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DEVELOPING A MARRIAGE MENTORSHIP MINISTRY
AT LAKEWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH
IN PEWAUKEE, WISCONSIN

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DEVELOPING A MARRIAGE MENTORSHIP MINISTRY
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I dedicate this project to my family. First, my wife Ashleigh Clark, who has faithfully encouraged and sacrificially labored alongside me in this endeavor. Also, my three girls Peyton, Logan, and Ella, who have been a constant encouragement to their daddy in the pursuit of this degree over these past several years.

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PREFACE

Completing this project is a testimony of God's faithfulness and enabling grace. The Lord has been shaping my life from the day of my salvation continuing every step of the way. I am a sinner who needs Jesus, everyday crawling back onto the altar as a living sacrifice.

This project's completion is also a testimony to my wife's (Ashleigh) faithfulness and grace for the many long hours of study and writing after many long hours of ministry. She sacrificially and selflessly supported and served this endeavor.

My three daughters relentlessly encouraged me to press on and keep working hard. It was fun to be "in school" together, and their prayers and patience are priceless.

Our church, Lakewood Baptist Church, has been supportive both financially and spiritually. It is a privilege growing and serving together with you! May this project fuel your passion and effectiveness to invest in one another for the glory of Christ.

I am grateful to Dr. Robert Jones and the faculty of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary for their faithful teaching and personal investment in my life over the course of my studies and this project.

Jordan Charles Clark

Waukesha, Wisconsin

May 2024

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A marriage built on Christ and the gospel is essential for its health and longevity. The present culture assaults the institution of marriage and threatens to undermine God's purpose for it. Many couples at Lakewood Baptist Church in Pewaukee, Wisconsin (Lakewood) rely solely on direct pastoral care, particularly in young marriages, which is unsustainable for effective ministry. The combination of these two factors raises the need to train and deploy a marriage mentorship ministry at Lakewood. Marriage mentorship shepherds our members toward life-on-life ministry that supports healthy and biblical marriage.

Context

Lakewood Baptist Church was established in 2009. The church experienced a strong season of growth in membership during the early years. The focus of Lakewood was on investing in people without the need for structure and programs. However, the church grew at a rapid pace and experienced a need for expanded pastoral support. Over the years, the church has depended on numerous well-trained and gifted vocational leaders for doing the work of the ministry. There have been substantial changes at Lakewood over its short history. The rapid increase in Sunday attendance from a handful of planting families to over six hundred has brought significant spiritual need. The church growth consists of new believers and membership transfers.

The recent additions to the membership of the church are couples and families that are younger in the faith, many of whom have not been effectively discipled. This brings great opportunity, but also greater needs for discipleship and counseling among

the church body.

The church has also received members and attenders from local churches whose teaching and leadership do not cultivate healthy marriages. The impact of church trauma on marriages and families has produced significant spiritual need. The care, counseling, and discipleship needs cannot be effectively met by pastoral investment alone.

Our philosophy of training members to do the work of the ministry is weak in its implementation (Eph 4:12). The reliance on highly-trained vocational ministers has diminished the role of lay servants in the church. The church has relied on vocational or professional ministers for biblical instruction, counseling, discipleship, and even basic mentorship. The members tend to be spectators in the work of ministry rather than participants. The equipped members are smaller in number and are overworked.

There remains a vacuum of member-to-member efforts in counseling, discipleship, and mentoring. When a counseling need arises, the resourced member seeks out a pastor, rather than personally engaging the situation. This practice minimizes the belief that members can effectively counsel one another. The lack of transparency and resistance to vulnerability has resulted in superficial relationships. The result is a shallow and relationally weak church. Lakewood needs an equipping ministry, to train our members to minister to these rising opportunities. This is particularly evident in the area of marriage mentorship.

Many marriages in our church are weak, particularly among the newer members and recent marriages. There is also a lack of discipleship, specifically related to marriage. A rising number of couples in our church received no premarital counseling, or at best, inadequate counsel. This lack of preparedness has resulted in many couples being ill-equipped to face the challenges of marriage in a Christ-centered way. There has been a rise in the crisis counseling needs among married couples. The onset of COVID and subsequent lockdowns in our region revealed underlying marital distress. The distress in

marriages has produced emotional and behavioral struggles among the children in these homes. These challenges are compounded by the failure of mature couples to engage in the lives of younger couples. Many of our seasoned couples lack training, are ignorant of the need, or feel inadequate to help in these situations.

Rationale

The culture of Lakewood needs to change to reflect a more sound practice of our stated philosophy of ministry. The philosophy of Lakewood is that the work of the pastor is to equip believers to do the work of ministry. This philosophy unfolds most clearly in Ephesians 4, where Paul articulates that God gifts healthy churches with leaders who invest in members for the work of ministry. The members in turn are to invest in one another for mutual care and spiritual development. The spiritual growth and maturity of Lakewood directly correlates to the faithful investment of each member within the body. One area of weakness at Lakewood in member-to-member ministry is among our married couples. The relationship of a husband and wife is a part of the good plan of God (Gen 2:18-25), but sin has corrupted and distorted this good plan (Gen 3:16-21). In the sovereign plan of God, marriage was designed to reflect a deeper reality of the relationship between Christ and the church (Eph 5:21-33). The gospel is clearly on display in our church through healthy Christ-honoring marriages. In a biblical marriage, Christ is the head, and both husband and wife are living in growing obedience to Christ (Eph 5:22-29). The husband is a loving leader, learning to live skillfully with his wife, in submission to Christ (1 Pet 3:7). The wife is a fitting helper (Gen 2:18), learning to live submitted to her husband, in submission to Christ (1 Pet 3:1).

In Ephesians there is a direct connection between the equipping ministry in the church (Eph 4:11-14) and the instructions laid for marriage (Eph 5:22-33). A marriage mentorship ministry is a very practical means of carrying out these instructions in the church.

The development of a marriage mentorship ministry shapes our church culture toward a biblical philosophy of ministry. This project shepherded our members to look to one another for ministry for which they would have previously looked to a pastor. This project fortified the foundation of marriages in our church and equipped members to invest in others as they face the ongoing attack of Satan, indwelling sin, and the cultural war against the institution of marriage.¹ There is a rise in marital distress, separation, and divorce. Proactive and preventative spiritual enrichment in couples from marriage mentors can make a significant difference. As marriages become stronger, the family becomes stronger, and our church becomes stronger.

I used my project to develop a marriage mentorship program. This project equipped couples at Lakewood to grow in their marriage relationships, and then in turn, mentor and disciple other couples toward a Christ-centered marriage. The training sessions nurtured and strengthened the participants' marriages and equipped them to invest in other couples. This project strengthened the marriages within our church family, and shepherded toward healthy member-to-member ministry.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to train couples for a marriage mentorship ministry at Lakewood Baptist Church in Pewaukee, Wisconsin.

Goals

The following four goals measured the completion of the project. They contribute to the purpose of training couples for a marriage mentorship ministry at Lakewood Baptist Church in Pewaukee, Wisconsin.

¹ The idea of culture war includes both the attack on the institution of marriage and also the rejection of the permanence of marriage. For a helpful resource on cultural opposition, see John Piper and Wayne Grudem ed. *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012.

1. The first goal was to assess the primary areas of need for marriage mentoring among couples at Lakewood.
2. The second goal was to develop an ten-week² curriculum centered on biblical instruction for healthy marriages.
3. The third goal was to use the curriculum to equip couples at Lakewood to participate in marriage mentorship.
4. The fourth goal was to develop a strategic ministry plan for deploying a marriage mentorship ministry at Lakewood.

A specific research methodology was created to measure the successful completion of these four goals.³

Research Methodology

Successful completion of this project depended upon the completion of these four goals.

The first goal was to assess the primary areas of need for marriage mentorship among couples at Lakewood. This goal was measured by administering a survey to 233 married individuals who represent a multi-generational cross section of Lakewood. The survey identified the primary areas of need for marriage mentorship at Lakewood.⁴ Additionally, this goal was considered successful when twenty-five couples completed the survey and the results were analyzed, yielding a clearer picture of the most relevant areas of focus for the marriage mentorship curriculum.⁵

The second goal was to develop a curriculum centered on biblical instruction

² The length of training was initially planned for eight weeks, but was extended to ten weeks to facilitate more discussion.

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.

⁴ See appendix 1.

⁵ The success of this goal was exceeded significantly due to a later decision to survey the entire congregation.

for healthy marriages. A ten-unit curriculum was designed to cover basic marriage mentorship, with a specific focus on the issues identified in the survey. Examples include dynamics of change, biblical roles, communication, conflict, forgiveness, family dynamics, intimacy, and other practical matters related to marriage. This goal was measured by an expert panel, which utilized a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum.⁶ This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 80 percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level.

The third goal was to use the curriculum to equip, at minimum, eight couples at Lakewood to participate in marriage mentorship. The participants met weekly for a 45-minute training over a ten week period. This goal was measured by administering a pre- and post-survey that tested the couple's level of knowledge, confidence, and motivation to engage in marriage mentorship.⁷ This goal was considered successfully met when a t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive significant difference in the pre- and post-survey scores.

The fourth goal was to develop a strategic ministry plan for deploying a marriage mentorship ministry at Lakewood. This goal was measured by a panel of three Lakewood pastors. They evaluated the curriculum, survey results, and plans for future mentor training. This goal was considered successfully met when the ministry plan was approved as viable by the panel of pastors for use in church ministry.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

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

Marriage. The church constitution of Lakewood Baptist church states that “we

⁶ See appendix 2.

⁷ See appendix 3 and appendix 5.

affirm that God designed and created two distinct and complementary sexes: male and female. God created marriage, which is a life-long covenant between two people of opposite sexes.”⁸

Biblical counseling. Biblical counseling “is the Christlike, caring, person-to-person ministry of God’s Word to people struggling with personal and interpersonal problems to help them know and follow Jesus Christ in heart and behavior amid their struggles.”⁹

Marriage mentorship. “A happy, growing, experienced couple coaching a younger couple toward growth in their marriage through sharing their wisdom and experience, through encouraging and challenging them to live according to biblical teaching, and through building a supportive relationship with them.”¹⁰

Two limitations applied to this project. First, the accuracy of the surveys was dependent on the willingness of participants to be transparent about their beliefs on marriage issues and mentorship. To mitigate this limitation, the survey used in the execution of goal 1 was designed to be anonymous. The survey used in the execution of goal 3 was designed to protect the identity of the participant in the analysis and presentation of the results. Second, the effectiveness of the training was diminished by the inconsistency of attendance for the training sessions. To mitigate this limitation, the participants signed a contract for participation in the sessions and additionally a synchronous/asynchronous learning environment was utilized.

Two delimitations applied to this project. The couples who participated in the training had been married for ten or more years. This allowed for adequate marital

⁸ Lakewood Baptist Church, *Lakewood Confession of Faith, Covenant, & Constitution*, last modified 2017, www.lakewoodbaptist.church/.

⁹ Robert D. Jones, Kristin L. Kellen, and Rob Green, *The Gospel for Disordered Lives: An Introduction to Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2021), 20.

¹⁰ James Patrick Curtis Jr., “A Marriage Mentor Program for the Local Church” (DMin Project, Western Seminary, 2004), 183.

experience and a stable foundation for mentoring another couple. Second, the selection of marriage mentors was by the approval of the elder team. To mitigate this delimitation, the elders approved all participants before extending an invitation for participation in the marriage mentorship training.

Conclusion

Lakewood Baptist Church seeks to glorify God as its highest goal. We accomplish this goal by making disciples. When marriages thrive, the love of Christ is visible and the gospel is powerfully on display. Marriage mentorship provides an opportunity to train our members to make disciples. This cultivates our biblical philosophy of ministry and addresses a critical need within the body. This project aims to raise up marriage mentors and lay the groundwork for establishing a marriage mentorship ministry at Lakewood.

CHAPTER 2

SCRIPTURE PROVIDES THE FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, MUTUAL CARE, AND MENTORSHIP PATTERN FOR SUPPORTING HEALTHY, BIBLICAL MARRIAGES IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

Statistics indicate 750,000 marriages in the United States end in divorce.¹ An increasing number of couples choose co-habitation over marriage, which leads to an increase in the probability of divorce.² It would seem reasonable to assume that many marriages beyond those that end in divorce are dysfunctional and troubled. “The highest rates of divorce are within the first three to four years, and half of couples who divorce do so within 12 years of getting married.”³ Additionally, only 44 percent of engaged couples participate in premarital counseling.⁴ These statistics indicate an incredible need for investment in marriages. There is an abundance of literature and websites dedicated to marriage, yet most of this material is either secular or popular psychology. Some of the Christian resources for marriage influencing our members are a blend of popular psychology and biblical principles that often bring confusion and erroneous expectations for marriage. There is a great need for biblically grounded mentors that are actively involved in the lives of young couples. An exegesis of Genesis 2:8-3:21, Ephesians 5:21-

¹ “National Marriage Divorce Rates 00-19,” CDC/NCHS National Vital Statistics System, accessed October 6, 2021, <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/dvs/national-marriage-divorce-rates-00-19.pdf/>.

² “Cohabitation, Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage in the United States,” CDC/NCHS National Vital Statistics System, last modified July 2002, https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/series/sr_23/sr23_022.pdf/.

³ “Premarital Counseling Can Decrease Divorce Rates, Psychologist Says,” The Daily Universe, last modified July 6, 2017, <https://universe.byu.edu/2017/07/06/premarital-counseling-can-decrease-divorce-rates-psychologist-says/>.

⁴ “20 Significant Premarital Counseling Statistics,” Health Research Funding, accessed October 6, 2021, <https://healthresearchfunding.org/20-significant-premarital-counseling-statistics/>.

33, 1 Peter 3:1-7, and Titus 2:1-8 provide foundational principles, roles and responsibilities, and a model for mutual care and mentorship. These biblical passages provide a resilient foundation and vibrant instruction for a healthy Christian marriage.

Genesis 2:8-3:21 Provides the Foundational Principles for a Healthy and Biblical Marriage

God's intentional design provides a basis for marriage today. This intentional design is essential to a biblical view of marriage. The first marriage brought joy and blessing to Adam in God's good creation. These principles must be understood and applied for a healthy and biblical marriage.

Exegesis of Genesis 2:8-3:21

God sovereignly planned the marriage relationship for humankind in the masterpiece of creation. The truths about marriage presented at the dawn of creation in the first narrative of Genesis lay the foundation for scriptural teaching on marriage.

Through God's work in creation generally, but specifically by the formation of humankind in the "image of God," God abundantly provided.⁵ As Bill Arnold states, "The Lord God 'formed' the man as a gifted potter lovingly forms a new jar. The Lord took the lifeless body of the man and 'breathed' his own breath into his lungs, which distinguished the man from all the other creatures."⁶ The image of God provided Adam and Eve the capacity for deep and genuine relationships with God and with one another in the first marriage relationship. God designed humankind for relationship, and the primary human inflection point for relationship is marriage. The context for the cultivation of this relationship was "a garden in Eden" (Gen 1:8).⁷ The word "Eden" (עֵדֶן)

⁵ The *imago Dei* refers to the special and unique creation of humankind in God's image. God endowed man with emotional, intellectual, and spiritual capacities as unique from all other creation.

⁶ Bill T. Arnold, *Encountering the Book of Genesis*, Encountering Biblical Studies (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003), 33.

⁷ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations come from the English Standard Version.

“should be associated with the Hebrew word for ‘pleasure’ or ‘delight.’”⁸ The garden-home that God provided was a direct blessing to man, and furnished the opportunity for fellowship and purpose. The goodness of God overflows in His provision of a luscious setting.⁹ This provision of God in “the tree of life” (Gen 2:9) grew in the “middle” (תְּוֹךְ) of the garden. This abundant garden was a sign of God’s blessing and presence in Eden.¹⁰ Adam and Eve will come to the realization that they are not the center of the universe and that the provision of God provides the opportunity to fellowship with God.¹¹

The abundant provision of God was not without purposeful work. The beautiful and plentiful provision of God (Gen 2:10-14) came with a stewardship of its cultivation (Gen 2:15). The good gifts of God, even prior to the fall of man and resulting curse of sin, came with a responsibility that involved work, and Adam was in the garden to serve. The direct instructions and prohibition in Genesis 2:16-17 concerning the trees of the garden speak to the generous provision of God, rather than a restrictive edict. The provision and protection of God were to be enjoyed.

