very thankful to the Lord for the opportunity to participate in the ministry of Inter-City Baptist Church by developing this project regarding the training of marriage mentors.

Second, I would like to thank my wife, Carrie, for her prayers, patience, and understanding during my classwork and project. Her love and understanding have been the encouragement that I desperately needed during times of frustration and struggle. Our children (Justin, Daniel, Andrew, and Lauren) have followed their mother's example of love and patience. I truly am blessed to call them my family.

Third, I would like to thank my pastor, Dr. David M. Doran, for the opportunity to work on this degree and write this project. I thank the Lord for his ministry in my life. He has discipled me and shown me sacrificial love for over thirty years.

Last, I would like to thank my professors from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Specifically, I am thankful to my doctoral supervisor, Dr. Jeremy Pierre, for patience and guidance through this project. May the Lord grant him grace and many years of ministry at SBTS.

Jeremy Earl Conn

Allen Park, Michigan

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Inter-City Baptist Church exists to honor God by making and maturing disciples who are together becoming like the Lord Jesus Christ. This philosophy divides into several sections. First, God’s glory guides the aim and purpose for any aspect of ministry endeavor (1 Cor 10:31). Second, the actions of making and maturing disciples govern the programs and fuel the mission of Inter-City Baptist Church. A critical part of this philosophy is seeing families impacted with the gospel so that they can progressively grow to maturity. A marriage mentoring program would glorify God by helping the church fulfill an important part of this philosophy. Third, the attribute of Christlikeness motivates these ministries as they seek to “grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ” (Eph 4:15). Therefore, implementing a marriage mentoring program will glorify God by strengthening marriages and families as they grow together into Christ.

Context

Inter-City Baptist Church (ICBC) in Allen Park, Michigan, officially began in July of 1950 as a merger of First Baptist Church of Melvindale, Michigan, and Allen Park Baptist Church, Michigan. The congregation's first pastor served a forty-year tenure (1949–1989), and the church's second pastor has ministered for nearly thirty years. God has blessed the ministry of ICBC in abundant ways. Because of the long history of ministry and the stability of leadership, the people of ICBC have impacted many lives for the glory of God. The discipleship mandate of reaching the lost for Christ has led to the conversion and discipleship of thousands in the downriver Detroit community, and the

support of many global missionary church planters. Also, faithful ministers at ICBC seek to mature disciples through faithful ministry to see the great commission accomplished in this area.

Inter-City intentionally promotes discipleship in four strategic areas: edification, fellowship, worship, and evangelism. These commitments are delineated in Acts 2:41–47 and Matthew 28:19–20. Inter-City commits to edification through the teaching ministries of the church. The primary sources of teaching/edification are the Adult/Student Bible Fellowships and Sunday services which are held in the morning and evening. Fellowship at ICBC means building spiritual relationships that display Christ’s love that helps the church grow toward godliness. The church body obligates itself to meet the needs of each person to serve the Lord by helping them grow and mutually encourage one another to persevere (Heb 3:12–13). Worship enables discipleship in the weekly gathering of God’s people in God’s presence to exalt Him through prayer, praise, presentation of ourselves and our gifts, participation in the ordinances, and the proclamation of His word (Acts 2:41–47). Last, evangelism focuses on Jesus’ mandate to “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations” (Matt 28:19).¹ ICBC focuses on evangelism by boldly proclaiming the gospel while living like we truly believe it. This evangelistic commitment seeks to build redemptive relationships, invite the unsaved to the fellowship of believers, and to give a clear verbal witness.

In the ministry context of ICBC, approximately 20 to 30 percent of the congregation consists of teens, young adults, and young married couples. With such a substantial number of people in the congregation heading toward possible marriage or already newly married, the discipleship role of the church to prepare for a healthy marriage is vital. Currently several avenues minister to this cross section of the church towards marriage preparation and strengthening. First, pre-marriage counseling is

¹ All Scripture references are taken from the New American Standard Bible (NASB) unless otherwise noted.

available to those preparing for marriage, and this task is typically accomplished by the pastor, who performs the marriage ceremony. Second, age and situation-based Adult Bible Fellowships (ABF) provide edification and fellowship to young adults and young married couples. Third, fellowship groups called “dinner for six” enable older and middle-aged couples to minister to young adults and young marrieds in a casual dinner setting several times a year. Last, counseling ministries help disciple young couples who struggle with specific issues of marriage and family.

Although the marriages at ICBC have evidenced stability for several decades, challenges often surface for maintaining long-term discipleship and growth in marriages in a well-established ministry. One opportunity for improvement in our church is in the mentoring of newly married couples. A main reason for this program is that marriage breakdown in the church body has increased. In the past several years, there has been a rise in the frequency of church discipline because of infidelity and divorce. A growing need exists for new and struggling marriages to be taught how to honor God in their marriage and persevere through the difficulties that marriage brings.

No ministry currently exists at ICBC that intentionally pairs newer married couples with a mature and well-established couple with the tools to help. Although the current discipleship arms help couples, they are often insufficient for couples during the problems that they encounter early in marriage. When the new couple struggles with the myriad of challenges they will face, they need to know that there are couples at ICBC that could help them through those issues. In addition, there are no standard follow-up sessions with younger couples excluding the needs that would require voluntary or mandatory pastoral counseling.

Rationale

Despite ICBC’s adherence to a God-centered philosophy, and belief in the inspiration, inerrancy, and sufficiency of the Scripture, couples at ICBC often approach marriage from an ungodly perspective. This perspective weakens the marriage bond and

makes them resistant to biblical teaching that calls for loving self-sacrifice. Many marriages struggle deeply in anonymity, some of which end in divorce as a result. This of course is detrimental to the testimony of Christ as individual couples and as a church body.

Inter-City Baptist Church is dedicated to fulfilling the discipleship mandate of making and maturing disciples, but currently lacks a focused framework for discipling new marriages. Therefore, this project will seek to strengthen ICBC's discipleship by addressing three existing needs for mentoring young marriages. The first need will seek to confirm a biblical foundation for marriage at ICBC. The current culture has an incredible influence on how marriage is defined and on what counts as reasonable expectations in marriage. Couples need to understand that the Bible should set the framework for marriage and that the Bible is sufficient to address the needs of a marriage for the long-term. Genesis 2:18–25 will set the foundation for all marriages because in the passage God explains the need and nature of all human marriage. Also, couples need to be taught the importance and implications of the Spirit's control in the first years of marriage. Ephesians 5:21–33 will help young couples understand the foundation for developing solid marriages and assist marriage mentors in discipling new couples in a Spirit-controlled framework.

A second issue to be addressed is the growing need of adequate resources to assist in developing a strong biblically based curriculum to help train mentors at ICBC. Many resources exist to help equip marriage mentors, but they lack a theological coherency in their approach.² Many curricula focus on the practical side of mentoring and add Scripture as needed. This project will focus on the biblically motivated reasons for

² Many of the current resources that define and describe marriage mentoring either lack in theological analysis or present no analysis. These resources are helpful for what they offer but present a definite need for a biblically rich resource. The most notable mentoring resource is from Les Parrott and Leslie Parrott. See Les Parrott and Leslie Parrott, *The Complete Guide to Marriage Mentoring* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005). For a resource with little biblical analysis, see Michael J. McManus, *Marriage Savers: Helping Your Friends and Family Stay Married* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993).

marriage mentoring, then seek to find appropriate applications which are rooted in the text of Scripture.

A third issue that will be addressed is the need for the selection of qualified mentors. Scripture has much to say about the role of people in the church body that are able to teach others in daily living, and this must be communicated to the members of ICBC. Titus 2:1–10 sets the pattern for church mentorship as the older and more mature couples teach the younger couples how to function in marriage. There are many couples at ICBC that would be willing to contribute to the marriage mentoring program, but they need to be trained well. Biblical and practical criteria for selecting marriage mentors must be developed and the potential mentors evaluated. This analysis would consist of things like the couple’s faithfulness to Christ (1 Cor 4:2), their spiritual maturity (Eph 4:1-3), and their expression of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-26). In the selection process, a list of trained mentors will be presented to the pastoral staff for approval and implementation.

The church body is called to minister to one another and to fulfill ICBC’s philosophy: to make and mature disciples who are together becoming like the Lord Jesus Christ. A marriage mentoring curriculum will assist the leaders of the church to fulfill the mandate to equip the “saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ” (Eph 4:12). Each member of ICBC is capable of ministering to each other effectively with the proper training, and marriages can be strengthened by couples admonishing one another with the knowledge of life’s experiences filtered through the word of God (Rom 15:14). Educating older and well-established couples in the church is a great need to help younger couples (Titus 2:1–10). There is a necessity for couples to know that they can be helped through the challenges that they face through the sufficient scriptures. Capable and well-trained marriage mentors could help strengthen marriages and in turn help the growth of the body in discipleship. Instead of leaning towards outside resources or insufficient biblical resources, couples at ICBC must realize that solid help and hope awaits them.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to develop a biblically based marriage mentoring training program at the Inter-City Baptist Church that will result in the equipping of mentors to assist newer marriages.

Goals

The following goals identify the necessary steps to fulfill the purpose of this project. The progression of these goals assessed the current level of perception of marriage mentoring to recruit and train marriage mentors that are able to help assist younger marriages at ICBC. The goals are listed as follows:

1. The first goal was to assess the perception of marriage mentoring at ICBC.
2. The second goal was to develop a nine-session curriculum to train marriage mentors at ICBC.
3. The third goal was to recruit couples to train for the marriage mentoring program.
4. The fourth goal was to increase the knowledge of marriage mentoring among participants.
5. The fifth goal was to develop a ministry plan for the continued training of marriage mentoring at ICBC.

Measuring these five goals was pertinent to the research and success of this project; therefore, the research methodology and tools used to measure the success of the goals are discussed in the next section.³

Research Methodology

The first goal of this project was to assess the perception of marriage mentoring at ICBC. This goal was measured by a simple survey of fact gathering questions concerning marriage mentoring called the Married Couples Survey (MCS). The MCS contained six questions designed to gather a basic understanding of the adult

³ All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

congregation's knowledge of marriage mentoring and basic marital issues. It was pilot tested by ten adults to discern the length of time to take it and to evaluate the types of issues marriages face. The pilot test revealed that the survey took respondents less than five minutes to finish.

After I completed the final draft of the survey, I distributed it on a Sunday morning to three teachers that lead Adult Bible Fellowship (ABF) classes. Participants took the survey anonymously during the classes. It was then collected by the teacher of the class and collected by me at the end of the ABF sessions. When at least fifty people completed the survey, the results were compared and compiled. The anonymous survey informed the curriculum by establishing the priorities of issues that needed to be addressed in the mentoring training. This goal was successfully met when at least fifty adult members responded to the MCS.⁴

The second goal of this project was to develop a nine-session curriculum that equipped couples to mentor young marriages. This goal was measured by an expert panel who utilized a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum.⁵ The expert panel was comprised of the senior pastor of ICBC, the school administrator at Inter-City Baptist School (ICBS), and a certified biblical counselor.

Chapter 2 of this project informed the biblical and theological aspects of the curriculum while chapter 3 helped form the scope and practical foundation for the curriculum. The marital issues gathered from the MCS helped design the curriculum to address central issues in young marriages. Using these sources helped the curriculum to stay biblically faithful and applicable in helping to train the mentors. The curriculum used a practical methodology to assist mentors to understand how to communicate their

⁴ See appendix 1.

⁵ See appendix 2.

learned wisdom with young marrieds. A second questionnaire was given during the curriculum development to further inform marital issues. This questionnaire was given in conjunction with the recruiting of mentors concurrent with goal 3. This questionnaire was called the Mentor Questionnaire (MQ).⁶

The Expert Panel Curriculum Evaluation (EPCE) was given to the expert panel in two phases. The first phase covered the first four chapters of the curriculum and the second phase covered the last five chapters. This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 80 percent of the evaluation exceeded the sufficient level.

The third goal was to recruit couples to train for the marriage mentoring program. This goal was measured by the pastors of ICBC, who were asked to evaluate the prospective mentors and accept or reject their recruitment.

A preliminary list of sixteen prospective mentors was sent to the senior pastor of ICBC for consideration during the first few weeks of curriculum writing. I asked him to consider the prospective couples along with other pastoral staff members and to report their acceptance or denial within one week. Next, I contacted potential mentors from the approved list and asked them for a commitment to be trained. They were asked to consider prayerfully the commitment to be trained, sign the commitment letter, and return the letter within one week.⁷ The Mentoring Couple Commitment Form (MCCF) was sent to the mentors with details concerning the time commitment, expectations, and basic content of the curriculum. This goal was considered successfully met when five couples had pastoral acceptance and committed to the mentor training.

The fourth goal was to increase the knowledge of marriage mentoring with the approved couples. This goal was measured by administering a pre- and post-survey which measured the change in the knowledge of marriage mentoring.⁸

⁶ See appendix 3

⁷ See appendix 4

⁸ See appendices 5 and 6.

Prior to the beginning of the first mentoring class, each participant was given the Mentoring Couple Questionnaire (MCQ). This questionnaire was composed of twenty-one questions designed to ascertain the mentor's current level of knowledge of marriage mentoring. The MCQ was designed to take approximately five minutes and was taken anonymously. To ensure anonymity, participants were instructed to use their full birthdate as a pin (example: 08021972). The results of the survey were compiled and put on a results table for the t-test.

During the teaching of the class, the weaker areas reported in the MCQ were emphasized in lectures, reading, and homework assignments to strengthen these areas. After the class time was complete, the Post-Mentoring Couple Questionnaire (PMCQ) was given to the mentors and completed and collected by me. This goal was considered successfully met when the t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-survey scores.

The fifth goal was to develop a ministry plan for the continued training of marriage mentoring at ICBC. This goal was measured by the pastors of ICBC who evaluated the ministry plan. When the initial training of mentors was completed, the curriculum, results of the t-test, feedback from the PMCQ, and plans for future classes were submitted to the pastors for evaluation. After the evaluation of the plan, changes were made for further training classes. This goal was considered successfully met when the ministry plan was approved by the pastors to continue implementing the program.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

The following definitions of key terms were used in the ministry project:

Marriage. Marriage is defined as the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the husband and wife the framework for

intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race.⁹

Marriage counseling. Marriage counseling is an intensely focused and personally interactive process where a mature believer speaks the truth of God’s Word to a married couple for the purpose of strengthening, challenging, and assisting their marriage.¹⁰

Marriage mentoring. Marriage mentoring is a spiritually mature and well-trained couple building a supportive relationship with a younger couple to help them grow in their marriage through sharing wisdom and experience according to biblical teaching.¹¹

Three limitations applied to this project. First, the accuracy of the pre- and post-series surveys was dependent upon the willingness of the respondents to be honest about their knowledge and understanding of marriage mentoring. To mitigate this limitation, the respondent’s surveys remained anonymous. Second, the effectiveness of the training was limited by the faithfulness of attendance. If the participants did not attend the training sessions, it would have been difficult to measure the benefit of the training. To mitigate this limitation, sessions six and eight were recorded and made available for absentees. Third, the selection of marriage mentors was dependent upon the final approval of the pastoral staff. To mitigate this limitation, the participants in the mentoring training were the ones approved by the pastoral staff.

Two delimitations were placed upon the project. First, the approved participants were trained to mentor those who are in their first five years of marriage.

⁹ “The Family,” Inter-City Baptist Church, accessed July 10, 2018, <http://www.intercity.org/who-we-are/what-we-believe/#family>.

¹⁰ Jacob Elwart, e-mail message to author, March 2, 2020. A helpful resource in developing this definition of marriage counseling was found in Jonathan D. Holmes, *Counsel for Couples: A Biblical and Practical Guide for Marriage Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), 33–39.

¹¹ James Patrick Curtis, Jr., “A Marriage Mentor Program for the Local Church” (DMin diss., Western Seminary, 2004), 121.

Second, the project was confined to fourteen weeks, which included pre-assessment, curriculum development, curriculum instruction, and post-assessment. This time period gave adequate time to prepare and teach elective classes on marriage mentoring and conduct the post-series survey after sessions were completed.

Conclusion

Inter-City Baptist Church seeks to glorify God by making and maturing disciples who are becoming like our Lord Jesus Christ. This mission is accomplished as the body of Christ is edified through the word, worshipping God in spirit and truth, fellowshiping by meeting the needs of the congregants, and evangelizing the lost. Although ICBC is very intentional in these mandates, much work can still be accomplished. This project focused on the need to assist young marriages by training matured and godly couples to mentor younger couples. Assisting young marriages should help accomplish Inter-City's mission by building up younger marriages which ultimately brings honor to the Lord.

CHAPTER 2

GOD'S WORD IS SUFFICIENT TO ESTABLISH THE FOUNDATION, ROLES, AND SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT OF MARRIAGES THAT HONOR HIM

Statistics in the last fifteen to twenty years estimate that approximately 40 percent of marriages in America end in divorce.¹ Evangelical divorce rates seem to match the national statistic, which should awaken God's people to the urgent need of both cultivating godly marriages and assisting struggling marriages.² To remedy this divorce epidemic, many secular and religious counseling methods seek to help married couples survive the duration and difficulties of married life. Unfortunately, some evangelical programs and therapies integrate secular psychology along with Scripture to help struggling marriages. For example, in his book *The Five Love Languages*, Gary Chapman integrates a psychological hierarchy of needs along with several Bible references to establish marriage advice.³ Similarly, some Christian counselors lay aside the sufficiency of the Bible in favor of psychological methodology to deal with marital issues; therefore, in much marriage counseling and teaching, the Bible is secondary in forming functional

¹ Estimates of divorce rates are taken from approximately 44 states. See "National Marriage and Divorce Rates 2000-16," Center for Disease Control and Prevention, accessed January 24, 2019, https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/dvs/national_marriage_divorce_rates_00-16.pdf.

² Although it is very difficult to determine the exact percentage of Evangelical divorces, many sources estimate approximately 38 percent of Evangelical marriages end in divorce. See "Divorce Rate in the Church—As High as the World?" Focus on the Family, accessed January 24, 2019, <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/about/focus-findings/marriage/divorce-rate-in-the-church-as-high-as-the-world>.

³ Gary Chapman, *The Five Love Languages: The Secret to Love that Lasts* (Chicago: Northfield Publishing, 2015), 13–14. Chapman focuses primarily on a psychological behaviorism rather than on the biblical motivations that should drive a marriage. Much of his attention in the book is on the romantic feelings in love that are "deeply rooted in our psychological makeup."

control over marriage. Separate from these counseling tendencies, this chapter aims to demonstrate the sufficiency of Scripture for helping new or struggling marriages. Therefore, an exegesis of Genesis 2:18–25, Ephesians 5:21–33, and Titus 2:1–8 informs mentors of the foundation, roles, and development of a godly marriage.

Genesis 2:18–25 Demonstrates that God Establishes the Foundation and Roles of the Marriage Relationship

On day 6 of the creation week, God originated marriage by creating man and woman in His image. Genesis 1:27 says, “God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” God intended for man and woman to be the pinnacle of His creation in a mutually satisfying, united relationship. In Genesis 2, Moses highlights God’s work of the creation of man and woman and emphasizes the foundation of marriage in an intimate and exclusive relationship. Genesis 2:18–25 reveals that God intended man to have companionship in his work and that he and woman would become one and dwell in sinless harmony.

Exegesis of Genesis 2:18–25

One of the most noticeable features of Genesis 2:18 is the declaration that man’s lack of a companion “is not good,” unlike the rest of the creation account, which is noted as being “good” or “very good.” God intended for man to have companionship in the work He had given him, and an appropriate helper to the man was necessary. The word “helper” (עֲזָרָה) “essentially describes one who provides what is lacking in the man, who can do what the man alone cannot do.”⁴ The word “suitable” (כְּנֻסָּה) explains that the woman complements the man but is not identical to him.⁵ Next, God formed and

⁴ Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of the Book of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988), 126.

⁵ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 1 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 87.

brought the animals to man for him to name in an exercise of his authority, but among the animal kingdom there was no “helper suitable for him” (vv. 19–20). Unlike the animals, the woman was indeed a “suitable” complement for man. Therefore, the animals stand in juxtaposition to the woman who is complementary to the man.

Verses 21–23 reveal the origins of the woman and the process of bringing man and woman together. God “caused a deep sleep” to create the woman from the rib of the man. This sleep that God initiates “preserves for the man the mystery of her creation and the subsequent surprise of her appearance.”⁶ As man slept, God created the woman from the very substance of man. The woman’s creation revealed that “the origins of both man and woman are similar, that is, both owe their existence to raw material—rib and dirt. Neither is actively involved in the creation of the other.”⁷ The delighted acknowledgement of Adam toward the woman reveals his understanding that the woman was part of himself. He says, “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh.” Adam had found the helper who was permanently complementary to him.

The last two verses of this pericope reveal the intimate nature of this new relationship. The phrase “for this reason” (עַל־כֵּן) “does not indicate an explanation of the foregoing but rather describes the consequence of God’s charge for the human family to propagate and rule.”⁸ Man was to “leave” (יָצָא) all family relationships and “be joined” (וַדָּבַק) to the woman. The word “leave” was used in the Old Testament to describe Israel’s rejection of her covenant with Yahweh (Jer 1:16; 2:13, 17, 19 et al.).⁹ The verb “be joined” stands in contrast to “leave” and in a positive sense “often designates the

⁶ Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, New American Commentary, vol. 1A (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1996), 216. Mathews notes that this level of sleep is “the special work of God as with Abraham’s slumber (15:12).”

⁷ Victor P. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1982), 28.

⁸ Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 222.

⁹ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1–17*, 181.

maintenance of the covenant relationship (Deut 4:4; 10:20; 11:22; 13:5; 30:20).”¹⁰ In this new covenant relationship, the man and woman are united into one person. Verse 24 declares the responsibility for each couple to break from all familial relationships and cling to each other as they form one new person. The closing epilogue in verse 25 (“naked and were not ashamed”) serves as a transition to link the accounts of creation and marriage to the fall of mankind into sin.¹¹ Before the fall, man and woman’s shamelessness showed their untainted union of sinless harmony. Therefore, God reveals in this paragraph that man found his companion solely in the woman and that the foundation for the marriage covenant is established as the woman and the man leave familial obligations and cling to each other perfectly as “one flesh.”

Practical Implications of Genesis 2:18–25 for Marriage Mentoring

From this passage, God’s design for marriage is explained in two ways, namely, as a divinely instituted partnership and a permanent union.

Partnership in marriage. Many readers of this Genesis text mistakenly understand the passage to be teaching that marriage is a remedy for loneliness. They reason, because man did not find a match among the animal kingdom, he was therefore lonely and needed companionship.¹² This understanding of the text undermines the central point of the passage: God created woman to become man’s helper in a covenantal relationship and fulfill God’s purposes as a unity. Marriage mentors should begin from this perspective when advocating marriage partnerships that honor God.

God designed marriage for intimacy between a man and a woman. The

¹⁰ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1–17*, 181.

¹¹ Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 224–5.

¹² For an excellent treatment of this interpretation, see Christopher Ash, *Married for God: Making Your Marriage the Best It Can Be* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 34–39.

importance of the marital bond cannot be overestimated in the Scripture. The act of sexual relations is at the core of this union which God intended for the man and woman to enjoy for a lifetime (Prov 5:15–19; Heb 13:4). Wheat and Wheat explain, “You have God’s permission to enjoy sex within your marriage. He invented sex; He thought it up to begin with.”¹³ The marital bond is so mutual and intimate that the husband’s body belongs to the wife and the wife’s body to the husband in sexual relations (1 Cor 7:3–4). This abundant blessing is contrasted with the dire warnings of judgement about any form of sexual sin (Exod 20:14; Lev 18:23; Rom 1:24–27; 1 Cor 6:9; 1 Tim 1:10, 3:2, 12; Heb 13:4). Also, this physical union was intended for procreation. God said to Adam and Eve, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth” (Gen 1:28). The tenor of Scripture is that children are a blessing from God, and man and woman should enjoy children as God’s gift to them (Pss 115:14, 127:3–5, 128).

God brought the woman to the man to complete him. Created in the same essence as man, the woman was brought to the man to help him accomplish the task God had assigned. Mathews notes, “The woman makes it possible for the man to achieve the blessing that he otherwise could not do ‘alone.’ And, obviously, the woman cannot achieve it apart from the man.”¹⁴ Consequently, in a marriage that honors the Lord, the husband and wife accomplish God’s purposes as a mutually compatible team. Mentors should emphasize that the husband is never to use his position over the woman to lord it over her but is to cherish his counterpart as a gift from God. The reality of this divine partnership does not negate functionality in the marriage relationship. Male headship is from divine choosing and should be understood in marriage as a reflection of God’s intention.¹⁵ This principle establishes the authority structure in both the home (Eph 5:22–

¹³ Ed Wheat and Gaye Wheat, *Intended for Pleasure: New Approaches to Sexual Intimacy in Christian Marriage*, rev. ed. (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1981), 20.

¹⁴ Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 214.

¹⁵ For a defense of the equality of essence and difference in function, see Raymond C. Ortlund, Jr., “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship: Genesis 1–3,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood &*

24) and the church (1 Cor 11:3, 9–10; 1 Tim 2:11–13).

Permanence of marriage. The obligation for the man to “leave” family relationships and “be joined” to his wife engenders several important points. Primarily, the idea of “leave” for the married couple is to abandon familial commitments and obligations. Mathews notes, “The significance of the language ‘leave’ is that marriage involves a new pledge to a spouse in which former familial commitments are superseded. Marriage requires a new priority by the marital partners where obligations to one’s spouse supplant a person’s parental loyalties.”¹⁶ Mentors should emphasize the exclusive nature of the marriage relationship and help demonstrate this exclusivity with advice about financial independence, holiday planning, residence proximity, and child rearing (Titus 2:4–6).

Next, the focus of “be joined” implies a life-long commitment. The typical vows at a protestant wedding are as follows:

I, [], take thee, [], to be my wedded husband/wife, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do us part, according to God's holy ordinance; and thereto I pledge thee my faith [or] pledge myself to you.¹⁷

These public vows reflect a covenantal obligation of the husband and wife to fulfill these commitments while they live. This type of life-long commitment is God’s creative intent and is commended by Jesus as keeping the principles of God’s institution of marriage (Matt 19:1–9; Mark 10:2–12). Jesus says in Mark 10:6–9, “But from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother, and the two shall become one flesh; so they are no longer two, but one flesh.

Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2006), 95–112.

¹⁶ Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 223.

¹⁷ “Basic Protestant Vows,” Traditional Wedding Vows from Various Religions, accessed January 31, 2019, <https://www.theknot.com/content/traditional-wedding-vows-from-various-religions>.

What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.” Also, this enduring commitment precludes divorce for any cause by emphasizing God’s pattern of creation (Matt 19:3–6).

Practically, this type of commitment meets the needs of the spouse in a self-sacrificial way. Ash helpfully states,

By publicly saying these things they commit themselves to their public promises, no matter what muddles and uncertainties there may be in the backs of their minds, or what butterflies in their stomachs. A promise is a promise, and commits me to keeping it, whatever the cost. This is why the psalmist commends those who make promises and keep them even when it proves costly (Ps. 15:4).¹⁸

Marriage mentors should stress the importance of helping young couples build marriages from God’s perspective, not their own ideals and emotional states. Also, young marrieds should be reminded that their vows are to God and each other and witnessed by others; therefore, young couples should be accountable so that their character and testimony reflect their lifelong commitment. In the current culture, couples often say they no longer feel any emotion toward their spouse, therefore their commitment can be broken. Mentors must be ready to challenge the unbiblical notion that the level of romantic love equals the level of commitment to the marriage; Scripture does not allow this type of thinking (John 3:16; Rom 5:6–9). Tim Keller and Kathy Keller summarize appropriately:

The Biblical understanding of love does not preclude deep emotion. As we will see, a marriage devoid of passion and emotional desire for one another doesn’t fulfill the Biblical vision. But neither does the Bible pit romantic love against the essence of love, which is sacrificial commitment to the good of the other. IF we think of love primarily as emotional desire and not as active, committed service, we end up pitting duty and desire against each other in a way that is unrealistic and destructive.¹⁹

Conclusion

The exegesis of Genesis 2:18–25 established two foundational principles for

¹⁸ Ash, *Married for God*, 111.

¹⁹ Timothy Keller and Kathy Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage: Facing the Complexities of Commitment with the Wisdom of God* (New York: Dutton, 2011), 78.

marriage mentoring. First, marriage is a union in which two people are called together as “one flesh.” Mentors should be ready to encourage couples to express this unity in physical intimacy and correct functionality in the home. Second, mentors should inspire young couples to persevere in their marriage by encouraging them to keep their vows and develop a biblical love that emphasizes commitment over feelings.