It is important to note the significance of God’s declaration in Genesis 2:18 concerning the aloneness of Adam. God emphatically said concerning all of His creation “behold, it was very good” (וַיֵּן הָאֱלֹהִים טוֹב מְאֹד), but in a sudden turn, the absence of a companion for Adam was declared “not good” (לֹא טוֹב). God was not surprised by this situation or need, but it provided the opportunity for Adam to recognize the special and personal provision of God. As Bruce Waltke states, “Adam must realize that it is not good to be alone (Gen 2:19-20). Rather than squandering his most precious gift on one

⁸ Arnold, *Encountering the Book of Genesis*, 33.

⁹ Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, New American Commentary, vol. 1A (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1996), 200.

¹⁰ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 1 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 61.

¹¹ Arnold, *Encountering the Book of Genesis*, 34.

who is unappreciative, God waits until Adam is prepared to appreciate the gift of woman.”¹² This companionship does not comprise the totality of God’s purpose for marriage. The covenant of marriage provides the opportunity for companionship in marriage.

The apex of God’s abundant provision was a “helper fit” (עֹזֵר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ) for Adam. The Hebrew word “helper” (עֹזֵר) indicates a function “to honor his vocation, to share his enjoyment, and to respect the prohibition.”¹³ It is used in the Old Testament to describe aid or support, specifically God’s protective care (Ps 121:1-2) and supportive care (Exod 18:4). As Waltke explains, “The man is created first, with the woman to help the man, not vice versa; however, this does not mean ontological superiority or inferiority. The word *helper*, used for God sixteen of the nineteen times it appears in the Old Testament, signifies the woman’s essential contribution, not inadequacy.”¹⁴ This does not imply that the woman is lesser because of her role, but a vital partner in fulfilling God’s purposes.¹⁵ The other descriptive word is “fit” (כְּנֶגְדּוֹ) which means “like what is in front of him”¹⁶ and “indicates a correspondence between the man and the woman.”¹⁷ The woman is created as God’s special provision for Adam, designed to complement him as a companion. As Waltke continues, “Men and women differ in sexuality but are equals as bearers of God’s image and in their standing before God.”¹⁸ God had a distinct purpose for the provision of the woman, designed to participate in the plan of God stewarded to

¹² Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 89.

¹³ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 88.

¹⁴ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 88.

¹⁵ Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 214.

¹⁶ Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 213.

¹⁷ Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 213.

¹⁸ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 88.

Adam. Eve's role consists of mutual support and companionship, not merely work and procreation.¹⁹ The creation and provision of the woman demonstrates the distinctiveness of this new relationship in God's creation.

This narrative provides foundational principles about the nature and purpose of marriage. The woman was taken from the “rib” or “side” (עֲצָצָה) of Adam in a divine surgical procedure. This special provision for Adam was “built” (בָּנָה) by God, as distinct from all other living creatures, made of the same substance and endowed with the same capacity for a relationship of intimacy and harmony. Adam awakens from the divine surgery with the resulting divine gift. The first and only words of a human being in the creation narrative are “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.”²⁰ This exuberant expectation comes from the recognition of the complementary match, relational closeness, and mutual commitment that was initiated by the creation of the woman. This statement of mutual companionship, care, and covenant loyalty serves as the basis for the modern marriage liturgy, “in sickness and in health.” Genesis 2:24-25 contains a compelling and powerful instruction for marriage. This foundational text is quoted by both Jesus (Matt 19:5-6; Mark 10:6-9) and Paul (Eph 5:31; 1 Cor 6:16) in their instructions on marriage. Jesus uses this text to defend the monogamous lifetime commitment divinely intended for marriage. Paul uses this text to provide instruction on marriage and to illustrate the relationship of Christ to the church (Eph 5:31), and also in regard to the threat of immorality to marriage and the testimony of the church (1 Cor 6:16). This text as presented in Genesis 2 begins with a statement of priority. The three-fold teaching for marriage begins with direction for the husband to “leave” (עָזַב), also translated “forsake,” his father and mother. Marriage brings a consequential impact to

¹⁹ Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 68.

²⁰ Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapter 1-17*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1990), 179.

parental relationships. As Matthews expounds, “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.”²¹ The next instruction is to “hold fast” (דָּבַק) to his wife, reinforcing the permanence of marriage. The husband and wife unite in a covenant relationship. The directives to “leave” and “cleave” find their inflection in the resultant “one flesh” (בְּשָׂר אֶחָד) relationship. The resulting union is a public declaration of full and exclusive commitment to one another, demonstrated in a new way of life together and new identity together. The word “flesh” (בְּשָׂר) used in 2:24 is also used to describe the creation of Eve from the “flesh” of Adam. This relationship becomes like a blood relation in closeness and connection. The coherence of the marriage relationship extends to the most basic realities of life, with the result that intimacy is characteristic of every aspect of life. This intimacy extends to the sexual union that God designed for the marriage relationship. Despite being “naked” (עָרֹם) (Gen 2:25), they were not “ashamed” (בוּשָׁה). The vulnerability and openness shared between Adam and Eve was without shame and without barriers in trust and confidence.

The narrative turns in Genesis 3:1-21 with the subsequent fall of Adam and Eve into sin and the resulting consequences. The curse of sin pervades every corner of the good creation of God. The impact of sin directly assaulted the marriage relationship. Trust and confidence (Gen 2:25; naked and not ashamed) were replaced by guilt and fear (Gen 3:7-8; naked and hiding). The narrative in Genesis 3 continues with a dialogue that reveals the unwinding of God’s design for leadership. The declaration of Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God,” presents the ultimate source of all authority. God “formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life” (Gen 2:7) as the Master Potter. Adam is accountable to God for his life, purpose, and direction. Adam is

²¹ Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 223.

to “have dominion” (Gen 1:28) over creation. Then God creates Eve from “the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man” (Gen 2:22). God gave Eve to Adam as a “helper” (2:18), to lead her as his partner in accomplishing the purposes that God had established. Adam was to follow God’s instructions, nurturing and leading Eve to follow those commands, protecting and providing for her in this endeavor. God re-orders the disorder as He addresses the situation (Gen 3:9-15). The serpent is subject to the future head-crushing “seed” of the woman, the woman in submission to the man, and all are under the ultimate authority of God.²²

The consequences of sin brought distressing effects on the marriage relationship and their allotted roles. The most acute marital impact comes in Genesis 3:16 when God declares, “Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.” As C. John Collins describes, the word “desire” (תַּשׁוּקָה) “has the sense ‘craving,’ with the context telling us what kind of craving is in view.”²³ The word “desire” occurs in two other places in Scripture (Gen 4:7; Song 7:10). The closest context in Genesis 4:7 contains God’s warning to Cain about the desire of sin and his prescribed response. This context contains the same parallel with the word “rule” (מָשַׁל) that occurs in Genesis 3:16. Collins helpfully explains,

In Genesis 4:7 it is plain that “desire for” someone is “desire to master” that person (hence ESV margin, “against”), while the “ruling” is not a punishment but the necessary remedy. If we apply this to 3:16, we conclude that God describes a condition of human marriages that is all too familiar, namely, competition for control. The proper remedy is a return to the creational pattern of the man’s leadership—loving, not dominating.²⁴

The relational harmony and marital roles God designed were upended by the curse of sin. The curse of sin brought conflict and dominance. Rather than be commandeered by his

²² Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 220.

²³ C. John Collins, *Genesis 1-4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2006), 160.

²⁴ Collins, *Genesis 1-4*, 160.

wife, the husband must seek effective and loving leadership.

Principles for Marriage Mentorship in Genesis 2:8-3:21

This passage provides foundational principles for marriage mentorship. The provision of God is the basis for a healthy marriage. This abundance shapes the foundational values and priorities for marriage. God affords abundant and perfect provision in His character, word, design, and redemption.

God's perfect character. The authority and centrality of God permeates every part of creation, and specifically man and woman. The purpose of all creation is the glory of God. All creation declares the glory of God (Ps 19:1). In every aspect, this new creation reflects the character of God in greatness and goodness. The authority and centrality of God is evident, and must characterize the marriage relationship. The horizontal human relationship that God created has a greater and essential vertical relationship. The spiritual health of each individual has a direct impact on the spouse. This newly established marriage brought a unified and meaningful relationship with God at the center. A husband and wife must live in mutual submission to God in every aspect of life. The health of a marriage is directly correlated to the rule of Christ in their lives individually and their relationship with God together.

God's perfect Word. The Word of God is the source of truth and life in marriage. His divine instructions and wisdom provide the nourishment and protection for a healthy marriage. God's abundant provision comes through His Word. These words are essential to successfully living in relationship with God and each other. This stewardship of God's Word must shape our view of God's world and all our relationships. The importance of God's Word cannot be overstated. The words of God were the centerpiece of attack by Satan. The distortion of God's message and the questioning of God's integrity fueled temptation. Satan injected doubt about God's good character and good

provision. Lack of clarity and commitment to God’s Word brought confusion, brokenness, and shame to Adam and Eve. The impact of this first sin saturated every aspect of life and relationships. A healthy marriage is committed to the ongoing transformation that comes with heart submission and active obedience to the Word of God. This is essential for life in a broken world as broken individuals. The necessary discipleship of marriage is a “long obedience in the same direction.”²⁵

God’s perfect design. God created man and woman, established their mutual purpose, and declared it “very good” (Gen 1:27-31). God endowed Adam with headship over all creation as the steward of God. This stewardship of God shared by Adam and Eve always took work. The result of sin brought pain and hardship to this labor, but work itself is not a result of the curse. The abundant provision of God came with a corresponding responsibility. Adam was placed in the Garden of Eden “to work and keep it” (Gen 2:15). “The word translated ‘work’ (עָבַד) is the common one for tilling the soil (e.g., 3:23; 4:2, 12) or for other labor (e.g., Isa 19:9); it also speaks of ‘service’ to another (e.g., 29:15; 31:6) and is often used of worship (e.g., Exod 3:12).”²⁶ There was a necessary and important investment in this good provision of God. Adam was placed in a relationship with Eve and given the instruction to “become one flesh” (Gen 2:24). God provided Eve as a corresponding companion for Adam. The marriage relationship flows out of the unique design of man and woman. This unity is reflected in the instructions to leave (primacy of this relationship), cleave (nurturing of this relationship), and weave (one flesh binding of this relationship). The marriage is a “one flesh” union that weaves the physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects of personhood. The sexual design for man and woman is an expression of the “one flesh” relationship. It is not only the means to

²⁵ Eugene H. Peterson, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction: Discipleship in an Instant Society* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 6.

²⁶ Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 209.

accomplish the commission to “be fruitful and multiply,” but it also brings a deeper and more significant unity connected to spiritual realities of the inner man (1 Cor 6:15-17).

Marriage, by God’s design, can be experienced “naked” and “not ashamed” (Gen 2:25). The entrance of sin into hearts resulted in fear and hiding in relationships (Gen 3:7-8). A husband and wife should pursue openness, transparency, and vulnerability. This yields the intimacy that characterized God’s original design.

God’s perfect redemption. The gospel fuels a healthy marriage. The gospel hope for sin’s brokenness is unveiled in the protoevangelium (first gospel) of Genesis 3:15. The crushing blow to the head of Satan came through the perfect obedience and satisfactory death of Jesus Christ. He resurrected from the grave, defeating sin’s power, providing forgiveness, and restoring what sin has broken. The primary tools for marriage are borne out of that same gospel. The most basic tools are repentance and faith, forgiveness and trust, and love and commitment. Marriage as God intended is possible because of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Summary

The Lord created marriage, established roles and responsibilities, and provided the necessary resources for healthy marriage. The impact of sin complicates relationships. The gospel and the indwelling Holy Spirit enable obedience, forgiveness, and genuine love. Through Christ, marriage can glorify God and fulfill the purposes for which God designed it.

Ephesians 5:21-33 Provides the Roles and Responsibilities of a Healthy and Biblical Marriage

This Ephesians passage provides a rich Christ-centered theology of marriage. It provides the longest marriage discussion in the New Testament, and a vibrant picture of biblical marriage with the mutual responsibilities of husbands and wives. Paul focuses

on the fulfillment of the Church's mission through the church, as the body of Christ. The responsibility of leadership in the church is to "equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (Eph 4:12). This takes specific shape in the context of marriage in Ephesians 5:21-33.

Exegesis of Ephesians 5:21-33

The instructions in this passage connect directly back to the main imperative in 5:18 to "be filled with the Spirit." The control and empowering of the Holy Spirit has specific expression in relationships, particularly the husband/wife relationship. This obedience to the work of the Spirit is an ongoing expression of "walking worthy of your calling" (4:1) and is the specific curriculum for carrying out the work to "equip the saints" (4:12). Spirit-filled believers are equipped and empowered to fulfill their responsibility to live blameless in their relationships.²⁷

The driving participle for this section is in 5:21, "submitting" (ὑποτάσσω). As Frank Thielman explains, "The verb refers to the ordering of something underneath something else, and when the passive voice of the verb is used of people (as it is here), it often refers to the voluntary 'submission' of one person to another."²⁸ This submission has specific expression and structure in the marriage relationship (Eph 5:22-33), but ultimately the focus of obedience is "out of reverence for Christ" (Eph 5:21). We submit to Christ by submitting to the God-ordained order of relationships. The theology for marriage in Paul's instruction, referred to as a mystery (μυστήριον) in 5:32, is Christ's relationship to the church. This is the referent for Paul's instructions to both husbands and wives. The sacredness and significance of marriage tie directly to this picture of

²⁷ Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 729.

²⁸ Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 372.

Christ and His church. This is a significant aspect of the church's witness of Christ to the world.

The next section in Ephesians 5:22-24 contains specific instructions for wives, shaping their role and responsibility to their husband. Wives should not rule over, control, or dominate their husbands, but rather live with respect for his God-given leadership in the home.²⁹ The action "submit" in 5:22 derives from the participle "submitting" in 5:21. The verbal action is middle and "asks wives voluntarily to subordinate themselves to their own husbands."³⁰ It is important to note that Paul gives this instruction to the wives and not to the husbands. This submission is to one's "own" (ιδίους) husband, as a personal and private act of submission to Christ. It is a matter of personal obedience "to the Lord," rather than an obligation placed over the wife by her husband.

The statement in 5:23, "For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church," stands as the main point of emphasis in the chiasmic structure.³¹ This parallel structure puts the emphasis on the husband's responsibility as a Christ-like head. These two complementary statements are the central argument and rationale for the instruction to wives. God's purposeful design gives the husband the headship responsibility. The word for "head" (κεφαλή) provides a metaphor for both a husband's and Christ's position of responsibility and authority. The husband is to model his headship after Christ's headship of the church. Thielman explains, "κεφαλή implies that the husband is the resource for the fulfillment of the wife, just as in 4:15-16 Christ, as the head of his church-body, equips and encourages the church's growth."³² The headship of

²⁹ Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 380.

³⁰ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 42 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1990), 367.

³¹ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 365.

³² Thielman, *Ephesians*, 377.

Christ was expressed in His self-sacrificing love as the “savior of the body” (5:23). As Arnold describes, “Christ not only gives guidance, direction, and inspiration for his body, but he also provides strength, help, and sustenance for his people.”³³ The text returns to submission in 5:24. “Now as” (ἀλλὰ ὡς) signifies a summary statement for clarity and emphasis. As the church responds to the headship of Christ in trust and subordination, in similar fashion wives are to respond to the headship of their husband. The submission is to be “in everything” (ἐν παντί). This extends to an attitude of support, affirmation, and respect for her husband, without controlling him in certain areas of life.³⁴

A wife’s submission is aided by the godly leadership of a husband. Since submission is first to Christ, biblical submission demands a godly and grace-filled confrontation of sin and the misappropriation of his authority (Eph 5:8-11). As Robyn Huck states, “God calls the unjust, cruel, or burdensome use of authority ‘oppression,’ and he explicitly forbids it. He will judge the offenders. He is a refuge to those who are mistreated. And in his mercy, he often uses men and women to rescue those who are oppressed.”³⁵ A wife’s counter-cultural and Spirit-empowered submission to their own husbands demonstrates their trust in the goodness and glory of Christ.

The text turns to addressing the husband’s role and responsibilities in 5:25-32, keeping Christ as the focal point for the marriage relationship. As Arnold states, “The example that Christ sets is for a husband to be willing to sacrifice everything for the benefit and well-being of his wife.”³⁶ The imperative verb “love” (ἀγαπάτε) means “to love irrespective of merit, even to the undeserving.”³⁷ In a similar way as the husband’s

³³ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 382.

³⁴ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 383.

³⁵ Robyn Huck, “The Dreaded S-Word: Submission and Abuse of Authority,” *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 30, no. 3 (2016): 53.

³⁶ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 383.

³⁷ Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, 747.

headship follows Christ's headship of the church, so Christ's love for His church is the model for the husband. This love extends to the ultimate sacrifice of one's life, practically shown in self-sacrifice and experienced in natural affection and sexual love.³⁸ This models Christ's love which radiates sacrifice, self-denial, and costly service (5:1-2).

The love of Christ for the church (5:26-27) transforms the church through the sanctification that comes by the gospel. Christ's work of redemption, sanctification, and glorification results in perfect holiness. As Arnold notes, "This, of course, far transcends what any other husband is able to accomplish for his bride and further confirms that this portion of the passage is solely a lesson on Christology."³⁹ The husband cannot duplicate the result of Christ's love (glorification), but must fulfill the command to love as an agent of those divine purposes. The leadership and love of the husband is as an ambassador of Christ. A husband must follow the example modeled by Christ in His care for the church (Eph 5:26-27) as he seeks to tangibly express the love of Christ toward his wife (Eph 5:28-29). This includes investing in the spiritual growth within marriage, cultivating closeness through the Word, and growing together in obedience to Christ.

The husband's responsibility to selflessly love his wife is reinforced in 5:28-31. The command to love in 5:25 is stated as an obligation to love in 5:28. As Arnold describes, "Paul stresses the husband's duty to love his wife by using a verb that implies a moral obligation (ὀφείλω)."⁴⁰ This obligation for love derives from the "one flesh" relationship of marriage. The word used for "hold fast" (προσκολληθήσεται) in 5:31 "means 'to glue, cement,' as the welding of two metals together."⁴¹ In marriage, the husband and wife join in an impenetrable bond. This love encompasses every aspect of

³⁸ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 374.

³⁹ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 390.

⁴⁰ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 391.

⁴¹ Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, 773.

their beings – emotional, physical, and spiritual.⁴² This “one flesh” union results in love for one’s wife being equivocal to a husband’s conduct toward himself (5:28-30). The response of love modeled by Christ toward the church, “nourishes” and “cherishes” (5:29). The terms ἐκτρέφει (care for) and θάλπει (cherish) describe the nurture and support of the husband for his wife.

This section ends with a summary statement in 5:33, speaking directly and personally to husbands and wives as a final appeal. As Harold Hoehner states, “He addresses each spouse in the singular rather than in the plural . . . to emphasize individual responsibility.”⁴³ Paul restates with emphasis, that the husband is to love his wife as himself. The final instruction to wives shifts from submission to “respect” (φοβῆται), which means fear, reverence, or respect. As Lynn Cohick observes, “Paul repeats the term ‘respect’ used in Eph 5:21, that believers submit to one another out of ‘reverence’ for Christ.”⁴⁴ The submission and respectful response of a wife to her husband comes from a worshipful and submissive heart toward Christ.

Principles for Marriage Mentorship in Ephesians 5:21-33

This passage provides a vibrant portrait of the roles and responsibilities in a Christ-honoring marriage.

Following Christ. The roles and responsibilities for husband and wife taught in Ephesians are all secondary to the rule of Christ in the life of a husband and wife. The filling of the Spirit (5:18) is essential to marriage. The control and transformation of the Spirit is a prerequisite and essential to following Christ in obedience. Christ is central to

⁴² Arnold, *Ephesians*, 393.

⁴³ Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, 781.

⁴⁴ Lynn H. Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2020), 372.

every instruction to husbands and wives. Submission is always “out of reverence for Christ” (5:21). A wife submits to her husband, not directly as obedience to him, but “as to the Lord.”

A heart submitted to the authority of Christ is empowered to submit to the authority of God-ordained earthly authorities. It is indispensable for a husband to model the sacrificial heart and actions of Christ (5:23). A wife’s submission is not predicated on a perfect husband (5:22; 24), but a husband’s Christ-like leadership encourages submission in marriage (5:23). The husband looks to Christ for his leadership. The wife is submitting to Christ in her response to her husband. They follow Christ together as “one flesh.” See figure 1 below.

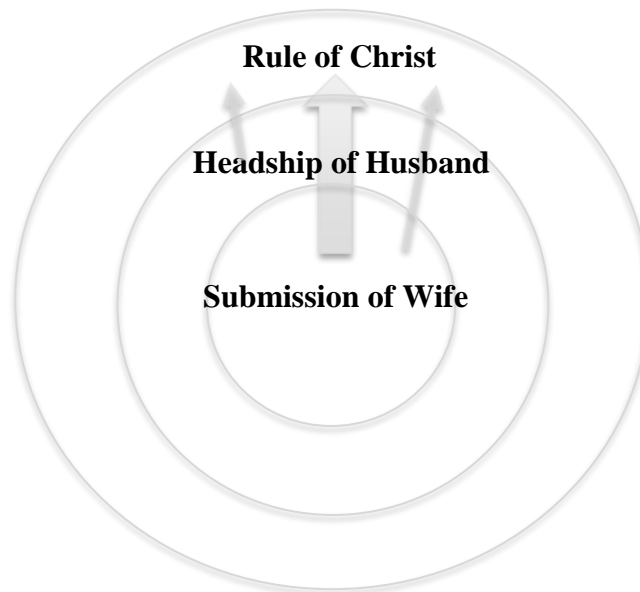


Figure 1. Direction of Submission in Marriage

Principles for the wife. The instructions given to wives are to submit and show respect to her husband. Both of these directives are counter-cultural in a contemporary context that values female dominance, independence, and individualism.

The first area of emphasis for wives is submission. A wife submits to her husband, not by her husband's compulsion, but as a voluntary act of obedience to Christ. The wife lives within the structure of the marriage relationship, supporting and contributing to the leadership of her husband. As Wayne Mack states, "She is her husband's teammate striving for the same goal. She has ideas, opinions, desires, requests, and insights, and she lovingly makes them known."⁴⁵ A wife's submission to her husband does not diminish her value or contribution. Rather, the practice of submission reflects the spiritual health of a wife and her obedience to Christ. The attitude and act of submission is a blessing to a husband and glorifying to the Lord.

The second area of emphasis for wives is respect or fear. The focus of this reverence is on the position of her husband, as she would reverence the position of Christ in her life. The wife gives respect to the husband due to his God-appointed position of leadership. A husband provides leadership in the marriage relationship; the wife receives that leadership with a spirit of humility before God.

Principles for the husband. The instructions given to the husband are to lead his wife with love, sacrifice, and care.

The first area of emphasis for the husband is loving leadership. Paul's dominant theme defining the husband's leadership is love. The husband's love is not dependent on his wife's submission. The standard for a husband's love is Christ. Christ demonstrated His love for us, despite our sin and resistance (Rom 5:8). This love is freely given and not earned, deserved, or purchased. This responsibility transcends a wife's behavior, health, appearance or any other constraint.⁴⁶ It requires paying the highest cost, including losing one's life. The husband provides a safe place of security and intimacy in

⁴⁵ Wayne Mack, *Strengthening Your Marriage* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing Company, 1999), 19.

⁴⁶ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 383.

the marriage relationship. This portrait of leadership is tender and compassionate, the husband considering the needs of his wife above his own. The resultant effect contributes to growing as “one flesh,” superglued together as one.

The second area of emphasis for the husband is directional leadership. The description of the husband as head implies an under-charge authority. The example of the headship of Christ implies authority (Eph 1:22). The husband must lead his wife as a stewardship from Christ, following the sacrificial and servanthood of Christ (Eph 5:23-24).

Summary

The culture’s depiction of male leadership is either abusive or absent. The picture that Paul provides is radically different. The husband exercises his leadership with love and sacrifice as a servant leader. He cultivates closeness through a care that protects, provides, and fosters an atmosphere of security and intimacy.

1 Peter 3:1-7 Provides Principles for Mutual Care in a Healthy and Biblical Marriage

Marriage is complicated by sin and by living in a world broken by sin. Healthy marriage is not by accident, but a result of purposeful and skillful investment. The instructions in 1 Peter 3:1-7 provide a portrait for the marriage relationship in the middle of a sinful and antagonistic world.

Exegesis of 1 Peter 3:1-7

The book of 1 Peter provides instructions for believers living in a hostile culture, as exiles living by faith (2:11). The gospel has brought new life, which changes everything (1:3). Living for Christ in difficult circumstances provides a unique opportunity to display the value of Christ and the genuineness of the gospel (2:12). This life of faith requires submission to earthly authorities instituted by God, while trusting the sovereignty of God (2:13-25). As followers of Jesus, we are now “exiles” in this world,

shaped by a new identity as citizens of God’s kingdom. This new identity shapes our lives in every way, and in 3:1-7 Peter provides instructions for the marriage relationship. This pericope divides into two sections, 3:1-6 provides teaching for wives and 3:7 provides teaching for husbands.

The section addressing wives begins with “likewise” (ὁμοίως), pointing back to the instructions on submission to household servants. In this section, the servant submits to their earthly authority, while entrusting their life to the plan of a sovereign God. This same mindset shapes a wife’s submission to her husband. As D. Edmond Hiebert states, “Both are to submit from the same motive: the mastery of their lives by the redemptive love of Christ our Lord.”⁴⁷ The wife’s position of submission is an assigned position of God, not as inferior or devalued, but empowered “by the authority and example of the crucified and resurrected Christ”⁴⁸ (2:21-24). This submission is to “your own husband” (τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν), which reinforces the uniqueness and exclusiveness of the marriage relationship.

The wife’s joyful and faithful response of submission has a positive spiritual effect on her husband (3:1b). The primary audience is wives of unbelieving husbands, but all husbands are in view.⁴⁹ This husband does “not obey the word” (ἀπειθοῦσιν τῷ λόγῳ) and is not obedient to the gospel and authority of God. The submissive wife, “without a word” (ἄνευ λόγου), through her “conduct” (ἀναστροφῆς) lives so that the heart of her husband “may be won” (κερδηθήσονται). Peter calls for words to be interchanged with godly living and faith-filled submission. The consequence is spiritual transformation in her husband. The wife’s conduct is “respectful” (φόβῳ) and “pure” (ἀγνήν). The word φόβῳ, which means fear or respect, is not fear toward the husband, but in 1 Peter this

⁴⁷ D. Edmond Hiebert, *1 Peter* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1992), 195.

⁴⁸ Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 204.

⁴⁹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 148-49.

kind of fear is always directed toward God.⁵⁰ The testimony of a godly and submissive wife demonstrates respect and holiness before God.

The focus of instruction for wives in 3:3-6 centers on “the hidden person of the heart” (ὁ κρυπτός τῆς καρδίας ἄνθρωπος). The inner beauty of a woman is of value before God, not the outward extravagance that parades external beauty. Peter does not advocate negligence in the external, but warns about the superficial beauty of outward adornment. Hiebert describes it as “a warning against extravagance and self-centered display.”⁵¹ The emphasis for Christian wives centers on internal “imperishable beauty” (ἐν τῷ ἀφθάρτῳ), meaning “the quality of not being subject to corruption.”⁵² This internal character and disposition is defined as a “gentle and quiet spirit,” which exudes temperance as opposed to a boisterous attitude.⁵³ The wife whose life is lived according to the instructions in 3:1-4 is “very precious” to the Lord. The word “very precious” (πολυτελής) is a financial term denoting value. Thomas Schriener explains this word as a contrast to “qualities from the expensive clothing and ornamentation desired by women in the Greco-Roman world.”⁵⁴ This further reinforces the priority of a heart yielded to the Lord in humble obedience, living in submission to her husband as a testimony of her faith and trust in the Lord. Those who live according to this divine pattern for marriage share their experience with Old Testament women of faith (3:5-6).

The second section (3:7) provides pointed instructions to husbands concerning their relationship to their wives. The husband is to live skillfully with his wife. The phrase “live with your wives in an understanding way” (συννοικοῦντες κατὰ γνῶσιν)

⁵⁰ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 152.

⁵¹ Hiebert, *1 Peter*, 200.

⁵² Hiebert, *1 Peter*, 200.

⁵³ Hiebert, *1 Peter*, 200.

⁵⁴ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 155.

means to be considerate, knowledgeable, and skillful in relationship with your wife.⁵⁵

The husband is to grow in knowledge about his wife and apply this knowledge actively in the marriage relationship. As Hiebert explains,

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. That involves the husband’s understanding of “the wife’s desires, goals, and frustrations; knowledge of her strengths and weaknesses in the physical, emotional, and spiritual realms.”⁵⁶

This knowledge extends directly to understanding the woman as “the weaker vessel” (ὡς ἄσθενεστέρῳ σκεύει). The weaker vessel has a variety of interpretations as referring to physical weakness, emotional weakness, tendency to deception (1 Tim 2:14), valuable (to be honored, treasured and protected), and positional weakness (position of submission). The latter two interpretations are preferred. The husband’s response to understanding this weakness is “showing honor” (ἀπονέμοντες τιμὴν), which can also be translated “showing her respect.”⁵⁷ The husband must consider the inherent weakness experienced by his wife in her role of submission. The husband must respond to his wife with care for by treating her with respect, attributing value, and serving her as uniquely made by God. This reality deepens with the recognition that the husband and wife are equal heirs of eternal life. As Hiebert explains, “This reality is the key to mutuality in the marriage relationship, the foundation for dignity and loving respect between husband and wife.”⁵⁸ A husband’s responsibility to his wife is of the utmost importance to God, as indicated by the stated consequence of hindered prayers. As Schriener observes, “God does not bless with his favor those who are in positions of authority and abuse those who are under them

⁵⁵ Hiebert, *1 Peter*, 205.

⁵⁶ Hiebert, *1 Peter*, 205-206.

⁵⁷ J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 49 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1982), 169.

⁵⁸ Hiebert, *1 Peter*, 207.

by mistreating them.”⁵⁹

Principles for Marriage Mentorship in 1 Peter 3:1-7

There is a direct correlation between marital investment and marital health. Peter’s address to husbands and wives includes purposeful and strategic investment in one another. Both the husband and wife are to consider how their life contributes to the spiritual and practical benefit of the other. They must invest continually in their relationship, guided specifically by their understanding of their spouse.

The wife must care for her husband skillfully, by submitting her attitudes and actions. The culture values independence, outward appearance, and the perception of a person’s image. In contrast, Peter commands submission for the wife with a desire to please the Lord and to contribute to the leadership and spiritual health of her husband. The focus of submission centers on the inner disposition of her heart. When a wife nurtures a close relationship with Jesus, it has a positive spiritual impact on her husband. Peter places a priority on the inner person, warning against inordinate attention to outward extravagance. A heart submitted to Christ, growing in outward obedience to Christ, cultivates a health marriage.

The husband must care for his wife skillfully, with a growing and particular knowledge of her person. Peter commands the husband to live skillfully with his wife through careful study of both her inner and outer person. Knowledge of the inner person requires a current and growing understanding of her struggles, desires, fears, dreams, and goals. Knowledge of the outer person requires an accurate knowledge of how to care for her as a “weaker vessel.” The wife is not inferior in her personhood, but made vulnerable by placing herself in the position of submission to her husband. The husband’s leadership is tempered and shaped by an accurate understanding of his wife. As the husband submits

⁵⁹ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 161.

to God in his role as a loving, learning leader, closeness is cultivated in the marriage relationship.

Summary

The instructions for marriage in 1 Peter 3:1-7 establish a vibrant picture of mutual care between husband and wife. Their relationship thrives around mutual submission to Christ. A vibrant investment in their individual relationship with Christ cultivates closeness. This investment is whole-hearted and skillful. It requires a growing knowledge and careful consideration of the uniqueness of both the husband and wife.

Titus 2:1-8 Provides Instructions for Mentorship in the Local Church

The book of Titus is about godly leadership that effectively teaches and models living as a fully devoted follower of Jesus. This leadership extends beyond the ministry of elders (1:5-16) to the discipleship between believers in the church (2:1-8). The gospel transfers through teaching, but also comes through modeling everyday application in practical obedience.