Ephesians 5:22–33 Demonstrates the God-Ordained Roles and Responsibilities for Marriage

The theme for Ephesians is the church as the body of Christ. This theme is developed in the division of the book in two sections: Ephesians 1–3 establishes for the reader the theological framework for the church as the body of Christ, while chapters 4–6 set the practical implications of that framework. Within that practical implications section of the book, several points assist the reader in understanding Paul’s overall point: first, Ephesians 4 supplies the directives for body unity and growth; second, Ephesians 5 supplies directives for the daily walk of the believer within the body; last, Ephesians 6 admonishes Christians in the body to engage in spiritual warfare.²⁰ In Ephesians 5, Paul addresses several elements of a Christian’s daily walk. Paul first shows that a Christian’s conduct will imitate God’s love for others and imitate His disdain for all that destroys relationships, namely, unholiness (5:1–14). Paul then reveals that a Christian will be controlled by the Spirit by speaking and singing to one another, while offering thanksgiving and submitting to one another (5:15–21). Paul finishes the chapter with directives of love and submission for the husband and the wife respectively (5:22–33).

Exegesis of Ephesians 5:22–33²¹

Paul’s teaching on Spirit filling (5:18–21) sets an excellent transition for the

²⁰ Although each chapter is labeled with basic thematic content, the content often overlaps from chapter to chapter. For example, Paul’s instructions for differing groups in the Ephesian church spans two chapters (5:22–6:9).

²¹ Some translations choose to begin the paragraph with v. 21 (NIV and CEV), while others

instruction that follows. The last participle “be subject” (Eph 5:21) reveals the importance of the Spirit’s control in relationships and provides the foundation for the instructions that follow for husbands and wives, parents and children, and masters and servants.²² In verse 21 for example, “He calls for a recognition of the divinely-established order in human life and in the church, and for each Christian to submit himself to whatever human authority he has been placed under.”²³

The wife’s submission in Ephesians 5:22–24. Paul instructs wives in verse 22 by saying, “Wives, be subject to your own husbands.” The Greek phrase literally reads, “Wives, to your own husbands.” The participle “be subject” (ὑποτασσόμενοι) is implied from verse 21, which supports the transition from submission to the responsible party in this context, namely, the wives. The instruction for wives then is to subordinate themselves under their husband’s leadership. O’Brien notes, “The apostle is not urging every woman to submit to every man, but wives to their husbands. The use of the middle voice of this verb (cf. Col. 3:18) emphasizes the voluntary character of the submission.”²⁴

begin the paragraph with v. 22 (ESV, NASB, NKJV, HCSB). Also, some proponents of a mutual submission model cite v. 21 to mean that the groups Paul addresses are to reflect a mutual submission. Scott responds appropriately, “There should never be a time when the wife takes the position of authority over the husband. The favorite (and only) passage that proponents of mutual submission cite is Ephesians 5:21. However, the meaning and context of ‘one another’ in this verse does not support their view, nor does it negate the several times that God commands the wife to be in subjection to her husband (Ephesians 5:22; Colossians 3:18; 1 Peter 3:1; Titus 2:4–5).” Stuart Scott, *The Exemplary Husband: A Biblical Perspective*, rev. ed. (Bemidji, MN: Focus Publishing, 2002), 79. Therefore, for this paper, the paragraph exegesis does not include v. 21.

²² Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 359.

²³ Homer A. Kent Jr., *The Glory of the Church: Studies in Ephesians*, rev. ed. (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 2005), 104.

²⁴ Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 411. In July 2016, Eerdmans Publishing Co. received allegations of plagiarism in one of its published NT commentaries written by Peter T. O’Brien. The findings of the investigation revealed that several of Peter O’Brien’s NT commentaries evidenced plagiarism, namely, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, and *The Epistle to the Philippians*. Although the findings of the investigation found plagiarism, O’Brien’s commentary on Ephesians was still found to be a scholarly resource and useful for this paper. See “Eerdmans Statement on Three New Testament Commentaries,” Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., accessed February 29, 2020, <http://www.eerdmans.com/Pages/Item/59043/Commentary-Statement.aspx>.

The phrase “as to the Lord” displays the motivation for the wife’s submission.²⁵ She is to submit to her husband as she inwardly submits to Christ.

Paul explains the reason for the wife’s submission in verse 23. The implied question in this verse is why should a wife submit to her husband “as to the Lord”? The clause “For the husband is the head of the wife” begins with the conjunction ὅτι (“for”) and could be translated “because.” This clause sets “up an analogy between a married couple and Christ’s relationship to the church.”²⁶ The comparative adverb “as” (ὡς) connects the analogy and shows that as Christ is the “head of the church” so the “husband is the head of the wife.”²⁷ The word “head” (κεφαλή) speaks of the God-given authority the husband has over his wife and enforces the admonition for the wife to submit from the previous verse. The phrase “He Himself being the savior of the body” emphasizes the character of Christ and the responsibility of the husband to lead. Thielman summarizes, “Paul pictures the wife’s submission as the recognition of the authority of a husband who imitates the self-sacrificial, nurturing, and supporting roles that Christ fills with respect to the church.”²⁸

The strong adversative “but” (ἀλλά) in verse 24 is likely used to return to Paul’s main idea of the submission of the wife.²⁹ The helpful comparison and ultimate motivation for the wife to submit to her husband is explained in this verse. The wife’s submission is related to the church’s submission to Christ because “by the Christian wife’s obedience to her husband she is also acting in obedience to Christ as a part of His

²⁵ O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 412.

²⁶ Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 376.

²⁷ Thielman, *Ephesians*, 376.

²⁸ Thielman, *Ephesians*, 379.

²⁹ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1984), 385.

church.”³⁰ The phrase “in everything” (ἐν παντί) is not an all-inclusive call for women to mindlessly and unbiblically submit to their husbands. The phrase must be understood as limited by the phrase “as the church is subject to Christ.” O’Brien concludes appropriately,

But the wife’s response of submission, which is not an unthinking obedience to his leadership, is to be rendered gladly, irrespective of whether the husband will heed the injunctions explicitly addressed to him or not. Contrary to much contemporary Western thinking, there is no suggestion that wives are to be submissive to their husbands only if their husbands are loving. We have already seen that the church’s submission to Christ leads to blessing, growth, and unity for God’s people. Similarly, the wife’s submission to her husband, as she seeks to honour the Lord Jesus Christ, will *ultimately* lead to divine blessing for herself and others.³¹

The husband’s love in Ephesians 5:25–32. Paul begins the instructions to the husbands with an admonition to “love your wives.” The present imperative command (ἀγαπάτε) speaks of the self-sacrificial love that is to continue throughout marriage and is compared to Christ’s love for the church. The comparative phrase “just as also” (καθὼς καί) establishes the foundation for the husband’s love for his wife; that is, his love is meant to be compared to Christ’s sacrificial love.³²

Paul then states the reasons for Christ’s self-sacrifice in verses 26 and 27. The ἵνα clause in verse 26 reveals the first purpose for Christ’s sacrifice, namely, the sanctification of the church. The word translated “sanctify” (ἀγιάσῃ) typically means to set something or someone apart as holy; elsewhere, Paul demonstrates the positional nature of this sanctification by translating the noun form of this term “saints” (Eph 1:1, 15; 5:3, et al.).³³ This sanctification is accomplished “by the washing of the water with the word.” The word “washing” (λουτρῶ) is often connected to the idea of baptism, but

³⁰ Kent, *The Glory of the Church*, 109.

³¹ O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 418, emphasis original.

³² O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 419n234.

³³ F. Wilbur Gingrich, *Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, rev. Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 2.

here it should be understood as a cleansing that happens through the word of God (ρόηματι).³⁴ Kent explains, “The Word of God is the cleansing agent for this present aspect of sanctification, in which the church, already forgiven by the atonement, is being progressively made pure in practice by the application of God’s Word.”³⁵

In verse 27, Paul uses a second ἵνα clause to continue the purpose of Christ’s sacrifice. The phrase “He might present to Himself the church in all her glory” carries the idea of the preparation for the eschatological wedding ceremony between Christ and the church.³⁶ The term “present” (παραστήσει) simply means “make” or “render.”³⁷ Paul is emphasizing the idea that Christ himself renders the church ready for the wedding. He describes the preparation of the bride “in all her glory.” This description of the bride’s glory is also used by John in Revelation 21:11.³⁸ John describes the church as “having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper.” Next, Paul uses the opposing phrases “spot or wrinkle” and “holy and blameless” to emphasize Christ’s work of preparation. Thielman argues that “those who comprise the church were once stained, but through the death of Christ and the preaching of the gospel, Christ cleansed them and set them apart for himself, just as a young and dazzlingly beautiful bride, in all her finery, is presented to the groom.”³⁹ The point of comparison should not be forgotten here; as Christ’s love for the church is evidenced through self-sacrifice and the sanctification process, the husband’s love should mimic Christ’s sacrificial service in helping his wife grow through the word.

³⁴ For an excellent discussion and defense of this view, see Thielman, *Ephesians*, 382–85.

³⁵ Kent, *The Glory of the Church*, 110.

³⁶ Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 389.

³⁷ Gingrich, *Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, 152, emphasis original.

³⁸ Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 389.

³⁹ Thielman, *Ephesians*, 386.

Paul begins verse 28 with “so” (οὕτως), which “points backward to the manner of Christ’s love for the church as Paul has just described it in 5:25–27, and Paul restates what he said in 5:25, but more emphatically and with an added motivation.”⁴⁰ As the husband is to love his wife and strive toward her purity (Eph 5:25–27), so the husband must provide for the care of his wife (Eph 5:28–31). The phrase “husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies” reflects a moral obligation which is evidenced by Paul’s use of the present active indicative command “ought” (ὀφείλουσιν).⁴¹ This obligation echoes the second great commandment found in Leviticus 19:18, “you shall love your neighbor as yourself.” In addition, the husband’s care should reflect this deep level of care because he and his wife are “one flesh” (Gen 2:24). Paul uses the phrase, “He who loves his own wife loves himself” to reflect this unity between husband and wife.

In verses 29–31, Paul supports this obligation by revealing the natural care that someone has for himself and compares that with the ultimate care that Christ has for the church. Paul begins with the explanatory “for” (γάρ) to express the general principle in life that people naturally take care of basic needs of the physical body.⁴² He then uses the strong adversative “but” (ἀλλά) to contrast a person who would “so called” hate himself to one who naturally cares for his body. The terms “nourishes” (ἐκτρέφει) and “cherishes” (θάλπει) carry the idea of the type of nurture and deep affection one would have for a child or spouse.⁴³ The word “because” (ὅτι) enforces this principle by revealing the reason why Christ cares for the church as His body; namely, we “are members of His body.” Last, the nourishing and cherishing Christ has for the church and

⁴⁰ Thielman, *Ephesians*, 387.

⁴¹ O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 426.

⁴² Arnold, *Ephesians*, 391.

⁴³ Thielman, *Ephesians*, 388.

a husband should have for his wife is further enforced in verse 31 where Paul quotes Genesis 2:24: “For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh.” In using this quote, “Paul reaches the climax of the paragraph. The husband should love his wife because she has become an integral part of him – the two have become one flesh.”⁴⁴

Next, Paul in verse 32 alludes back to the previous verse and calls it a “mystery” (*μυστήριον*), which means something unknown now becoming known (Eph 3:9; Col 1:26–27).⁴⁵ The profound (“great”) significance of this mystery is that it is “speaking with reference to Christ and the church.” The usage of Genesis 2:24 and the reference to a “mystery” is an example of typology in the New Testament. Paul uses the formation of the marriage between husband and wife (Gen 2:24) in a redemptive reality as a type of Christ’s union with the church (Eph 5:26–27, 32).⁴⁶

Paul, in verse 33, brings the readers back to the conclusion of the section by closing the paragraph with two exhortations. First, Paul focuses on the husband’s responsibility to “love his own wife even as himself.” This phrase points back to verses 28–29 when Paul admonishes the men “to love their wives as their own bodies.” Paul practically appeals to the men that the “love for his wife is to have a unique quality, reflecting the truth expressed in Gen. 2:24—that he and his wife are ‘one flesh.’”⁴⁷ Second, the wife is to “respect her husband.” The word “respect” (*φοβῆται*) here is also used in verse 21 concerning the fear or reverence a person would have for Christ.⁴⁸ The wife’s submission to her husband (vv. 22–24) is shown by the respect she displays to him

⁴⁴ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 392.

⁴⁵ Gingrich, *Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, 130.

⁴⁶ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 42 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1990), 382.

⁴⁷ Thielman, *Ephesians*, 391.

⁴⁸ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 398.

as her head, which is an appropriate display of her submission to the Lord (Eph 5:21; 1 Pet 3:1–6).

Practical Implications of Ephesians 5:22–33 for Marriage Mentoring

Paul’s treatment of the marriage relationship in Ephesians 5 sets an incredibly important framework for Christian marriage. Marital breakdown is most often traced back to the systemic effect of neglecting each other’s relationship to the Lord; therefore, mentors need to direct couples back to the foundation of their relationship, namely, Christ. Rooting his arguments in a deep Christological understanding, Paul’s point of comparison throughout the passage is how the married couple relates to Christ. Christ supplied the means for a relationship to God and to others through His work of redemption (Eph 1:7, 2:13–17). He is the authoritative head over all things in this life and the life to come (Eph 1:10, 21–22). He is the source of all unity and growth in relationships with Him and others (Eph 4:13–16). He is the foundation for all human relationships in the church (Eph 5:2; 5:21–6:9). Arnold states, “This Christology serves as the basis for the instructions given to each marriage partner. Paul skillfully and eloquently weaves his perspective on the relevance of Christ’s work for the marriage relationship through the passage from beginning to end.”⁴⁹ Ephesians 5:22–33 presents several key implications for how the married couple should function to reflect their God-given roles.

Implications for the wife. In this passage, Paul teaches that the wife’s primary responsibility in marriage is to submit to and respect her husband. How a wife responds to these commands reveals several things about her relationship with the Lord and her view of marriage. First, these admonitions reveal the strength of her relationship to the

⁴⁹ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 399.

Lord because her submission is to be done “as to the Lord” (Eph 5:22) and “in the fear of Christ” (Eph 5:21). The New Testament gauges a person’s relationship with the Lord through his obedient responses to Him (e.g., John 14:15; 1 John 5:2–3); therefore, submission is primarily a heart issue that expresses itself in the fruit it produces (1 Pet 3:4–6). It is important that mentors focus on this reality when helping a young wife cultivate submission through her love for the Lord. If the wife’s relationship is growing, and she is walking in the Spirit’s control, then she can show proper respect (Eph 5:33), bear up under difficult treatment (1 Pet 3:13–15), and even submit to an unsaved husband because she hopes in the Lord (1 Pet 3:1, 5–6).

Second, the current cultural climate directs women toward independence and outward appearance. The modern culture wants wives to believe that submission to their husbands is degrading and outdated. Arnold notes that Ephesians 5:22–24 “stands in significant conflict with our prevailing culture that has been on a decades-long course of leveling any role distinctions between men and women—including in the home.”⁵⁰ Mentors should teach wives that the current culture wants to “squeeze you into its own mould” (Rom 12:2 Phillips), but they must cling to the authority of God’s word that teaches submission as the wife’s normal pattern in marriage (Titus 2:5). The cultural pull toward appearance is also a great danger for woman and should be challenged. Younger wives should be taught that their worth is not evidenced in their outward appearance, but in their submissive attitude (Prov 31:30; 1 Pet 3:3–6). Also, because the culture consistently distorts what biblical submission is, mentors should spend time teaching wives what submission is not. Arnold offers several helpful points:

1. It does not make the husband the boss and the wife the servant.
2. It does not lead to the wife’s loss of her self (or her identity).
3. It does not mean that the wife loses her voice and decisions are made unilaterally.
4. It does not set the wife up for emotional, verbal, or physical abuse.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 401.

⁵¹ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 401–2. See also Wayne Mack, *Strengthening Your Marriage*

Implications for the husband. Several actions are implied in the text concerning the husband's love for his wife. First, the husband's love is sacrificial. Paul likens a husband's love to Christ's sacrifice for the church (Eph 5:25). Mentors must teach a husband to put his wife's needs above his own. Mack says, "*The husband is to live for the sake of his wife, always keeping her best interests at heart. He is to be his wife's servant-leader.*"⁵² In humble service, the husband should never have the sense of individualism but seek to serve his wife's needs above his own (Phil 2:3–4). He should therefore be willing to sacrifice his desires for the benefit of his wife in areas of intimacy, recreation, and finances. The husband should never seek his own interests in the sexual relationship but should see it as a way to serve his wife (1 Cor 7:1–5). The husband should not prioritize recreation above the needs of his wife but should seek to understand her needs first (1 Pet 3:7). He should also provide for his wife's material needs through hard work and wise stewardship (1 Tim 5:8).

Second, the husband's love is for the spiritual benefit of his wife. Mentors must encourage a husband to be his wife's primary discipler. Following the example of Christ's work of sanctification in the church, husbands must seek the spiritual growth of the wife (Eph 5:26–27). They must be taught to help their wives in the sanctification process by both speaking and living the word (Eph 5:26; 1 Cor 14:35). Husbands should read the word with them and speak the word to them in gentleness (Eph 4:15), understanding, and honor (1 Pet 3:7). They should live the word as an example of godliness in their home and church (1 Tim 4:12), guard against hypocrisy in both (Rom 12:9) and seek to develop the discipline of prayer (1 Tim 2:8).

Last, the husband's love must be tender and compassionate. A husband must be taught to "nourish and cherish" his wife because this concept is not native to his

(Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1977), 13.

⁵² Mack, *Strengthening Your Marriage*, 28, emphasis original.

understanding (Eph 5:29). Peter teaches husbands to “live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman” (1 Pet 3:7). The husband must see his wife as his most precious possession. He should seek to understand her joys, sorrows, goals, frustrations, weaknesses, and strengths. Ash explains,

We who are husbands need to learn to understand our wives, the physical and psychological rhythms of their bodies, what they go through in childbirth, in breast-feeding, in all the stages of motherhood, when the children fly the nest, through menopause, and in old age. We are to live with them according to understanding, recognizing that in some respects (and only some!) they are weaker than us.⁵³

A husband must seek to support his wife as her protector and provider and be taught to guard against anger and bitterness toward her (Col 3:19).

Conclusion

In Ephesians 5:22–33, Paul establishes the primary roles and responsibilities for a husband and wife. The wife is to submit to her husband, and the husband is to love his wife. The passage pictures Christ’s love and sacrifice for His church and the church’s submission to Christ as the perfect model for Christian marriage. If a young marriage is going to glorify the Lord, mentors must be trained to both speak and model this important passage as they seek to help marriages grow and succeed.

Titus 2:1–8 Demonstrates the Church’s Role in the Spiritual Development of Marriage

In the pastoral epistles, Paul writes to two elders of the church to teach and direct them in the ministry to which God had called them. Paul wrote the letters to Timothy to exhort him to deal with false teachers and educate him in correct procedures for worship and church life. Paul’s purpose in writing the epistle to Titus was to exhort Titus to teach the believers on Crete to strive toward godly living by displaying good works (Titus 2:12; 3:8, 14). Lea and Griffin argue, “Paul’s primary concern was to

⁵³ Ash, *Married for God*, 88.

indicate that the Christian's faith, but *subjectively* as experience and *objectively* as a body of doctrine, must result in a life that consistently demonstrates appropriate behavior."⁵⁴

Titus could accomplish this task by selecting qualified leaders to teach the church how to live correctly as a community of believers and to warn them about false doctrine. The instruction about living as a community in 2:1–8 illustrates the importance of older believers in the assembly helping younger believers live godly lives. An exegesis of these verses is essential to help in the spiritual development of marriages in a marriage mentoring program.

Exegesis of Titus 2:1–8

In Titus 2:1, Paul uses the adversative “but” (δὲ) to contrast the errors taught by false teachers (Titus 1:10–16) with the words “fitting for sound doctrine” that Titus teaches.⁵⁵ This command to teach sound doctrine has a practical import for the church; that is, good doctrine produces right living. Kent writes, “The present imperative *laiei* (continue speaking) stresses continuing action, and hence encourages Titus to maintain the course on which he has embarked. Just as he has been proclaiming sound doctrine, so he is to encourage these practical virtues which are consistent with the gospel truths.”⁵⁶

Paul's exhortations to the household. The first set of instructions are for the “older men” of the congregation. These “older men” (*πρεσβύτεας*) were to act with a spiritual maturity that matched their age and set the example for the whole congregation. First, they were to be “temperate” (*νηφάλιους*). This word speaks of a moderation in

⁵⁴ Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, Jr., *1, 2 Timothy and Titus: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture NIV Text*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 296, emphasis original.

⁵⁵ George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992), 305.

⁵⁶ Homer A. Kent Jr., *The Pastoral Epistles*, rev. ed. (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1986), 220.

conduct that would include their use of wine.⁵⁷ Second, older men should be “dignified” (σεμνούς). This word was used of the dignity of the office of deacon (1 Tim 3:8) and focuses on the moral worth of a man’s character as not frivolous or showy.⁵⁸ Third, the word “sensible” (σώφρονας) can also be translated as self-controlled (ESV, NIV). Hiebert says, “The word presents the concept of a well-balanced, properly regulated mind; a person discreet and prudent. The old men should be the balance wheels in the congregation, keeping its course steady.”⁵⁹ This term dominates this section because it characterizes all the groups, namely, older women (2:4), younger women (2:5), and younger men (2:7). The final description incorporates primary virtues of the Christian life, faith, love, and endurance. These qualities are characteristic of a mature Christian who is solid in his faith (1 Tim 6:11; 2 Tim 3:10).

Next, Paul addresses the older women in the congregation. The word “likewise” (ὡσαύτως) in verse 3 links Paul’s previous instructions to the older women in the congregation. Several traits characterize the older women in the assembly. First, these women were “to be reverent in their behavior.” The word “reverent” (ἱεροπρεπεῖς) carries the idea of the venerable conduct like a priest.⁶⁰ Older women were to display a reverent behavior in their deportment in life. Next, these women should not be “malicious gossips.” The word is (διαβόλους), which could also be translated as slanderer. She is to be a woman who does not speak evil against others or make accusations against people.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: The Tyndale Press, 1980), 191.

⁵⁸ William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 409.

⁵⁹ D. Edmond Hiebert, *Titus and Philemon*, Everyman’s Bible Commentary (Chicago: The Moody Bible Institute, 1957), 48.

⁶⁰ Frederick William Danker, Walter Bauer, and William Arndt, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), s.v. “ἱεροπρεπεῖς,” 470. Hereafter, this source is cited as BDAG.

⁶¹ Hiebert, *Titus and Philemon*, 49.

Paul continues to teach that older women should not be “enslaved to much wine.” The word “enslaved” (δεδουλωμένας) warns of the danger of what “much wine” can do to the older women. This warning is not uncommon with Paul because of the warnings to other groups in the church, such as pastors (1 Tim 3:3) and deacons (1 Tim 3:8). Guthrie argues, “Evidently in Crete the liability to these excesses was more severe than in Ephesus, especially among the women, for the verb (*doulō*) used here signifies ‘bondage’ (RSV ‘slaves to drink’), a much stronger expression than the corresponding phrase in 1 Timothy.”⁶²

Paul then encourages these women should be “teaching what is good.” Older women should not teach men in the congregation (1 Tim 2:12) but can have an incredible opportunity to minister to the younger women in the church. Mounce demonstrates that the teaching here “pictures the older women, those who were experienced in life, marriage, and child rearing, taking the younger women in the congregation under their care and helping them to adjust to their responsibilities.”⁶³ This phrase sets a transition into verse 4 because their teaching was “so that” (ἵνα) the younger women in the church would be taught how to function in their roles.

Paul begins with the older women’s role in encouraging the younger women. The word “encourage” in verse 4 is (σωφρονίζωσιν) and can be also translated to “teach” or “train” (KJV, ESV). The word means “to instruct in prudence or behavior that is becoming and shows good judgment, encourage, advise, urge.”⁶⁴ The younger women should be taught to “love their husbands” and “love their children.” The tenor of the home should reflect a loving environment for both husband and children. Next, Paul in verses 5 and 6 includes in his instruction several character traits for younger women to be

⁶² Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 192, emphasis original.

⁶³ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 410.

⁶⁴ BDAG, s.v. “σωφρονίζωσιν,” 986.

taught. First, they were to be “sensible” (σώφρονας) and “pure” (ἀγνάς). The younger women were to mimic the same sobriety as the other groups in the congregation (Titus 2:2, 3, 6) and live a life of purity and discretion. Next, they were to be “workers at home” (οἰκουργούς). The word indicates a woman who is busy carrying out household responsibilities.⁶⁵ Last, the younger women should be taught to be “subject to their own husbands.” The word “subject” (ὑποτασσομένης) is a present middle participle and could be translated “submitting themselves.” The younger women were to be in voluntary submission to their husbands in the home and congregation (1 Cor 14:34; Eph 5:21, 24; Col 3:18).⁶⁶ The last phrase, “so that the word of God will not be dishonored”, points to the wife’s submission to her husband as a testimony of God’s truth lived out in front of unbelievers.

In verse 6, Paul then instructs Titus to “urge the young men to be sensible.” Verse 6 begins with “likewise” (ὡσαύτως), which as in verse 3, points to previous instruction. Titus was to “urge” (παρακάλει) the young men as the older women were to teach the young women.⁶⁷ This word has a much stronger force than the initial “speak” in verse 1 and shows a strong appeal or an urging to the young men in the congregation.⁶⁸ The directive to the young men is similar to the other groups in the congregation, namely, “to be sensible.” Hiebert helpfully shows that the young men “are to cultivate balance and self-restraint; their faculties, appetites, and passions must be kept under the control of a sound judgment and an enlightened conscience. It is a comprehensive demand that covers all of their lives.”⁶⁹

⁶⁵ BDAG, s.v. “οἰκουργούς,” 700.

⁶⁶ Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 309.

⁶⁷ Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 310.

⁶⁸ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 412.

⁶⁹ Hiebert, *Titus and Philemon*, 52.

Paul's exhortations to Titus. Paul exhorts Titus in verses 7 and 8 to set a personal example for those in the congregation. The phrase “in all things” in verse 7 points to the ongoing “example” that Titus is to have among the different groups.⁷⁰ He is to reflect this example in his “good deeds.” These good deeds are reflective of Paul’s purpose in writing this epistle. If the Christians in the church were to live out good deeds (Titus 2:3,12; 3:8, 14), then Titus was to set this example. He was to set the example first “with purity in doctrine.” This is set in contrast to the false teachers (Titus 1:10–16; 3:9–11) which were accused of false doctrine and heresy. He was to be “dignified” (σεμνότητα), which reveals “a manner or mode of behavior that indicates one is above what is ordinary and therefore worthy of special respect.”⁷¹

In verse 8, Paul tells Titus to be “sound in speech which is beyond reproach.” The adjective “sound” (ύγιή) can also be translated as “truth” (NLT). In his example of dignified behavior, Titus was to have integrity of speech (λόγον) that could not be used in an attack against him. The purpose of this truthful speech was to shame his opponents because they could not bring an accusation against him. The word “reproach” (ἀκατάγνωστον) means “to not be considered blameworthy.”⁷² Kent argues that all of Titus’ speech “should be such that nothing frivolous or unsound can be discovered in it. Akatagnōston is etymologically ‘not known against,’ and suggests a courtroom where the judge cannot gain knowledge of any kind of flaw. For such persons the plaintiff has no case.”⁷³

Paul exhorts Titus to teach the congregation the importance of their distinct roles in the congregation as men and women. Older men have a profound influence on

⁷⁰ Kent, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 224.

⁷¹ BDAG, s.v. “σεμνότητα,” 919.

⁷² BDAG, s.v. “ἀκατάγνωστον,” 35.

⁷³ Kent, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 224

the congregation because of the depth of their character and perseverance in the faith. Older women must teach the young women in the congregation by both example and direct encouragement. Young men and women are to follow the example and teaching ministries of these more mature Christians in the congregation so that they would model purity and not false teaching. Titus then must guard his life and example while he continually teaches and exhorts this normal pattern of church life.

Practical Implications of Titus 2:1–8 for Marriage Mentoring

As defined earlier, marriage mentoring is the use of a spiritually mature and well-trained couple building a supportive relationship with a younger couple to help them grow in their marriage by sharing wisdom and experience according to biblical teaching. Unlike marriage counseling that tends to be more intensely focused and personally interactive, marriage mentoring builds a relationship to share wisdom and experience by walking alongside a young couple. No text of Scripture supplies both the doctrinal importance and practical outworking of this type of teaching role to young members more than Titus 2:1–8. The older members of the church are to teach and mentor young believers so that they might live productive lives in their homes and church. Several important implications for a mentoring program surface from this text.

Teach with authority. This passage is a contrast to false teachers who, through their heresy, impacted both family and church (Titus 1:11; 3:10–11). Paul told Titus to “speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine” because that type of teaching would have a profound impact on both institutions. Hiebert argues, “Paul here stresses the importance of building up the inner life of believers as the best antidote against error. Sound doctrine must lead to ethical conduct in the lives of all the groups in the congregations. Emphasis falls on the family groups; the false teachers there had

apparently done their greatest damage (1:11).”⁷⁴ Good doctrine always leads to correct practice; therefore, marriage mentors should be taught correct doctrine so that they in turn can communicate to young couples the word of God with boldness and clarity. Mentors will strengthen marriages by teaching them God’s truth so that couples are protected from the errors of false teaching.