Exegesis of Titus 2:1-8

Titus 2 provides instructions for various demographics within the church and the mentorship that is vital to the community of faith. This passage contains four distinct sections addressing older men (v.2), older women (v.3), younger woman (vv.4-5), and younger men (vv.6-8). The verbs that shape the passage are “teach” (λάλει), “train” (σωφρονίζωσιν), and “urge” (παρακάλει). These commands shape the culture of discipleship that Paul is advocating between older and younger in the church.

The passage begins with an exhortation to Titus in his teaching ministry within the church. Paul instructs Titus to “teach” (v.1). He is to speak and live in ways that are consistent with the truth of the gospel, equipping mature members of the congregation to speak and live according to the same rule of faith. As Robert Yarbrough states, “Paul’s

concern is not limited to what Titus ‘teaches’ or preaches in the formal sense but extends to the fullest expression of who he is as a verbal and interactive man of faith and ecclesial leader.”⁶⁰ Titus, as the ministry leader, invests in mature mentors who are able to participate in the lives of younger believers. The focus of 2:2-3 is on the mentors, the “older men” (πρεσβύτερος) and “older women” (πρεσβυτίδα). In antiquity the lifespan was often shorter, estimated between twenty-five or thirty years.⁶¹ There were always exceptions to average lifespans, and some surmise that “older” refers to “at least somewhere upward of forty years old, possibly into their fifties or sixties.”⁶² Thomas Lea considers the “older” as “an age sufficient to have raised a family and seen their children begin families of their own.”⁶³ It would seem appropriate to consider that the old and young are in reference to experience relative to one another rather than to a season of life.⁶⁴ The investment of Titus was toward mature, seasoned believers who were able by their sound doctrine and well-ordered life to “train” the “young women” and “younger men.” The instructions in 2:2-3 for the older provides an example by which mentors (older men and women) minister into the lives of mentees (younger men and women).

Paul begins with practical instructions to the “older men” as they live with spiritual maturity and leadership within the community of faith. They are to be “sober-minded” (νηφαλίους), living life with a clear mind and with good judgment.⁶⁵ These men were to be “dignified” (σεμνούς), worthy of respect, and “a godly dignity should mark

⁶⁰ Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018), 507-508.

⁶¹ Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 509.

⁶² Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2006), 720.

⁶³ Thomas Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, *The New American Commentary*, vol. 34 (Nashville: Holman Reference), 297.

⁶⁴ William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 408.

⁶⁵ Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 297.

their character and shine forth from their lives.”⁶⁶ This same character trait is included for deacons (1 Tim 3:8). The older men are called to be “self-controlled” (σώφρονας) or prudent. Paul lists self-control for both older and younger. Paul completes the priorities for older men with a call to be “sound” (ὕγιαίνοντας) in “faith” (πίστει), “love” (ἀγάπη), and “steadfastness” (ὑπομονῆ). This list exemplifies the character that Paul valued in these mentors.⁶⁷

The next section in 2:3 addresses the “older women.” They are to be “reverent” (ἱεροπρεπεῖς) in their behavior (καταστήματι). The conduct of their lives is an “outward expression of an inner character.”⁶⁸ They are not to be “slanderers” (διαβόλους) or accusers who speak maliciously against others.⁶⁹ Similar to the older men, the older women are not to be under a negative controlling influence, referred to as “slaves” (δεδουλωμένας) “to much wine.”

The passage further develops a life-on-life ministry emphasis with the transition phrase “They are to teach what is good, and so train.” This turns the attention from the example of the mature believers to mentorship among the younger believers. The older are “to teach what is good” (καλοδιδασκάλους), which is discipleship among believers within the congregation. This teaching is not incidental or momentary, but a purposeful and continual practice of encouraging, urging, and advising within the body of believers for spiritual benefit.

The third section gives the content of the instructions from older to younger women. First, they are “to love their husbands and children.” According to Yarbrough,

⁶⁶ Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 509.

⁶⁷ Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 511.

⁶⁸ Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 299.

⁶⁹ Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 511.

Paul is urging “strong, godly, and selfless relationships leading to vibrant marriages.”⁷⁰ He is concerned for the attitude and conduct.⁷¹ Second, they are “to be self-controlled” (σώφρονας), a common injunction for each group. As Towner suggests, the nuance here is “restraint of passions and urges that might jeopardize fidelity to her husband.”⁷² Third, they are to be “pure” (ἀγνάς), above reproach morally, particularly in marital devotion.⁷³ Fourth, they are to be “working at home,” (οικουροῦς) as diligent household managers.⁷⁴ Fifth, their reputation should be as one who is “kind” (ἀγαθός), and as one who treats other kindly.⁷⁵ Lastly, and consistent with Paul’s other instructions within the home, they are to be “submissive to their own husbands.” The term used for “submissive” (ὑποτασσομένας) is a present middle participle, denoting a voluntary choice to place themselves under the leadership of their husbands. This section ends with a warning intended to bring urgency and seriousness. The believer has the potential to bring “shame” (βλασφημῆται), eroding the legitimacy of the truth by their disordered life.

The final section provides priorities for younger men (2:6-8). This section expands in 2:7-8 to include instructions given to Titus, a younger man disciplined by Paul (1:4). The instructions for the younger men also build upon the instruction in 2:3-4 to “teach what is good, and so train.” The first instruction, directed generally to younger men, is “to be self-controlled” (σωφρονεῖν). This characteristic is common to all the groups addressed, but particularly the young men “in all respects” should be “possessing

⁷⁰ Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 514.

⁷¹ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 411.

⁷² Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 726.

⁷³ Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 300.

⁷⁴ George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), 308.

⁷⁵ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 412.

mental and emotional composure, not being distracted; not impulsive but focused.”⁷⁶ Regarding the emphasis of the latter section in 2:7-8 being focused on Titus, George Knight states, “he is addressing Titus about his particular responsibilities as a minister and as an example to these men.”⁷⁷ The remaining instructions to the younger men come directly to Titus, of which the first is “to be a model of good works.” The young men are to be an example of obedience, an echo of Paul’s instructions to Timothy to “Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in faith, in purity” (1 Tim 4:12). The second instruction focuses on Titus’ example in the arena of his “teaching” (διδασκαλία). This teaching encompasses both the message and life of Titus, and by extension the young men. This life-on-life teaching contains “integrity” (ἀφθορίαν), “dignity” (σεμνότητα), and “sound speech” (λόγον ὑγιῆ). As William Mounce explains, “Paul tells Titus that as he teaches, he must maintain purity of motive and a dignity in his behavior,”⁷⁸ so that the young men’s lives before an unbelieving world “cannot be condemned” (ἀκατάγνωστον), “put to shame” (ἐντραπή), or accused of “evil” (φαῦλον). As Mounce continues, “Titus is to be a mold into which others can be impressed and therefore bear a likeness to him.”⁷⁹ Despite the ongoing attack and opposition to the gospel itself, Titus’s life and ministry will be above reproach.⁸⁰

Principles for Marriage Mentorship in Titus 2:1-8

This passage provides principles and practices for marriage mentorship in the

⁷⁶ Yarborough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 520.

⁷⁷ Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 311.

⁷⁸ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 413.

⁷⁹ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 413.

⁸⁰ Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 734.

local church.

Intentional teaching. It is the responsibility of leaders in the church to intentionally teach good theology and good practice. An important aspect of this teaching ministry is equipping and directing discipleship within the church. The older or mature believers must be taught to invest in younger or inexperienced believers. It is easy for older believers to criticize or isolate themselves from the younger or less mature believers in the congregation. The content passed between generations includes proper beliefs, proper authority, and practical life choices. Personal discipleship strengthens marriages, develops parents, and shapes lives. This life-on-life ministry is essential to the health of the local church.

Intentional modeling. The New Testament is replete with directives for leaders and teachers to model the truth (Rom 6:17; Phil 3:17; 1 Thess 1:7; 1 Tim 4:12). Paul's clear and direct instructions in Titus 2:1-8 provide a framework for inter-generational mentorship. Experienced mentors open their lives intentionally to mentees, sharing their lives through words, actions, and practical obedience. The spheres of modeling range from character and deportment to marriage and parenting. It is essential that biblical beliefs translate into day-to-day practical obedience. A commitment to mentorship from older to younger produces growth and stability in the local church.

Intentional obedience. Mentoring requires intentional obedience. Effective mentorship depends upon mature and experienced believers who are committed to following Jesus in obedience. Paul starts by challenging the older men and women to obedience, and addressing their spiritual needs. The spiritual heritage and life experience of the older generation is a stewardship. God expects that they invest this deposit of truth and wisdom into younger believers with intentionality.

Summary

The Scripture calls us to invest in the lives of others. The patterns throughout Scripture demonstrate life-on-life ministry that is patient, loving, truth-filled, and intentional. This mentorship is essential for a young couple recently married, or recently coming to faith in Christ. A mature and older couple can invest the truths and principles for marriage in a personal and practical way. Mentorship in the life of a young couple has an incredible impact, establishes a trusting relationship for counsel, and lays a foundation for a stable and healthy marriage.

Conclusion

God designed marriage as a means of bringing Him glory. This purpose was established at the onset of marriage and continues as we pursue marriage as God designed. The biblical instructions for marriage are sufficient and authoritative for the practice of marriage and also provide the basis for marriage mentorship in the church.

CHAPTER 3

MENTORSHIP IS AN EFFECTIVE TOOL TO SUPPORT COUPLES THROUGH THE CULTURAL OPPOSITION AND ACUTE CHALLENGES OF MARRIAGE

The talk in the culture and the church seems to be saturated with trainings and seminars on personal growth, collaboration, and team-building. In both the secular and sacred settings, regardless of the terminology, a priority is placed on mentorship. This comes at a time when relationships are often mediated through technology and have limited personal contact. The process and practice of mentorship has a variety of expressions and is not standardized in practice. As Catherine McLaughlin states, “I was nonetheless amazed by the range of uses and lack of consensus out there about what mentoring is, much less how to do it and get more of it.”¹ The dynamics of mentorship find their root in Scripture, are utilized widely in culture, and are effective for impacting the lives of individuals and couples. Mentorship is a valuable tool to invest in the life of another for their personal benefit and growth as they face the acute challenges of marriage.

Mentorship is an Effective Tool for Support and Growth, Utilized Both in the Contemporary Culture and in the Local Church

The impact of our actions extends far beyond our loudest words. This influence can be leveraged for the spiritual and practical benefit of others. Mentorship exists at the crossroads of instruction and modeling. It is an effective tool for support and growth both in the culture and in the church.

¹ Catherine McLaughlin, “Mentoring: What Is It? How Do We Do It and How Do We Get More of It?,” *Health Services Research* 45:3 (June 2010): 871.

Definition of Mentorship

The absence of a general consensus concerning mentorship demands specific attention. In order to successfully engage in the practice of mentoring, a definition must be explored and explained. The term is often utilized with a lack of clarity on the practice, purpose, and goal.

Mentorship. Mentorship requires two individuals, or sets of individuals, one of whom has wisdom and experience, and one who desires to learn. As written by Les Parrott,

The mentor and mentoree must be drawn to each other to some degree. If either side is not genuinely interested in the other, true mentoring will never take place. Along with this attractiveness, the mentoree must be willing and ready to learn from the mentor. Without a responsive attitude and a receptive spirit on the part of the mentoree, little genuine mentoring can occur.²

The mentor relationship develops organically and voluntarily because the mentor seeks an impact and the mentee seeks to be impacted. As Howard Hendricks simply states, mentoring “focuses on relationships.”³ This relationship provides long-term guidance and focused involvement through the stages of life. Bobb Biehl well defines “mentoring as a lifelong relationship, in which a mentor helps a protégé reach her or his God-given potential.”⁴

Mentor. The mentor has a heart to identify a mentee and personally invest for the benefit of another. As Hendricks expounds, “An effective mentor has to be willing to give himself to another human being. He must be capable of establishing and maintaining

² Les Parrott and Leslie L. Parrott, *The Complete Guide to Marriage Mentoring: Connecting Couples to Build Better Marriages* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 29.

³ Howard G. Hendricks and William Hendricks, *As Iron Sharpens Iron: Building Character in a Mentoring Relationship* (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 183.

⁴ Bobb Biehl, *Mentoring: Confidence in Finding a Mentor and Becoming One* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 19.

a relationship.”⁵ The mentor cultivates the relationship, commits to the investment, communicates wisdom and experience, and cares deeply. A mentoring relationship usually involves a relationship that extends from older to younger, a purposeful investment in the next generation. Ron Davis picks up this theme when he describes mentorship as “a process of opening our lives to others, of sharing our lives with others, a process of living for the next generation.”⁶ Being a mentor requires transparency and risk as life details, both good and bad, are shared with others. As Regi Campbell describes, “You get dirty mentoring people. They bring real issues to the table. And those issues require mentors to get personal, transparent, and exposed.”⁷ Mentoring involves both formal and informal personal investment. Skill in living passes through not only instruction and coaching, but also through the patterns of life observed by the mentee. In many ways formal investment provides the platform for informal life-on-life opportunity, such as marriage enrichment, parenthood, or developing a life-skill. As Hendricks explains, “We have to define a mentor not in terms of any formal roles that he carries out, but in terms of the character of his relationship with the other person, and the functions that that relationship serves.”⁸ The life-on-life process of mentorship aims to share and show Christ in a practical and persistent way. This is well-stated by Campbell when he says, “Mentoring is about showing someone how *to be something*. It’s about *becoming* a learner and follower of Jesus Christ because that’s what makes our Father most pleased.”⁹

⁵ Hendricks and Hendricks, *As Iron Sharpens Iron*, 61.

⁶ Ron Lee Davis, *Mentoring: The Strategy of the Master* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991), 16.

⁷ Regi Campbell and Richard Chancy, *Mentor Like Jesus* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2009), 19.

⁸ Hendricks and Hendricks, *As Iron Sharpens Iron*, 158.

⁹ Campbell and Chancy, *Mentor Like Jesus*, 18.

Mentee. The mentee is a learner who seeks input and investment into his or her life. The task of the mentee is described by Parrott as “careful observation of those more experienced.”¹⁰ A mentee opens their life up to a mentor, knowing that they need the life experience and wisdom that a Christ-centered, traveled life provides. As Hendricks appeals, “What we need are relationships with people who know Christ (experientially) and can help us know Him at our point of need.”¹¹ The relationship of a mentee to a mentor must be natural and voluntary, rather than assigned or forced, a relationship that is sought and subsequently explored for compatibility and desirability. As Hendricks describes of his own mentees, “to one degree or another, every one of them has been goal-oriented, looking for bigger and better things, an initiator, eager to learn, and responsible in terms of his own development.”¹²

The mentorship relationship provides opportunity for the mentor to effectively share their life, and for the mentee to receive support and guidance. The culture embraces the model of mentorship as an effective tool for shaping others.

Mentorship in Culture

The passing of expertise and understanding has always been from one life to another, often in a family context. As Parrott states, “In every culture throughout human history, mentoring has been the primary means of passing on knowledge and skills.”¹³ The concept of mentoring looms large in community and corporate culture, ranging from Little League teams to Fortune 500 companies. As observed by McLaughlin, “Discussions about the value of and the need for mentoring occur in many different

¹⁰ Parrott and Parrott, *The Complete Guide to Marriage Mentoring*, 28.

¹¹ Hendricks and Hendricks, *As Iron Sharpens Iron*, 124.

¹² Hendricks and Hendricks, *As Iron Sharpens Iron*, 57.

¹³ Parrott and Parrott, *The Complete Guide to Marriage Mentoring*, 28.

arenas, not just in academia, but also in business, sports, and the arts.”¹⁴ Consider some significant iterations of mentorship historically in culture, Freddie Laker mentored Richard Branson, Aristotle mentored Alexander the Great, Bach mentored Mozart, Kobe Bryant mentored LeBron James, and the list could continue.¹⁵ Higher education prioritizes internships in their undergraduate and graduate programs, particularly in fields that include a high degree of competency at the onset of a career, such as medicine, finance, and social work. As Parrott expounds, “Why do the trades have apprenticeships and professions require internships? Because personal attention from experienced practitioners helps learners master essentials skills, techniques, attitudes, and knowledge.”¹⁶ The culture widely utilizes direct personal interaction for transferring knowledge and skill.