Teach by example. Before mentors teach the young marrieds, they must first reflect upon their own walk with Christ. Titus was to teach the older men and women to focus first on their own piety, then they could teach the younger men and women with integrity. The adage “more is caught than taught” is applicable here. The character of life and testimony of the mentor couple is necessary for this ministry. The pastoral epistles consistently reveal that those who teach others must be mindful of themselves to be fruitful in ministry (1 Tim 4:11–12; 1 Tim 6:11–12; 2 Tim 2:19–26; Titus 2:1, 7–8). The emphasis on example is not a call for sinless perfection but rather on consistency in Christian growth. If the standard for mentoring were sinless perfection, no one would qualify to mentor.

Teach with empathy. The mentoring couple should be able to empathize with the young married couple in their situation in life. The Titus’ charge to encourage and train a young couple assumes that mentors seek first to understand a young couple’s situation and then seek to help with humility and compassion (Phil 2:3–5). Les Parrott and Leslie Parrott helpfully describes empathy in mentoring:

Empathy is jumping into the water and risking one’s own safety to help a person who is struggling. And the risk is real. Why? Because empathy will change you. Once you empathize with someone, once you accurately understand what life must be like to be lived in their skin, you’ll ever see that person the same again. You’ll have more patience with them, more grace and compassion for them.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ D. Edmond Hiebert, “Titus,” in vol 11 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), 435.

⁷⁵ Les Parrott and Leslie Parrott, *The Complete Guide to Marriage Mentoring* (Grand Rapids:

Teach with endurance. Mentors should view their relationship with young couples as a marathon and not a sprint. This is not to say that mentors should actively guide the young couple for the entirety of their marriage, but they should view mentorship as more than a one-and-done meeting. The phrase “so that they may encourage” in verse 4 speaks of ongoing action on the part of the older women in “teaching what is good.” The mentors should always be ready in their character and teaching to help a young couple in need.

Conclusion

The Scripture is fully sufficient to assist marriages to honor God. These three passages have set the foundation, roles, and responsibilities for both young marriages and marriage mentoring in the church. Genesis 2:18–25 reveals that God is the author of marriage and has designed marriage to be a permanent, functional partnership. Next, Ephesians 5:22–33 teaches that both the wife and husband have God ordained responsibilities in marriage that can only be accomplished through the power of the Spirit. Last, Titus 2:1–8 is foundational in a mentoring program so the church fulfills its responsibilities to exhort older Christians to assist younger Christians to grow in Christ. By God’s grace and through His word, marriage mentors can minister to young and struggling couples to grow in their relationships and, in turn, glorify God.

Zondervan, 2005), 108.

CHAPTER 3

TRAINING MENTORS TO ASSIST YOUNG COUPLES

The purpose of this chapter is to show that the process of training mentors is the responsibility of the church as the leadership equips them to assist young couples. As the church is responsible for the spiritual growth of its own people, the church is to equip faithful people to serve in the assembly. Training older couples to mentor younger couples fulfills the church's responsibility to disciple young marriages. Before expounding on the training of mentors, several preliminary questions must be answered. First, what is a mentor? Second, why does the church need to equip mentors? Third, how does a mentor function? Fourth, how should the church select mentors?

First, what is a mentor? The term mentor does not appear in the Bible but is certainly rooted in the training relationships of both the Old and New Testaments. Dean Thompson and D. Cameron Murchison frame the idea of mentoring from the Greek word μένω, which can be translated to remain or abide. They explain,

The word *mentor* calls to mind the Greek word *meno*, meaning “to abide” or “to remain.” The mentoring context frequently involves an intimate, committed, continuous, developmental, and reciprocal relationship. This relationship includes a reciprocal availability, where unforced influence and helpfulness take place. To have a mentor who abides and remains available in times of need and in situations of potential growth is to open oneself to life-shaping possibilities.¹

Mentoring relationships exist throughout the Bible. Several examples of mentoring from the Old Testament include Jethro and Moses, Moses and Joshua, Eli and Samuel, and Elijah and Elisha. In the New Testament, examples of mentoring are Jesus

¹ Dean K. Thompson and D. Cameron Murchison, eds., *Mentoring: Biblical, Theological, and Practical Perspectives* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2018), 1, emphasis original.

and the Disciples, Paul and Timothy, Peter and Mark, and Paul and Titus. In each of these relationships, the older person trained a younger person to serve the Lord. In the context of the local church, these types of mentoring relationships should happen between Christian couples. These biblical examples of mentoring provide a pattern for the churches to help develop faithful mentors.²

Second, why does the church need to train mentors? The Apostle Paul taught the church at Ephesus that when Christ ascended into heaven, He gave gifts to the church for their equipping for service (Eph 4:11–13). The offices of apostle and prophet formed the foundation of the church primarily through the revelation of the Scripture (Eph 2:20).³ The offices of evangelist and pastor-teacher enabled the long-term function of the church for the spiritual growth and equipping for service in the local body.⁴ These leaders were given to the church to equip the people to serve so that the overall body would be edified and grow into spiritual maturity. Consequently, the local church is the primary agent to equip God’s people not only to edify each other, but also to encourage one another to grow into Christ (Rom 12:3–8; Eph 4:15–16).⁵

The idea of the word *καταρτισμὸν* (“equipping”) in Ephesians 4:12 is that of

² There is a sense in which mentoring and discipleship are synonymous terms. The idea of discipleship is baptizing people into a local body and teaching them to obey Christ’s commands (Matt 28:18–20). Marriage mentoring then is an aspect of discipleship as qualified couples in the church train young couples how to obey the commands of Christ.

³ The offices of apostle and prophet were revelatory in nature. These men and at times women functioned as channels of revelation for the full New Testament written record and sporadic predictions for the early church. The twelve apostles and Paul represent the gift of apostleship. Agabus and the daughters of Philip represent the New Testament prophet (Acts 11:27–28, 21:9). For an excellent treatment of the foundational nature of apostle and prophet, see Homer A. Kent, *The Glory of the Church: Studies in Ephesians*, rev. ed. (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 2005), 71–72.

⁴ Kent, *The Glory of the Church*, 72–73.

⁵ Parachurch ministries and organizations supply many helpful resources for Christians. Although helpful, these organizations should never replace the church’s mandate to equip and teach God’s word. Because many churches do not take their role of discipleship seriously, people in the church search elsewhere for help and hope for marriages, counseling, and Christian growth. For an excellent defense of the primacy of the local church in equipping and teaching, see Mark Dever, *Discipling: How to Help Others Follow Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 51–57.

preparation or equipping for something.⁶ The leadership in the local church was given the mandate to prepare the saints for serving so that the church would be edified. Kent helps explain this idea of equipping by saying, “This ministering by all believers, as they have been equipped by the gifts just mentioned, is intended to accomplish the building up of the church. Although the idea of numerical growth may be involved, the emphasis in the passage seems to be on the spiritual life and its development.”⁷ The church must take the equipping mandate and convert that into a thorough training program that gives mentors the knowledge and skill necessary for the task. Therefore, the training program must focus on offering mentors a toolbelt of biblical knowledge, practical knowledge, suitable skill, and active problem solving to equip them in the task.⁸

Third, how does a mentor function? The New Testament pattern of mentoring is the preparing of a person to be able to do the work of ministry and share that knowledge with others. Paul models this type of equipping process as he addresses the Ephesian elders for the last time (Acts 20:27–35). Paul equipped those men by admonishing them (v. 31), commending them (v. 32), and showing them how to minister effectively (v. 35). Those elders were then to equip the church at Ephesus to do the work of ministry. Also, Paul calls both Timothy and Titus to duplicate themselves by teaching them that the elders of the church must be able to proclaim to their congregation the word of God and live out the word as an example to the flock (1 Tim 3:2; 4:11–16; Titus 1:9). Newton says, “The local church provides the most consistent atmosphere for this kind of tailored approach in mentoring since, as happened with the Twelve and the Seventy, it includes mentoring in the context of community.”⁹

⁶ BDAG, s.v. “καταρτισμὸν,” 526.

⁷ Kent, *The Glory of the Church*, 73–74, emphasis original.

⁸ The idea of the term “toolbelt” for mentors was from my senior pastor, David Doran. He thought that giving mentors many “tools” (resources) would give them the help necessary for good mentoring.

⁹ Phil A. Newton, *The Mentoring Church: How Pastors and Congregations Cultivate Leaders*

Another picture in the New Testament is found in Titus 2. In this chapter, Paul exhorts Titus to equip the older and more mature groups of people in the church to minister to the younger. Paul directs Titus to “speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine” to these groups of people in the congregation (v. 1). Titus was to teach these “things” because sound doctrine is to be lived out in the lives of the congregation. For example, the pattern for a church from Titus 2 is that the leadership would equip the older women to train the younger women to practice the doctrine they learned. The older women, much like the older men, were instructed in the principle of love (vv. 2–3) so that they could train younger women to pattern this love in their home to their husband and children (v. 4).

Mentoring relationships should reflect a life–touching–another–life model. Paul told the church at Corinth to imitate him as he imitated Christ (1 Cor 4:16; 11:1). The best mentors are those who model Christlikeness and encourage young couples to follow along. Newton comments, “Effective mentoring does not take place from behind a lectern as much as in life-on-life relationships.”¹⁰ Paul says that Scripture was given so “that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:17). Therefore, mentors assist young couples by sharing lessons gleaned through life experiences, encouraging them to obey Scripture and giving loving exhortations to work through problems biblically.

Fourth, how should the church select mentors? The selection of mentors is a part of the equipping mandate given to the church for the work of ministry; therefore, the church should choose mentors wisely based on the evaluation of their character. Even the corporate world understands the importance of character in leading and guiding people. In the book *The Leadership Challenge*, James Kouzes and Barry Posner surveyed over

(Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2017), 33.

¹⁰ Newton, *The Mentoring Church*, 181.

one thousand managers around America and asked, “What values (personal traits or characteristics) do you look for and admire in your superiors?”¹¹ They reported that “the most frequent responses, in order of mention, were (1) integrity (is truthful, is trustworthy, has character, has convictions), (2) competence (is capable, is productive, is efficient), and (3) leadership (is inspiring, is decisive, provides direction).”¹² So, the church should choose mentors based primarily on their proven character and what they are capable of accomplishing in a marriage mentoring program.

For example, potential mentors should be competent for the task.

Competency means that they are able to become mentors because they have something to offer to the young couple by way of a visibly healthy marriage. Parrott and Parrott say that mentors do not have to be perfect, “but marriage mentors are models of behavior. If you do not demonstrate a relatively healthy marriage, you become part of the problem rather than the solution.”¹³ Some potential mentors might refuse to participate in an equipping program because they feel inadequate for the task. Past or current struggles in marriage, feelings of hypocrisy, a lack of education, and a lack of knowledge may lead to feelings of inadequacy. Mentors need reminding that no one is adequate for the task of ministry, but through the strength and confidence that God provides, ministry to struggling couples can happen. Second Corinthians 3:4–5 says, “And such confidence we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God.”

Also, mentors should live visibly godly lives as examples to the congregation. The New Testament emphasizes the importance of godly character in

¹¹ James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge: How to Get Extraordinary Things Done in Organizations* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1987), 16.

¹² Kouzes and Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, 16.

¹³ Les Parrott and Leslie Parrott, *The Complete Guide to Marriage Mentoring* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 40.

ministry. Paul taught Timothy that cultivating godliness is the key to effective ministry (2 Tim 2:20–22). Sinless perfection is not a requirement for effective ministry in the church; rather, God requires faithfulness in personal stewardship (1 Cor 4:1–2), purity in word and deed (1 Tim 4:16; 2 Tim 2:22–23), and humility in service (1 Pet 5:1–5). Leaders who select mentors that are competent and godly set a good foundation for success with the overall program, enabling the program to continue in the future.

In the selection process, the leadership should evaluate potential mentors asking several questions. First, are the potential mentoring couples known for wise stewardship of their money and resources? The character of the mentors should be known in the church body as those who have been faithful with the resources God has given. Second, are the potential mentors known to the congregation as those who use their words wisely and live what they say? If mentoring couples are known to be gossips or hypocrites, then the ministry to young couples would be greatly hindered. Third, are the mentors known for their service in the local body? Potential mentors should be evaluated by their personal service to the church and others. Are they currently ministering in specific ways? Do they exercise their spiritual gifts for the benefit of the body of Christ? This selection process is important to choose qualified mentors to train young couples in a God honoring way. The next section will seek to train qualified mentors with skills to assist young couples.

Training Mentors with Skills to Develop Christlike Character Traits to Assist Young Couples

When mentoring has been defined, the function of the mentor is described, and godly and competent mentors are chosen, then the leadership of the church can train the mentors effectively. This section seeks to train mentors to identify important Christlike character traits and demonstrate them to life situations.

Training Mentors to Identify Christlike Character Traits

The goal of training mentors is to develop Christlike character in both the mentors and those they assist. Paul says, “until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ” (Eph 4:13). Therefore, five qualities were chosen to serve as benchmarks of Christlike character traits that church leaders can identify and communicate to mentors.

The first characteristic of a Christlike couple is their commitment to glorify God. A mature marriage is one that remembers that God is to be glorified in all things (Rom 11:36; Eph 3:21). Douglas Wilson centers Christian marriage in God’s glory by saying, “A mature Christian is one who understands that it is the duty of all human creatures to glorify God in all things. It therefore stands to reason that a mature Christian man will be a mature husband. Likewise, a mature Christian woman will be a mature wife. *Maturity in the Lord is a prerequisite to maturity in marriage.*”¹⁴ God must be at the center of all things in marriage (Eph 3:19) because He defines what marriage is and what the couple is to practice (Eph 5:22–33; Col 3:18–19). Harvey adds, “When we begin to orient our marriages around biblical truth, we see something amazing. Marriage was not just *invented* by God, it *belongs* to God. He has a unique claim over its design, purpose, and goals. It actually exists for him *more* than it exists for you and me and our spouses.”¹⁵

Second, a Christlike couple loves sacrificially. Jesus said, “Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). Jesus said that a person’s love is gauged by the amount of sacrifice for the one loved. Applied to the

¹⁴ Douglas Wilson, *Reforming Marriage* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 1995), 11–12, emphasis original.

¹⁵ Dave Harvey, *When Sinners Say “I Do”*: *Discovering the Power of the Gospel for Marriage* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 2007), 25, emphasis original.

marriage relationship, marital love is complete self-sacrifice in the forsaking of all other people and serving each other. Furthermore, marital love must be rooted in God's love. John said, "Jesus said that the second greatest commandment is to 'love your neighbor as yourself'" (Matt 22:39). In marriage, the wife or husband is the nearest neighbor and is owed the love that Jesus commands. Paul says, "And walk in love, just as Christ also love you, and gave Himself up for us an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma" (Eph 5:2). Spouses show sacrificial love when they give up their wants and desires to serve the other person as Christ modeled (Phil 2:1–3).

Third, a couple with Christlike character deals with sin quickly and correctly.¹⁶ A good example of sin that couples face regularly in marriage is conflict. Conflict is inevitable when two sinners live together, so couples must learn to deal with this sin as quickly as possible. Paul says, "Be angry, and *yet* do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity" (Eph 4:26–27; emphasis added). Paul instructs believers to keep short accounts with each other by dealing with sin at the earliest possible moment. If the sin of anger is not immediately dealt with, the devil can gain an opportunity to tempt the couple to further sin. Kent says, "Unrestrained anger . . . allows Satan to work through the *old man* and entice us to sin because so often our anger is not righteous."¹⁷ Kent also argues, "The devil needs only the slightest place to begin operations, and from that point he is fully able to produce the utmost havoc. How many Christians have lost their testimony as they have allowed the evil one to exploit their anger into the most unseemly viciousness!"¹⁸

Fourth, a Christlike couple must edify each other. Paul says, "Let no

¹⁶ David Doran, "The Certainty of Radical Change" (Lecture, Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, Allen Park, MI, Fall 2015), 3.

¹⁷ Kent, *The Glory of the Church*, 86, emphasis original.

¹⁸ Kent, *The Glory of the Church*, 87.

unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification, according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear” (Eph 4:29). Edification seeks to build each other up while inappropriate speech seeks to tear one another down. Young couples need to be reminded that their speech to one another is so important because it is a means of grace for the spouse to grow. Young couples should not use speech that is sarcastic, cutting, or inappropriate. When an issue arises between the couple and must be dealt with by confrontation, a good rule for couples to be taught to practice is a three-for-one principle. For every one thing that needs to be confronted, the spouse should at least encourage the other person at least three times. Proverbs 15:23 says, “A man has joy in an apt answer, And how delightful is a timely word.” An encouraging and uplifting word is indeed a great value to the other person (Prov 25:11).

Last, a Christlike couple must be committed to forgiving each other. Couples should forgive each other because “*forgiven sinners forgive sin.*”¹⁹ Paul supports this statement rooting relational forgiveness with the forgiveness that God gives to people through Christ (Eph 4:32). Mentors must teach the importance of forgiveness in marriage because of its foundational implications for their relationship with Christ and each other. Those who will not forgive their spouse are reflecting a heart that will not submit to Christ’s teaching and example. Couples learn to forgive by focusing on two things. First, couples should always have an attitude of forgiveness toward each other. Jesus and Stephen are New Testament examples of those who had an attitude of forgiveness even when there was no reciprocal repentance (Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60). This attitude of forgiveness should be present even when one spouse does not ask for forgiveness. It also helps the spouse who forgives not to be bitter after being sinned against.²⁰

¹⁹ Harvey, *When Sinners Say “I Do,”* 100, emphasis original.

²⁰ Robert D. Jones, *Pursuing Peace: A Christian Guide to Handling Our Conflicts* (Wheaton,

Second, couples should always forgive when their spouse asks for forgiveness. Jesus says, “Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ forgive him” (Luke 17:3–4). Applied to marriage, a spouse is to forgive every time there is confession of the sin. Subsequently, the sin is covered and not brought up again (1 Cor 13:5; 1 Pet 4:8).

Training Mentors to Demonstrate Christlike Character Traits

The church must train mentors not only to identify and teach Christlike character traits but must also demonstrate what these traits look like in life. Jonathan Holmes notes that “Christlike change is particular, measurable, and observable. It’s a change in the tone of voice when a wife responds to a husband’s tardy arrival at dinner. It’s the pausing for prayer before shooting off a mean-spirited text. It’s the desire to share what you are learning from God’s word in your personal devotional time.”²¹ This section will practically demonstrate the previous character traits to the young couple.

First, Mentors must show young couples that a Christlike marriage centers itself in living for God’s glory (Rom 11:36; 1 Cor 10:31). When marital difficulties arise, a wise mentor will first direct the couple back to their relationship with God. A mentor may ask these questions: How did you deal with the difficulty initially? Did God fill your thoughts upon the first level of provocation, or did you rely on your own thoughts? Did the couple turn to God in confession and repentance and then turn toward each other? Couples must first be right with God before they can be right with one another. Tripp helpfully says,

IL: Crossway, 2012), 134–5.

²¹ Jonathan D. Holmes, *Counsel for Couples: A Biblical and Practical Guide for Marriage Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), 36.

I have become more and more persuaded that marriages are fixed vertically before they are ever fixed horizontally. We have to deal with what is driving us before we ever deal with how we are reacting to one another. Every relationship is victimized in some way when we seek to get from the surrounding creation what we were designed to get from God. When God is in his rightful place, then we are on the way to putting people in their rightful place.²²

Second, sacrificial love in marriage is usually not revealed until it is tested by the problems and stresses of life. Growing together in love as a couple during difficult times is evidenced in how a spouse sacrifices to serve the other. Answering these questions can be helpful: How did the couple serve each other when the difficult time arose? Did the couple separate from each other during the difficulty or did they draw near to each other? Mentors need to point couples back to a biblical love that is not feeling-oriented as the world portrays but is commitment-oriented toward doing the best thing for the person loved. God's love through Christ is the chief example of this type of sacrificial love (John 3:16; Rom 5:8).²³

Third, dealing with anger quickly in marriage means never to allow it to linger on and on. No conflict should ever carry on into the next day. Mentors must challenge young couples not to blow up nor clam up about an incident. Also, they should be taught not to scream at each other nor should they give each other the silent treatment. Mentors can evaluate how couples are dealing with sin and sinful responses by asking several questions. For example, how long did your current conflict last? How did you respond initially to each other when the conflict began? How did you respond to God? Mentors can then encourage couples to deal with the sin at the earliest possible moment of conviction by confessing it immediately to God and then to each other (Prov 28:13; 1 John 1:9).

Fourth, mentors must demonstrate ways the young couple can build one

²² Paul David Tripp, *What Did You Expect? Redeeming the Realities of Marriage* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 35–36.

²³ Tripp, *What Did You Expect?*, 188.

another up. The threat of verbal abuse and denigration is real in marriage and needs to be strongly cautioned against. Mentors can challenge the younger couple's level of edifying each other by asking several questions. To the wife, one could ask—How often does your husband compliment your appearance? How often does he pray with you after a difficult day? When was the last time he complimented your meal and the appearance of the home when he got home from work? To the husband, one could ask—How often does your wife thank you for working hard to provide? When was the last time your wife complimented you for completing a project around the home? Young couples need to be taught how to encourage each other in a consistent way. A timely text to say “I love you” or a note before leaving for work stating “I cannot wait to be with you tonight” would encourage and edify.

Last, mentors can gauge the level of forgiveness that the couple grants by asking several questions: To the Wife—When was the last time you asked forgiveness of your husband? Did he grant you forgiveness? Did he bring it up again later? Did he bring it up again to prove a point in an argument? To the Husband—When was the last time you asked forgiveness of your wife? Did she grant you forgiveness? Did she bring it up again later? Did she bring it up again to prove a point in an argument?

Conclusion

The primary point of this section is that the church is responsible to train mentors with skills to develop Christlike character and demonstrate these traits in young couples. Mentors need training to serve young couples in the church and the leadership needs to focus on identifying and demonstrating to the mentors these traits. In the next section, the church will train mentors to recognize crucial biblical principles to assist young couples.

Training Mentors with Skills in Biblical Instruction to Assist Young Couples

The church must train mentors with the skills necessary to instruct young couples biblically. Many biblical principles are important for training mentors in their training ministry, but space will not allow for a development of each biblical principle that applies to marriage. Therefore, this section will focus on training mentors to instruct young couples concerning their roles and responsibilities in marriage. This topic was chosen because of its importance for a God honoring marriage and the amount of New Testament teaching on the subject.

Training Mentors with Skills to Instruct Biblically

Mentors must be trained to instruct couples in their biblical roles and responsibilities. Several passages in the New Testament highlight expectations for the wife and husband to understand God's requirements for their roles in marriage (Eph 5:22–33; Col 3:18–19; 1 Pet 3:1–7). The first set of expectations falls upon the husbands as he both loves and learns his wife. The primary command in the New Testament for husbands is to love their wives (Eph 5:25; Col 3:19). The type of love commanded here has several important characteristics. First, this type of love is compared to the love that Christ had for His church in complete self-sacrifice (Eph 5:25). The young husbands must be taught to sacrifice his wants and needs for the sake of his wife, and to cherish her above all things. Second, this type of love provides for the needs of his wife. The husband must be taught to provide for his wife financially, emotionally, and sexually throughout their marriage. Third, the husband's love must help to sanctify his wife. The husband's role in helping his wife grow spiritually is an excellent display of love. As Christ loved the church and sanctified her through the word, so a husband must be taught to sanctify his wife by helping her understand and grow in the word of God (1 Cor 14:35).

The husband must seek to learn his wife. First Peter 3:7 says, "You husbands

likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.” Peter here commands the husband to understand his wife, and this understanding is accomplished in several ways. First, the point of “weaker vessel” here is not to emphasize physical weakness of the wife but to reveal the preciousness and value of the wife. Scott says, “We are to treat our wives in the way that we would a very delicate and useful vessel. In other words, we are to esteem her as valuable and handle her *carefully*.”²⁴ Second, the husband should understand her status alongside him. Peter says that she is “a fellow heir of the grace of life,” which means she is equal to him. Scott argues that the idea of the passage “would be that the wife is just as much a person as the husband, and therefore, she should be treated with the same dignity and human respect as the husband.”²⁵ Third, the husband should understand the consequences of his disobedience. If he does not live with her in an understanding way, his prayer life is hindered.

The wife’s primary biblical expectation is to submit to her husband. Paul commands the wives to “be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord.” This command is repeated in several parts of the New Testament, which emphasizes its importance in marriage (Eph 5:33; Col 3:18; Titus 2:5; 1 Pet 3:1). Martha Peace explains, “The verb ‘be subject to’ in the Greek is the word *hupotasso*, a military term which means to be ranked under in military order. This ranking of the wife under the husband’s authority was sovereignly chosen by God so that there will be order and harmony in the home.”²⁶ The world does not recognize this type of submission because it does not

²⁴ Stuart Scott, *The Exemplary Husband: A Biblical Perspective*, rev. ed. (Bemidji, MN: Focus, 2002), 199, emphasis original.

²⁵ Scott, *The Exemplary Husband*, 200.

²⁶ Martha Peace, *The Excellent Wife: A Biblical Perspective* (Bemidji, MN: Focus, n.d.), 138–39, emphasis original.

recognize the difference between the essence of the relationship versus the function of the relationship. The Trinity serves as the best example of the difference between essence and function. The Trinity is equal in essence (Matt 28:19; 2 Cor 13:14), but distinct in function (Luke 22:42; John 14:16–17, 26; 15:26–27; 1 Cor 11:3). Therefore, as the Son and the Spirit function by subordination, so the wife must function in a subordinate role to her husband.

After the biblical knowledge of the roles and responsibilities in marriage is acquired, leaders must show mentors how to demonstrate their practical knowledge of the subject. For example, if the husband is to love his wife, what is the best way for him to do that? If the wife is to submit to her husband, what would that look like in the home? Mentors need to be trained to offer young couples practical assistance to live out their roles and responsibilities toward Christlikeness.

Another example is helping the mentor to be prepared for expected issues that confront every early marriage. Parrott and Parrott say, “Every couple, regardless of how well prepared or how long they have dated before getting married, runs into some predictable issues. And every marriage mentor who is focusing on this state must be well versed in these areas.”²⁷ One of these predictable issues that Parrott and Parrott cite are the roles and responsibilities the couple has towards one another.²⁸ As the couple wrestles through the appropriate applications of love and submission to each other, the mentors must be ready to assist.

Mentors should also be trained with aids for are listening and questioning young couples about their roles and responsibilities. First, mentors must develop the ability to listen to the couple’s problems with their roles and responsibilities. Proverbs

²⁷ Parrott and Parrott, *The Complete Guide to Marriage Mentoring*, 59.

²⁸ Parrott and Parrott, *The Complete Guide to Marriage Mentoring*, 59. The Parrott’s suggest that mentors help the couple list out all of the roles and responsibilities the young couple’s family of origin did (mother or father) and then delegate who will do those tasks in their home.

15:14 says, “The mind of the intelligent seeks knowledge, But the mouth of fools feeds on folly.” A wise mentor will listen to the fulness of the issue before guiding the couple. Proverbs 18:13 says, “He who gives an answer before he hears, It is folly and shame to him.” Listening skills will prevent the mentors from prescribing action before a thoughtful diagnosis of the dilemma can be made.

Second, learning how to ask good questions will enable the mentors to understand the couple’s issues with their roles and responsibilities. Asking “Why?” questions framed as “What?” questions can help the mentor determine the direction of the young couple’s motives.²⁹ A good example of questions to ask a young couple concerning their roles are as follows: “*Where do you find your identity? How do you define who you are?*”³⁰ Often the couple’s identity is not defined by what God’s word says about their proper roles and responsibilities, and this acknowledgement can help the mentor know what to address in a session.

As the mentors are teaching the young couples about their roles and responsibilities, several problems may arise during mentoring sessions. The first problem—what if the mentors are asked questions that they don’t know the answer to? The young couple may ask a question about how their roles and responsibilities in marriage relate to the Trinity. When asked this type of question, mentors may need to seek outside help for an answer. In addition to the mentoring classes, helpful resources for the mentors to read could help them answer this type of question. Parrott and Parrott advise, “When you have a question you’re not sure how to answer, one of your best resources might be a pastor, a counselor, or a friend. Or maybe another marriage mentor. In fact, many mentors find it helpful to meet from time to time with other mentors and share ideas for

²⁹ David Powlison, *Seeing with New Eyes: Counseling and the Human Condition through the Lens of Scripture* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2003), 132.

³⁰ Powlison, *Seeing with New Eyes*, 140, emphasis original.

this very reason.”³¹ A second problem arises if a couple’s issues are beyond the mentor’s ability to help. Parrott and Parrott say, “Every effective marriage mentor knows that he or she is not equipped to handle every situation. You may be expertly trained, have a wealth of experience, keep current with research, and routinely pray for wisdom. But there are occasions when a mentoree couple needs assistance that a mentor simply cannot give.”³² For example, if the husband has been immoral or the wife is stubbornly rebellious, the couple may need to be referred to someone else for help.

Training Mentors with Skills to Demonstrate Biblical Instruction

One of the clearest ways for mentors to demonstrate biblical instruction is by sharing personal life lessons with young couples in an open and honest way. In sharing life lessons, mentors must display transparency with them both in word and deed. Leaders should direct mentors to share their own struggles in dealing with their own roles and responsibilities in marriage and to share their own mistakes and successes regarding role expectations. This humble vulnerability helps mentors realize that their openness displays to others that they also have struggles with particular issues (1 Cor 10:13).

The mentor as a coach should demonstrate pointing to the Bible as the framework for couples to fulfill their roles and responsibilities together. Parrott and Parrott say, “Every new couple comes into a marriage with what we call ‘unconscious role expectations.’ These are powerful expectations held by a bride and groom of exactly what a loving husband or wife should say, do, and think.”³³ Mentors must understand that demonstrating role expectations from the Scriptures establishes a pattern for other couples to follow. For example, older women in the church should model and teach the

³¹ Parrott and Parrott, *The Complete Guide to Marriage Mentoring*, 148.

³² Parrott and Parrott, *The Complete Guide to Marriage Mentoring*, 200.

³³ Parrott and Parrott, *The Complete Guide to Marriage Mentoring*, 60.

younger women the importance of submission in marriage because submission is primarily for the Lord (Eph 5:22; Col 3:18). The younger wives need to be taught that submission to their husbands is not becoming a “door mat,” nor are all the decisions solely his to make. The wife also needs to be taught that submission to God is first and to the husband second; this priority guards the wife from submitting to her husband if he asks her to sin or do something against her conscience (Acts 5:29).

At times the mentor must exhort or confront a young couple for going in an unbiblical direction concerning their roles (Gal 6:1). Perhaps the wife is not submitting to her husband regarding a decision he has made. The mentors should lovingly exhort the wife to submit to the decision the husband has made in a spirit of meekness (1 Pet 3:4). Also, if the husband is not sacrificially loving his wife, then he must be exhorted to confess his sin to God and his wife (Eph 5:25).

Conclusion

Roles and responsibilities in marriage are one of the main matters that young couples face, and mentors need training both biblically and practically to handle these matters. Church leaders must train mentors to be skilled in handling God’s word so they in turn can assist young couples to obey the Bible and to deal with issues that arise in their marriage. In the last section, leaders will train mentors with the skill necessary to share practical wisdom to a young couple.

Training Mentors with Skills to Dispense Practical Wisdom to Assist Young Couples

The leadership of the church must train mentors in skills to “have their senses trained to discern good and evil” in matters of daily living (Heb 5:14). The practice of personal wisdom focuses on God’s perspective and acts accordingly, and that type of wisdom centers in the book of Proverbs. Kidner defines wisdom from the book of Proverbs as follows, “wisdom as taught here [Proverbs] is God-centered, and even when

it is most down-to-earth it consists in the shrewd and sound handling of one's affairs in God's world, in submission to His will."³⁴

In every marriage, wisdom is required for matters not explicitly commanded in the Scripture. Some of the areas needing practical wisdom is for navigating in-laws, finances, work schedules, romance, holidays, and family traditions.³⁵ Married couples can find biblical principles concerning these issues, but how to apply these principles to life's tricky situations requires help. Every issue that a couple faces cannot be dealt with in this paper, so this section will train mentors in practical skills concerning financial decisions. This topic was chosen because of the prevalence of influence and problems finances introduce to marriages.

Training Mentors to Understand Important Practical Skills

Finances can bring great strain into a marriage. Parrott and Parrott say, "Money has always provided plenty of fodder for marital discord. It is, after all, the most common source of conflict between couples."³⁶ Mentors need to be well-equipped with a God-centered view of finances. God says much about money, both how to manage it well and the consequences of mishandling it. Advice about money comes from many different sources today, and much of that advice may be somewhat helpful; but the primary advice needs to be God-centered and not man-centered. Several principles help keep God at the center of a mentor's mindset about money. First, God blesses those who keep him first with their money (Prov 3:9–10; 1 Tim 6:17). Second, money exposes the heart's true loyalty (Matt 6:24; 1 Tim 6:10). Third, money exposes the heart's true motivations (Prov

³⁴ Derek Kidner, *Proverbs*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1964), 13–14.

³⁵ Several of these topics taken from Parrott and Parrott, *The Complete Guide to Marriage Mentoring*, 63–68.

³⁶ Parrott and Parrott, *The Complete Guide to Marriage Mentoring*, 63.

28:22; 1 Tim 6:9), Fourth, money should be used for God’s glory and His purposes (2 Cor 9:12–15).

God expects His people to handle their money as wise stewards of what He has given. Green says, “As a steward of all that God has given you, it is your responsibility and joy to consider how Jesus, your Master, would want you to use those resources. God entrusts you with everything you have: your intellect, your abilities, your skills, and the money those things produce.”³⁷ Stewards must use money in several ways. First, stewards should give to God and others (2 Cor 8:1–5; 1 Tim 6:18). Second, stewards must save money for future needs and emergencies (Prov 6:6–8). Last, stewards should spend money wisely and for enjoyment (1 Tim 6:17).

The mishandling and misuse of money causes many problems in marriage. Parrott and Parrott say, “Money is also the catalyst for marital conflict because it so often represents the measure of personal success and self-worth—especially for men. Of course, having a certain amount of money is no guarantee of security or freedom, but believing that making more money will give us more peace of mind is a trap many couples fall into.”³⁸ The misuse of money leads to several consequences. First, when money is mishandled, it disappears quickly (Prov 23:4–5). Second, money reveals a greedy heart that brings severe consequences (Prov 28:22; 1 Tim 6:9–10). Last, the success of a person or of a marriage is not measured by money (Luke 12:15).

Mentors need to be trained to use wisdom with their finances and in turn teach others. Being well-acquainted with financial plans will help mentors influence couples toward financial responsibility. Many financial plans have been developed, but perhaps the best plan is offered by Dave Ramsey’s baby steps program. Dave Ramsey’s steps are as follows:

³⁷ Green, *Tying the Knot*, 96.

³⁸ Parrott and Parrott, *The Complete Guide to Marriage Mentoring*, 63.

1. \$1000 in an emergency fund; 2. Pay off all debt (except the house) utilizing the 'Debt Snowball'; 3. Three to six months expenses in savings for emergencies; 4. Fully fund 15 percent into pre-tax retirement plans and ROTH IRA, if eligible; 5. College funding; 6. Pay off home early; Build wealth! (Mutual funds and real estate).³⁹

These steps will help mentors be organized with their money and set an excellent example for others to follow.

Leaders must train mentors to ask appropriate questions of mentorees. The first thing to determine is a couple's situation in life. Example questions include the following: What are your current occupations? What are your current spending habits? Do you currently have a budget? Do you follow the budget? These questions help form a basic understanding of the financial situation. Second, to determine what formed their understanding of finances, these questions should be asked: Who shaped your understanding of finances the most? What parent was responsible for financial decisions? What types of financial burdens did you grow up in? Many of these questions not only train the mentor to understand the background of the couple's situation, but also how the couple currently views finances.

Leaders must also train mentors to deal with problems that arise with finances. First, how should a mentor guide the young couple when they disagree with a budget? For example, how should they prioritize bills to pay? Second, If the couple is deeply in debt before the marriage starts, how should they begin paying off their debts? Mentors must seek to understand each couple within the context of their lives and apply wise advice to help remedy their situation.

³⁹ Dave Ramsey, *The Money Answer Book: Quick Answers to Your Everyday Financial Questions* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 12. Ramsey seems to advocate a self-serving approach in baby step 6 by teaching to build wealth. He clarifies his intention by adding a seventh baby step which states, "build wealth and give." See "What Are the Baby Steps?" Dave Ramsey's 7 Baby Steps, accessed May 3, 2019, <http://www.daveramsey.com/dave-ramsey-7-baby-steps?snid=start.steps>. For other helpful resources, see Ron Blue, *Master Your Money: A Step-By-Step Plan for Financial Freedom*, rev. ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997), and Larry Burkett, *How to Manage Your Money: An In-Depth Personal Bible Study on Personal Finances* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2002).

Training Mentors to Demonstrate Important Practical Skills

Training mentors to apply financial decisions requires understanding and empathy. Every couple has made unwise decisions about money, and the mentor must be able to offer real help. Mentors can share life lessons with a young couple in several ways. First, mentors can share their own struggles with finances. Offering specific, personal struggles and mistakes regarding money decisions can help the couple understand that they are not alone in this struggle (1 Cor 10:13). Second, mentors can share their experience with budgeting and how to prioritize financial decisions. Many couples do not share the same priorities with budgeting, so the mentors can help arbitrate main priorities for consideration. Last, mentors can model establishing a budget and showing the benefits of it and showing them how to establish a budget. Setting a budget helps prioritize spending habits and helps the mentor communicate its importance to others.

Leaders must encourage mentors to teach biblical principles of finance in several ways. First, they must be encouraged to teach giving to the Lord first. Young couples need to be trained in biblical giving and generosity. Green says,

Remember, everything belongs to the Lord. Theologically, there is no such thing as “your money.” Instead, you are stewarding God’s resources for his honor and glory. Part of that stewardship is giving, especially to your local church. Regular and sacrificial giving is the means God uses to provide for the needs associated with ministry. Giving is also an opportunity to tangibly express thanks for all that the Lord has done for you.⁴⁰

The sacrifice of giving is important for the young couple to embrace because it displays their priority to serve the Lord first. Second, mentors must be encouraged to give wise advice about planning for future things like a rainy-day fund, long-term investments, college planning, and debt avoidance. These things need to be taught to young couples so that long-term planning is seen as the wisest financial move a marriage can make (Prov

⁴⁰ Green, *Tying the Knot*, 103.

6:6–8).

Mentors must be encouraged to gently exhort young couples to obey God regarding finances. A good rule for mentors is as follows: if they see something, they should say something. First, if the mentors observe a couple refusing to maintain a budget, then they should lovingly warn them of danger of such an action. Mentors need to gently remind the couple that their resources are not their own because God owns everything; they are merely stewarding what God has entrusted to them (1 Cor 4:1–2). Second, mentors must be trained to exhort couples to take debt seriously. Solomon taught that wisdom is evidenced by how seriously a couple seeks to repay creditors and get out of debt (Prov 6:1–5). Third, mentors need to warn of the temporal and eternal consequences of greed (1 Tim 6:8–10). Green says, “Greed is often at the forefront of debt. It is an attitude of the heart that is unwilling to wait or to do without, so debt is often a part of the equation. Money and possessions cannot buy happiness. That is why you must be so diligent to avoid greed.”⁴¹

Conclusion

Mentors can be a great source of encouragement and wisdom for young couples. Handling money is an important issue for young couples and mentors must be trained to assist them to live out financial wisdom. The philosophy of the day is to get what one desires now, instead of patiently waiting for those things. Encouraging mentors to teach and model basic biblical principles of finance and to heed sound wisdom will help build stronger marriages and ensure a financial peace that will foster Christlikeness.

⁴¹ Green, *Tying the Knot*, 99.

CHAPTER 4

IMPLEMENTING THE MARRIAGE MENTOR TRAINING PROGRAM

The purpose of this project was to develop a biblically-based marriage mentoring training program at the Inter-City Baptist Church (ICBC) that results in the equipping of mentors to assist newer marriages. The first three chapters of this paper established the need, the biblical foundation, and overall process for training marriage mentors at ICBC. The purpose of this chapter is to review the intended goals that were necessary to accomplish the mentoring training and the steps taken to accomplish the project. The project implementation began on August 16, 2019, and concluded on November 18, 2019. This chapter argues that I reached the goals for the project and that my ministry project was a success.

History of the Ministry Project

When my pastor asked me to study for a Doctor of Ministry degree in biblical counseling at Southern Seminary, my initial thought was to choose a project that would enhance my current ministry at Inter-City Baptist High School (ICBHS). I proposed to him either a discipleship project for the students at the school or a counseling methodology for high school students. His thoughts on the project were much different. He asked me in the fall of 2017 to begin thinking about a marriage mentoring training project to help the younger couples in our church. I then began researching everything I could find on marriage mentoring and found that there were only a few solid evangelical resources available. After settling on the idea of a mentoring project, I reviewed a very helpful Doctor of Ministry project from Western Seminary in Portland, Oregon, which set

a basic framework for my thinking on the project.¹ I then began writing down my initial proposal to my pastor and for my contextualized writing seminar.

Structuring the Ministry Project

Upon receiving all of the approvals for the first three chapters of my project from my advisor and the ethics committee, I began planning out the structure of my class. The fall ministry calendar provided the opportunity to implement my ministry project in the context of the available ministries at ICBC. I chose to train the mentors on Monday nights in a nine-week format. I chose this format for two reasons. First, ICBC reserves Monday nights for our Bible Institute, which excludes other main activities from being scheduled on that night (e.g., athletic games for high school and other church ministries). Second, when I designed the goals and format of the class, I understood that a nine-week segment would work well to facilitate the mentors with the primary topics and methodology necessary to begin mentoring. My understanding was confirmed when I surveyed several Adult Bible Fellowship (ABF) classes from our church and found that the adults selected a few primary topics that should have priority for mentor training.

I chose a discussion format for each class session rather than a lecture format. I wanted to lead the discussion but not dominate the delivery of the curriculum. Since this project was a new ministry in our church, I wanted to glean the wisdom of the mentor couples to develop the applications for each of the lessons of the curriculum. I had the mentoring couples prepare each week by learning a memory verse and reading a chapter from a marriage preparation book, as well as read and answer questions from the curriculum I developed.

¹ James Patrick Curtis, Jr., “A Marriage Mentor Program for the Local Church” (DMin diss., Western Seminary, 2004).

Preparation for Training Mentors

The preparation process to train mentors involved three parts, namely, collecting the data, writing the curriculum, and selecting the mentors. Each of these parts accomplished three goals necessary to accomplish the project.

Data Collection

The first goal of this project was to assess the perception of marriage mentoring at ICBC. To accomplish this goal, I designed the Married Couples Survey (MCS) that asked six questions regarding the varied members' perception of marriage mentoring. I designed the questions to understand whether the congregation saw the need for a mentoring ministry at ICBC and what types of topics a mentoring ministry must address. I pilot-tested the survey with ten people to determine how long the survey would take and what question editing needed to be done. I wanted the survey to take no more than five minutes because I was giving the survey to three ABF classes and did not want to take too much time from the teacher. The pilot test took approximately five minutes to take according to the respondents, so I did not edit the survey for length. I did consolidate several listing questions upon recommendation because they seemed redundant. I removed anger from the list of issues that couples face because there was already a category for conflict resolution. On the survey I also combined the roles of husband and wife.

I talked with three ABF teachers at ICBC and asked for permission to give their class the surveys. I gave the MCS to three ABF teachers on Sunday, August 25, for their classes to complete anonymously during the scheduled class time. I received 63 surveys back from the teachers, which fulfilled my first project goal by compiling at least 50 surveys. I used Likert items to determine the perceived need for the mentoring program. The MCS revealed a need for a marriage mentoring ministry with an average perceived need of 5.33 out of 6 on the Likert scale. The MCS also revealed the priorities of topics to train the mentors. I asked the respondents to rank the importance of each

topic from 1 (most important) to 10 (least important). The lower the total score for the topic equaled the order of importance for mentoring. The results of the MCS informed my curriculum by showing the priorities of topics to teach to the marriage mentors.²

Table 1 reveals the order of priority for each topic.

Table 1. Priorities of topics for mentor training

Topic and Rank	Score
1. Communication	137
2. Conflict resolution	180
3. Expectations in marriage	212
4. Roles for the husband and wife	214
5. Forgiveness	215
6. Finances	222
7. Intimacy	273
8. In-law issues	313
9. Parenting issues	331
10. Long-term goals	412

Curriculum Writing

The second goal of this project was to develop a nine-session curriculum to train mentors. I began writing the curriculum in August 2019 and finished September 22, 2019. I began constructing the lessons before receiving my ethics committee confirmation on August 14, 2019. I began building the curriculum before ethics approval

² Although I received 63 surveys from the ABF teachers, the ranking for the survey is based on 47 surveys received. I only used 47 because 16 respondents did not fill out the form correctly. Also, I did include a category labeled “other.” I did not include this in table 1 because only a few respondents wrote in additional issues. Some of the additional issues included (1) Children, (2) Balancing personal and family time, and (3) Dealing with past hurts and wrongs.

and beginning goal one because the first four lessons focused on introductory and methodological items, both of which were not needed to fulfill the first goal.

I structured the first two lessons to answer the question—Why are we training mentoring couples? I used chapters 2 and 3 of this ministry project to write the introduction and biblical-theological sections of the curriculum. The next two lessons answered the question of methodology, namely, how are we going to approach marriage mentoring? In those lessons, I again used chapter 3 of this paper to inform the methodology of the curriculum. The last five lessons applied the methodology to specific topics that mentors would be trained to handle. In those lessons, I used the MCS to inform what topics to cover and emphasize in the teaching of the curriculum. The curriculum is titled “Marriage Mentoring Training Syllabus.”³

Lesson 1, titled “Introduction: The Foundations for Marriage Mentoring,” sets the foundation for the mentor training. The primary goals for Lesson 1 was to introduce the need for marriage mentoring, root this new ministry in ICBC’s philosophy of ministry, and explain what attributes a Christlike couple should manifest in their marriage.

Lesson 2, titled “Biblical and Theological Foundations,” reinforced the need to ground the curriculum in the clear exegesis of Scripture. The goal for this lesson was to root the mentoring ministry in three foundational texts: Genesis 2:18–25, Ephesians 5:22–33, and Titus 2:1–8 respectively.

Lesson 3, titled “Methodology: Building a Relationship with Your Couple,” addressed how to build a mentoring relationship with a young couple. In this lesson, I focused on strategies for developing a strong relationship with the young couple. I focused on fervent prayer, empathy, humility, and personal listening and questioning skills.

³ For the full syllabus, see appendix 7.

Lesson 4, titled “Methodology: A Mentoring Focus and Framework,” furthered the methodology of mentoring by focusing on the sufficiency of Scripture, progressive sanctification, and a mentoring framework. The framework is a “toolbelt” for mentors to offer different options for mentoring sessions.

Lesson 5, titled “Training Mentors to Help Young Couples Understand and Live Their Roles and Responsibilities in Marriage,” focused on training mentors to apply the mentoring framework to the roles and responsibilities God has given in marriage. I emphasized the importance of obeying texts like Ephesians 5 and 1 Peter 3, and I gleaned practical principles from these texts to apply to marriage.

Lesson 6, titled “Training Mentors to Help Young Couples Understand How to Handle Communication in Marriage,” emphasized the importance of godly communication. In this lesson, I applied the mentoring framework by teaching mentors the biblical principles of communication, which grounds marriages firmly in a God-centered relationship.

Lesson 7, titled “Training Mentors to Help Young Couples Understand How to Handle Conflict Resolution,” focused on the causes and cures for conflict in marriage. Mentors have a great opportunity to redirect a young couple’s focus back to sacrificial love, while honoring and cherishing each other during seasons of conflict.

Lesson 8, titled “Training Mentors to Understand How to Help Young Couples with Their Finances,” equipped mentors to guide a young couple through the practical handling of their finances. I focused in this lesson on the importance of godly stewardship in helping the mentorees establish godly financial practices.

Lesson 9, titled “Troubleshooting and Dealing with Problems That Couples Present to Mentors,” dealt with potential problems the mentoring couple may need to work through. Because each mentoring situation is different, I wanted to train mentors on how to deal with difficulties that they may encounter.

In each of the lessons, I included essential questions for the mentoring couples

to answer throughout the week and during class time. At the end of each lesson, I provided a verse for the mentors to memorize, asked them to read the next lesson, and asked them to read a chapter from the chosen textbook for the following week. I chose *Tying the Knot* by Rob Green for the mentors to work through. I chose this book because many of the young couples at our church who went through pre-marital counseling at ICBC read it. I also supplied three appendices at the end of the curriculum to help with different areas of need. The first appendix supplies mentors with a list of questions to help enhance their mentoring sessions. The second appendix offers mentors a reading list to enhance their understanding of helpful topics in marriage. The third appendix offers suggestions for the initial mentoring session and guidance for subsequent meetings.

I completed the curriculum in two phases. On August 26 I sent the first four lessons to my expert panel for review. I received the lessons back from two of three experts and made the edits they recommended. I continued writing the curriculum and sent the last five lessons to the expert panel on September 22. As I received back the suggestions from the expert panel, I made the edits they recommended. My expert panel consisted of my senior pastor, an associate pastor, and a high school administrator.

The first person on my expert panel is a longtime mentor and the current senior pastor of ICBC. He holds a DMin from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and is also the President of Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary (DBTS). I chose him to be on my panel because of his role in starting a marriage mentoring project. He asked me when I began my doctoral studies to consider doing my project on marriage mentoring, and I gladly embraced his vision to help marriages in our church.

The second person on my expert panel is an associate pastor at ICBC. Prior to coming on staff at ICBC, he served as the senior pastor of Ambassador Baptist Church in Royal Oak, Michigan, for seven years. He is currently serving as the pastor of discipleship ministries. He holds a ThM from DBTS and is a member of the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors (ACBC). He is also an adjunct seminary professor at

DBTS.

The third person on my expert panel is the administrator at ICBHS. He holds an EdD from Bob Jones University and has been an administrator for almost three decades. He is a personal friend and has taught me just about everything I know about educational philosophy and curriculum development.

Mentor Recruiting

The third goal of this project was to recruit couples to train for the marriage mentoring ministry. I sent an initial list of sixteen possible mentors to the senior pastor on August 16, 2019, and asked him to review the list and then send the list to the other pastoral staff members to consider. I compiled the list of mentors by considering their demeanor in the church body, their stewardship in the church, and their service in the church. From my perspective each of the couples was qualified to mentor, but I wanted the pastoral staff to review the list before I asked for any commitments from the couples. I received the list back from the pastors on August 20, 2019, with approval for each couple listed. The senior pastor suggested that I add a divorced couple to the list of potential mentors to help mentor couples with divorce in their past. I added a divorced couple to the list of possible mentors and sent a final list of six couples to my pastor. He agreed to the final list.

I sent out emails to five couples on August 21, 2019, and an email to one couple on August 22, 2019, to request their participation in the mentor training. In the emails, I included the purpose of the class, the duration of the training, the basic framework of class sessions, and requirements for the training. By August 25, 2019, I received four “yes” responses and two “no” responses. I sent out another email on August 28, 2019, to a couple on the approved list to request their participation in the training. They accepted the invitation on September 3, 2019, to participate in the training.

I sent out informational emails to the couples between September 2 and

September 3, 2019. In the email, I detailed the three sections of the curriculum and also asked them to fill out the Mentoring Couple Commitment Form (MCCF), Mentor Questionnaire (MQ), and Mentor Couple Questionnaire (MCQ). I placed each of these forms in a packet and gave them to the mentors on September 7 and 8, 2019. I asked that they return the forms prior to the first mentor training session. Each of the couples signed the commitment forms and filled out the two questionnaires prior to the first training class. The third goal of my project was considered successful when I had five couples committed to attending the training sessions.

Implementing the Training Program

The nine-week mentoring class began on September 16, 2019, and ended on November 18, 2019. I received back the MQ from each of the mentors prior to the first day of class and reviewed the results to make sure I understood what topics in marriage were of greatest concern to them. I also asked them for their input on three questions to equip me to minister to them effectively in the nine-week training class. The questions were as follows: What is your greatest concern coming into the mentoring class? From your perspective, what is a primary reason Christian couples struggle in their marriages? What concerns you the most about the young couples at ICBC? The answers to these questions prompted me to write out extra items to address during the introduction of the first class.

Lesson 1

On September 16, 2019, we met for the first mentoring class. The first class and every subsequent class met from 7:00 p.m. to 8:15 p.m. We began class with prayer and a basic introduction to the class. All of the mentors were present. The main goal of the session was to introduce the idea of mentoring to the couples and convince them of its importance; therefore, I began by offering a full apologetic for the class. I then focused on addressing the input I received from the MQ the mentors filled out prior to class. Two

main concerns the mentors mentioned in the MQ and during class time were about not wanting to mess up a young couple and not wanting to be hypocritical in this ministry. I gave a preliminary response to their concerns and asked for their patience through the class because it was my intention to answer all of their questions and concerns as best as I could over the nine-lesson curriculum.

Inter-City's ministry philosophy is stated accordingly: Inter-City Baptist Church exists to honor God by making and maturing disciples who are together becoming like the Lord Jesus Christ. I took time to root the mentoring ministry in the philosophy of our church to help the mentors understand the importance of their participation with the goals and framework of our church.

I then spoke of the differences between mentoring and counseling. I told them that mentoring is assisting young couples by walking with them for a set time to help prepare the young couples to handle problems they may encounter in marriage. Basically, mentoring is discipleship. I then emphasized that marriage mentoring would be a culture change at ICBC, and it would take time to establish this ministry in our church. As we walked through Lesson 1 of the curriculum, the mentors appreciated the questions throughout section IV of the outline. The questions would be ideal questions to ask the young couple to evaluate strengths and weaknesses in their marriage. I also emphasized the necessity of the accountability of the local church and the mentor's responsibility to encourage faithfulness to our church. I closed the session by reminding the mentors about the logistics of each class and reminded them of their homework for the following week. I did not video the session because all of the mentors were present.

Lesson 2

We met on September 23, 2019, for the second training session. In this session, I opened in prayer, then I asked for the mentors' input from the reading in *Tying the Knot*. The first passage we discussed in class was Genesis 2:18–25. In this passage God

establishes the foundation and roles of the marriage relationship in both its partnership and permanence. I brought up topic of in-laws during this discussion time and focused on what leaving and cleaving looks like for a young couple.

We then discussed Ephesians 5:22–33 as a class. I emphasized the need for mentors to reflect and encourage submission in action and attitude with the wife (Prov 31:30). I also emphasized to the mentors that a husband’s love should be characterized by humble service (Phil 2:3–4), spiritual leadership (Eph 5:26–27), and tender and compassionate care toward his wife.

Last, we worked through the importance of Titus 2:1–6 to demonstrate the church’s role in the spiritual development of marriage and family in the congregation. The mentors gave personal testimony to the importance of the church to their own ministry. We discussed the topic of the use of alcohol and how to deal with that with a young couple. I argued that drinking alcohol is not necessarily sinful, but I did encourage the mentors to navigate this carefully if it came up in a mentoring session. Next, I warned the mentors about the “curse of knowledge.”⁴ This phrase applied to mentoring means that it is difficult to remember what it was like to be newly married and that we need to exercise empathy with the young couple. I closed the session by reminding the mentors about the logistics of each class and reminded them of their homework for the following week. I did not video the session because all of the mentors were present.

Lesson 3

We met on September 30, 2019, for the third training session. In this session, I opened in prayer and asked if there were any comments or questions about what we had covered so far. One of the mentors mentioned confusion over one thought from chapter 1, “Jesus Must Be at the Center of Your Life,” of Green’s book *Tying the Knot*. The

⁴ Robyn R. Jackson, *Never Work Harder than Your Students & Other Principles of Great Teaching* (Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 2009), 103–4.

confusion was over why Green thought it was selfish to attend a Sunday School class or small group for the purpose of pre-marital counseling. We discussed this idea as a class for a few minutes.

I then shared ideas for building a supportive relationship with the young couple. One concern I had in this lesson was the generational gap between the young couple and the mentors. To help overcome this concern, I taught the necessity of humility in serving the young couple by having the mind of Christ in humility and service (Phil 2:1–5). I also cautioned the mentors to think through the implications of Romans 14 in their mentoring relationships. Several mentors noted on the MQ their concerns about the young couples at ICBC. I encouraged them to make sure their view of the mentorees allow for room for differing opinions. I also encouraged the mentors to give homework for the young couple to work through together.

I spoke to them about my plan to add an appendix at the end of the syllabus as a resource for additional questions as a resource for the mentors. At the end of the session, I reminded the mentors to memorize their verse, read their chapter from *Tying the Knot*, and read the assigned lesson of the curriculum for next week.

Lesson 4

We met for the fourth training session on October 14, 2019. We skipped a week (October 7) because several of us were out of town. We opened the class in prayer, and I asked for any comments or questions from the mentors. During this class, I developed the essential doctrine of the sufficiency of scripture for the mentoring process. I wanted to emphasize the importance of sufficiency with the mentors to guarantee that the mentoring process is God-centered rather than man-centered (Col 2:8–10). I shared with the mentors that a major theological issue in evangelicalism today is regarding the doctrine of sufficiency. I championed the total sufficiency of the Scripture during the session.

Next, I discussed the doctrine of sanctification to help focus the mentoring curriculum toward our church's understanding of sanctification. I emphasized the synergistic nature of sanctification (Phil 2:12–13). I rejected the Keswick model of sanctification with the mentors and pointed them toward progressive sanctification. I said that the work of the Spirit is organic in the heart to transform couples progressively into the image of Christ (2 Cor 3:18; Col 1:28–29).