Mentorship in the Church

The Scriptures are replete with examples of mentorship. Some significant examples include the mentoring of Elisha by Elijah, Joshua by Moses, Samuel by Eli, Paul by Barnabas, and Timothy by Paul. The practice of mentorship shapes the injunction to the family and community in Deuteronomy 6¹⁷ for passing on the truth from one generation to another.

The pattern established in the New Testament was discipleship. Discipleship seeks to fulfill the command in Matthew 28:19-20 to “make disciples” by teaching them to learn and obey the whole of Scripture. The practice of mentoring is a strategy for

¹⁴ McLaughlin, “Mentoring,” 872.

¹⁵ McLaughlin, “Mentoring,” 872.

¹⁶ Parrott and Parrott, *The Complete Guide to Marriage Mentoring*, ” 27.

¹⁷ Deut 6:4-9 "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”

discipleship, focusing on the passing of specific life principles through life on life interaction. Marriage mentorship is helpfully defined by James Curtis as “A happy, growing, experienced couple coaching a younger couple toward growth in their marriage through sharing their wisdom and experience, through encouraging and challenging them to live according to biblical teaching, and through building a supportive relationship with them.”¹⁸ The relationship of Jesus with the twelve disciples set forth a pattern for mentorship. As Campbell writes, “Jesus was a mentor. His mentorees became totally committed to His mission, worked together as an effective team, and through their efforts, arguably one-third of the world’s population believes in what they taught. From eleven people to two billion people . . . Jesus was a pretty good mentor.”¹⁹ He taught and modeled truth and obedience and called His followers to the same. Effective mentorship finds its source in the teaching and life of Jesus as Paul states in 1 Corinthians 11:1 “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.” Paul had experienced mentoring from Barnabas, which was a critical investment in his life. As Hendricks states, “By mentoring Paul, Barnabas was engaging in a ministry of multiplication. The world has never been the same, which demonstrates that every time you build into the life of another person, you launch a process that ideally will never end.”²⁰ The model and mission set for the New Testament church was one of discipleship or mentoring others toward Christ-likeness, and obedience. As Dennis McCallum expounds, “In the early church, there were no professional counselors. People in the body of Christ helped each other as they were able.”²¹ The church ministers to one another, meeting its practical and spiritual needs

¹⁸ James Patrick Curtis, Jr., “A Marriage Mentor Program for the Local Church” (DMin project, Western Seminary, 2004), 183.

¹⁹ Campbell and Chancy, *Mentor Like Jesus*, 8.

²⁰ Hendricks and Hendricks, *As Iron Sharpens Iron*, 131.

²¹ Dennis McCallum and Jessica Lowery, *Organic Disciple Making: Mentoring Others into Spiritual Maturity and Leadership* (Houston: Touch, 2006), 143.

through relationships of growth and encouragement.

Marriage Mentorship Provides Biblical Care to Resist Cultural Opposition

The church shares in the trauma of the surrounding culture, particularly when it comes to marriage. The likelihood that a couple received quality biblical pre-marriage counseling has diminished. Many couples become believers after marriage and need to grow in their understanding and practice of biblical marriage. As Dale Losch explains, “In the West, the church has flourished when it comes to *impressing people from a distance*, but has failed when it comes to *impacting them close up*.”²² Marriage mentorship, as an extension of the discipleship ministry of a church, provides biblical care for healthy marriages. The prevalence of mentorship both as a concept and common experience in culture provides a model for life-on-life investment. The formal ministries of a church, such as Adult Sunday School or other such training programs are helpful for growing disciples, but discipleship relationships must be nurtured within the community of faith. As Steve Viars states, “Churches need to have ministries in place to help men and women who do not benefit yet from the normal discipleship means and methods of the church. Call it whatever you want, but just make sure it is in place.”²³ A marriage mentorship ministry provides direction in a local church for strengthening marriages.

Marriage Mentorship

A healthy church fosters a culture of discipleship. That discipleship must extend into the arena of marriage. Pre-marriage counseling and mentorship is essential for those preparing for marriage. This training would include teaching on areas such as

²² Dale Losch, *A Better Way: Make Disciples Wherever Life Happens* (Kansas City, MO: Crossworld, 2012), 29.

²³ Steve Viars, “The Discipleship River,” *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 20, no. 3 (2002): 60.

theology of marriage, communication, conflict resolution, roles and responsibilities, sex, finances, and relating to in-laws. “Americans receive education and training before receiving a driver’s license. Yet when those same people seek a marriage license, relatively few of them receive education about how to establish a successful marriage.”²⁴ Post-wedding marriage mentorship provides ongoing counsel and investment to continue to grow a healthy marriage and deal with the issues that arise. Some couples find themselves on the brink of divorce without ever seeking out biblical counsel and care in their troubles. The divorce rate among professing Christians matches that of the unbelieving world. As a study from the Barna group²⁵ reveals,

But where practicing Christians and evangelicals share likeness with the rest of the country is in the proportion who have ever been divorced. In fact, both groups equal the rate of divorce (both historically and currently) of the general adult population. Among both groups, one-quarter (25%) have been divorced (as of the 2016 data), compared to that very same number among all adults. So although those with strong religious convictions are more likely to be married, they are also just as likely to have experienced a divorce.²⁶

The majority of couples begin their marriage with optimism, but unfortunately they are not equipped for marriage. Marriage mentorship provides an opportunity for strengthening and protecting marriages in the local church. A more experienced couple invests in a less experienced couple with biblical instruction, sharing their lives, and walking through the seasons and storms of marriage. The mentoring couple becomes a

²⁴ “Premarital counseling can decrease divorce rates, psychologist says,” The Daily Universe, last modified July 6, 2017, <https://universe.byu.edu/2017/07/06/premarital-counseling-can-decrease-divorce-rates-psychologist-says/>.

²⁵ The Barna Group uses a self-designated professing Christian category in their survey. This can result in a broad sense of the category of Christian or Evangelical. Those surveyed do not seem to have been able to distinguish between a past divorce, potentially even being pre-conversion, and a divorce as a professing Christian. These factors considered, it provides a jarring statistic relative to the health of Christian marriages broadly and strengthens the urgency for marriage mentorship. These statistics do not match the situation in our congregation relative to divorce and I would suspect also a healthy evangelical church.

²⁶ “The Trends Redefining Romance Today,” Barna, last modified February 9, 2017, <https://www.barna.com/research/trends-redefining-romance-today/>.

sounding board and counseling resource potentially for a lifetime. Rather than struggle to the point of crisis, a couple can resource help as issues and needs arise.

Biblical Care

A church must provide basic pre-marriage counseling to all those who seek to be married under their oversight. As Ken Sande explains, “Mandatory premarital counseling can help couples deliberately prepare for the challenges of marriage. And through informal fellowship, younger couples can learn from older couples as they model the attitudes and skills that lead to a solid marriage.”²⁷ The mentorship model extends marriage investment beyond formal pre-marriage counseling and that extends into the continuing marriage experience.

Beyond this basic care they should be encouraged to establish a relationship with a mentor couple. It is important that the mentorship relationship is organic and not forced, welcomed by both the mentor and mentee. These mentors should be prepared to provide solid biblical counsel and godly wisdom rather than human wisdom and popular psychology. A marriage mentor disciples another couple to follow Christ, with an emphasis on applying biblical truth to marriage.

The amount of material written online and in print on marriage is voluminous, and a large portion of resources are outside the scope of Scripture. Marriage mentors must be grounded in Scripture and its teaching on marriage, rather than filled with the secular and popular ideas and teaching on marriage. A healthy marriage mentor is most concerned with a couple’s relationship to Christ and His agenda for their marriage. As Robert Brantley states, “In order to facilitate our spiritual growth and maturation, God, by His grace, has provided a system of accountability that begins with a discipler, a believer whom He has called into our lives to shape and sharpen us into a true disciple of

²⁷ Ken Sande, “The Churches’ Role in Preserving and Healing Marriages,” *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 22, no. 3 (2004): 43.

Christ.”²⁸ Marriage impacts the whole person and so a marriage mentor must be ready to bring God’s Word to bear on the full scope of the human experience in marriage. As the book *Organic Disciple Making* explains, “That’s why, as a disciple-maker, you must be ready to move into any and every area of a disciples’ life with godly help. Your disciples will need advice and help with a thousand areas: relational, functional, emotional, even physical.”²⁹

Another significant aspect to biblical care is church discipline. The goal of church discipline is spiritual formation and protection. Often church discipline is perceived as negative in the life of the church, but it is indeed a significant blessing to the church. The two major aspects of church discipline are formative and corrective. Marriage mentorship operates in the realm of the formative discipline of the church. When a marriage mentor speaks into the struggle of a younger couple, they are acting in a spiritually forming and protective way. This call back to following Christ in obedience in marriage, functions to protect those believers and that marriage from becoming a corrective discipline issue, such as betrayal or divorce. As Sande teaches, “A church can use formative discipline to strengthen and preserve marriages by providing thorough teaching on God’s design for marriage, on ways to nurture a marriage, and on how to deal with problems that arise in the marital relationship.”³⁰

Genuine biblical care must be the hallmark of marriage mentorship, which shares and shows Christ through Scripture, personal testimony, and a transparent life of faith and obedience.

²⁸ Robert Brantley and Astra Brantley, “The Grace of God’s Accountability,” *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 17, no. 1 (1999): 46.

²⁹ McCallum and Lowery, *Organic Disciple Making*, 143.

³⁰ Sande, “The Churches’ Role in Preserving and Healing Marriages,” 43.

Cultural Opposition

Marriage is troubled both inside and outside the church. As Timothy Keller reports, “The divorce rate is nearly twice the rate it was in 1960. In 1970, 89 percent of all births were to married parents, but today only 60 percent are. Most tellingly, over 72 percent of American adults were married in 1960, but only 50 percent were in 2008.”³¹ The culture actively seeks to deconstruct biblical marriage. As Andreas Köstenberger aptly writes, “For the first time in its history, Western civilization is confronted with the need to define the meaning of the terms *marriage* and *family*. The Judeo-Christian view of marriage and the family with its roots in the Hebrew Scriptures has to a significant extent been replaced with a set of values that prizes human rights, self-fulfillment, and pragmatic utility on an individual and societal level.”³² The climbing divorce rates, aggressive sexual revolution, rising gender confusion, and ongoing cultural enslavement to pornography, sow confusion and have detrimental effects on lives and marriages. As Köstenberger continues, “An integrative, biblical treatment of marriage and the family is essential to clear up moral confusion and to firm up convictions that, if acted upon, have the potential of returning the church and culture back to God’s intentions for marriage and families.”³³ A rising generation of young adults show disinterest and even disdain for marriage, choosing to remain single longer and with low expectations for marital satisfaction.

Marriage Mentorship Provides Biblical Wisdom to Face the Acute Challenges of Marriage

Marriage is under attack in American culture. The culture has shifted its attention away from monogamous marriage to sexual exploration. The societal norms

³¹ Timothy Keller and Kathy Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage: Facing the Complexities of Commitment with the Wisdom of God* (New York: Dutton, 2011), 14.

³² Andreas J. Köstenberger and David W. Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 15.

³³ Köstenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 17.

have shifted and commitment vanished. As the Institute for Family Studies has noted, “In particular, shifts in attitudes, aspirations, and norms, coupled with declining participation in secular and religious civic institutions, have undercut the social pressure to marry, to have children within marriage, and to stay married.”³⁴ The pervading influences shaping the values and beliefs of the present generation purport a message contrary to Scripture. Along with the alarming intensity of opposition to marriage, there is an influential profane pattern of life. The Institute for Family Studies continues, “In sum, expressive individualism, the sexual revolution, feminism, the growing number of children reared in non-intact families, and the rise of the capstone model of marriage all coalesced to weaken the social and behavioral connections among sex, marriage, and parenthood.”³⁵ The attack on biblical marriage must be met with rich biblical teaching and vibrant personal investment. Marriage mentorship provides life-on-life investment of biblical wisdom to face these challenges. When a man and a woman covenant together in biblical marriage, they bring their unique background, struggles, and experiences. The mentorship relationship provides a distinct opportunity to partner in the unique challenges of individual marriages. The remainder of this chapter will unpack two particular modern-day acute challenges facing marriage.

Marriages Impacted by Anxiety

Anxiety as a diagnosis and anxiety as an experience are pervasive among peoples in general, but specifically in the United States.³⁶ The COVID-19 pandemic along with ongoing economic and societal disruptions continue to contribute to the

³⁴ “The Role of Culture in Declining Marriage,” Institute for Family Studies, last modified March 10, 2016, <https://ifstudies.org/blog/the-role-of-culture-in-declining-marriage-rates/>.

³⁵ Institute for Family Studies, “The Role of Culture in Declining Marriage.”

³⁶ “Facts & Statistics,” Anxiety & Depression Association of America, last modified October 2020, <https://adaa.org/understanding-anxiety/facts-statistics/>.

overall experience of anxiety in culture.³⁷ This internal turmoil impacts an individual's closest relationships in the home, most particularly the marriage relationship. The rise of divorce during the pandemic is symptomatic of this reality.³⁸ It is normal to feel a degree of anxiety during seasons of stress or hardship, but excessive, ongoing anxiety and uncontrolled worry that interferes with day-to-day activities could indicate generalized anxiety disorder.³⁹ The *Harvard Mental Health Letter* aptly described debilitating anxiety as "toxic worry."⁴⁰ This emotional struggle fixates on worst-case scenarios, imagined unjustified threats, paralysis in uncertainty, indecision, overpowering restlessness, irritability, and lack of concentration.⁴¹ The physical ailments include fatigue, insomnia, muscle tension, nervous shakes, sweating, nausea, diarrhea, and irritable bowel syndrome.⁴² Regardless of any official diagnosis, the experience of fear, worry, and anxiety brings substantial disruption to the marriage relationship.

The experience of anxiety can emerge in marriage through a variety of presenting problems. As Robert Jones explains, "Perhaps no single problem plagues people more than worry and anxiety. It may arise suddenly. It may accompany you daily. It saps your sleep, drains your joy, exhausts your energy, ruins your relationships, and

³⁷ "Stress in America 2020: A National Mental Health Crisis," American Psychological Association, last modified October 2020, <https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/stress/2020/sia-mental-health-crisis.pdf/>.

³⁸ Anne Marie Chaker, "The Strain the Covid Pandemic Is Putting on Marriages," *The Wall Street Journal*, August 4, 2020.

³⁹ "Generalized Anxiety Disorder," Mayo Clinic, last modified October 13, 2017, <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/generalized-anxiety-disorder/symptoms-causes/syc-20360803/>.

⁴⁰ Harvard Medical School Health, "Generalized Anxiety Disorder: Toxic Worry," *The Harvard Mental Health Letter* 19, no.7 (2003): 1.

⁴¹ National Institute of Mental Health, "Generalized Anxiety Disorder: When Worry Gets Out of Control," *National Institutes of Health* no. 16 (2016): 6.

⁴² National Institute of Mental Health, "Generalized Anxiety Disorder: When Worry Gets Out of Control," 6.

aggravates your body ailments.”⁴³ Anxiety, fear, and worry disorient the marriage relationship through three significant problems, relational withdrawal, marital conflict, and conflict avoidance.

Relational withdrawal seeks control over people and situations by excluding, alienating, or eliminating people and situations from their lives. In an attempt to micro-manage life and mitigate uncertainty, the anxious spouse manipulates for control.⁴⁴ Anxiety arises when uncertainty and lack of control are felt in circumstances and relationships. As inadequacies and frustrations surface in a relationship, anxiety rises. Rather than seek for clarity and reconciliation, the relationship becomes plagued by negative assumptions and emotional/physical isolation. These responses demonstrate that life is centered on oneself rather than on God and His sovereign purposes. Relational withdrawal demonstrates the minimization of the presence and authority of God and His relevance to daily life.

Anxiety, worry, and fear in a person’s heart result in relational conflict. The *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* notes “an association between anxiety disorders and relationship distress . . . on days when wives experienced increased anxiety, their husbands were more likely to report a reduction in positive qualities of the relationship.”⁴⁵ The integrity of a relationship erodes as anxiety rules the heart.

Another relationally destructive consequence of life-dominating anxiety is conflict avoidance. The foundation of any relationship and most particularly marriage, is trust, communication, and love. As *Marriage Helper* describes, “His worry was

⁴³ Robert Jones, “Getting to the Heart of Your Worry,” *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 17, no. 13 (1999): 21.

⁴⁴ Edward Welch, *Running Scared: Fear, Worry, and the God of Rest* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2007), 53.

⁴⁵ Talia Zaider, Richard Heimberg, and Masumi Lida, “Anxiety Disorders and Intimate Relationships: A Study of Daily Processes in Couples,” *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* vol.119, no. 1 (2010): 12.

controlling him and his every decision. He was becoming a prisoner of his mind . . . and was making a ton of assumptions about what he thought his wife was thinking.”⁴⁶ The statistics in societal studies indicate a strong association between anxiety dysfunction in a marriage and marital dissatisfaction.⁴⁷ Also noted in these same studies are interpersonal behaviors that jeopardize support and intimacy in marriage.⁴⁸ Normal demands and difficulties of life dominate thoughts, escalate emotions, and contribute to a lack of relational health. Rather than confront issues and pursue restoration in the marriage relationship, communication diminishes and anxiety-driven assumptions fill in the details. Avoidance and presumption erode trust, fuel suspicion, and produce internalized and externalized anger. This response to normal marital conflict contributes to unresolved tension. As a result, the tension mounts and brings an escalation of emotions and reactions.

The anxious heart experiences feelings of vulnerability (anxiety about performance) and a sense of shame (anxiety about expectations). God intends for marriage to be a place where vulnerability meets acceptance and shame meets grace. The marriage relationship should provide a place of secure love and spiritual renewal. God designed marriage as a place of safety and security.

The burdens of our hearts must be brought to the Lord, rather than the just our spouse, trusting our good, wise, and all-sufficient God to meet our needs. As Andrew Selle succinctly states, “You may not allow those desires to control your life as idols. And you can live without those things if necessary, because you have Christ. Your future

⁴⁶ “How Anxiety Affects Your Marriage,” Marriage Helper, last modified 2019, <https://marriagehelper.com/how-anxiety-affects-marriage-erh/>.

⁴⁷ Zaider, Heimberg, and Lida, “Anxiety Disorders and Intimate Relationships,” 2.

⁴⁸ Zaider, Heimberg, and Lida, “Anxiety Disorders and Intimate Relationships,” 2.

is out of your control, but it is in God’s control.”⁴⁹ The anxious individual must embrace the ministry within marriage of vulnerability, transparency, and security. They must also trust the good and powerful sovereign God. As Selle continues, “Love God in your relationships. Step out in faith, doing what is right without ‘giving way to fear.’”⁵⁰

A biblical theology of the body and its stewardship provides insight into anxiety, fear, and worry. Evidence indicates that many physical symptoms are caused or aggravated by mental stress.⁵¹ As we consider the heart issues at work in anxiety, we must also consider physiological changes to lifestyle. Lifestyle choices are intricately connected to the marriage relationship. Example areas for adjustment might include employment, sleep patterns, eating habits, recreation, and exercise routines. It is also advisable for a full medical evaluation with a general practitioner to explore somatic issues that might include: gastrointestinal disease, cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease, endocrine disorders, musculoskeletal disorders, headaches, skin disorders, hormone disorders, neurological disease, and immune disorders.⁵²

Anxiety, fear, and worry can bring havoc to a marriage relationship, producing a breakdown in communication and intimacy. Marriage mentorship can serve as a catalyst for biblical encouragement and change in the struggle with anxiety, fear, and worry. Often the road to physical and spiritual wholeness requires the investment of spiritual wisdom over an extended period of time. A husband and wife can be greatly helped by sharing their internal and external struggles and receiving godly biblical care and practical accountability through a mentoring relationship.

⁴⁹ Andrew Selle, “The Bridge over Troubled Waters: Overcoming Crippling Fear by Faith and Love,” *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 21, no. 1 (2002): 38.

⁵⁰ Selle, “The Bridge over Troubled Waters,” 39.

⁵¹ “Stress symptoms: Effects on your Body and Behavior,” Mayo Clinic, last modified August 10, 2023, <https://www.barna.com/research/trends-redefining-romance-today/>.

⁵² Michael R. Emler, “Understanding the Influences on the Human Heart,” *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 20, no. 2 (2002): 47-52.

Marriages Impacted by a Prior or Current ADHD Diagnosis

The issue of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder has arisen in my own counseling of marriages and so I have chosen to include it relative to marriage mentorship.⁵³ The incidence rate of ADHD behaviors continue to rise among adolescent teens.⁵⁴ When a child struggles in this way, the resources of the local church, particularly biblical instruction, are not resourced. The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* gives this description: “ADHD is characterized by a persistent pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity/impulsivity that interferes with functioning or development.”⁵⁵ Some parents conclude that ADHD behaviors are merely physiological and/or mental health issues and ignore biblical strategies addressing root issues of the heart. The diagnosis of ADHD comes almost exclusively from an evaluation of behaviors and responses described as inattention, hyperactivity, and/or impulsivity. These undesirable ADHD behaviors are often exclusively managed by medication and behavior modification strategies. The lack of biblical instruction and recognition of sin manifests itself in life-dominating sinful patterns. These ADHD behaviors do not disappear at the end of adolescence, but continue into adulthood, with a recognizable impact on marriage. According to the Mayo Clinic, “Adult ADHD symptoms include: impulsiveness, disorganization and problem prioritizing, poor time management skills, problems focusing on a task, trouble multitasking, excessive activity or restlessness, poor planning, low frustration tolerance, frequent mood swings, problems following through and

⁵³ This topic was mentioned in the marriage mentorship training and was noted as a point of emphasis for future advanced marriage mentorship training.

⁵⁴ “ADHD throughout the Years,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, last modified September 3, 2020, <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/adhd/timeline.html/>.

⁵⁵ American Psychiatric Association, “Attention-Deficit and Disruptive Behavior Disorders,” *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th ed.*, (2013).

completing tasks, hot temper, trouble coping with stress.”⁵⁶ Medication may be warranted and helpful with somatic issues (i.e. hypothyroidism), but the inner person cannot be ignored if there is to be lasting change. Adult ADHD behaviors result in an experience of brokenness in adult relationships, often characterized by dissonance toward authorities and peers, arguments, anger, and broken commitments.⁵⁷

The most acute issues related to adult ADHD occur in the marriage relationship. As the pre-marriage relationship begins, impulsivity and intensity are a welcomed part of the relationship. This intense and exciting experience often blinds the couple from recognizing behavioral and emotional challenges. As Melissa Orlov describes,

One of the most stunning surprises about ADHD relationships is the transition from courtship to marriage. It is quite typical that a person with ADHD is so involved in and excited by courtship that he becomes hyperfocused on his partner. He lavishes attention on her, thinks of wonderful and exciting things to do together, and makes her feel as if she is the center of his world . . . which she is. Neither party is aware of what is going on, only their feelings that “this must be true love!” But when the hyperfocus stops, the relationship changes dramatically for both of them.⁵⁸

The passion and focus of courtship are exchanged for dispassion and distraction. The impulsive behaviors, viewed positively as spontaneity, turn to procrastination, disorganization, and forgetfulness. This can result in “verbal outbursts that impede communication, economic splurges leading to overspending or interpersonal impulsivity expressed in angry outbursts and impatience.”⁵⁹ The areas of significant impact in a marriage center on communication, intimacy, and abdication of

⁵⁶ “Adult Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD),” Mayo Clinic, last modified June 22, 2019, <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/adult-adhd/symptoms-causes/syc-20350878/>.

⁵⁷ Carol Ann Robbins, “ADHD Couple and Family Relationships: Enhancing Communication and Understanding through Imago Relationship Therapy,” *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 61, no. 5 (2005): 565.

⁵⁸ Melissa Orlov, *The ADHD Effect on Marriage: Understand and Rebuild your Relationship in Six Steps* (Plantation, FL: Specialty Press, 2010), 40.

⁵⁹ Shiri Ben Naim et al., “Life with a Partner with ADHD: The Moderating Role of Intimacy,” *Journal of Child & Family Studies* 26 (2017): 1366.

responsibility. Marriages afflicted by ADHD behaviors are often plagued by conflict.⁶⁰ Miscommunication and impulsivity fuels assumptions about motives and results in accusations. This pattern arouses anger and resentment between spouses. The downward spiral of behavior and response results in marital crisis.

There are a variety of approaches utilized in the treatment of adult ADHD. The physiological treatments include medication, nutrition, exercise, and regulated sleep.⁶¹ The behavioral treatments include strategies designed to improve the reliability of behaviors. These include: organization, timeliness, impulse control, and anger management.⁶² These strategies can provide a measure of relief to a crisis situation, but fall short of genuine change.

ADHD is primarily a struggle with deeply entrenched sinful patterns, attitudes, and emotions, and our approach must begin with the heart. God created mankind as embodied souls. ADHD behaviors arise out of a sin-cursed body, which increases the challenges to obedience. The heart must still be kept as the target for addressing this issue. Hope does not ultimately arise out of behavior modification, but rather finds its hope in Christ and the lasting change that comes through willing submission to the Word of God. ADHD is not the reason for behavior rather it is a description of behavior. As John Babler explains, “True change and healing come only through God and His Word. With just a little work, the counselor can easily find Scripture that deals with each of the above behaviors of ADHD and be an instrument of God’s healing, rather than a purveyor

⁶⁰ Ben Naim et al., “Life with a Partner with ADHD,” 1366.

⁶¹ Nancie Kohlenberger and Melissa Orlov, *The Couple’s Guide to Thriving with ADHD* (Plantation, FL: Specialty Press, 2014), 23.

⁶² Melissa Orlov, “The ADHD Effect Marital Recovery Map,” in *The Distracted Couple: The Impact of ADHD on Adult Relationships*, ed. Larry Maucieri and Jon Carlson (Williston, VT: Crown House Publishing, 2014), 186.

of temporary relief.”⁶³ Marriage is a major arena for heart struggles and the war between selfishness and selfless obedience to Christ. Serious consideration of indwelling sin and its motivating factors will yield life-changing results and restore health to a marriage broken by ADHD.

A generation of ADHD-medicated children are entering adulthood and experiencing challenges, particularly in the context of marriage. These issues must be addressed biblically and with a focus on heart transformation, rather than reliance on medication and the short-sighted goal of behavioral modification. These issues must be addressed with biblical strategies of change.

Mentorship provides a structure for bringing biblical truth to bear on the dysfunctional beliefs, attitudes, and actions of ADHD. This particular struggle necessitates a more direct approach to situations and strategies for relationships and regular choices. Those struggling with ADHD behaviors in adulthood need regular accountability and ongoing reminders. The impacted spouse needs regular encouragement and support. A marriage mentoring relationship from within their local church can build trust, confront issues, invest biblical strategies, and walk consistently with a struggling couple.

Conclusion

Mentorship within the local church provides necessary practical and spiritual investment for the sake of healthy marriages. The model of mentorship is a proven tool for building effective life-on-life relationships where truth can be applied with maximum impact. The present cultural opposition and acute challenges of marriage require the equipping and strengthening found in God’s Word. These truths must be actively applied and particularly followed. The spiritual need among newly married couples and newly

⁶³ John Babler, “A Biblical Critique of the DSM-IV,” *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 18, no. 1 (1999): 27.

saved couples must be met with resources in the local church. This need can be met through marriage mentorship. When married couples struggle in their relationship, they often do not pursue counseling until they are at a point of crisis. The trust and transparency of a mentorship relationship provides a pathway to preventative support and guidance. Beyond the typical challenges of marriage, more acute challenges are best met with ongoing discipleship in a marriage. Marriage mentorship strengthens marriages for the glory of God and the strengthening of His church.

CHAPTER 4
PREPARING AND IMPLEMENTING THE MARRIAGE
MENTORSHIP TRAINING

The overall objective of this project was to implement a biblically-saturated and practically-oriented marriage mentorship training that would solidify a list of couples for marriage mentorship at Lakewood Baptist Church. This project, to this point, has established the need for mentors, explicated and applied key biblical texts on marriage and mentoring relationships, explored the sociological utilization of mentorship, and considered some specific issues in contemporary marriage. The current chapter will review the proposed goals of this project and delineate the investment and fulfillment of those goals.

The project implementation began on October 1, 2023, and concluded on January 9, 2024. The following chapter maintains that I accomplished the project goals and advanced a marriage mentorship program at Lakewood Baptist Church.

History and Adjustment of Ministry Project

This project began in Pennsylvania at Calvary Baptist Church and finished at Lakewood Baptist Church in Wisconsin. My doctoral journey began at a Starbucks coffee shop with our lead elder as we discussed potential doctoral programs and their emphasis for pastoral ministry. Out of the intensity and widening need for pastoral counseling in our context arose a desire for equipping of lay-counselors, particularly in the area of marriage. An increasing number of couples in our fellowship either had non-biblical, sub-biblical, or an absence of pre-marriage counseling. It became increasingly clear that preemptive and strategic marital investment must be established in our church.

Out of these conversations grew a desire for a team of marriage mentors who

were largely non-pastoral. While enrolled at Southern Seminary and in the midst of architecting and writing this project, Calvary Baptist Church entered into a ministry transition just as the COVID pandemic became acute. As both the ministry transition and the pandemic stabilized God arranged a change of ministry for our family. On August 1, 2022 we began our new ministry in Pewaukee, Wisconsin, at Lakewood Baptist Church. Our elder team at Lakewood was delighted to welcome my project to Lakewood and have been supportive and encouraging in this last leg of my journey.

The situation at Lakewood mirrored that of Calvary in many aspects, particularly the need for marriage mentorship as a preemptive investment for young marriages and new-to-Christ marriages. Since my time at Lakewood, the need has grown in this regard as we have seen the church grow significantly in both membership and attendance in the past year. Much of this growth has been through conversion or pivoting from unhealthy churches, both of which welcome Biblical marriage investment.

As I began my research for this project, two doctoral projects¹ emerged that have been very helpful in guiding both my sources for resources and also the structure of my project. As I discussed the idea for this project with congregants and also leadership at our church it became evident that marriage mentorship would be of the most value for my doctoral focus. This project was formalized in the fall of 2020 with Contextualized Writing Seminar and approval by the elder team at Calvary Baptist Church in Lansdale, Pennsylvania. This project continued in the summer of 2022 with approval from the elder team at Lakewood Baptist Church in Pewaukee, Wisconsin.

¹ 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) and Jeremy Earl Conn, "Developing a Marriage Mentorship Training Program at Inter-City Baptist Church in Allen Park, Michigan" (DMin project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2020).

Design and Structure of Mentorship Training

Logistics for Training

In discussions with the Lakewood elder team it became evident that our Sunday Life Together (adult education) was the ideal timeslot for training couples. In the life of our church, this time is set aside for equipping, training, and discipleship-oriented classes. This would allow for childcare and also facilitate consistent attendance since it is just prior to our regular worship gathering on Sunday mornings. Our church family lives in a wide radius to our church facility and engages in localized ministry during the week (Community Groups, Men's/Ladies Bible studies), so this ministry slot in the life of our church gave the widest opportunity to engage couples in the training. The training was organized as 10 classes that met for 45 minutes each week. I also utilized an extra session (90 minutes) during the final week of our training. The final session met during the normal Life Together slot, but also met again after worship for an additional training with extended interactive discussion.

Pedagogical Approach

I utilized a mixture of teaching and discussion in our classes. The teaching was designed to equip the couples in the skill of mentoring, reinforce a foundation of Biblical marriage, explore critical areas of marriage, and facilitate interactive discussions. The expectation between classes included reading supplemental notes along with journal articles to guide future class discussion.

Gathering Data to Guide the Training

The first goal of this project was to assess the primary areas of need for marriage mentoring among couples at Lakewood. In order to accomplish this goal I utilized a Married Couple's Survey (MCS) that included questions collecting basic marriage demographics, marriage mentorship or counseling experiences, and ranking of

common marriage problems.² There was one final short-answer question which was included to harvest any potential feedback not included in the MCS. The survey was designed to be completed in a brief timeslot, but not rushed, to allow for accuracy in response. In discussion with our elders, to have the widest generational data-set, to strengthen awareness of marriage mentorship within our congregation, and to fortify the results, we chose to utilize the end of our primary worship gathering for administering the MCS. This allowed for surveying well beyond the twenty-five couple metric for satisfying the stated goal for participation. At the conclusion of our worship gathering, the congregation was asked to remain in their seats for a brief survey. The MCS was distributed by our ushers while basic instructions were verbally given. In total, 233 surveys³ were collected from all willing married attenders on Sunday, October 1, 2023. The informal congregational response at the conclusion of our gathering was very positive, with general excitement to participate in the research.