In the last part of the class, I explained a framework for mentors to use as a practical guide through their mentoring ministry. I explained that the mentoring framework is their “toolbelt” for mentoring sessions that would enable them to handle the different scenarios they faced. I reminded the mentors about their memory verse, their reading in *Tying the Knot*, and their curriculum reading for the following week. I did not video the session because all of the mentors were present.

Lesson 5

The fifth training session met on October 21, 2019. At the beginning of class, we opened in prayer and I asked for any questions or comments. The mentors asked several logistical questions, and I spent time working through the answers. The questions asked include the following: (1) When will we start the mentoring? (2) What is the process for finding and assigning couples? (3) Who will we report to during the mentoring? (4) How will you recruit the young couples?

In Lesson 5, I trained the mentors to help young couples understand their roles and responsibilities in marriage. I chose this topic first because of its importance for a God-honoring marriage and because of the frequency of marital breakdown when one of these aspects of marriage collapses.

We had a great discussion concerning an illustration I put into the syllabus. Many of the mentors could not believe that a husband treating his wife so poorly could happen in the way I described. I explained that the illustration was a real story of a

seminary couple I had known over twenty years before. They were flabbergasted that a man training for ministry would behave in such a way. It was a good opportunity to remind them that if a scenario like this happens in a mentoring relationship, they need to know how to react biblically. I closed the meeting by reminding the mentors about the memory verse, the chapter reading in *Tying the Knot*, and the curriculum reading. I did not video the session because all of the mentors were present.

Lesson 6

On October 28, 2019, we met for the sixth training session. I opened in prayer and asked for comments or questions. In Lesson 6, I trained the mentors how to help handle communication problems in marriage. I supplied a case study for us to work through together to offer practice in a real-life scenario regarding a communication breakdown between a couple. Many of the mentors commented on how difficult the case study was, so the open-ended questions supplied an excellent discussion about how to deal with such an awkward situation in a mentoring session. My intention with this case study was to shed light on how difficult proper communication can be in a young marriage.

Next, I encouraged the mentors to be willing to share some of their struggles with communication to encourage the young couple to endure through their struggles. Toward the end of the class, I offered several open-ended questions concerning how the mentors could encourage obedience and confront disobedience. I closed the session by reminding the mentors to memorize their verse, read the assigned chapter from *Tying the Knot*, and read the curriculum lesson. I videoed the session and sent it to three of the mentors who were absent.

Lesson 7

The seventh training session met on November 4, 2019. At the beginning of class, we opened in prayer, and I asked for any questions or comments. The three mentors

who were not there the week before commented on how appalling the case study was to them. We took time to discuss the previous case study for a few minutes. Also, several mentors pointed out that the alignment of the homework assignments was confusing. I told the mentors that I would make changes for future training classes.⁵

I spent time during this session fleshing out some principles of forgiveness to share with a young couple. I included this information during the lesson on conflict for two reasons. First, the MCS revealed that learning about forgiveness was a priority for a mentoring ministry. Second, I determined that the topic of forgiveness should be handled while dealing with the topic of conflict resolution. I explained that mentors should teach young couples to always have an attitude of forgiveness even if their spouse has not asked for it (Matt 5: 23–24; Luke 23:34; 1 Pet 4:8). Full reconciliation is always the goal but does not always happen. I emphasized the need to turn to the Scriptures to guide them through inevitable conflict, including Scripture memory as homework. I did not video the session because all of the mentors were present. I reminded the mentors regarding their memory verse, and their chapter reading from *Tying the Knot*, and their curriculum reading. I did not video the session because all of the mentors were present.

Lesson 8

We met for the eighth training session on November 11, 2019. I emailed the mentors earlier in the day because we were expecting a major snow storm and offered to postpone the training session. The majority of the mentors emailed back and said that they were fine with having class, but they left the decision up to me. I proceeded with class as planned. We opened the class in prayer, and then I asked for any comments or questions from the mentors. The mentors really enjoyed chapter 7 in *Tying the Knot*, titled, “Community with Jesus as the Center.” One of the mentors pointed out the

⁵ One of the mentors supplied a helpful chart that aligned the homework assignments with the class schedule for future training classes.

importance of stressing faithful attendance to church. A young couple should not be content to come to just one service a week. Another mentor liked the emphasis of the book on the local church's role in building a successful marriage.

During the session, I emphasized the need to help the young couple to establish a budget together. I directed the mentors toward Dave Ramsey's baby step program, but explained that Ron Blue and Larry Burkett have excellent resources as well. I also emphasized the need to study how financial priorities change from generation to generation.

During a discussion portion of the class, I asked, "Would a couple be sinning by not sharing joint bank accounts?" I asked this question to help the mentors differentiate between confronting sinfulness and encouraging the couple toward wise practices. I argued that not combining bank accounts, although unwise, was not a sin. I encouraged the mentors to be willing to open up about some of their financial decisions for giving and investing for the future. Because finances are such a sensitive subject, I cautioned the mentors about confronting the mentorees. I closed the meeting with a reminder about their memory verse, their chapter reading in *Tying the Knot*, and their curriculum reading. I videoed the session because one of the mentors could not come to the meeting. I emailed him the video of the session.

Lesson 9

We met for the ninth and final training session on November 18, 2019. We opened the session with prayer, and I asked for any questions and comments about what we had covered so far. I took time to offer some suggestions regarding mentoring sessions with their young couple and told them that several of the pastors of ICBC had given recommendations for potential young couples to mentor. I told them to be ready to begin in January.

I took a different approach to the lesson notes during the final session. The

mentors had several important questions, so I decided to walk through the notes out of order to answer their questions. For example, one mentor asked about how confidential the meetings with mentorees should be, and I took the mentors to the last section of the notes. I addressed how to handle difficult sin issues and encouraged them to alert pastoral staff in such situations. There should not be confidentiality when issues of deep sins or crimes come to light in the mentoring relationship. I then cautioned the mentors not to give advice in areas that they are not qualified to speak. Legal, medical, and other sensitive issues should be avoided without talking with pastoral staff first.

At the end of the class session, I thanked the mentors for their participation in the class and gave them the Post-Mentoring Couple Questionnaire (PMCQ). The mentors requested some time to take the questionnaire, and many mentors indicated their intention to have their answers filled out and given back by Wednesday, November 20. I received all of the questionnaires by Sunday, November 24. That Sunday night, I ran the statistical analysis of the pre- and post-surveys and was very thankful for the results. After completing the class, the post-survey revealed a significant increase in the mentor's knowledge and preparedness.

Ministry Plan for Continued Training

On December 4, 2019, I sent a ministry plan to the pastoral staff regarding continuing the training ministry. In the document sent to the pastors, I offered several important parts of the mentor training. First, I gave the pastors a list of the trained mentors, and I detailed when I trained them and for how long. Second, I supplied the questions from the pre- and post-surveys, along with the results. Third, I included a detailed ministry plan for their approval. I asked that they review the curriculum, the results of the survey, and the ministry plan. I asked them to give me their approval or disapproval by Friday, December 13.

My ministry plan I sent to the pastors is as follows: (1) I will follow-up with current mentors throughout the mentoring process during 2020. (2) I will edit the curriculum and process based on the helpful input of the current mentors. (3) For the next two years (2020 and 2021), I would like to recruit and train 9 more mentor couples to participate in this ministry, bringing the mentoring list up to 15. (4) I would like to train the mentors using the current format—9-week sessions during the fall semester. This time frame worked well for several reasons. First, the fall is traditionally a great time to begin a teaching program in a church setting. Second, a nine-week commitment did not seem to be a burden on the current mentors to handle in their schedules. Third, the class was finished before the busy holiday season. (5) I will utilize the experience of the current mentors by bringing some of them into future training classes to explain their experiences. I can also interview current mentors on video and use the clips in the training process.

I received back input from the pastors between December 11 and December 13, 2019. Two of the pastors recommended I include some instruction regarding the topic of intimacy in the mentor training. One of the pastors listed the reasons for the inclusion, and the other pastor recommended that I give the mentors some helpful material regarding intimacy. All of the pastors accepted the ministry plan.

Conclusion

My goal in this ministry project was to train qualified and godly servants to minister to young married couples at ICBC in keeping with Ephesians 4:12. I was very thankful for the mentors who participated in the training sessions and for their helpful insights throughout the classes. My prayer is that God would use this ministry to assist young couples to grow together as they grow in the Lord.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

In this chapter, I offer an evaluation of the purposes, goals, strengths, and weaknesses of the ministry project. This chapter also details things I would do differently for future mentor training classes to improve this ministry at Inter-City Baptist Church (ICBC). My long-term desire for our church is to continue improving this mentoring training ministry for the long-term benefits of the mentors and the couples they serve. Along with a conclusion, the chapter ends with my personal and theological reflections of the project.

Evaluation of the Project Purpose

The purpose of this project was to develop a biblically-based marriage mentoring training program at Inter-City Baptist Church that will result in the equipping of mentors to assist newer marriages. This goal is consistent with the biblical mandate to equip saints to do the work of the ministry (Eph 4:12) and develop older men and women in the church to encourage and exhort the younger people in the church toward godliness (Titus 2:1–8). The goal is also consistent with ICBC’s philosophy of ministry which seeks to mature disciples to grow in Christ.

In the last several years, marital decline has increased at ICBC which necessitated the church to act. Because no current ministry exists that pairs godly and well-trained couples with newly married or struggling couples, this reality validated the development of a training program to disciple young couples toward God-honoring marriages. Although this project successfully trained ten mentors to minister to young married couples at ICBC, the training program needs to continue to train mentors for the

future discipleship of couples.

Evaluation of the Project Goals

The goals for this project were consistent with accomplishing its purpose. The five goals for the project were as follows: (1) assess the perception of marriage mentoring at ICBC; (2) develop a nine-session curriculum to train marriage mentors at ICBC; (3) recruit couples to train for the marriage mentoring program; (4) increase the knowledge of marriage mentoring among participants; (5) develop a ministry plan for the continued training of marriage mentoring at ICBC.

Goal 1

The first goal of the project was to assess the perception of marriage mentoring at ICBC. I used the Married Couples Survey (MCS) to assess the perception. I had several objectives for this goal. First, I wanted to assess whether at least fifty members from a cross-section of Adult Bible Fellowship (ABF) classes perceived a need for mentoring at our church. I assumed before the survey that people would see the need for this ministry, but I wanted to confirm that assumption. Out of the sixty-three participants that took part in the survey, sixty answered the question regarding the need for mentoring. The need for a mentoring ministry was confirmed with an average of 5.33 out of 6 on the Likert scale. These results were strengthened because twenty of the respondents had previously been a part of marriage mentoring. The perceived need for mentoring for these respondents was 5.7 out of 6 on the Likert scale. These results among respondents revealed strong support for a mentoring ministry.

My second objective was to gather data about what topics would be helpful early in marriage that could inform the curriculum and training class. Unfortunately, not all of the respondents filled out the survey correctly. Although my goal was fulfilled by having at least fifty respond to the survey, and each of the surveys were helpful, only forty-seven surveys clearly indicated the topic priorities for marriage. I should have spent

time personally informing the ABF classes that took the survey how to fill it out. My communication with the ABF teachers was not sufficient to direct the survey respondents. Even though several respondents did not fill out the survey correctly, the survey was helpful and clearly revealed the most important topics I should address in the mentoring training.

Goal 2

To meet the second goal's objective, I developed a nine-session curriculum to train marriage mentors at ICBC. The most helpful models for composing the curriculum were mentoring books written by Les and Leslie Parrott and a DMin project that I consulted from Western Seminary in Portland, Oregon.¹ I spent time searching for more resources but found that many of the resources were weak both theologically and exegetically. I decided to form a curriculum that gleaned heavily from chapter 2 of this paper and the training model I established in chapter 3. The exegetical, theological, and practical analysis of these chapters strengthened the content of the curriculum.

A panel of three experts evaluated the curriculum by utilizing a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum. My goal was to achieve at least an 80 percent from the expert's evaluation. I received a 97 percent on the curriculum (93 out of 96 possible points from the rubric).² One of the experts commended the curriculum for having a good base of biblical truths for marriage and mentoring.

The experts made several suggestions that I utilized in the curriculum. First, one suggested that I label each part of the curriculum to identify the primary goal of the

¹ Les Parrott and Leslie Parrott were extremely helpful for setting an example of a marriage mentoring curriculum primarily in their book on marriage mentoring. See Les Parrott and Leslie Parrott, *The Complete Guide to Marriage Mentoring* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005). For another helpful model, see James Patrick Curtis, Jr., "A Marriage Mentor Program for the Local Church" (DMin diss., Western Seminary, 2004).

² See appendix 3.

section. Second, one reviewer consistently encouraged that I enhance the biblical support for each of my main points in the curriculum. Third, the suggestion to remind the mentors not to offer legal or other types of advice they are not qualified to give was used during the last training session. Fourth, one reviewer suggested that I clarify the difference between encouragement and edification in Lesson 1. I edited the curriculum per their advisement. The second goal of my project was considered successful with a 97 percent approval from my expert panel.

Goal 3

The third goal was to recruit couples to train for the marriage mentoring program. I have attended ICBC for twenty-five years and have observed godly people using their gifts and talents for the Lord. When I knew that I needed to recruit mentors for the training portion of my project, the list I generated of possible mentors was easy to produce. God has blessed ICBC with many qualified and godly couples who are capable of mentoring young couples.

The pastoral staff unanimously agreed to the list I sent them to consider, and one of the pastors added several more couples to consider. When time came to recruit for the training sessions, I looked at the list of possible couples and settled on a group of six. Unfortunately, not all six couples could commit to the training sessions. Two of the couples declined the invitation to join the training. I then invited a couple that came highly recommended by one of the pastors and also my wife, and they graciously accepted the invitation. The third goal was considered successful when I had five committed couples to train.

Goal 4

The fourth goal was to increase the knowledge of marriage mentoring among participants. The highlight of the project was meeting with the mentor couples for nine weeks. They are a godly group of people that I highly respect. I came into the training

sessions with a bit of nervousness because all but one of the mentors was older than I and married longer than my wife and me. The interactions with these couples during the class sessions were extremely helpful for the current curriculum and for revising the curriculum for future mentoring sessions.

The pre- and post-questionnaire revealed two things about the mentor's level of knowledge. First, the pre-questionnaire revealed that several of the mentors scored quite high before the training began. This made me nervous. My concern was whether I was going to teach some of the mentors enough to see an increase in their knowledge. Second, the post-questionnaire revealed a significant increase in the mentor's knowledge, and consequently, their scores.³ From my perspective, the increase was due to my spending time calming their anxieties about mentoring by focusing not only on the curriculum but also on addressing their concerns regarding the actual meetings with young couples.

The t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive, statistically significant difference between pre- and post-training survey scores: $t_{(9)} = -6.639$, $p < .0001$. The t-test indicated that the mentoring curriculum and the class sessions increased the mentor's level of knowledge for mentoring. The fourth goal of my project was successful.

Goal 5

The final goal was to develop a ministry plan for the continued training of marriage mentoring at ICBC.⁴ I designed a two-year plan to continue training mentors to minister to young couples. I submitted the ministry plan to the pastoral staff to consider the details of the plan, the curriculum, and the results of the project for their approval. I

³ See appendix 5 and 6.

⁴ See appendix 8.

knew that if I did not have the collective wisdom and support of the pastors at ICBC, the mentor training and implementation of the mentoring ministry would not be very effective. I received an acceptance of the ministry plan as proposed from the pastoral staff on December 13, 2019. My final goal of the ministry project was successful.

Table 2. T-test: Paired two sample for means

	Pre-Test total	Post-Test Total
Mean	81.6	106.4
Variance	217.8222222	48.71111111
Observations	10	10
Pearson Correlation	0.616573139	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	9	
t Stat	-6.639682034	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.00004743	
t Critical one-tail	1.833112933	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.00009485	
t Critical two-tail	2.262157163	

Strengths of the Project

The greatest strength of the project is that it addressed a ministry need at ICBC. My pastor’s vision to help young and struggling marriages with a mentoring ministry has been formed and servants equipped to fulfill Paul’s mandate to equip “the saints for the work of service” (Eph 4:12). I am confident that the mentors have been equipped for mentoring young couples and that their service to the Lord through their ministry will bear fruit in the young and struggling marriages in our church (1 Cor 15:58; Titus 2:1–8).

A second strength of the project is the curriculum. When I researched for mentoring resources, I did not find many that focused on Scripture as the foundation for mentoring. Most of the resources simply proof texted their point rather than gleaning the

point from a careful exegesis of Scripture. Also, some of the resources relied heavily on secular and psychological models rather than on Scripture. This curriculum written for the mentoring ministry is rooted in theology and the exegesis of Scripture; therefore, the curriculum does not rest in the wisdom of man, but God (1 Cor 1:18–25). The pedigree of the expert panel that reviewed the curriculum, and their focus on rooting the curriculum in Scripture, confirmed the strength of the curriculum for training mentors.

A third strength of the project is the impact it had on the mentoring couples. When I recruited the couples a few months ago, several of them were hesitant to join the training. The reason they gave was that they did not want to be hypocritical. Another concern one of the mentors voiced was that he did not want to mess up a young couple. As I addressed these issues in the training classes, it seemed to put the mentors more at ease. By the end of the mentor training, many of the mentors thanked me for inviting them to train because it had such a good effect on their own marriage. They were thankful to address things in their own marriage as they learned and grew during the class.

Weaknesses of the Project

After reflecting on the strengths of the project, I need to note several weaknesses. First, the training methodology in the curriculum needs to improve for future mentor training sessions. Although I received overall high marks from my expert panel regarding the mentoring curriculum, one of the lower scores on the rubric concerned my training methodology in the curriculum. Also, during the class sessions, most of the questions referenced mentoring methodology. At times, I did not offer sufficient answers to their questions. This part of the curriculum was admittedly weak, partly because I did not know what I did not know. As the pastors and I implement the mentoring ministry at ICBC, we will gain more insight concerning our methodology while mentoring couples.

A second weakness of the project concerns the survey process used to gather information for the curriculum. I gave the MCS to three ABF leaders to distribute the

survey during class. Many of the respondents filled out the survey incorrectly or incompletely. The fault is my own. I did not spend enough time instructing the ABF leaders regarding how to have the respondents fill out the survey. Although the survey was helpful, and it accomplished my goal, it could have been more beneficial to the project.

A third weakness concerns a section of the curriculum that was insufficiently written. I incorporated a section on forgiveness in the discussion time during the teaching of Lesson 7. In this lesson, we discussed conflict resolution and during the lesson, I needed to add several verses and explanations concerning biblical forgiveness. Although forgiveness was addressed in Lesson 1 of the curricula as a picture of a Christlike couple, a thorough treatment should have been added in the lesson on conflict resolution.

What I Would Do Differently

Though the entire project has been an incredible learning and growing experience for me personally, there are several things I would do differently if beginning again. First, I would elicit input from others that have experience with marriage mentoring. I would seek assistance from churches that have an established mentoring ministry. I only read through a mentoring framework from one church that actively participates in a mentoring ministry. In addition, I would spend time interviewing couples at ICBC who had gone through a mentoring program in the past. I should have considered the best practices of those who have an established program or have experienced a mentoring program in the past.

Second, I would spend time promoting the mentoring ministry in several of the ABF classes, and especially classes with young marrieds. I told the mentors several times through our sessions together that developing this ministry is going to change the culture at ICBC. Changing a church culture takes time, intentionality, and patience. I would request time in the ABFs to introduce the ministry and offer a basic apologetic for its

existence.

Third, instead of relying on the class leaders to conduct the MCS, I would go personally into the ABF classes. I would spend time explaining the survey, how to fill it out, and why it is so important for the project. Time in the classes would have also given exposure to the program and our desire to help marriages at ICBC.

Fourth, I would include two sections in the curriculum. First, I would create a section in the class notes concerning forgiveness. I would add this to the lesson regarding conflict resolution. I addressed the need for forgiveness in Lesson 1 but needed to develop it more thoroughly later in the curriculum. A section on forgiveness would have complemented the notes on conflict very well. Second, instead of delegating an appendix for logistics and setting up the first mentoring session with a couple, I would include this as a main part of the curriculum. I would place this early in the notes because of the amount of questions I received on this topic early on in the class sessions.

Fifth, I would video every mentoring session. During the mentoring class, I videoed all of the sessions when mentors were absent and then emailed the session for them to watch during the week. Because there were only two sessions when mentors were absent, I only videoed two sessions. Videoing all the sessions would have helped me remember key discussions during class time, and it would be a valuable resource for future mentoring training classes.

Last, I would be more careful with aligning the homework assignments for the mentors each week. At times the mentors were confused with what chapter they were to read for the following week. It would be best for future classes to include a clear chart for homework assignments to align better with the weekly lessons.

Theological Reflections

As I reflected on the truths I learned through the project, several are noteworthy. First, God works through His Word. The Bible is sufficient to help young

couples deal with the complications and trials they face. Young couples can find many resources to help their marriage, but no resource can help them like God's Word. As married couples cling to the word, they have an unshakable refuge to help during times of difficulty and trial. Marriage mentors have an incredible opportunity to share God's Word with a young couple and help them establish a firm foundation early in their marriages. During the mentoring sessions, I told the mentors that pointing a young couple back to God's Word is the most loving and helpful action they can do for their mentorees.

Second, God sanctifies His children in various ways. One way that God chooses to sanctify us is through the covenant of marriage. We are being sanctified as God transforms us primarily through our response to His word, and our responses in marriage reveal whether we are growing in Christ. If the Spirit is working, the husband will sacrificially love his wife, and the wife will submit to her husband. When trials and sufferings occur in marriage, God uses them to transform the couple to be like Christ. Likewise, godly and competent people speaking truth into a young couple's marriage provides a means for their spiritual transformation.

Third, I learned the importance of the Titus' two in the life of the church. Paul taught Titus to both instruct and model a-life-touching-a-life model of ministry. As older men and women at ICBC instruct, encourage, exhort, and mentor younger couples, God's word will be exalted and younger couples in the church will grow in Christ.

Personal Reflections

This project has been one of the most difficult, but rewarding, experiences in my Christian life and academic experience. At times through the development of the project, writing the curriculum, and teaching the class, I felt very unqualified because of my own failings in marriage. That said, God has been faithful in strengthening my marriage and helping me to grow as a husband. I cannot recount all that God has done these past few years, but I will endeavor to reflect on several major things. First, God

helped me to learn to trust in His timing. As I awaited confirmations through the project writing process, God was teaching me to wait on Him.

Second, this project stirred up in me the desire to help young couples in our church. God has ordained the marriage to be the cornerstone of human society and a picture of Christ and His bride. Developing healthy marriages is vital for the mission of Christ in the church. Healthy marriages are also a direct evidence of the Spirit's work in the husband and wife (Eph 5:21–33). Having the opportunity to help young couples grow together through the encouragement and guidance of godly couples is exciting.

Third, I am thankful for my church and the faithful servants who serve the Lord. Because of the number of faithful servants, the selection of mentoring couples was quite easy. My church has been blessed with godly and gifted people that are willing to serve. The mentors were very teachable and encouraging through the teaching sessions. They also were extremely helpful with their comments and suggestions through the entire class. My time teaching and fellowshiping with the five mentoring couples during the class will always be treasured.

Fourth, while I am not a pastor at ICBC, my senior pastor, David Doran, has put confidence in me to develop and implement a fledgling ministry in our church. I am deeply indebted to my pastor for his guidance and encouragement through the entirety of the project. When he asked me to get my doctorate, I was humbled for the opportunity and excited beyond belief. Also, when he asked me to develop a mentoring program and gave me license to implement it in our church, I was again humbled. My pastor had the vision to begin a mentoring training ministry, and I am thankful to have been a part of its formation.

Conclusion

By God's grace and the help of many people, I achieved the goals for my ministry project. Even though the academic portion of the marriage mentoring project is

coming to a close, much work must still be done. The saints must be equipped to do the work of the ministry at ICBC. With God's help, ICBC must continue to equip godly couples to do the work of ministry by training them to mentor young couples. It has been one of the greatest privileges of my life and ministry to participate in equipping the saints. May God continue to bless the marriages at ICBC and mold them into a wonderful picture of Christ and His bride.

APPENDIX 1
MARRIED COUPLES SURVEY¹

Agreement to Participate

This research is designed to gather your basic knowledge of marriage mentoring and marital issues that young couples face. Jeremy Conn is conducting this research for purposes of evaluating marriage mentoring for doctoral research. In this research, you will be asked to answer questions about your level of experience and knowledge of marriage mentoring and marital issues. Any information you provide will be strictly confidential. Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

By your completion of this questionnaire you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

1. How many years have you been married? _____
2. Have you ever been the recipient of a marriage mentoring program before? _____
3. If the answer to #2 is yes, was this mentoring beneficial? _____ Also, how long were you mentored? _____
4. In your opinion, what is the one major issue, which needs to be discussed or addressed during the first year of marriage?

¹ Portions of this questionnaire were adapted from Christopher Dwight Aday, "Equipping Married Couples to Mentor Other Married Couples at Oakland Baptist Church in Corinth, Mississippi" (DMin project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013), 106-7. Used with Permission.

5. What in your opinion are some issues that you or other married couples that you know have faced that would be helpful to address in mentoring? Please rank these issues in order of importance (1 being most important and 10 being the least important).

- ___ Finances
- ___ Communication
- ___ Parental issues and decisions
- ___ Family Issues (In-laws and extended family boundaries)
- ___ Intimacy (Sexual problems and expectations)
- ___ Conflict Resolution
- ___ Forgiveness
- ___ Role of the husband/wife
- ___ Expectations for marriage
- ___ Long term goals (education, employment, expectations for kids)
- ___ Other (Please Specify) _____

6. Using the scale below, please circle the number that represents your opinion to the following statement:

Connecting trained couples to young married couples for marriage mentoring would be helpful at Inter-City Baptist Church.

1 2 3 4 5 6

Strongly disagree Disagree Somewhat disagree Somewhat agree Agree Strongly agree

APPENDIX 2
MENTOR QUESTIONNAIRE¹

Agreement to Participate

This research is designed to measure your basic knowledge of marriage mentoring and marital issues that young couples face. Jeremy Conn is conducting this research for purposes of evaluating marriage mentoring for doctoral research. In this research, you will be asked to answer questions about your level of experience and knowledge of marriage mentoring and marital issues. Any information you provide will be strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

By your completion of this questionnaire and giving your name below, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Name _____

Date _____

1. How many years have you been married? _____
2. Have you ever been the recipient of a marriage mentoring program before? _____
3. If the answer to #2 is yes, was this mentoring beneficial? _____ Also, how long were you mentored? _____
4. In your opinion, what is the one major issue, which needs to be discussed or addressed during the first year of marriage?

¹ Portions of this questionnaire were adapted from Christopher Dwight Aday, "Equipping Married Couples to Mentor Other Married Couples at Oakland Baptist Church in Corinth, Mississippi" (DMin project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013), 106-7. Used with Permission.

APPENDIX 3

EXPERT PANEL CURRICULUM EVALUATION

The following rubric was given to three expert panel members. The expert panel was comprised of the pastor of ICBC, the school administrator at Inter-City Baptist Schools, and a certified biblical counselor. The rubric covered an analysis of the use of scripture and the practical nature of the project.

Table A1. Curriculum evaluation rubric

Name of Evaluator _____ Date _____

Marriage Mentoring Curriculum Evaluation Rubric					
1 = Unsatisfactory 2 = Inadequate 3 = Adequate 4 = Exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Biblical Faithfulness					
The content of the curriculum is biblically sound. It was interpreted, explained, and applied well.					
The content of the curriculum is theologically sound.					
Scope/Sequence					
The scope/content of the curriculum is sufficient to train marriage mentors.					
The sequence of the curriculum is logical in the training of marriage mentors.					
Methodology					
The curriculum utilizes an acceptable methodology for training mentors.					
The curriculum makes use of various learning approaches such as lecture, case studies, discussion, and informative reading.					
Practicality					
The curriculum provides opportunity to analyze and apply Scripture to mentoring scenarios					
The curriculum facilitates the mentors with the information to mentor a young couple successfully.					

The expert panel consisted of the current senior pastor of ICBC, the administrator of Inter-City Baptist High School, and an associate pastor at ICBC.

The following table represents the expert panel’s scores for the criteria represented in the rubric.

Table A2–Rubric Evaluation Results

Criteria	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Totals
Current Senior Pastor	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	31
High School Administrator	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	3	30
Certified Counselor	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	32
Perfect Score	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	32

APPENDIX 4

MENTORING COUPLE COMMITMENT FORM

Content of the Mentoring Class

The marriage mentoring training class is designed to enable mentors to assist young couples to grow in their individual and collective spiritual walk. The biblical pattern is that the church would be able to “speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine” (Titus 2:1) as older men and women teach younger men and women. **This commitment form is for your prayerful consideration to be trained to assist younger couples at ICBC.**

1. Time Commitment

- The formal training will consist of 9 sessions.
- Each session will last one hour and fifteen minutes.
- Outside class homework and reading will consist of no more than 1 hour per week.

2. Content of the Curriculum

The content of the curriculum is divided into three parts. **First**, weeks one through four will help the mentors understand the definition of marriage mentoring, its biblical basis, and a framework for mentoring. **Second**, weeks five through eight will deal with marriage issues that need to be addressed biblically. **Third**, week nine will assist the mentors to handle specific issues and questions that arise in marriage.

The goal of the curriculum is to equip the mentors with a tool bag of biblical principles, methods of dealing with issues, and help with dispensing practical wisdom to young couples.

3. Basic Expectations

Remember, no couple is perfect. We have all made numerous mistakes through our marriages. The goal of the mentors is not perfection!! The goal is faithfulness.

- Commit to faithful attendance to each session. If I am unable to attend a session, I will watch the session at home during the week.
- Commit to completing the assigned homework each week.
- Commit to formulating questions to be discussed during class time.

Commitment to the Mentoring Class

I have prayerfully considered becoming a mentor, reviewed the content of the training class, and commit to the 9-session training course.

Name _____ Date _____

Signature _____

APPENDIX 5

MENTORING COUPLE QUESTIONNAIRE¹

Agreement to Participate

This research is designed to measure your current level of knowledge regarding your perspective and practices of marriage mentoring. Jeremy Conn is conducting this questionnaire for purposes of evaluating marriage mentoring for doctoral research. In this questionnaire, you will be asked to answer questions about your level of experience and knowledge of marriage mentoring and marital issues. Any information you provide will be strictly confidential. To ensure anonymity you will be asked to supply your full birthdate as an ID (example: 08021972). Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

By your completion of this questionnaire and giving your name below, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

ID# _____

Date _____

**SD=Strongly Disagree D=Disagree DS=Disagree Somewhat
AS=Agree Somewhat A=Agree SA=Strongly Agree**

1. I understand and can explain the Bible well enough to address other couples' marital issues. SD D DS AS A SA

2. Marriage mentoring is a needed ministry at ICBC. SD D DS AS A SA

3. I understand and can explain how marriage mentoring advances ICBC's philosophy of ministry. SD D DS AS A SA

¹ Portions of this questionnaire were adapted from Christopher Dwight Aday, "Equipping Married Couples to Mentor Other Married Couples at Oakland Baptist Church in Corinth, Mississippi" (DMin project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013), 108-10. Used with Permission.

**SD=Strongly Disagree D=Disagree DS=Disagree Somewhat
AS=Agree Somewhat A=Agree SA=Strongly Agree**

- | | | | | | | |
|---|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 4. I understand and can explain specific Christlike traits that should characterize a young couple's marriage. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 5. I can identify and explain foundational passages regarding the roles and responsibilities in marriage. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 6. I understand and can apply specific listening strategies in a mentoring relationship. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 7. I understand and can apply specific questioning strategies in a mentoring relationship. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 8. I understand and can explain the biblical principles of finances in marriage to a young couple. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 9. I understand and can explain to a young couple the biblical principles of communication in marriage. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 10. I can identify and explain to a young couple the biblical principles for becoming financially and emotionally independent from their parents. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 11. I understand and can explain the biblical principles of conflict resolution in marriage to a young couple. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 12. I understand and can explain the biblical principles of forgiveness in marriage to a young couple. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 13. I understand and can explain the biblical principles for the role of a husband to a young couple. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

**SD=Strongly Disagree D=Disagree DS=Disagree Somewhat
AS=Agree Somewhat A=Agree SA=Strongly Agree**

- | | | | | | | |
|--|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 14. I understand and can explain the biblical principles for the role of a wife to a young couple. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 15. I understand and can explain the biblical principles for expectations in marriage to a young couple. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 16. Currently, I feel confident to engage in marriage mentoring. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 17. I understand and can explain the importance of the sufficiency of Scripture in a mentoring relationship. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 18. I understand and can explain the process of sanctification in a mentoring relationship. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 19. I understand how to gauge when a young couple needs help beyond my ministry as a mentoring couple. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 20. I can identify and explain biblical passages regarding the church's role in mentoring. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 21. I am equipped to mentor a young couple at Inter-City Baptist Church. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

Table A3–Mentoring couple questionnaire results

Mentor #	MCQ Total	Possible Score
7131960	64	126
2041953	97	126
1271974	93	126
6121961	105	126
9221960	87	126
10081954	90	126
5211972	75	126
10231965	73	126
3171958	70	126
1151960	62	126
	Total: 816	Total Possible: 1260

APPENDIX 6

POST-MENTORING COUPLE QUESTIONNAIRE¹

Agreement to Participate

This research is designed to measure your current level of knowledge regarding your perspective and practices of marriage mentoring. Jeremy Conn is conducting this questionnaire for purposes of evaluating marriage mentoring for doctoral research. In this questionnaire, you will be asked to answer questions about your level of experience and knowledge of marriage mentoring and marital issues. Any information you provide will be strictly confidential. To ensure anonymity you will be asked to supply your full birthdate as an ID (example: 08021972). Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

By your completion of this questionnaire and giving your name below, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

ID# _____
Date _____

**SD=Strongly Disagree D=Disagree DS=Disagree Somewhat
AS=Agree Somewhat A=Agree SA=Strongly Agree**

- | | | | | | | |
|---|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 1. I understand and can explain the Bible well enough to address other couples' marital issues. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 2. Marriage mentoring is a needed ministry at ICBC. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 3. I understand and can explain how marriage mentoring advances ICBC's philosophy of ministry. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

¹ Portions of this questionnaire were adapted from Christopher Dwight Aday, "Equipping Married Couples to Mentor Other Married Couples at Oakland Baptist Church in Corinth, Mississippi" (DMin project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013), 108–10. Used with Permission.

**SD=Strongly Disagree D=Disagree DS=Disagree Somewhat
AS=Agree Somewhat A=Agree SA=Strongly Agree**

- | | | | | | | |
|---|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 4. I understand and can explain specific Christlike traits that should characterize a young couple's marriage. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 5. I can identify and explain foundational passages regarding the roles and responsibilities in marriage. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 6. I understand and can apply specific listening strategies in a mentoring relationship. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 7. I understand and can apply specific questioning strategies in a mentoring relationship. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 8. I understand and can explain the biblical principles of finances in marriage to a young couple. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 9. I understand and can explain to a young couple the biblical principles of communication in marriage. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 10. I can identify and explain to a young couple the biblical principles for becoming financially and emotionally independent from their parents. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 11. I understand and can explain the biblical principles of conflict resolution in marriage to a young couple. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 12. I understand and can explain the biblical principles of forgiveness in marriage to a young couple. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

**SD=Strongly Disagree D=Disagree DS=Disagree Somewhat
AS=Agree Somewhat A=Agree SA=Strongly Agree**

- | | | | | | | |
|--|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 13. I understand and can explain the biblical principles for the role of a husband to a young couple. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 14. I understand and can explain the biblical principles for the role of a wife to a young couple. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 15. I understand and can explain the biblical principles for expectations in marriage to a young couple. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 16. Currently, I feel confident to engage in marriage mentoring. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 17. I understand and can explain the importance of the sufficiency of Scripture in a mentoring relationship. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 18. I understand and can explain the process of sanctification in a mentoring relationship. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 19. I understand how to gauge when a young couple needs help beyond my ministry as a mentoring couple. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 20. I can identify and explain biblical passages regarding the church's role in mentoring. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 21. I am equipped to mentor a young couple at Inter-City Baptist Church. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

Table A4–Post-Mentoring couple questionnaire results

Mentor #	MCQ Total	Post-MCQ Total	Possible Score
7131960	64	103	126
2041953	97	105	126
1271974	93	106	126
6121961	105	119	126
9221960	87	102	126
10081954	90	117	126
5211972	75	99	126
10231965	73	111	126
3171958	70	101	126
1151960	62	101	126
	Total: 816	Total: 1064	Total Possible: 1260

APPENDIX 7

TEACHING NOTES

This appendix contains the syllabus I used during the training seminars with the mentors. The syllabus was approved by my expert panel and edited per their suggestions.

Marriage Mentoring Training Syllabus

Part One: Why are we training couples to Mentor?

Lesson One – Introduction: The Foundations for Marriage Mentoring

Essential Questions for Lesson One:

1. How does marriage mentoring help fulfill ICBC's ministry philosophy?
2. What Christlike character traits are mentors supposed to model and teach?

I. Setting the Foundation

A. Philosophy of Ministry: Inter-City Baptist Church exists to honor God by making and maturing disciples who are together becoming like the Lord Jesus Christ.

B. How does marriage mentoring fit our philosophy?

1. The primary aim of marriage mentoring is to glorify God (1 Cor 10:31).
2. The action of making and maturing disciples can be accomplished as spiritually mature couples are trained to help young couples progressively grow to maturity (Eph 4:12).
3. The attributes of Christlikeness in young couples are strengthened as godly couples speak the truth in love (Eph 4:15).

Therefore, implementing a marriage mentoring program will glorify God by strengthening young marriages as they grow together into Christ.

II. What is marriage mentoring?

A. Definitions

1. Marriage: Marriage is defined as the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God’s unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the husband and wife the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race.¹

2. Marriage counseling: Marriage counseling is an intensely focused and personally interactive process where a mature believer speaks the truth of God’s Word to a married couple for the purpose of strengthening, challenging, and assisting their marriage.²

3. Marriage Mentoring: Marriage mentoring is the process of a spiritually mature, experienced, and well-trained couple building a supportive relationship with a younger couple to help them grow in their marriage through sharing wisdom and experience according to biblical teaching.³

4. Mentor - The word *mentor* calls to mind the Greek word *meno*, meaning “to abide” or “to remain.” The mentoring context frequently involves an close, committed, continuous, developmental, and reciprocal relationship. This relationship includes a reciprocal availability, where unforced influence and helpfulness take place. To have a mentor who abides and remains available in times of need and in situations of potential growth is to open oneself to life-shaping possibilities.⁴

Mentoring relationships exist throughout the Bible. Several examples of mentoring from the Old Testament include Jethro and Moses, Moses and Joshua, Eli and Samuel, and Elijah and Elisha. In the New Testament, examples of mentoring are Jesus and the disciples, Paul and Timothy, Barnabas and Mark, and Paul and Titus. In each of these relationships, the older person trained a younger person to serve the Lord. In the context of the local church, these types of mentoring relationships should happen between Christian couples. These biblical examples of mentoring provide a pattern for the churches to help develop faithful

¹ “The Family,” Inter-City Baptist Church, accessed July 10, 2018, <http://www.intercity.org/who-we-are/what-we-believe/#family>.

² Jacob Elwart, e-mail message to author, March 2, 2020. A helpful resource in developing this definition of marriage counseling was found in Jonathan D. Holmes, *Counsel for Couples: A Biblical and Practical Guide for Marriage Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), 33–39.

³ James Patrick Curtis, Jr., “A Marriage Mentor Program for the Local Church” (DMin diss., Western Seminary, 2004), 183.

⁴ Dean K. Thompson and D. Cameron Murchison, eds., *Mentoring: Biblical, Theological, and Practical Perspectives* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2018), 1, emphasis original.

mentors.⁵

B. How does a mentor function?

Mentoring relationships should reflect a life–touching–another–life model. Paul told the church at Corinth to imitate him as he imitated Christ (1 Cor 4:16; 11:1). The best mentors are those who model Christlikeness and encourage young couples to follow along. Paul says that Scripture was given so “that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:17).

Therefore, mentors assist young couples by sharing lessons gleaned through life experiences, encouraging them to obey Scripture, and giving loving exhortations to work through problems biblically.

Mentors should live visibly godly lives as examples to the congregation. The New Testament emphasizes the importance of godly character in ministry. Paul taught Timothy that cultivating godliness is the key to effective ministry. Paul said,

Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. Therefore, if a man cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work. Now flee from youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart (2 Tim 2:20–22).

Sinless perfection is not a requirement for effective ministry in the church; rather, God requires faithfulness in personal stewardship (1 Cor 4:1–2), purity in word and deed (1 Tim 4:16; 2 Tim 2:22–23), and humility in service (1 Pet 5:1–5).

III. Why is marriage mentoring necessary?

A. Marriage is under attack.

Statistics in the last 15–20 years estimate that approximately 40 percent of marriages in America end in divorce.⁶ Evangelical divorce rates seem to match

⁵ There is a sense in which mentoring and discipleship are synonymous terms. The idea of discipleship is baptizing people into a local body and teaching them to obey Christ’s commands (Matt 28:18–20). Marriage mentoring then is an aspect of discipleship as qualified couples in the church train young couples how to obey the commands of Christ.

⁶ Estimates of divorce rates are taken from approximately 44 states. See “National Marriage and Divorce Rates 2000-16,” Center for Disease Control and Prevention, accessed January 24, 2019, https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/dvs/national_marriage_divorce_rates_00-16.pdf.

the national statistic, which should awaken God's people to the urgent need of both cultivating godly marriages and assisting struggling marriages.⁷

Since my older boys have graduated from high school, four of their classmates' parents have divorced. Several of these families waited for their kids to graduate before they divorced, which suggests a child-centered marriage rather than a Christ-centered marriage.

One of the reasons for this ministry is that marriage breakdown in our church body has increased. In the past several years, there has been a rise in the frequency of church discipline because of infidelity and divorce. A growing need exists for new and struggling marriages to be taught how to honor God in their marriages and persevere through the difficulties that marriage brings.

B. Opportunity to minister to young couples is needed.

No ministry currently exists at ICBC that intentionally pairs a newer married couple with a mature and well-established couple with tools to help the couple. Although the current discipleship ministries help couples, they are often insufficient for couples during the problems that they encounter early in marriage. When the new couple struggles with the myriad of challenges they will face, they need to know that there are couples at ICBC that could help them through those issues. In addition, there are no standard follow-up sessions with younger couples.

IV. What are basic characteristics of a marriage that is growing in Christlikeness? What is our goal?

A. Christlike couples glorify God together.

Principle: God must be at the center of all things in marriage (Eph 3:19) because He defines what marriage is and what the couple is to practice (Eph 5:22–33; Col 3:18–19). Harvey adds, “When we begin to orient our marriages around biblical truth, we see something amazing. Marriage was not just *invented* by God, it *belongs* to God. He has a unique claim over its design, purpose, and goals. It actually exists for him *more* than it exists for you and me and our spouses.”⁸

⁷ Although it is very difficult to determine the exact percentage of Evangelical divorces, many sources estimate approximately 38 percent of Evangelical marriages end in divorce. See “Divorce Rate in the Church—As High as the World?” Focus on the Family, accessed January 24, 2019, <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/about/focus-findings/marriage/divorce-rate-in-the-church-as-high-as-the-world>.

⁸ Dave Harvey, *When Sinners Say “I Do”: Discovering the Power of the Gospel for Marriage* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 2007), 25, emphasis original.

Practice: Mentors must show young couples that a Christlike marriage centers itself in living for God’s glory (Rom 11:36; 1 Cor 10:31).

- When marital difficulties arise, a wise mentor will first direct the couple back to their relationship with God and His word.
- A mentor may ask these questions: How did you deal with the difficulty initially? Did Scripture fill your thoughts upon the first level of provocation, or did you rely on your own thoughts? Did the couple turn to God in confession and repentance and then turn toward each other?

B. Christlike couples love sacrificially.

Principle: Jesus said, “Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). Jesus said that a person’s love is gauged by the amount of sacrifice for the one loved. Applied to the marriage relationship, marital love is complete self-sacrifice in the forsaking of all other people and serving each other. Furthermore, marital love must be rooted in God’s love. John said, “Jesus said that the second greatest commandment is to ‘love your neighbor as yourself’” (Matt 22:39).

In marriage, the wife or husband is the nearest neighbor and is owed the love that Jesus commands. Paul says, “And walk in love, just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma” (Eph 5:2). Spouses show sacrificial love when they give up their wants and desires to serve the other person as Christ modeled (Phil 2:1–3).

Practice: Sacrificial love in marriage is usually not revealed until it is tested by the problems and stresses of life. Growing together in love as a couple during difficult times is evidenced in how a spouse sacrifices to serve the other.

- Answering these questions can be helpful: How did the couple serve each other when the difficult time arose? Did the couple separate from each other during the difficulty or did they draw near to each other?
- Mentors need to point couples back to a biblical love that is not feeling-oriented as the world portrays but is commitment-oriented toward doing the best thing for the person loved. God’s love through Christ is the chief example of this type of sacrificial love (John 3:16; Rom 5:8).

C. Christlike couples deal with sin quickly and correctly.⁹

Principle: A good example of an issue that couples face regularly in marriage is conflict. Conflict is inevitable when two sinners live together, so couples must learn to deal with this sin as quickly as possible.

Paul says, “BE ANGRY, AND *yet* DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity” (Eph 4:26–27; emphasis added).

Paul instructs believers to keep short accounts with each other by dealing with sin at the earliest possible moment. If the sin of anger is not immediately dealt with, the devil can gain an opportunity to tempt the couple to further sin.

Practice: Dealing with anger quickly in marriage means never to allow it to linger on and on. No conflict should ever carry on into the next day. Mentors must challenge young couples not to blow up nor clam up about an incident. Also, they should be taught not to scream at each other nor should they give each other the silent treatment.

- Mentors can evaluate how couples are dealing with sin and sinful responses by asking several questions. For example, how long did your current conflict last? How did you respond initially to each other when the conflict began? How did you respond to God?
- Mentors can then encourage couples to deal with the sin at the earliest possible moment of conviction by confessing it immediately to God and then to each other (Prov 28:13; 1 John 1:9).

D. Christlike couples edify one another.

Principle: Edification seeks to build each other up while inappropriate speech seeks to tear one another down. Young couples need to be reminded that their speech to one another is so important because it is a means of grace for the spouse to grow. Young couples should not use speech that is sarcastic, cutting, or inappropriate. When an issue arises between the couple and must be dealt with by confrontation, a good rule for couples to be taught is that everything that needs to be confronted, the spouse should at least encourage the other person at least three times. Proverbs 15:23 says, “A man has joy in an apt answer, And how delightful is a timely word.” An encouraging and uplifting word is indeed a great

⁹ David Doran, “The Certainty of Radical Change” (Lecture, Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, Allen Park, MI, Fall 2015), 3.

value to the other person (Prov 25:11).

Practice: Mentors can challenge the younger couple's level of edifying each other by asking several questions.

- To the husband, one could ask – How often do you compliment your wife's appearance? How often do you pray with her after a difficult day? When was the last time you complimented the meal and the appearance of the home when you got home from work?
- To the wife, one could ask – How often do you thank your husband for working hard to provide? When was the last time you complimented him for completing a project around the home?
- Young couples need to be taught how to encourage each other in a consistent way. A timely text to say "I love you" or a note before leaving for work stating "I cannot wait to be with you tonight" would encourage and edify.

E. Christlike couples forgive one another.

Principle: A Christlike couple must be committed to forgiving each other. Couples should forgive each other because "*forgiven sinners forgive sin.*"¹⁰ Paul supports this statement rooting relational forgiveness with the forgiveness that God gives to people through Christ (Eph 4:32).

Practice: Mentors must teach the importance of forgiveness in marriage because of its foundational implications for the couple's relationship with Christ and each other. Those who will not forgive their spouse are reflecting a heart that will not submit to Christ's teaching and example. Couples learn to forgive by focusing on two things.

- How can couples display an attitude of forgiveness toward each other?

Jesus and Stephen are New Testament examples of those who had an attitude of forgiveness even when there was no reciprocal repentance

¹⁰ Harvey, *When Sinners Say "I Do,"* 100, emphasis original.

(Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60). This attitude of forgiveness should be present even when one spouse does not ask for forgiveness. It also helps the spouse who forgives not to be bitter after being sinned against.¹¹

- Should couples forgive when their spouse asks for forgiveness?

Jesus says, “Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ forgive him” (Luke 17:3–4). Applied to marriage, a spouse is to forgive every time there is confession of the sin. Subsequently, the sin is covered and not brought up again (1 Cor 13:5; 1 Pet 4:8).

Conclusion: Marriage mentoring is a needed ministry in our church to help encourage and edify young couples to cultivate a Christlike marriage. In this curriculum, I will offer you a toolbelt of specific helps during your mentoring ministry. **First**, I will seek to increase your knowledge of the theological/biblical foundations for marriage. **Second**, I will offer a methodology for how mentoring can be done effectively. **Third**, I will address specific topics that should set a framework for how to work through an issue with a couple.

- Each weekly seminar will include the following: 1. In-class discussion on your assigned reading from the previous week. 2. Teaching time from the syllabus. 3. Question and answer time.
- Each week you will be assigned homework to work on together as a couple as a help for the next week’s seminar.

¹¹ Robert D. Jones, *Pursuing Peace: A Christian Guide to Handling Our Conflicts* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 134–35.

Lesson Two – Biblical and Theological Foundations

Essential Questions for Lesson Two:

1. What does companionship between a husband and wife reveal about God?
2. Why is the wife's respect and the husband's love so important to God?
3. Why is the church the best place for mentoring relationships to take place?

I. Foundational Text 1: Genesis 2:18–25

Big Idea: God establishes the foundation and roles of the marriage relationship.

A. Basic principles of the passage

- In Genesis 2, Moses highlights God's work of the creation of man and woman and emphasizes the foundation of marriage in an intimate and exclusive relationship.
- Genesis 2:18–25 reveals that God intended man to have companionship in his work and that he and the woman would become one and dwell in sinless harmony.

1. 2:18 – One of the most noticeable features of verse 18 is the declaration that man's lack of a companion "is not good," unlike the rest of the creation account, which is noted as being "good" or "very good." God intended for man to have companionship in the work He had given him, and an appropriate helper to the man was necessary.

2. 2:19–20 – Next, God formed and brought the animals to man for him to name in an exercise of his authority, but among the animal kingdom there was no "helper suitable for him" (vv. 19–20). Unlike the animals, the woman was indeed a "suitable" complement for man.

3. 2:21–23 reveal the origins of the woman and the process of bringing man and woman together. God "caused a deep sleep" to create the woman from the rib of the man. This sleep that God initiates "preserves for the man the mystery of her creation and the subsequent surprise of her appearance."¹² As

¹² Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, New American Commentary, vol. 1A (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1996), 216. Mathews notes that this level of sleep is "the special work of God as with Abraham's slumber (15:12)."

man slept, God created the woman from the very substance of man. The delighted acknowledgement of Adam toward the woman reveals his understanding that the woman was part of himself. He says, “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh.” Adam had found the helper who was permanently complementary to him.

4. 2:24–25 reveals the intimate nature of this new relationship. Verse 24 declares the responsibility for each couple to break from all familial relationships and cling to each other as they form one new person. The closing epilogue in verse 25 (“naked...not ashamed”) serves as a transition to link the accounts of creation and marriage to the fall of mankind into sin. Before the fall, man and woman’s shamelessness showed their untainted union of sinless harmony.

Therefore, God reveals in this paragraph that man found his companion solely in the woman and that the foundation for the marriage covenant is established as the woman and the man leave familial obligations and cling to each other perfectly as “one flesh.”

B. Important implications of the passage for mentoring

1. Partnership in marriage

God created woman to become man’s helper in a covenantal relationship and fulfill God’s purposes as a unit. Marriage mentors should begin from this perspective when advocating marriage partnerships that honor God.

- **Intimacy** – The act of sexual relations is at the core of this union which God intended for the man and woman to enjoy for a lifetime (Prov 5:15–19; Heb 13:4). The marital bond is so mutual and intimate that the husband’s body belongs to the wife and the wife’s body to the husband in sexual relations (1 Cor 7:3–4). This abundant blessing is contrasted with the dire warnings of judgement about any form of sexual sin (Exod 20:14; Lev 18:23; Rom 1:24–27; 1 Cor 6:9; 1 Tim 1:10, 3:2, 12; Heb 13:4).
- **Procreation** – this physical union was intended for procreation. God said to Adam and Eve, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth” (Gen 1:28). The tenor of Scripture is that children are a blessing from God, and man and woman should enjoy children as God’s gift to them (Ps 115:14, 127:3–5, 128).
- **Complementary** – in a marriage that honors the Lord, the husband and wife accomplish God’s purposes as a mutually compatible team.

Mentors should emphasize that the husband is never to use his position over the wife to lord it over her but is to cherish his counterpart as a gift from God. The reality of this divine partnership does not negate functionality in the marriage relationship. Male headship is from divine choosing and should be understood in marriage as a reflection of God's intention.¹³ This principle establishes the authority structure in both the home (Eph 5:22–24) and the church (1 Cor 11:3, 9–10; 1 Tim 2:11–13).

2. Permanence in marriage

The obligation for the man to “leave” family relationships and “be joined” to his wife engenders several important points.

- “Leave” – Primarily, the idea of “leave” for the married couple is to abandon familial commitments and obligations. Mentors should emphasize the exclusive nature of the marriage relationship and help demonstrate this exclusivity with advice about financial independence, holiday planning, residence proximity, and child rearing (Titus 2:4–6).
- “Be joined” – This type of life-long commitment is God's creative intent and is commended by Jesus as keeping the principles of God's institution of marriage (Matt 19:1–9; Mark 10:2–12). Also, this enduring commitment precludes divorce for any cause by emphasizing God's pattern of creation (Matt 19:3–6).

Marriage mentors should stress the importance of helping young couples build marriages from God's perspective, not their own ideals and emotional states. Mentors must also be ready to challenge the unbiblical notion that the level of romantic love equals the level of commitment to the marriage; Scripture does not allow this type of thinking (John 3:16; Rom 5:6–9).

II. Foundational Text 2: Ephesians 5:21–33

Big Idea: Marriage must be established on the basis of God-ordained roles and responsibilities.

A. Basic principles of the passage

¹³ For a defense of the equality of essence and difference in function, see Raymond C. Ortlund, Jr., “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship: Genesis 1–3,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2006), 95–112.

Paul's teaching on Spirit-filling (5:18–21) sets an excellent transition for the instruction that follows. The last participle “be subject” (v. 21) reveals the importance of the Spirit's control in relationships and provides the foundation for the instructions that follow for husbands and wives, parents and children, and masters and servants.

1. The wife is commanded to submit.

Paul instructs wives in verse 22 by saying, “Wives, be subject to your own husbands.” The Greek phrase literally reads, “Wives, to your own husbands.” The participle “be subject” is implied from verse 21, which supports the transition from submission to the responsible party in this context, namely, the wives. The instruction for wives then is to subordinate themselves under their husband's leadership.

Paul explains the reason for the wife's submission in verse 23. The implied question in this verse is as follows: “why should a wife submit to her husband ‘as to the Lord’?” The clause “For the husband is the head of the wife” begins with the conjunction (*for*) and could be translated “because.”

The helpful comparison and ultimate motivation for the wife to submit to her husband is explained in this verse. The wife's submission is related to the church's submission to Christ because “by the Christian wife's obedience to her husband she is also acting in obedience to Christ as a part of His church.”¹⁴

2. The husband is commanded to love.

Paul begins the instructions to the husbands in verse 25 with an admonition to “love your wives.” The present imperative command speaks of the self-sacrificial love that is to continue throughout marriage and is compared to Christ's love for the church.

Paul pictures Christ's love for His bride in this passage as a model for the husband to achieve. This picture points to several important ideas for the husband to model in his love for his wife.

- **Sacrificing for her purity**, vv. 26–27

¹⁴ Homer A. Kent Jr., *The Glory of the Church: Studies in Ephesians*, rev. ed. (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 2005), 109.

Paul teaches that the husband is to model the self-sacrificial love for his wife as Christ sacrificed for the church. He does this by pointing out several key words: Sanctify, washing, present. Husband's are to mimic Christ's example of seeing His bride holy, cleansed by the Scripture, and gloriously made new.

- **Gently caring for her person**, v. 28–32

The husband's care should reflect this deep level of care because he and his wife are "one flesh" (Gen 2:24). Paul uses the phrase, "He who loves his own wife loves himself" to reflect this unity between husband and wife.

Furthermore, the nourishing and cherishing Christ has for the church and a husband should have for his wife is further enforced in verse 31 where Paul quotes Genesis 2:24: "For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh."

Conclusion: Verse 33 summarizes the responsibilities of both husband and wife. The wife is to respect her husband and the husband is to love his wife as himself.

B. Important implications of the passage for mentoring

1. Reflect and encourage submission.

It is important that mentors focus on this reality when helping a young wife cultivate submission through her love for the Lord. If the wife's relationship is growing, and she is walking in the Spirit's control, then she can show proper respect (Eph 5:33), bear up under difficult treatment (1 Peter 3:13–15), and even submit to an unsaved husband because she hopes in the Lord (1 Pet 3:1, 5–6).

Younger wives should be taught that their worth is not evidenced in their outward appearance, but in their godly character and submissive attitude (Prov 31:30; 1 Pet 3:3–6). Also, because the culture consistently distorts what biblical submission is, mentors should spend time teaching wives what submission is not.

2. Teach the sacrificial nature of love.

- **Humble service** - the husband should never have the sense of individualism but seek to serve his wife's needs above his own (Phil

2:3–4). He should therefore be willing to sacrifice his desires for the benefit of his wife in areas of intimacy, recreation, and finances.