The completed surveys provided data on the lengths of marriages, the experience in counseling (secular or biblical, helpful or unhelpful) and type of counseling received (pre-marital, during marriage, or both). The MCS also gauged the individual's personal willingness to participate in marriage counseling or mentorship. The most crucial component of the survey included a ranking for areas (communication, roles, intimacy, etc.) considered vital for inclusion in marriage mentorship.

The results of the survey are organized in a series of tables that give basic demographics, counseling and mentorship experience, and priority ranking for marriage

² See appendix 1, portions of this survey were adapted from Jeremy Earl Conn, "Developing a Marriage Mentoring Training Program at Inter-City Baptist Church in Allen Park, Michigan" (DMin project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2020), 95-97.

³ I received 233 completed surveys from congregants attending on October 1, 2023. The results for the ranking are based on 177 survey due to incorrect response in the ranking question. Either they did not provide ranking on all items, they did not rank in order, or they did not complete that section. The "other" category was largely not utilized with a limited number with a write in category, therefore these items are excluded from the results. The "other" responses were items that would generally fit under the categories given for ranking. The other collected information was utilized from all 233 respondents.

mentorship training.

The demographic results reveal a substantial length of marriage (Mean 23.7, Median 21 years) and a wide range of marriage length (2 months to 64 years). The percentage of couples without any marriage counseling or mentorship was 44 percent. The demographic results from the MCS are included below in table 1.

Table 1. Basic demographics

Mean length of marriage (years)	24
Median length of marriage (years)	21
Longest marriage (years)	64
Shortest marriage (months)	2
Formal marriage mentorship or counseling	56%
No counseling either before or during marriage	44%

Respondents who received pre-marriage mentorship or counseling were 45 percent. Among those who received counsel, 9 percent indicated that it was not biblically based, 14 percent indicated that it was biblical but unhelpful. The marriage counseling and mentorship results from the MCS are included below in table 2.

Table 2. Respondents who received marriage mentorship or counseling

Pre-marital mentorship/counseling (both included)	81%
Post-wedding mentorship/counseling (both included)	45%
both pre- and post- mentorship/counseling	27%
Prior counsel/mentorship was biblically based	91%
It was biblical and unhelpful	14%
It was not biblically based	9%

The willingness to participate as a recipient of marriage mentorship or counseling was 73 percent, while 27 percent did not see it as beneficial for their marriage.

The response to participation in marriage mentorship results from the MCS are included below in table 3.

Table 3. Response to mentorship

Mentorship welcomed? "Yes"	73%
Mentorship welcomed? "No"	27%

The MCS provided the importance for the mentorship training. The respondents were asked to rank specific topics in order of priority from 1 (most important) to 10 (least important). The lower the total score, the more important it is ranked. Also included are the mean ranking and median ranking. The respondents indicated communication as unmistakably the highest rank.⁴ The ranked priorities for marriage mentorship results of the MCS are included below in table 4.

Table 4. Ranking of priority for marriage mentorship

Emphasis	Total	Mean	Median	Overall
Communication	453	2.5	2	1
Conflict resolution	809	4.5	4	2
Expectation for marriage	838	4.7	4	3
Biblical roles	905	5	5	4
Forgiveness	948	5.2	5	5
Intimacy	992	5.5	6	6
Parenting	1111	6.2	6	7
Finances	1116	6.2	7	8
Priorities family/home	1244	7	7	9
Family issues	1325	7.4	8	10

⁴ Forty-four percent of respondents ranked Communication as #1 in priority, while the next closest were both Biblical Roles and Expectation for Marriage which were each ranked #1 by 12 percent of respondents. Though not ranked as #1 by as many respondents, considering the aggregated of responses, Conflict Resolution ranked as #2 overall.

Marriage Mentorship Curriculum Training

The second goal of this project was to develop a curriculum designed to cover basic marriage mentorship and to biblically equip marriage mentors for the local church. I began planning the curriculum before receiving ethics approval in order to meet the deadline to begin teaching for the fall session of our scheduled Life Together classes at Lakewood. The curriculum was developed to fit within the ten classes planned for our pre-worship Life Together adult education slot. This was not a publicly available class, but met as a private class.

Expert Panel Evaluation

The curriculum was sent electronically to three seasoned pastors with marriage counseling experience. My expert panel consisted of three pastors with ministry and marriage counseling experience.

The first member of the expert panel, Dave Marriott, was the planting pastor of Lakewood and is currently serving as the lead elder. He holds a Master of Divinity Degree from Maranatha Baptist University and is completing a DMin in Apologetics at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. I chose him to be on my panel because of his role as lead pastor and partnership in ministry at Lakewood.

The second member of the expert panel, Rob Clarke, served as a pastor and lead of discipleship at Calvary Baptist Church of Lansdale (CBCL) during my adolescent years. Rob holds a Master of Divinity Degree from Calvary Baptist Theological Seminary. For over a decade Rob served overseas in East Asia, establishing and nurturing pastoral training. Rob and I served together on the elder team at CBCL in recent years and have been involved in pastoral training in both East Asia and East Africa. I chose Rob because of his partnership in global gospel ministry and expertise in discipleship.

The third member of the expert panel, Rick Dobrowolski, serves as the lead pastor of Citylight Bible Church and holds a Master of Divinity Degree from Calvary Baptist Theological Seminary. Rick and I have known each other since our childhood and

have been encouraging and investing mutually in each other’s lives for decades. I chose Rick because of his partnership in the sharpening of my life and ministry. He also has extensive experience in counseling and mentorship in the local church context.

The expert panel agreed to read through the curriculum, fill out an evaluation form⁵, and provide written feedback. Table five below summarizes their evaluation.

Table 5. Expert evaluation of curriculum

	Marriott	Clarke	Dobrowolski	Total Actual	Possible
Biblical faithfulness (2 categories)	8	8	8	24	24
Scope and sequence (2 categories)	8	8	8	24	24
Methodology (2 categories)	8	8	8	24	24
Practicality (2 categories)	8	8	8	24	24
	32	32	32	96	96

The written feedback noted the thoroughness, adaptability, Biblical foundation, and helpfulness in documenting solid resources. The written critique noted some of the material could be over the head of a lay-person. Another helpful critique mentioned the importance of integrating a theological and practical gospel connection more widely in the lessons. The last significant critique noted the need for more case study material. The response in the evaluation was encouraging, but the written critiques were most helpful in strengthening the curriculum. The feedback from the expert panel was used to make adjustments to the final training curriculum.

⁵ See appendix 2, portions of this assessment were adapted from Jeremy Earl Conn, “Developing a Marriage Mentoring Training Program at Inter-City Baptist Church in Allen Park, Michigan” (DMin project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2020), 95-97.

Implementing the Training Program

The third goal of this project was to successfully train marriage mentors utilizing the developed curriculum. This began with the selection of mentors and continued with a ten-week training.

Selection of Mentors

The selection of mentors began with a conversation with our lead elder to determine a practical approach for selecting mentors. We decided to begin with a preemptive screening to reach a manageable list for elder discussion. I began by sorting through our membership list to identify potential couples that met a baseline criteria for participation in marriage mentorship ministry at Lakewood (members in good standing, married for 10 years or more, actively engaged in weekly worship, actively serving in some capacity, available for mentor training). This list was further refined according to my own discretion based on their respectability in our fellowship and evident spiritual maturity. The resulting list was brought to our elder team for discussion and selection. The elders were still free to recommend couples outside the scope of my own filtering. This final elder team discussion yielded ten couples. These ten couples were invited to participate and nine of these couples agreed to participate, one couple was interested but not adequately available for the trainings.

Mentorship Training

The training began on October 1, 2023 and was completed on December 3, 2023. The mentor trainees completed their pre-training survey at the start of our first class and spent time in class discussion around their expectations and potential hesitations to marriage mentorship. I laid out the expectations for participation which included consistent attendance, assigned readings, and class discussion engagement.

Lesson 1

We began our first class on October 1, 2023, with prayer, an introduction to the

rationale for why they were invited into the class, and the expectations for their participation. They were expected to attend all the classes, but if sickness or a scheduling conflict arose, the classes would be recorded. They were expected to listen attentively to the recordings for any class missed. I laid out the expectation that they would complete any supplemental reading that was assigned and be ready for discussion during the following training session. I welcomed any questions and invited feedback from the class on expectations or hesitations to marriage mentorship. We spent the remainder of the class discussing the mission and philosophy of Lakewood and demonstrating that marriage mentorship contributes to fulfilling the goals of our church. We discussed the role of mentorship in our overall mission of “Growing People through God’s Word” and also our core value of discipleship in fulfillment of the Great Commission. We concluded our class with a discussion on the impact of mentorship in fulfilling our church goals. An article that I wrote on a philosophy of the home was assigned for discussion at the next class.

Lesson 2

We began our second training on October 8, 2023, with a discussion of an unpublished essay I wrote on Deuteronomy 6. This discussion allowed for interactive training on a Biblical view of the home and the strengthening of the home within the community of faith. The training session continued with a discussion that sought to distinguish Biblical counseling from marriage mentorship. A rationale was given for mentorship in the broader culture for the shaping of beliefs and practice. We explored examples of mentorship in the life and ministry of Jesus and Paul. We concluded the class with a discussion around the impact that mentorship can have in a person’s life within the local church. The emphasis was placed particularly on the powerful tool that marriage mentorship would be at Lakewood.

Lesson 3

Our third training on October 15, 2023, began a two-week focus unpacking Biblical mentorship principles and practices. During the first of these two weeks we spent time considering the principles and practice laid out in Titus 2:1-8. We explored the inter-generational ministry that is essential for a healthy local church. This pattern of discipleship between older and younger provides a model for mentorship. We discussed not only a gap in experience and skills for living marked by age, but also marked by spiritual age. Our congregation has experienced recent growth through adult conversions. This has provided the opportunity to mentor a couple that may not be vastly younger in years, but younger in the faith. We discussed the need for mentorship in the lives of those who have only known marriage outside of Christ. These situations are in the bullseye for marriage mentorship. The training also included scriptural principles of intentional teaching, modeling, and obedience within mentorship born out of Titus 2:1-8.

Lesson 4

Our fourth training on October 22, 2023, completed our two-week focus, with this second week centering primarily on practices for mentorship. We started our class discussing the importance of the sufficiency and authority of Scripture in our mentorship (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:19-21; 2 Pet 3:18). I explained that Scripture can become secondary in our mentorship and must instead guide our investment in other's lives. We spent time discussing how to communicate with a couple in a way that does not seek to control or manage the details of their lives. Our desire should be to help them live out the truth of Scripture, while humbly guiding them in personal application. The goal of this discussion was to shape our thinking about how to guide and counsel without being dogmatic or controlling on matters of discernment. We discussed generational differences in approach to aspects of life, and that the application of wisdom may lead to varying life choices. I shared the goal of heart transformation rather than mere conformity for the couple we mentor. We discussed the patience needed to walk alongside people toward change and

the essential attributes that strengthen the bridge of our relationship with a couple. The main attributes being prayerful, humble, transparent, and listening. Our training ended with a discussion on asking good questions and thinking cross-culturally toward a younger couple.

Lesson 5

Our fifth training on October 29, 2023, focused on the foundation of marriage (Gen 1:26-31; 2:7-25; 3:1-24). The goal of this class was to establish and reinforce a foundation for marriage from Scripture. We discussed God's creational design for marriage and how this design extends to the relationship between husband and wife. We discussed God's design for the relationship of a husband toward his wife and complementarity of the wife toward her husband. We discussed the biblical principles related to leaving, cleaving, and weaving. We discussed the impact of sin and the curse on the marriage relationship and accompanying sinful responses between husband and wife. This section was summarized by a discussion around God's perfect character, Word, design, and redemption laid out in Genesis 2 and 3. Our class concluded with a time of questions and comments for clarification and reinforcement.

Lesson 6

Our sixth training on November 5, 2023, began a two-week focus on roles and responsibilities in a healthy Biblical marriage. The first week we explored Ephesians 5:21-33. After laying a foundation from Scripture, we spent time discussing the role and mindset of a husband as he relates to his wife as well as the role and mindset for a wife as she relates to her husband. We talked about the gospel motivation and example that shapes our marriage relationships. We spent time discussing the failure of a husband to be a loving servant leader. We discussed the failure of a wife to properly relate to her husband in her responsibility to submit. Particular teaching attention was given to mentorship in situations where a husband demonstrates a domineering leadership and to

situations where a wife fails to confront her husband due to her passivity. These are important considerations in light of the broader cultural challenges in our region. We ended our training summarizing the relationship of husband and wife from Ephesians 5:21-33.

Lesson 7

Our seventh training on November 12, 2023, which was the second of the two week series, explored the principles for marriage in 1 Peter 3:1-7. The emphasis of this training was on relating skillfully to one's spouse. We discussed the wife's skillful submission and sanctifying effect on a husband. We discussed the impact of a wife's genuine and grace-filled relationship with God toward her husband. We discussed the knowledgeable way that a husband lives with his wife. This mutual care and spiritual investment are to be nurtured in a mentored couple. We spent time in discussion around how to help a couple in a struggling marriage. This passage can provide hope and instruction for mentoring in those situations. We also discussed situations where it is advisable to pursue pastoral assistance with a couple they are mentoring.

Lesson 8

Our eighth training on November 19, 2023, began with an opportunity to ask questions and discuss any matters that may need further explanation or clarity from our training. We spent a significant portion of our training in open discussion as a group. It was a positive discussion with great opportunity to work through further application. We spent the remainder of our training with an introductory discussion on communication in marriage. It was noted that the overwhelming majority of those in our congregation rated communication as the most needed area for marriage mentorship.

Lesson 9

Our ninth training on November 26, 2023, was spent working through

communication in marriage. We discussed and explored the scriptural teaching on communication and applied it specifically to marriage (Eph 4:15-32; Jas 1:19-26; various Proverbs). We explored the cross-cultural nature of communication between husband and wife and the work it takes to maintain healthy communication. We discussed biblical principles for communication such as honesty, transparency, patience, repentance, and obedience in our communication. Each of these areas delved into specifics from Scripture and its application in marriage. This session was filled with vibrant interaction and helpful discussion. We discussed the importance of communication to all aspects of the marriage relationship, from basic life together to the sexual relationship. Communication is essential for repentance, forgiveness, and restoration, which are often used tools in a marriage relationship.

Lesson 10a

Our training on December 3, 2023, was split into two sessions to finish our training. We met during our pre-worship Life Together adult class, but then also scheduled an extended training combined with a lunch in the afternoon. I arranged for basic childcare for the children so that we could meet with minimal distraction. In our early session I sought to equip them in the areas of money (Gen 2:15; Prov 5:15-19; 21:20; 22:7; Luke 16:11-13; Eph 2:10; 1 Tim 5:8) and sex (Song 7; Rom 12:1-2; 1 Cor 6:19-20; Heb 13:4; 7:1-5). Since we have a regularly offered financial stewardship class at Lakewood, I decided to focus my attention specifically on financial principles applicable especially to younger couples and also some important baseline guidance. We spent the majority of the training discussing a Biblical view of sex in marriage. This is an area that seems to be less often discussed in our context and so it was important to work through a Biblical framework for talking about and helping a couple who is struggling with intimacy. I helped them understand that this is an area of marriage that often reveals other issues, particularly issues of abuse from one's past and so I advised them to

resource a pastor when certain issues arise. The discussion was helpful and appreciated by those in the class.

Lesson 10b

Our final training on December 3, 2023, was over lunch and into the afternoon. This session was set up with tables that were arranged in a square so that we were all facing one another for our discussion. This setting was particularly conducive to open discussion and interaction, which was particularly helpful for our content. We started with a training and discussion on handling conflict in marriage, laying out principles in James 4:1-3, and discussing their application for marriage and marriage mentorship. This teaching and discussion opened up an opportunity to troubleshoot and bring clarity to the marriage relationships among the participants in the class. This discussion led us to a second discussion on forgiveness from Matthew 18. We worked through eight principles for forgiveness from this chapter. It was a tremendous discussion and provided an opportunity to strengthen the marriages of those participating in the training. This was noted by the participants as the most helpful of our trainings for them personally. We finished our training with a session on how to get started with mentoring. This was a practical training on the basics of starting a mentoring relationship and planning the meetings. A compiled list of helpful resources was distributed to the class. I communicated to the class that I would be reaching out in the new year with next steps for formalizing a marriage mentorship ministry at Lakewood.