- **Spiritual leadership** - Mentors must encourage a husband to be his wife's primary discipler. Following the example of Christ's work of sanctification in the church, husbands must seek the spiritual growth of the wife (Eph 5:26–27).
- **Tender and compassionate care** - The husband must see his wife as his most precious possession. He should seek to understand her joys, sorrows, goals, frustrations, weaknesses, and strengths.

III. Foundational Text 3: Titus 2:1–8

Big Idea: This text demonstrates the church's role in the spiritual development of marriage.

A. Basic principles of the passage

The instruction about living as a community in 2:1–8 illustrates the importance of older believers in the assembly helping younger believers live godly lives.

1. Older Men

These “older men” were to act with a spiritual maturity that matched their age and who set the example for the whole congregation in several ways.

- **Temperate** – moderation in conduct that would include their use of wine.¹⁵
- **Dignified** - focuses on the moral worth of a man's character as not frivolous or showy.¹⁶
- **Sensible** - a well-balanced, properly regulated mind; a person discreet and prudent. The old men should be the balance wheels in the congregation, keeping its course steady.”¹⁷

¹⁵ Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: The Tyndale Press, 1980), 191.

¹⁶ William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 409.

¹⁷ D. Edmond Hiebert, *Titus and Philemon*, Everyman's Bible Commentary (Chicago: The

- **Mature** - The final description incorporates primary virtues of the Christian life, faith, love, and endurance. These qualities are characteristic of a mature Christian who is solid in his faith (1 Tim 6:11; 2 Tim 3:10).

2. Older Women

- **Reverence** - display a reverent behavior in their deportment in life.
- **Not malicious gossips** - She is to be a woman who does not speak evil against others or make accusations against people.¹⁸
- **Not enslaved to wine** – (RSV) not “slaves to drink”
- **Teaching what is good** – Paul’s teaching “pictures the older women, those who were experienced in life, marriage, and child rearing, taking the younger women in the congregation under their care and helping them to adjust to their responsibilities.”¹⁹

3. Younger Women

Paul begins with the older women’s role in encouraging the younger women. The word “encourage” in verse 4 is (σωφρονίζωσιν) and can be also translated to “teach” or “train” (KJV, ESV). The word means “to instruct in prudence or behavior that is becoming and shows good judgment, encourage, advise, urge.”²⁰

- **Love for husband and children** - The tenor of the home should reflect a loving environment for both husband and children.
- **Sensible and Pure** - The younger women were to mimic the same sobriety as the other groups in the congregation (2:2, 3, 6) and live a life of purity and discretion.
- **Workers at home** – focused on fulfilling household responsibilities
- **Submissive** – her submission points to the wife’s submission to her husband as a testimony of God’s truth lived out in front of unbelievers.

Moody Bible Institute, 1957), 48.

¹⁸ Hiebert, *Titus and Philemon*, 49.

¹⁹ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 410.

²⁰ BDAG, s.v. “σωφρονίζωσιν,” 986.

4. Younger Men

The young men “are to cultivate balance and self-restraint; their faculties, appetites, and passions must be kept under the control of a sound judgment and an enlightened conscience. It is a comprehensive demand that covers all of their lives.”²¹

5. Titus

Paul exhorts Titus to guard his life and example while he continually teaches and exhorts this normal pattern of church life.

B. Important implications of the passage for mentoring

1. **Teach with authority** - Marriage mentors should be taught correct doctrine so that they in turn can communicate to young couples the word of God with boldness and clarity. Mentors will strengthen marriages by teaching them God’s truth so that couples are protected from the errors of false teaching.

2. **Teach by example** - The pastoral epistles consistently reveal that those who teach others must be mindful of themselves to be fruitful in ministry (1 Tim 4:11–12; 1 Tim 6:11–12; 2 Tim 2:19–26; Titus 2:1, 7–8). The emphasis on example is not a call for sinless perfection but rather on consistency in Christian growth.

3. **Teach with empathy** - The Titus’ charge to encourage and train a young couple assumes that mentors seek first to understand a young couple’s situation and then seek to help with humility and compassion (Phil 2:3–5).

4. **Teach with endurance** - Mentors should view their relationship with young couples as a marathon and not a sprint. This is not to say that mentors should actively guide the young couple for the entirety of their marriage, but they should view mentorship as more than a one-and-done meeting.

Conclusion: These passages set the foundation for God’s ordination of marriage, roles and responsibilities in marriage, and the church’s part in developing marriages that honor Christ. This section is to equip mentors with these foundational texts that translate that into a practice of training young couples.

²¹ Hiebert, *Titus and Philemon*, 52.

Part Two: How are we going to approach marriage mentoring?

Lesson Three – Methodology: Building a Relationship with Your Couple

Essential Questions for Lesson Three:

1. What are effective strategies for building a relationship?
2. How do mentors become excellent listeners?
3. How do mentors become wise questioners?

I. Strategies for building a relationship with your couple

Remember our definition of marriage mentoring: Marriage mentoring is a spiritually mature, experienced, and well-trained couple building a supportive relationship with a younger couple to help them grow in their marriage through sharing wisdom and experience according to biblical teaching.

A. Bathe your meetings in prayer.

Psalm 127:1 says, “Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; Unless the LORD guards the city, the watchman keeps awake in vain.”

You should focus the meeting on God’s glory by praying with the couple. Prayer sets the direction for the mentoring by asking God to help you communicate clearly and helpfully.

Remember: All of the training in the world does not compare to the work of God in the lives of the young couple. Our best intentions with mentoring do not compare to the love and care that God has for the new couple.

B. Build a supportive relationship (Gal 5:13–15).

1. Be yourselves.

If you are anything like me, I will probably be very nervous the first time I meet with a couple. Don’t be someone that you are not.

Remember that God has equipped you to help this young couple within the context of your own personality and has brought you together by His providential leading. Your goal is to make them feel comfortable and build your relationship gradually.

Paul acknowledged his own weakness in ministering to the Corinthians, but he focused on the main goal of pointing them to Christ. 1 Cor 2:1–5 And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. ²For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.³ **I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling,** ⁴ and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵ so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.

2. Be edifying

Your role with the young couple should be focused on building them up and helping them mature in Christ. Notice Paul's words in the Epistles.

Ephesians 4:12 – “to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ **may be built up** until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God **and become mature,** attaining to the whole measure of the fulness of Christ.” (NIV)

Colossians 2:6–7 – “So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, **rooted and built up in him,** strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness” (NIV)

You can help them by **encouraging** them in their struggles and trials and offering them **hope** that they can endure. Point them to Christ and to the encouragement of the Scriptures to help.

Romans 15:4 – “For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the **encouragement** of the Scriptures we might have **hope.**”

3. Be empathetic.

Empathy is the capacity to understand or feel what another person is experiencing from within their frame of reference, that is, the capacity

to place oneself in another's position.²²

How do mentors empathize with the young couple? Hebrews 4:15 – “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.”

- Seek to have the mind of Christ – We cannot perfectly empathize with the young couple, but we can seek to enter their world and understand what issues they face.
- Empathize with humility – Christ did not sin when he entered our world, but we do. Our thoughts could quickly become proud or arrogant with our comparisons to the young couple.

****Special Note** – It may be difficult to relate to your young couple because of the generational gap and differences in preferences and values. The corrective for this is to review Philippians 2:1–5 and pray that God would give you the mind of Christ in humility and service to the young couple.

4. Be wisely open.

Sharing your marriage story is an excellent way to relate to the young couple and for them to relate to you. You can share basic parts of your life together from the beginning of your relationship.

- You can also share successes and failures with the couple, but this must be done wisely.
- Don't “toot your own horn” nor “beat yourself up” in explaining your story.
- Make sure that God's grace through Christ is at the center of your story and explain in what ways God has blessed you and enabled you to work through difficult times in your marriage.

2 Cor 12:9 – “But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.”

II. Work on your listening skills.

Mentors must develop the ability to listen to the young couple effectively. Proverbs 15:14 says, “The mind of the intelligent seeks knowledge, But the mouth of fools feeds on folly.” A wise mentor will listen to the fulness of the issue before guiding the couple. Proverbs 18:13 says, “He who gives an answer before he hears, It is folly and

²² “Empathy,” Wikipedia, accessed February 5, 2020, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Empathy>.

shame to him.” Listening skills will prevent the mentors from prescribing action before a thoughtful diagnosis of the dilemma can be made.

Also, when you listen to the young couple, listen with empathy towards their needs and show a genuine interest in helping them. “When we listen to couples, we want to model for them a God who bends his ear near to us so he can hear our struggles and our cries for help. This is not a God who is distant and indifferent, but a God who is vitally interested in your life and, by extension, your marriage.”²³

A. What are common problems that keep us from listening effectively?²⁴

1. We do not see the big picture because we grab some small detail.
2. We prematurely evaluate what is being said.
3. We interrupt the other person before they are through speaking.
4. We do not listen for feelings behind the words.

B. How do you become a more effective listener?²⁵

1. Ask your spouse to help point out areas where you can improve how you listen.
2. Test yourself personally by asking several questions:
 - Do I have a wandering mind?
 - Do I forget important details?
 - Do I find myself misquoting people?
 - Am I impatient when other people are speaking?
 - Do I interpret a lot?
3. Keep a notebook of your discussions with your couple to pray about things that you have discussed. You may also want to follow up with the couple on how things are going with a topic you have discussed.

²³ Jonathan Holmes, *Counsel for Couples* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), 103.

²⁴ David Doran, “Introduction to Biblical Counseling” (Lecture, Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, Allen Park, MI, Summer 1996), 28–29.

²⁵ Doran, “Introduction to Biblical Counseling,” 29.

III. Work on your questioning strategies.

Learning how to ask good questions will enable the mentors to understand the couple and know where they can assist them in their marriage. Proverbs 20:5 says, “The purposes of a person’s heart are deep waters, but one who has insight draws them out (NIV).”

A. Are questions a good strategy?

Consider these questions from Scripture:²⁶

- “Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, take your mat and walk?’” Mark 2:9
- “What is your name?” Mark 5:9
- “Why are you so afraid?” Mark 4:40
- “Why do you call me good?” Mark 10:18
- “Who will separate us from the love of Christ?” Romans 8:35
- “God is not concerned about oxen, is He?” 1 Corinthians 9:9

Questions, if done correctly, can be one of the greatest helps to get the young couple to think about their marriage. Each of the questions above were designed to get the hearer to contemplate something on a deeper level and to expose perhaps wrong thinking on a subject.

B. What are the purposes of questions?²⁷

1. **Information** – Basic questions to get to know the couple

Examples: When did you meet? What are your occupations?

2. **Investigation** – Seeks to understand the couple and why they do what they do.

Examples: What are your long-term goals? When you disagree, how have you handled the conflict?

3. **Introspection** – To get the couple to think about themselves and their course of action.

Examples: What other couple in our church do you desire approval from and why? How do you define success and failure in marriage?

²⁶ See Les Parrott and Leslie Parrott, *The Complete Guide to Marriage Mentoring* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 133.

²⁷ See appendix 1 for more suggestions for quality questions.

Each of the above types of questions will develop over time. As your relationship with your couple deepens, you will ask these questions with more confidence and intention.

Conclusion: Building a trusting relationship with your couple will take time, prayer, and wise strategy. Learning how to be an excellent listener and questioner will help you develop into excellent mentors.

Lesson Four – Methodology: A Mentoring Focus and Framework

Essential Questions for Lesson Four:

1. Why does the sufficiency of Scripture give confidence to mentors?
2. How is the work of sanctification accomplished in a young couple?
3. How do we organize potential issues that we may face?

I. The Mentor’s Confidence – The Sufficiency of Scripture

A. Sufficiency defined

Sufficiency can be defined as follows: “The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man’s salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture.”²⁸

B. Why does sufficiency give us confidence for mentoring?

The sufficiency of the Scripture means that God’s word is all Christians need to live a life of godliness which is pleasing to the Lord (2 Peter 1:3-4). Also, through the inspiration of the Scripture, God has revealed to us all things that are “profitable” for our own growth in godliness (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

The Bible does not directly address every possible situation and problem in the world, but it does give a framework of authority in which a mentor can guide a young couple with God’s wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2:3). The “material sufficiency” of the Bible means that God’s perspective on all things in life can be given to the young couple.²⁹

The sufficiency of the Bible guarantees that the mentoring process is God-centered rather than man-centered in its approach (Col. 2:8-10). Secular mentoring programs are too focused on self in their approach because they do not see God as the center of all things. **Therefore, mentoring from a Godward perspective and armed with sufficient revelation from Him guarantees**

²⁸ “The Westminster Confession of Faith,” ch. I, sec. VI, http://www.reformed.org/documents/wcf_with_proofs/.

²⁹ Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 50.

genuine help to a young couple to grow in Christ.

II. The Mentor's Focus – Sanctification

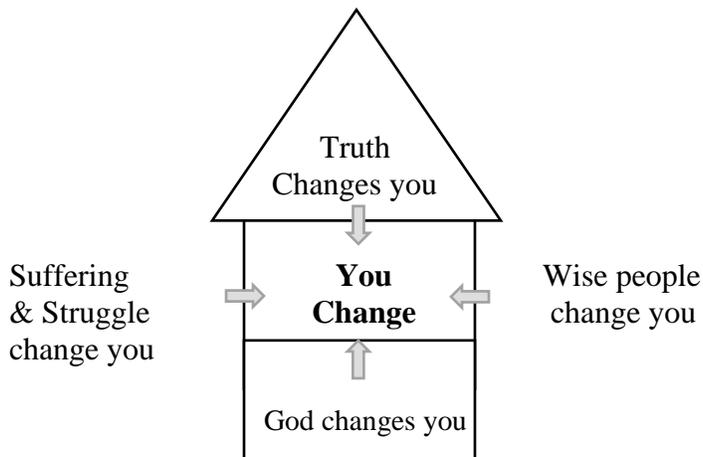
A. Sanctification defined

Present sanctification can also be called progressive sanctification. “[Present] Sanctification is that continuous operation of the Holy Spirit, by which the holy disposition imparted in regeneration is maintained and strengthened.”³⁰

Sanctification is a work of the Spirit of God in the life of the believer to transform them into the image of Christ (2 Cor 3:18; Col 1:28–29). The work of present sanctification is **synergistic**³¹ in that the genuine believer must respond to the working of God in their hearts (Phil 2:12–13); he must obey the word of God as the word sanctifies him (Jn 17:17; 1 Thess 4:3). The work of the Spirit is **transformational** in nature throughout the life of the believer in his total person (1 Thess 5:23–24). The sanctified believer will never attain to full maturity or perfection in this life but is guaranteed the final sanctification will happen (Phil 1:6).

B. Sanctification described

David Powlison illustrates the work of sanctification in our lives with this helpful diagram and explanation.³²



³⁰ A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. in 1 (Valley Forge, PA: Judson, 1907), 869.

³¹ Synergistic simply means that I, as a responsible agent, respond to God's work in my life.

³² David Powlison, *How Does Sanctification Work?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 63–67.

1. God changes you – This truth is foundational to all of our transformation. It is a promise that God has given to all who believe (Phil. 1:6). This work of God is accomplished through the Spirit (2 Cor 3:18; Titus 3:5).

2. The word of truth changes you – God changes us as we respond to His word. David says, “The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple” (Ps. 19:7). Paul illustrates the work of God’s word in our transformation from beginning to end in 2 Tim 3:15–17, namely salvation and sanctification.

3. Wise people change you – Proverbs 13:20 says, “Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise.” God in His graciousness puts godly role models into our lives that lead us to Christ.

- God uses people to **confront** us – Powlison says, “It is a great mercy to know people who deal gently with your ignorance and waywardness, because they know their own weakness and sinfulness, and they know the mercies of Christ (Heb. 5:2–3).”³³
- God uses people to **comfort** us – Powlison continues, “It makes a huge difference when other people are able to comfort you in your afflictions, because God is bringing comfort in their afflictions (2 Cor. 1:4).”³⁴

4. Suffering, struggle, and troubles change you – Jesus and others model the importance of suffering in this life.

Psalm 119:71 David says, “It is good for me that I was afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes.”

Hebrews 5:8 says, “Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.”

5. You change – Sanctification is transformational because all of these things are working in you as you continue to obey, hope, love, give thanks, weep, confess, praise, trust, remember, listen, repent, believe, delight, and walk. **The result of all these things is a progressive and life-long transformation (2 Cor. 3:18).**

C. Why is sanctification so important in the mentoring process?

³³ Powlison, *How Does Sanctification Work?*, 65.

³⁴ Powlison, *How Does Sanctification Work?*, 65–66.

1. You are being equipped to be a conduit of God's grace toward the young couple. In the wisdom and obedience, you have gained in marriage, you are able to give help and hope to the couple as they are personally and collectively being transformed.

2. Sanctification can give you hope that your efforts are not worthless. God promises that our work for Him will not be in vain (1 Cor 15:58). God is going to work in the young couple to help them mature and grow in His timing and will.

III. The Mentoring Framework

This part of the lesson offers a **practical guide** to mentors. In a sense, this framework is a **toolbelt** for you to walk through a specific need or issue with your couple. This is answering the question – **How do we handle the issues that we face?**³⁵

Although I cannot anticipate every scenario and every challenge the young couple presents to you, each of these points is to help you think through the situations you encounter as mentors and have a strategy to help the young couple.

A. Increase biblical knowledge.

In each of the topics we discuss as a group, I will offer pertinent Scripture to help you think through the issue biblically. I will also offer specific readings for you to cover as you think through a topic biblically. Your goal as a mentor is to point the young couple back to the sufficient word and to demonstrate Christlike character to them.

B. Increase practical knowledge.

You already know how you have handled your own situations in the past, but perhaps you have never guided someone else through those issues. This point answers the question – what else do we need to know about the topic that would be helpful with mentoring?

C. Cultivate suitable skills.

You need to work on your listening and questioning skills.

1. Work together to become excellent listeners. Listening to others requires work on your part. **Remember:** Listen before you respond.

³⁵ The idea of the term “toolbelt” for mentors was from my senior pastor, David Doran. He thought that giving mentors many “tools” would give them the resources necessary for good mentoring.

Proverbs 15:14 says, “The mind of the intelligent seeks knowledge, But the mouth of fools feeds on folly.” Proverbs 18:13 says, “He who gives an answer before he hears, It is folly and shame to him.”

2. Work together to formulate good questions for them and how to respond to their questions. Read through the questions in **Appendix 1** and pray through the input the young couple gives to you in your meetings.

Remember: Be patient and listen for questions that you can answer. Proverbs 20:5 says, “The purposes of a person’s heart are deep waters, but one who has insight draws them out” (NIV).

D. Cultivate problem-solving.

Case studies will be given to work through together as a couple. Here is a sample marital issue that a couple presents to you.

Case Study: Joe and Janice have been married for six months, and they had their first major fight last week. **They asked for your advice about what to do to make sure it doesn’t happen again.** The fight started when Joe came home from work and didn’t compliment Janice on how clean the house was and on how much time she spent cooking a nice meal for him. Janice stormed out of the dining room and went right to bed. Joe came in an hour later to apologize for not complimenting her, but Janice had already cried herself to sleep. The next morning, both of them apologized to each other, asked for God’s forgiveness, and asked for each other’s forgiveness. How would you deal with this situation?

E. Share life lessons.

Remember: Be wisely open. Sharing your stories with your couple can help accomplish three things.

1. It shows the young couple that they are not alone in their struggles.
2. It shows the young couple a path for help
3. It magnifies God’s grace and your growth in godliness.

F. Encourage scriptural obedience.

Be an encourager toward their continued obedience. Philippians 3:17 says, “Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.” We can encourage obedience by doing two things.

1. Model correct obedience to the couple – 1 Timothy 4:12 says, “Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe.”

2. Point them to others who have exemplified obedience.

Hebrews 6:12 – “so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”

Hebrews 13:7 – “Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith.”

G. Confront disobedience.

Confront **clear violations** of God’s word. In Galatians 2, Paul confronted Peter on the clear disobedience of hypocrisy (Gal 2:11–13). **Example:** How has the husband neglected his love for her? How has she neglected her responsibility to submit?

Here are several principles to keep in mind when you do have to confront a sinning brother.

1. Confront with meekness – Galatians 6:1 says, “Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.

2. Confront with empathy – Hebrews 3:13 says, “But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called ‘today,’ so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.”

3. Confront with the purpose of restoration – Matthew 18:15–20.

H. Pray with and for your couple.

Although this point is the last point in the mentoring framework, it is of first importance in a mentoring relationship. We can prepare and become the best trained mentor in the world, but if God is not at work in us and in the young couple then our work might be in vain.

Psalm 127:1 “Unless the LORD builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the LORD guards the city, The watchman keeps awake in vain.”

Colossians 4:2 “Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving.”

Please Note: You may not follow each of these categories with your couple when you meet. **Example:** If they are struggling with **finances** and reflect that they have never studied the principles of Scripture, you may want to focus on **increasing their biblical knowledge** of the subject. If they have questions about how to handle **Christmas family obligations**, you may want to **share** your early struggles with family obligations and how you dealt with it.

Conclusion: Mentoring rests on the foundation of a sufficient word from God and a promise that God will sanctify us throughout our lives (1 Thess 5:23). Mentors can have hope that God is at work in the young couple and will continue. As God is working, mentors should be equipped to handle issues that come their way. Hopefully this lesson has given you a framework to think through how to help couples.

Part Three: What issues and topics are we going to train mentors to handle?

Lesson Five – Training Mentors to Help Young Couples Understand and Live Their Roles and Responsibilities in Marriage

Essential Questions for Lesson Five:

1. In what ways is the husband to exercise sacrificial love for his wife?
2. In what ways is the wife to exercise submission to her husband?
3. What life lessons could you share that have helped you to live out your roles and responsibilities?

This lesson will focus on training mentors to instruct young couples concerning their roles and responsibilities in marriage. This topic was chosen first because of its importance for a God-honoring marriage and because marital breakdown often occurs when one or both of these aspects of marriage disintegrates.

I. Increase biblical knowledge.

A. The husband's roles and responsibilities

The first set of expectations falls upon the husband as he both loves and learns his wife. The primary command in the New Testament for husbands is to love their wives (Eph 5:25; Col 3:19). The type of love commanded here has several important characteristics.

A Life-long Lover (Ephesians 5:25–32)

1. This type of love is compared to the love that Christ had for His church in complete **self-sacrifice** (Eph 5:25). The young husbands must be taught to sacrifice his wants and needs for the sake of his wife and to cherish her above all things.
2. This type of love provides for the needs of his wife. The husband must be taught to **provide** for his wife financially, emotionally, and sexually

throughout their marriage.

3. The husband's love must help to **sanctify** his wife. The husband's role in helping his wife grow spiritually is an excellent display of love. As Christ loved the church and sanctified her through the word, so a husband must be taught to sanctify his wife by helping her understand and grow in the word of God (1 Cor 14:35).

A Life-long Learner (1 Peter 3:7)

4. The husband must **understand** his wife. "All husband-wife relations should be governed by 'knowledge,' a knowledge derived from reason and common sense, as well as an understanding of the Christian principles directing the marriage relationship."³⁶ A husband must learn his wife in several ways:

- As a **precious** vessel. The point of verse 7 is not that the wife is "weaker" in the sense of comparison. The wife is to be treated as fine china.
- With **dignity** – As a human created in the image of God, the wife is to be treated with respect.
- With **God-centeredness** – Paul's point is that if the husband does not treat his wife with care and dignity, his relationship with God is hindered.

B. The wife's roles and responsibilities

The wife is to **submit** to her husband. Martha Peace explains, "The verb 'be subject to' in the Greek is the word *hupotasso*, a military term which means to be ranked under in military order. This ranking of the wife under the husband's authority was sovereignly chosen by God so that there will be order and harmony in the home."³⁷

- Emphasize the right **perspective** - The wife's submission to her husband in no way diminishes her importance or dignity. The world does not recognize this type of submission because it does not recognize the difference between the **essence** of the relationship versus the **function** of the relationship.

³⁶ D. Edmond Hiebert, *1 Peter* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), 205.

³⁷ Martha Peace, *The Excellent Wife: A Biblical Perspective* (Bemidji, MN: Focus, n.d.), 138–39, emphasis original.

- Emphasize the primary **example** - Theologically, the Trinity serves as the best example of the difference between essence and function. The Trinity is equal in essence (Matt 28:19; 2 Cor 13:14), but distinct in function (Luke 22:42; John 14:16–17, 26; 15:26–27; 1 Cor 11:3).

II. Increase practical knowledge.

As the couple wrestles through the appropriate applications of love and submission to each other, the mentors must be ready to assist. Green observes,

Have you noticed that this discussion of roles in marriage leaves a lot of flexibility in how a household is run? Scripture does not say who must organize the daily finances or who does the laundry, the cooking, the cleaning, or the car maintenance. God has gifted each of you differently. What works for one couple will not necessarily be best for another. Each couple has to learn what works best, given each person's skills, gifts, abilities, and desires.³⁸

III. Cultivate suitable skill.

A. Listen to what the couple is saying in light of their roles and responsibilities. It takes wisdom to discern what issues the couple is facing and whether the husband is acting unloving and the wife is not acting in submission.

Example: You may need to help the couple organize the priorities in the home as they consider their own abilities and desires.

B. A good example of questions to ask a young couple concerning their roles is as follows: “*In what ways can you show your wife love? How can you show your husband submission?*”³⁹

Often the couple's identity is not defined by what God's word says about their proper roles and responsibilities, and this acknowledgement can help the mentor know what to address in a session.

IV. Solve problems.

Case Study: Lee and Judy have been married for six months and have been attending IC for the last three months. They are both interested in joining and have been to the

³⁸ Rob Green, *Tying the Knot: A Premarital Guide to a Strong & Lasting Marriage* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2016), 71–72.

³⁹ David Powlison, *Seeing with New Eyes: Counseling and the Human Condition Through the Lens of Scripture* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2003), 140, emphasis original.

newcomers' class. After a church service, they ask Pastor whether the church offers any kind of marriage mentoring, and Pastor asks you to start meeting with Lee and Judy. Your first meeting was to get acquainted with them, and that went very well. During the second meeting, you start with the question – How are things going with your new house? Judy says that they are struggling with their responsibilities in the home. She asks you both a question - “Who should be responsible for the daily upkeep in our home?” She says that Lee tries hard to help after he works long hours but is very tired and falls behind in helping. She also works long hours and is taking several online classes for her master’s degree. Judy came from a home where everything was orderly, but Lee did not.

What are important parts of this case study on which to focus and pray through?

What question(s) would you ask?

How would you help Lee and Judy?

V. Share life lessons.

As you think through your early years, how did you deal with the responsibilities around the home? What practical strategies did you incorporate to honor the responsibility to love and to submit? **Remember: Be wisely open.**

VI. Encourage scriptural obedience.

Mentors must understand that demonstrating role expectations from the Scriptures establishes a pattern for other couples to follow. For example, older women in the church should model and teach the younger women the importance of submission in marriage because submission is primarily for the Lord (Eph 5:22; Col 3:18). The younger wives need to be taught that submission to their husbands is not becoming a “door mat,” nor are all the decisions solely his to make. The wife also needs to be taught that submission to God is first and to the husband second; this priority guards the wife from submitting to her husband if he asks her to sin or do something against her conscience (Acts 5:29). Older men must encourage younger men to model love and understanding in their marriage. Peter says for men to “dwell in an understanding way.” Older men can give examples of how they can treat their wives as a precious gift.

VI. Confront disobedience.

At times the mentor must exhort or confront a young couple for going in an unbiblical direction concerning their roles (Gal 6:1). Perhaps the wife is not submitting to her husband regarding a decision he has made. The mentors should lovingly exhort the wife to submit to the decision the husband has made in a spirit of meekness (1 Pet 3:4). Also, if the husband is not sacrificially loving his wife, then he must be exhorted to confess his sin to God and his wife (Eph 5:25).

Illustration: A friend told me about an incident between a young couple that I will never forget. My friend and his wife received a phone call from a friend saying that she needed a ride home from CVS because her car had broken down. They both went to get her and take her home. On the way to her house, my friend and his wife asked whether her husband knew she had broken down. She said that he knew, but he could not come and get her because he was watching the show *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. This man was a seminary student at the time of this incident.

Was he treating her as fine china? Was he showing any kind of sacrificial love? Make sure that the disobedience is clear enough to confront biblically. Also, make sure you are confronting with a level of gentleness instead of reacting to the spouse's foolishness.

Remember: The goal of confrontation is repentance and not revenge.

VII. Pray with your couple and for your couple.

- Pray that they would accept their roles and fulfill their responsibilities in the home.
- Pray that they would embrace the teaching of Genesis 2 and Ephesians 5.
- Encourage the young couple to pray together.

Lesson Six – Training Mentors to Help Young Couples Understand How to Handle Communication in Marriage

Essential Questions for Lesson Six:

1. How can communication between a husband and wife grow and be more Christ-centered?
2. What are some common problems for couples as they communicate with each other?

God is the author of communication. He himself created language to express His character and His will. **Communication in marriage is at the center of either a godly relationship or an ungodly one.** When a husband and wife recognize and embrace their roles and responsibilities in marriage, they will understand the importance of communication with one another.

I. Increase biblical knowledge.

What does the Scripture teach about communicating with one another in marriage? Here are several principles for effective communication in marriage:

A. Our speech must always be **God**-centered.

Communication between a couple is built upon God's work in salvation. Ephesians 4 speaks of our speech being rooted in God's work of renewal in our hearts as we are growing more "in the likeness of God" (4:24).

Psalm 141:3 – "Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips."

Colossians 3:17 – "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father."

B. Recognize that what we say and how we say it **reflects** what is in our **hearts**.

Matthew 12:34 – "You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart."

The tongue is what exposes the heart. The only way to have godly communication in marriage is to focus on heart transformation as the tongue exposes our true heart condition.

C. My words have the power to **build up**.

Ephesians 4:15 – “but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ.”

Communication in marriage should be governed by truth (15, 25) and edification (29). Here are several principles to make sure our speech is truthful and edifying.⁴⁰

1. Be Honest.
2. Solve problems quickly.
3. Be encouraging instead of attacking.
4. Act, don't react

D. My words have the power to **tear down**.

Ephesians 4:29 – “Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear.”

Encourage your couple to know the warning signs that lead to harsh communication. Sometimes taking time to refocus and pray before talking with one another is key.

1. Am I irritable because of some difficulty?
2. Am I irritable because I am tired?
3. Am I disappointed or frustrated about something or someone?

II. Increase practical knowledge.

“Most marriage counselors will agree that a breakdown of communication is almost always involved in marital dysfunction. No one working in this realm disputes the fact that ineffective communication has disastrous results.”⁴¹

- A. How can you help a couple understand the importance of good communication?

⁴⁰ See Rob Green, *Tying the Knot: A Premarital Guide to a Strong & Lasting Marriage* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2016), 87–90.

⁴¹ Wayne Mack, *Preparing for Marriage God's Way*, 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2013), 117.

1. Emphasize to them that intimacy in marriage starts with good communication.
2. Help them understand that good communication is built over time.
3. Demonstrate that communication comes from a heart that carries out its desires. (James 4:1–2)

B. What are some helpful guidelines for godly speech in marriage?⁴²

1. Use the McDonald's method (repeating your order back to you) and repeat back to your spouse what he or she just said.
2. Be sure to give eye contact when you speak and when you listen.
3. Both spouses need to evaluate speech habits. Do I sound or look **harsh** when I speak? Do I sound sarcastic when I speak?
4. Don't be accusatory in your speech.

III. Cultivate suitable skill.

A. Listen to what the couple is saying about their communication. How do they typically respond to one another? Observe how they interact with one another while they are with you and when they are at church.

B. Questions – Ask them: What have been some difficulties for you in your communication to one another? What types of things seem to be going right with your communication? What are your warning signs that lead to harsh communication?

IV. Solve problems.

Case Study: Tim and Pam have been married for a year, and you have met with them recently to begin mentoring. You invite them over to your house to get to know them better, and on the second meeting they invite you over to their home. When you both arrive, Pam greets you at the door and welcomes you in. She says that Tim will be home in a few minutes and offers you some appetizers as you wait for Tim to arrive. Once Tim arrives, he greets both of you and goes over to the TV and turns on the local news channel. After Pam sets the table for the meal, you sit down and pray together.

⁴² Many of these points were adapted from Keith R. Miller and Patricia A. Miller, *Quick Scripture Reference for Counseling Couples* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2017), 97–98.

After Tim prays for the meal, he serves himself to the spaghetti and salad and takes his chair and turns it toward the TV. He says that when he gets home, he likes to have a bit of alone time to unwind from his day. Both of you talk to Pam throughout the meal and when the local news is over, Tim joins in your conversation at the table. Pam really doesn't show any frustration or embarrassment. She acts as if this is normal activity between married couples.

1. What questions would you ask Tim and Pam?
2. From your perspective, what is the problem with Tim's actions?
3. How would you encourage both of them?

V. Share life lessons.

My problem with communication (and Carrie can testify) is that I like to approach communication with her either to win an argument or to show her my authority as if I were speaking to an unruly student. I also struggle with taking her words and trying to solve the problem rather than just being an ear to listen.

What life lessons can you share?

VI. Encourage scriptural obedience.

How could you encourage Tim and Pam?

What scriptural principles about communication are important for them to understand?

VII. Confront disobedience.

How would you know when Tim or Pam have crossed the line into disobedience with their communication?

VIII. Pray.

Pray that God gives you discernment. Not every couple handles communication the same way.

Lesson Seven – Training Mentors to Help Young Couples Understand How to Handle Conflict Resolution

Essential Questions for Lesson Seven:

1. What is happening in the heart of a husband and/or wife that causes conflict?
2. How do many couples incorrectly deal with their conflicts?
3. How can couples stop problems from turning into conflicts?

In the many surveys I ran to inform the curriculum, conflict resolution was number two. Conflict happens in every marriage. One marriage mentoring curriculum I looked through had a chapter entitled “Effective Fighting.”⁴³ Conflict is going to happen in every marriage, but that does not mean that couples shouldn’t take it very seriously. As mentors, you can be a great help in redirecting a young couple’s focus back to their commitment to love, honor, and cherish even during seasons of conflict.

I. Increase biblical knowledge.⁴⁴

A. Why do problems turn into conflicts?

James 4 reveals that “quarrels and conflicts” are sourced in our sinful desires and pleasures. When a husband and wife engage in conflict, the desires of their heart are manifested. James likens this level of sinful desire as lust (v. 2).

This type of desire is also likened to idolatry of the heart. The spouse is worshipping an idol of the heart that is usually detected by several characteristics.

B. What is going on in the heart that is causing the conflict? **Heart Idolatry**

1. Pride

Proverbs 13:10 – “Only by pride cometh contention; but with the well advised is wisdom” (KJV).

⁴³ James Patrick Curtis, Jr., “A Marriage Mentor Program for the Local Church” (DMin diss., Western Seminary, 2004), 121.

⁴⁴ Many of the principles in this lesson concerning dealing with conflict were used from David M. Doran, “Teacher Inservice Session on Conflict Resolution” (lecture, Inter-City Baptist Church, Allen Park, MI, August 21, 2019). Used with Permission.

2. Anger

Proverbs 15:18 – “A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, But the slow to anger calms a dispute.”

Proverbs 30:33 – “For the churning of milk produces butter, And pressing the nose brings forth blood; So the churning of anger produces strife.”

3. Greed

Proverbs 28:25 – “The greedy stir up conflict, but those who trust in the LORD will prosper” (NIV).

The point here is that the husband or wife is seeking his/her own desires, and the result is conflict.

4. Dishonesty

Proverbs 16:28 – “A perverse man spreads strife, and a slanderer separates intimate friends.”

II. Increase practical knowledge.

Couples often deal with their conflicts in different ways. In time, these responses will turn into their habits.

A. Types of responses to conflict – Don and Sherry

1. **Avoid** – This response doesn’t solve the problem at all. Avoiding problems only lets them incubate to greater problems and consequences. Don avoids the problems at home by working late hours. This leads to a lack of security for Sherry and can lead to bitterness later in marriage.

2. **Accommodate** – This response typically is motivated by the fear of man and not by biblical principle.

Sherry gives in during the conflict so that Don calms down. Proverbs 29:25 says, “The fear of man brings a snare, But he who trusts in the LORD will be exalted.” If Sherry constantly gives in to Don, she is not loving him biblically. At times Don needs to be confronted in a spirit of submission and humility.

3. **Compete** – This response seeks to win the argument. The goal is to win.

Sherry was brought up in a home where everything was a competition. Don has a difficult time resolving conflicts with her because Sherry never

backs down. This response has the potential to cause anger and resentment in Don. At times, men will use their strength and force of presence to overcome this type of deficit.

4. **Compromise** – This response seeks to split the difference in the conflict. In a sense, Don and Sherry give a little to gain a little. This response leaves both parties lacking because the conflict is never really resolved.

5. **Collaborate** – This response seeks to work together to solve the issue or problem. Don and Sherry both admit their part in the conflict, repent before God, confess their sin to each other. This approach seems to honor the Scripture in the best way.

Ephesians 4:2–3 – “with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love, being **diligent** to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

B. Contributing issues to conflict

1. **Perspective** – upbringing and tendencies. One of them might have come from a home where conflict was never dealt with biblically.

2. **Setting** – Context of the issue/conflict. When a couple is under pressure, it often brings out issues and conflict.

One Christian author calls this the law of the tea bag.⁴⁵ When hot water is poured on the tea bag, what fills the bag comes out.

3. **Sinful habits** – Typical responses to pressure. “This is just how I am” type of response to conflict.

III. Cultivate suitable skill.

A. Listen for what type of conflict they are having and how they are dealing with it. Listen for tones in their voice as they speak of conflict. Listen for sarcastic phrases toward one another or toward a person they feel is causing the conflict.

B. Questions

1. Out of the 5 ways that couples deal with conflict, which one best fits your experience?

⁴⁵ Jim Berg, *Changed into His Image: God’s Plan for Transforming Your Life* (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 1999), 3–4.

2. How did your parents handle conflict?
3. What pressures are you facing right now that could be influencing your reactions to your husband/wife?
4. How have you resolved conflicts in the past?
5. What are the options for solving this problem?
6. What are the positives and negatives for each option?

IV. Solve problems.

Case Study: Don and Sherry have met with you several times now and are willing to be more transparent about the conflicts they have been having. Many of the conflicts seem to be centered on Don's relationship with his parents, specifically his mother. Don understands that Sherry is upset, but really doesn't understand why. You give both of them time to share their experiences with you. Don shares that Sherry gets upset that they go over to his parent's house most Sundays after church and rarely go out with anyone at church. Sherry says that she can count on one hand the amount of times they have eaten with a couple from church or have just been alone together for lunch on a Sunday in the last six months. Don says that he wants to honor his parents and that his mom gets upset when they don't come over. Sherry has a good relationship with Don's parents, but this conflict seems to be driving a wedge between Sherry and Don's mom.

What details are important in this case study to help mentor this couple?

What questions would you ask Don and Sherry?

What verses could you direct them to?

V. Share life lessons.

Do you have any experiences like this that you can share with Don and Sherry?

How has your handling of conflict changed through the years?

What verses were key in helping your conflict resolution?

VI. Encourage scriptural obedience.

You can help to resolve conflicts in marriages in several ways.

A. Help them to establish clear guidelines for conflict.

You may need to rehash with them that the goal in conflict is to deal with the heart of the issue. Assist them in asking what is motivating their conflict. Is it pride, greed, or anger? What biblical teaching addresses these types of sins?

B. Help resolve the conflict by teaching them in good communication habits.

Proverbs 15:1–2 – “A gentle answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger. The tongue of the wise makes knowledge acceptable, But the mouth of fools spouts folly.”

Proverbs 15:28 – “The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer, But the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things.”

C. Teach them to anticipate the potential for conflict.

Proverbs 22:3 “The prudent sees the evil and hides himself, But the naïve go on and are punished for it.”

D. Know the potential that conflict can escalate.

It is always possible that you are not hearing the entirety of the story, and you may need to seek outside help to resolve the conflicts.

Proverbs 18:17 – “The first to plead his case seems just, until another comes and examines him.”

E. Celebrate with your couple as they are successful in dealing with conflict.

Proverbs 15:23 – “A man has joy in an apt answer, And how delightful is a timely word!”

VII. Confront disobedience.

How would you know when Don and Sherry need to be confronted about their conflicts?

What are some commands/principles from James 4:1–10 that would help you as you help your couple with the conflict they are facing?

VIII. Pray that God would give you wisdom to help couples in conflict.

You need to make sure you have an established relationship with the couple before offering advice about their conflicts.

Proverbs 26:17 – “Like one who takes a dog by the ears Is he who passes by and meddles with strive not belonging to him.”

Pray that God would keep your marriage from handling conflicts unbiblically.

Lesson Eight – Training Mentors to Understand How to Help Young Couples with Their Finances

Essential Questions for Lesson Eight:

1. How would a couple display wise stewardship with their money?
2. What are the benefits of living by a budget early in marriage?
3. Should married couples combine all of their finances?

Mentors need to be well-equipped with a God-centered view of finances. God says much about money, both how to manage it well and the consequences of mishandling it. Advice about money comes from many different sources today, and much of that advice may be somewhat helpful; but the primary source of advice needs to be God-centered, not man-centered.

I. Increase biblical knowledge.

A. Encourage the couple to keep God at the center of finances.

1. God blesses those who keep him first with their money (Prov 3:9–10; 1 Tim 6:17).
2. Money exposes the heart’s true loyalty (Matt 6:24; 1 Tim 6:10).
3. Money exposes the heart’s true motivations (Prov 28:22; 1 Tim 6:9).
4. Money should be used for God’s glory and His purposes (2 Cor 9:12–15).

B. Teach the couple what wise stewardship looks like in the Scripture.

God expects His people to handle their money as wise stewards of what He has given. Green says, “As a steward of all that God has given you, it is your responsibility and joy to consider how Jesus, your Master, would want you to use those resources. God entrusts you with everything you have: your intellect, your abilities, your skills, and the money those things produce.”⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Rob Green, *Tying the Knot: A Premarital Guide to a Strong & Lasting Marriage* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2016), 96.

1. Stewards should give to God and others (2 Cor 8:1–5; 1 Tim 6:18).
2. Stewards must save money for future needs and emergencies (Prov 6:6–8).
3. Stewards should spend money wisely and for enjoyment (1 Tim 6:17).

C. Show them that the mishandling and misuse of money causes many problems in marriage.

Parrott and Parrott say, “Money is also the catalyst for marital conflict because it so often represents the measure of personal success and self-worth—especially for men. Of course, having a certain amount of money is no guarantee of security or freedom, but believing that making more money will give us more peace of mind is a trap many couples fall into.”⁴⁷

1. When money is mishandled, it disappears quickly (Prov 23:4–5).
2. Money reveals a greedy heart that brings severe consequences (Prov 28:22; 1 Tim 6:9–10).
3. The success of a person or of a marriage is not measured by money (Luke 12:15).

II. Increase practical knowledge.

A. Be well acquainted with helpful financial plans.

Many financial plans have been developed, but perhaps the best plan is offered by Dave Ramsey’s baby steps program. Dave’s steps are as follows:

1. \$1000 in an emergency fund
2. Pay off all debt (except the house) utilizing the ‘Debt Snowball’
3. Three to six months expenses in savings for emergencies
4. Fully fund 15 percent into pre-tax retirement plans and ROTH IRA, if eligible
5. College funding

⁴⁷ Les Parrott and Leslie Parrott, *The Complete Guide to Marriage Mentoring* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 63.

6. Pay off home early; Build wealth! (Mutual funds and real estate).⁴⁸

B. Train couples to deal with financial problems.

Mentors can help deal with problems that arise with finances. First, how should a mentor guide the young couple when they disagree with a budget? For example, how should they prioritize bills to pay? Second, if the couple is deeply in debt before the marriage starts, how should they begin paying off their debts?

III. Cultivate suitable skill.

A. Mentors must seek to understand the couple within the context of their lives and apply wise advice to help remedy their situations.

1. Listen for the commitments they share with you and others.
2. Study how values have changed from your generation to their generation.

B. Mentors must ask appropriate questions of mentorees.

1. The first thing to determine is a couple's situation in life.

Example questions include the following:

- What are your current occupations?
 - What are your current spending habits?
 - Do you currently have a budget?
 - Do you follow the budget?
2. Second, to determine what formed their understanding of finances, these questions should be asked:
 - Who shaped your understanding of finances the most?

⁴⁸ Dave Ramsey, *The Money Answer Book: Quick Answers to Your Everyday Financial Questions* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 12. Ramsey seems to advocate a self-serving approach in baby step 6 by teaching to build wealth. He clarifies his intention by adding a seventh baby step which states, "build wealth and give." See "What Are the Baby Steps?" Dave Ramsey's 7 Baby Steps, accessed May 3, 2019, <http://www.daveramsey.com/dave-ramsey-7-baby-steps?snid=start.steps>. For other helpful resources, see Ron Blue, *Master Your Money: A Step-By-Step Plan for Financial Freedom*, rev. ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997), and Larry Burkett, *How to Manage Your Money: An In-Depth Personal Bible Study on Personal Finances* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2002).

- What parent was responsible for financial decisions when you were growing up?
- In what types of financial burdens did you grow up?

IV. Solve problems.

Case Study: Brad and Linda have been married for six months and have joined in a mentoring relationship with you. They struggle with their finances mainly because of student loans. Linda studied to become a physical therapist and accrued 80K in student loan debt. As you begin asking several informational questions, you find out that Brad and Linda have separate checking and savings accounts. They have divided up their individual financial responsibilities and pay for their obligations separately. During a session, they ask you if you think they should keep separate accounts or join them.

- Is it necessary to have joint accounts? Why or why not?
- Is there any more information that you would like to gather from them before speaking to them on this issue?
- How would you advise them?

V. Share life lessons

- What has worked for you in dealing with your finances through the years? What has not worked?
- What tends to bring conflict into your relationship regarding finances?

- What are the different stressors that can come into young couples' lives that you have had to work through?
- How much do you give to the Lord? Do you use a percentage?

VI. Encourage scriptural obedience.

Mentors should teach biblical principles of finance in several ways.

A. Encourage young couples to give to the Lord first.

1. Young couples need to be trained in biblical giving and generosity. Green says,

Remember, everything belongs to the Lord. Theologically, there is no such thing as “your money.” Instead, you are stewarding God’s resources for his honor and glory. Part of that stewardship is giving, especially to your local church. Regular and sacrificial giving is the means God uses to provide for the needs associated with ministry. Giving is also an opportunity to tangibly express thanks for all that the Lord has done for you.⁴⁹

2. The sacrifice of giving is important for young couples to embrace because it displays their priority to serve the Lord first.

B. Point young couples to apply biblical principles wisely.

Mentors should encourage young couples with things like a rainy-day fund, long-term investments, college planning, and debt avoidance. These things need to be taught to young couples so that long-term planning is seen as the wisest financial decision a marriage can make (Prov 6:6–8).

VII. Confront disobedience.

Be very cautious here!!! If you don't want people messing with your finances, chances are they are very sensitive about their own as well. For the husband, finances can be a major source of ego and identity. For the wife, finances can be a major source of insecurity. Walk cautiously!

⁴⁹ Green, *Tying the Knot*, 103.

A. Remind the couple of their stewardship responsibilities.

Mentors need to gently remind the couple that their resources are not their own because God owns everything; they are merely stewarding what God has entrusted to them (1 Cor 4:1–2).

B. Remind the couple to take debt seriously.

Solomon taught that wisdom is evidenced by how seriously a couple seeks to repay creditors and get out of debt (Prov 6:1–5).

C. Warn the couple about the consequences of greed.

Mentors need to warn of the temporal and eternal consequences of greed (1 Tim 6:8–10). Green says, “Greed is often at the forefront of debt. It is an attitude of the heart that is unwilling to wait or to do without, so debt is often a part of the equation. Money and possessions cannot buy happiness. That is why you must be so diligent to avoid greed.”⁵⁰

VIII. Pray.

A. Pray for God’s wisdom in dealing with such a tender topic.

B. Pray that God opens up opportunities to speak truth into the young couple’s life.

C. Pray that God will help them have a firm grasp on their finances.

⁵⁰ Green, *Tying the Knot*, 99.

Lesson Nine – Troubleshooting and Dealing with Problems That Couples Present to Mentors

Essential Questions for Lesson Nine:

1. Should mentoring ever be cut short?
2. What if the mentors encounter an issue that they do not know how to handle?
3. How would I help the couple if there are deep sins that surface?

I. When should mentoring a young couple stop?

A. Mentoring should stop when the agreed time-frame ends with the young couple.

When you meet with your couple in the first few sessions, you should both agree on the amount of time to spend together. Having an agreed-on time frame will help eliminate two things.

1. Pressure on the mentors – Mentors should never view the meetings with their young couple as permanent. **I do not mean** that you can never help the couple in any way. You should always be encouraging and praying for the couple that you mentored. **What I am saying** is that the meetings with the couple are not indefinite. Typically, a mentoring relationship will last for a year.

2. Wrong expectations from the young couple – It is possible for a young couple to find too much security in the relationship itself. It is good for the young couple to make their own decisions, learn to work through their mistakes, and celebrate successes together.

B. Mentoring should stop if the agreed-on topics and goals for the relationship are abandoned.

Unfortunately, not every mentoring relationship will be effective. Sometimes a young couple will not want to utilize the relationship in the way it is designed.

1. It is possible that the young couple just wants companionship. They have come to the mentoring sessions just to build a relationship. This is not sinful, but it is not the full design for a mentoring relationship.

2. If the young couple just wants to vent about life or about each other, this will greatly hinder the purposes of the mentoring relationship. You should gently encourage the couple to be focused on the goal for the relationship.

3. If your couple consistently misses agreed on meetings, then you may need to suspend mentoring until you can understand their reasons. Perhaps the reason they have missed is providential hindrances, but you won't know until you reschedule, and a pattern is formed.

II. What if we encounter something that we are not equipped to handle?

****You need to be cautious in giving advice in areas that you are not qualified to speak. Issues of law and medicine should be avoided without first asking Pastor or staff.**

Here are several things to consider when you face an issue that you are not expecting or not able to handle:

A. Refer the couple to pastoral staff.

You may need to refer the couple (or an individual) to those trained in counseling. Some issues run very deep and need a more concentrated focus. You should pray for the couple and also be willing to go with them to counseling if prudent.

B. Suggest several resources to them to work through together.

There are many resources that exist that could help a young couple with the issue that they are facing. For example, you may feel very uncomfortable dealing with issues of intimacy. You can recommend a resource for them to read through that would help them understand the issue from a biblical worldview.

III. What if there are deep sins in the present or suffering from the past that comes to your attention?

When the young couple agrees to enter a mentoring relationship, they will understand at the beginning that you might have to alert pastoral staff to issues that surface in the mentoring relationship. For example, you may need to alert pastoral staff if there is a threat of suicide or a deep level of porn addiction. **Also, if you detect abuse in the relationship, you should alert someone who can help.**⁵¹ Since you are not

⁵¹ Here are a few websites that offer some help in understanding warning signs of abuse. <http://www.westerntrust.hscni.net/3176.htm> and elisabethklein.com/2015/03/05/when-youre-in-an-abusive-marriage-but-dont-know-youre-in-an-abusive-marriage/.

counselors, there may be some issues that you need to refer for the sake of the care of the young couple. **You are not alone through this process!** Pastoral staff will always be ready to help in any situation.

By God's grace and through the equipping you have received, you can have an immense impact on the marriages at ICBC. I will be praying for you and at times with you as you minister to God's people here at IC!!

TEACHING NOTES APPENDIX 1
ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR MENTORS

Many of these questions were taken from David Powlison, *Seeing with New Eyes: Counseling and the Human Condition Through the Lens of Scripture* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2003), 132–140. **These are suggestions.** They can be modified as you see fit.

1. What do you love? Hate?
2. What do you want in life? What do you wish for?
3. Where do you bank your hopes?
4. What do you fear? What do you tend to worry about?
5. What really matters to you? What do you organize your life around?
6. Where do you find refuge, safety, comfort, escape, pleasure, security?
7. Whom must you please? Whose opinion of you counts? In whose eyes are you living?
8. Who are your role models?
9. What would make you feel rich, secure, prosperous?
10. What would bring you the greatest happiness? The greatest pain and misery?
11. In what situations do you feel pressured or tense? What are your escapes?
12. What do you pray for?
13. What do you talk about? What is most important to you?
14. How do you spend your time?
15. What are your priorities?

TEACHING NOTES APPENDIX 2

HELPFUL RESOURCES FOR FURTHER READING

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TEACHING NOTES APPENDIX 3
SETTING UP MEETINGS/LOGISTICS

There is no set pattern for a mentoring relationship — this is a good thing. Each relationship will take on a character of its own. Here are some suggestions for you as you prepare to meet with your couple.

Your First Meeting

1. Focus on building a relationship with your couple.
 - Get to know them. Have them tell their story about dating, engagement, and marriage.
 - Tell your story. As in the curriculum – **be wisely open**. It is good to share your story along with its successes and trials.
 - Explain the basic goal of the mentoring relationship
2. Settle on logistics
 - Email or call your couple and set up an initial time to meet.
 - I suggest that you meet at least once a month for a year. **This is a suggestion**. Sometime schedules will not allow for this amount of time and you can only meet six times in the year. Be flexible and take the time that you have to mentor the couple.
 - Settle on what day(s) work best for you to meet together. You may need to have a calendar with you as you settle on your dates.
3. Establish clear expectations
 - The point of the mentoring relationship is to address specific topics with your couple. **Many of the topics will be decided on by your couple**. They will be given a worksheet to fill out prior to your first meeting so that you have a general idea of topics to cover with them and the order of priority.
 - Let them know up front what your expectations are for the relationship and give them an opportunity to voice their expectations.

Subsequent Meetings

Once you get to know your couple, settle on logistics, and establish clear expectations — here are some suggestions of how to continue the meetings with your couple.

1. **Book studies** – If your couple settles on several topics of struggle, then you might suggest a book study with them. For example, if your couple indicates a problem with conflict resolution, you may want to read and study the book *Pursuing Peace: A Christian Guide to Handling Our Conflicts* by Robert Jones. Another excellent resource is Dave Harvey’s book *When Sinners Say “I Do”*: *Discovering the Power of the Gospel for Marriage*.

2. **Specific Projects** – Your couple may need you to guide them through a “how to” type of approach. For example, your couple may not know how to develop a budget together. Help them to establish a budget and then keep them accountable to the budget they set.

3. **Topic Discussion** – You may decide with your couple to follow a specific topic guide. You can set up each meeting with a specific agenda to hit all of the main topics that they wrestle with. You might want to follow the **Mentoring Framework I** offered in lesson 4. The mentoring framework is a **tool belt** of approaches you can use when guiding your couple through the issues they face.

Example: Your couple indicates that they would like to talk about conflict resolution, finances, in-law issues, and communication. Focus in on these issues and divide your time together by developing each one thoroughly.

Homework

It is important at the end of each meeting to assign homework with your couple. Homework accomplishes several things for your mentoring ministry.

1. It keeps the mentoring relationship focused on a goal.
2. It helps establish the need of the couple to work together on projects so that after the mentoring is complete, they are able to work through issues together.
3. It helps determine the seriousness of the couple to grow together in the topics you discuss.

APPENDIX 8

MINISTRY PLAN FOR CONTINUING THE TRAINING OF MENTORS AT ICBC

I would like to continue training marriage mentors in our church. At this point in the mentoring ministry, we don't know what we don't know; therefore, Jacob and I are organizing the first year of mentoring sessions and over the course of the year, we will be taking careful notes of the progress of the marriage mentoring ministry. I will be revising and editing both the curriculum and our process as we observe the ministry for a full year. The mentoring couples listed above will be assigned to couples in our church to begin mentoring in January 2020.

The ministry plan is as follows:

- Follow-up with current mentors throughout the mentoring process during 2020.
- Edit the curriculum and process based on the helpful input of the current mentors.
- For the next two years (2020 and 2021), I would like to recruit and train 9 more mentor couples to participate in this ministry. This would bring the mentoring list up to 15 (I am including Carrie and myself as potential mentors).
- I would like to train the mentors using the current format – 9-week sessions during the Fall semester. This time frame worked well for several reasons. First, the Fall is traditionally a great time to begin a teaching program (e.g. Bible Institute and WOW). Second, a nine-week commitment did not seem to be a burden on the current mentors to handle in their schedules. Third, the class was finished before the busy holiday season.
- Utilize the experience of the current mentors by bringing some of them into future training classes to explain their experiences to the mentors in training. I can also interview current mentors on video and use the clips in the training process.

I am asking you to review the provided curriculum, survey results, and ministry plan and provide one of three responses.

I approve of the curriculum, survey results, and ministry plan as proposed.

I approve of the curriculum, survey results, and ministry plan as proposed pending the provided edits or additions.

I disapprove of the curriculum, survey results, and ministry plan as proposed.

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ABSTRACT

DEVELOPING A MARRIAGE MENTORING TRAINING PROGRAM AT INTER-CITY BAPTIST CHURCH IN ALLEN PARK, MICHIGAN

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2020
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This ministry project was designed to train marriage mentors to assist young married couples at Inter-City Baptist Church in Allen Park, Michigan.

Chapter 1 explains the context, rationale, purpose, goals, and research methodology of the project.

Chapter 2 establishes the biblical-theological foundation for marriage mentoring through an exegesis of Genesis 2:18–25, Ephesians 5:22–33, and Titus 2:1–8.

Chapter 3 explains that the process of training mentors is the responsibility of the church as the leadership equips them to assist young couples. This equipping includes an overview of how to select, organize, and train marriage mentors.

Chapter 4 details the history, preparation, and implementation of the nine-week mentor training class.

Chapter 5 evaluates the purpose and goals of the ministry project. The chapter also reflects on the strengths and weaknesses of the project. It includes suggestions for change along with theological and personal reflections.

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