We concluded our marriage mentorship training in the same way that we began each of our sessions. We sought the Lord in prayer in humble dependence and with a desire to be used in the lives of others according to God's purposes for the strengthening of marriages and for the solidification of the body of Lakewood.

Strategic Ministry Plan

The fourth goal was to develop a strategic ministry plan for deploying a

marriage mentorship ministry at Lakewood. On January 9, 2023, the elder team at Lakewood (ministry plan expert panel) discussed the ministry plan for launching a marriage mentorship ministry at Lakewood. First, I provided the list of mentoring couples that were trained. Second, I distributed an outline of the curriculum utilized in the training. Third, I distributed the results from the MCS, training participants, and expert panel curriculum evaluation. Fourth, I included a ministry plan for their review. I asked for an affirming consensus among our elders on launching a marriage mentorship ministry at Lakewood. The ministry plan distributed among our elders contains five launching initiatives and four long-term goals.

Launching Initiatives for Marriage Mentorship Ministry

My launching initiatives are as follows: (1) I will invite further feedback from the participants in the marriage mentorship class for areas of further training or areas of interest for training. (2) I will establish an initial list of Marriage Mentoring Couples (for elder's use only) from this initial training. (3) I will further refine and develop the marriage mentorship training curriculum for regular trainings. (4) I will offer a basic marriage mentorship training class every two years during our Fall Life Together session (10-week session). (5) I will offer an advanced marriage mentorship training class every two years to further develop the marriage mentorship team (Saturday or Sunday multi session format).

Long-term Goals for Marriage Mentorship Ministry

My ministry long-term goals are as follows: (1) I will establish a team of well-trained marriage mentors for use at Lakewood with newlywed couples and also newly-saved couples. (2) I will establish a regular cadence of marriage mentorship training opportunities to further equip the team and also raise up new mentors to join the team. (3) I will develop a standardized handbook for Lakewood pastoral pre-marriage counseling

that encapsulates the basics of the marriage mentorship curriculum. (4) I will invest in a culture within our congregation that expects newly married couples to participate in marriage mentorship beyond basic pre-marital training.

Conclusion

The goal for this ministry project was to train and deploy marriage mentors in the local church. This goal began at Calvary Baptist Church in Lansdale, Pennsylvania, and was completed at Lakewood Baptist Church in Pewaukee, Wisconsin. Both of these congregations and leadership teams have contributed to the goal. This goal has become most intensely developed at Lakewood, and Lord-willing will continue to full maturity for the sake of God's purposes in the marriages of our church family. My continued efforts and prayer is that couples would grow in their marriages and be strengthened as families to the glory of God.

CHAPTER 5

PROJECT EVALUATION AND PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

This chapter aims to critically evaluate and personally reflect on the purpose, goals, strengths, and weaknesses of this project. Additionally, this chapter aims to provide theological and personal reflections. The following evaluation and reflection provide the opportunity to fuel the overall goal of establishing a marriage mentorship ministry at Lakewood. The long-term success of a marriage mentorship ministry will depend on the effective training and continued support of mentor couples.

Evaluation of the Project Purpose

The stated purpose of this project was to train couples for a marriage mentorship ministry at Lakewood Baptist Church in Pewaukee, Wisconsin. The intended outcome of this purpose was to establish a marriage mentorship ministry. The purpose of this project contributed to the disciple-making mission of Lakewood established by Christ (Matt 28:18-20). Marriage fulfills the God-glorifying purposes for creation (Gen 1:27-28). God's design for marriage (Gen 2:24), restated by Jesus (Matt 19:5-6) and by Paul (Eph 5:31), continues to fulfill these same God-glorifying purposes. God's design for leadership in the church is to equip believers to minister to one another (Eph 4:11-14). One of the methods for effective discipleship extends from older to younger within the church (Titus 2:1-8). The purpose of this ministry project fulfilled this Biblical vision for discipleship in the strengthening of marriage. This ministry project also contributed to Lakewood's mission of discipleship by growing people through God's Word.

The membership of Lakewood continues to reflect growth through conversion, growth from ungrounded believers, and also a young demographic, all desiring to grow

and follow God faithfully. The growing need for marriage strengthening at Lakewood is central to the purpose of this ministry project.

Evaluation of Project Goals

The goals for this project supported the stated purpose. The four goals for the project were (1) to assess the primary areas of need for marriage mentoring among couples at Lakewood; (2) to develop a ten-week curriculum centered on Biblical instruction for healthy marriages; (3) to use the curriculum to equip couples at Lakewood to participate in marriage mentorship; and (4) to develop a strategic ministry plan for deploying a marriage mentorship ministry at Lakewood.

Goal 1

The first goal of the project was to assess the primary areas of need for marriage mentoring among couples at Lakewood. This assessment began informally in my personal reflections on pastoral marital counseling. The amount and intensity of marital counseling indicated a need for marital investment. My personal perception and conversations with other pastors indicated a heavy load of counseling borne by the pastoral team. This informal assessment continued through intentional discussions with the elders at Lakewood regarding the demographics and state of marriage at Lakewood. The information gathered through these initial means contributed to the urgency and necessity of establishing a marriage mentorship ministry.

The assessment continued with the Married Couples Survey to gather information from Lakewood on the marriage metrics of our church and also the perceived priority of the relevant areas of focus for marriage mentorship. The initial plan was to survey a minimum of twenty-five couples, but in conversation with the elders it seemed ideal to survey all married couples in attendance at the conclusion of a Sunday worship gathering. The surveys were largely completed correctly, but some completed the ranking section incorrectly and that section of their survey was not included in results. A total of

233 surveys were completed. Of that number, 177 completed the ranking portion correctly. The verbal instructions for the ranking section should have been clearer with the understanding that the written instructions within the survey were inadequate.

The ranking results gave helpful guidance for priorities in topics for marriage mentorship training. The survey revealed a strong desire for marriage mentorship as 73 percent were welcoming to marriage mentorship. The results also revealed that only 45 percent of respondents had pre-marriage counseling, indicating an opportunity for marriage strengthening ministry at Lakewood. The informal response of our congregation subsequent to completing the marriage survey was very positive and evidenced a desire for marriage strengthening ministry. This goal not only gathered data, but also raised the awareness in our congregation of the potential for marriage mentorship ministry, as well as yielding conversations that led to immediate pastoral marriage counseling.

The first goal of my project was completed successfully when one hundred seventy-seven individuals completed the Married Couples Survey and the results were analyzed to yield a clear picture of the needs at Lakewood for a marriage mentorship curriculum.

Goal 2

The second goal was to develop a ten-week curriculum centered on Biblical instruction for healthy marriages and practical skills for marriage mentorship.¹ I designed the curriculum to convince the trainees of the necessity and impact of marriage mentorship, strengthen their Biblical foundation for marriage, and equip them in the areas of typical difficulty in marriage. The curriculum also weighted areas reported as a priority in the Married Couples Survey. The training structure was influenced by two helpful DMin projects from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary consulted during my

¹ See appendix 7.

Contextualized Writing Seminar.² I chose to utilize some of the content from chapters two and three of my project in the training sessions. Additional training material arose from a combination of general study and pastoral marriage counseling. The sessions were designed to both inform and also engage the class in discussion.

An expert panel evaluated the training material by utilizing a provided evaluation form. The critique focused on biblical faithfulness, scope/sequence, methodology, and practicality. The evaluation form also invited additional comments beyond a rating of one (unsatisfactory) to four (exemplary). My goal was to meet a minimum of 80 percent of the evaluation criterion. I received a 100 percent on the curriculum (96 out of 96 possible points in the rubric).³

The evaluation metrics proved to be less helpful than the written feedback and suggestions for the curriculum. The curriculum was commended as being thorough, including Scriptural support, and being well resourced. It was noted by two on the expert panel that the curriculum could be easily adapted for another church setting and also as a guiding resource for pre-marriage counseling. The curriculum was critiqued for being light on case study material and in some areas too detailed for a lay-person. A helpful suggested addition would be to weave the gospel as a foundation and motivation into the curriculum more broadly. The expert panel's comments provide an opportunity to further strengthen and enhance the curriculum.

The second goal of my project was completed successfully with a 100 percent approval from my expert panel.

² 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) and also Jeremy Earl Conn, "Developing a Marriage Mentoring Training Program at Inter-City Baptist Church in Allen Park, Michigan" (DMin project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2020).

³ See appendix 2.

Goal 3

The third goal was to use the curriculum to equip couples at Lakewood to participate in marriage mentorship. This goal began with the selection of mentoring couples to participate in the ten-week training. The list of couples was chosen in collaboration with our elder team and according to their willingness to participate relative to their availability for the scheduled marriage mentorship training. I invited ten couples to participate in the training and nine agreed.⁴ This goal continued through the training sessions. The group represented a wide age range (thirties to sixties) and marriage experience (~10 years to over 40 years). It was both humbling and helpful to spend time together growing in God's Word and discussing marriage and mentorship as a class.

The class pre-assessment yielded two preliminary conclusions.⁵ The first conclusion was the existence of a strong conviction for the need of marriage mentorship in the class. They scored a class total of 100 out of 108 prior to our training.⁶ The second conclusion was that the class was biblically ill-equipped regarding the church's role in mentoring. They scored a class total of 50 out of 108 prior to our training.⁷ The post-assessment showed an increase in total scores indicating a strengthening of knowledge and confidence among the mentoring couples.⁸

The pre- and post-assessment sought to provide statistical significance for the effectiveness of the training. The increased confidence was progressively evident during the training as we spent time looking to Scripture. Many of the class's potential

⁴ One couple did not give a timely response to the invitation, requesting additional time for consideration, which extended beyond the start of the training. This prompted me to request that they wait for a future opportunity to participate in marriage mentorship training.

⁵ The pre-test scores were totaled by assigning a numerical value for each designation from Strongly Disagree (1 point) to Strongly Agree (6 points), the total points scored for the class on each of these questions.

⁶ See appendix 4.

⁷ See appendix 4.

⁸ See appendix 6.

objections for mentoring were assuaged in our teaching and discussions. The t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive, statistically significant difference between pre- and post-training survey scores as displayed in the table below:

Table 6. T-test: Paired two sample for means

Statistical Description	Pre-Test Total	Post-Test Total
Mean	82.3	106.0
Variance	251.74183007	118.823529412
Observations	18	18
Pearson Correlation	0.5870335916	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Df	17	
t Stat	-7.7763490070	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.0000002679	
t Critical one-tail	1.7396	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.0000005358	
t Critical two-tail	2.109815578	

The third goal of my project was completed successfully as evidenced by a t-test for dependent samples that demonstrated a positive significant difference in pre- and post-survey scores.

Goal 4

The fourth goal was to develop a strategic ministry plan for deploying a marriage mentorship ministry at Lakewood. The ministry plan was distributed to the elders with a request for feedback and a consensus agreement on the proposed initiatives and long-term goals. The plan was well-received by a consensus agreement to move forward and a suggested addition of an initiative to connect mentoring couples with potential mentees.

The fourth goal was successfully completed with the acceptance of my strategic ministry plan.

Strengths of the Project

The main strength of the project centered on spiritual opportunity and investment at Lakewood. This project was designed to strengthen marriage by equipping and establishing lay-leaders for marriage mentorship. This reinforced the Lakewood discipleship emphasis among the trained couples and also strengthened the fulfilling of our mission by equipping couples for ministry.

The second strength of the project was the opportunity to teach a proper theology of marriage from Scripture and equip core couples of our church in teaching and defending marriage. In light of many errors being taught and practiced in southeastern Wisconsin (both egalitarian and abusive patriarchy), this project strengthened and equipped couples in a biblical framework (complementarian). The potential objections raised in class indicated both of these influences among the trained mentoring couples.

Third, this project facilitated the opportunity to build confidence in couples. A few of the trained couples exhibit spiritual strength and wisdom and are respected highly in our body, but have more reserved personalities. The mentor training built their confidence and willingness to be more proactive in discipleship ministry.

A fourth strength of the project was the repeatability of the training by lay-leadership. The scope and sequence and training material will allow for future leaders to shepherd the mentoring ministry with pastoral oversight. The further development of the material and more extensive training will provide the opportunity for self-propagation.

The final strength of the project was the contribution that it made to a discipleship culture of Lakewood. The practice of mentorship requires vulnerability, transparency, and humility. A wider practice of mentorship at Lakewood will contribute to this desired outcome within our fellowship. As further mentoring couples are trained and mentoring relationships are established, the culture of our church will be strengthened in transformational discipleship.

Weaknesses of the Project

Though this project had some notable and encouraging strengths, it had some weaknesses as well. The first weakness was the deployment of the data-gathering survey (MCS). It was positive to have a church-wide participation, but that created some unanticipated challenges. The MCS could have been explained more fully and more instructions could have been given to mitigate some confusion in filling in the priorities section. The integrity of the results of the survey were not compromised, but a fuller response would have been desirable.

Another weakness of the project was the homework assigned to the couples. The homework included reading articles and being prepared for a discussion at the following class. There was little accountability for completing the homework and more time could have been allotted in class for discussing the assignments. The homework could have included case study responses and increased accountability.

A third weakness was the length of our training sessions. Though this was an ideal timeslot in the life of our church, the classes could have been for a longer period of time to allow for more class discussion and working together on case study situations. The most vibrant discussion occurred in our extended afternoon training where there were less time constraints. It would have been ideal to include another extended afternoon training to facilitate more practical troubleshooting.

Fourth, the expert panel, though qualified and experienced to evaluate the marriage mentorship training material, gave good feedback, but may have been biased in their rubric evaluation. It would seem more realistic and reasonable for the evaluation to yield less than a perfect score from all the evaluators. The expert panel gave critique in the comments they provided more than in their scoring.

A final weakness of the project was the lack of formal feedback and evaluation of the training. The pre- and post-assessment indicated that the class grew in equipping

and confidence, but it would have been helpful to additionally provide an opportunity for formal open-ended feedback.

What I Would Do Differently

There are a number of areas of needed change in the project for future use that I would have handled differently. The first area would be in the selection of mentoring couples. This first round of training included more obvious choices for couples within our congregation. In the future I would plan to meet with a potential mentoring couple before admitting them into the training. This would have re-directed at least two of the couples that participated in the training based on interactions with this couple outside of class. The practice of meeting with potential couples will not only help with discerning a fit for the ministry, but it will also help build rapport with the couple ahead of the training.

Another aspect I would change is the distribution of the training material. I would provide the full syllabus both electronically and in-print to each participant ahead of the first training session. This would provide an adequate expectation for the scope of the material, homework assignments, and case study discussions. The printed book would be a reference point for their future mentoring. Along with the full set of notes, I would ask each couple to subscribe to the *Journal of Biblical Counseling* archive, which will more adequately and sustainably facilitate homework reading material.⁹

Third, I would handle the case studies differently. I would provide more detailed case studies for both homework and class discussion. The class's case study work would be strengthened by requiring them to provide a written response to class. This would increase their accountability and also help me gauge the class's assimilation

⁹ It is permissible to make up to twenty copies of individual articles for church ministry use. As stated on their website: <https://www.ccef.org/copyright-permissions> "as the copyright holder, CCEF does grant an individual the right to reproduce and distribute an individual JBC article to up to 20 people without requesting additional permissions." This was sufficient for this initial training, but will not be a suitable and sustainable solution going forward. As needed, our ministry could reimburse a mentoring couple for a one-year electronic subscription.

of the provided class instruction. I would also include more case studies and allot more time for in-class discussion and guided workshopping.

A fourth area that I would change would be the amount of time given to training mentors. The ten allotted forty-five minute sessions were not sufficient for the training. I was able to adjust to include a final extended afternoon training, but could use more opportunities for discussion and case studies. I would have included one or two additional extended trainings on Sunday either in the afternoon or in the evening.

The last aspect for change would be to include an anonymous written evaluation for input and feedback at the conclusion of the training. I was able to receive informal feedback in conversation with the class members outside of class, but that tends to include more positive feedback than necessary critique.

Theological Reflections

The immense amount of study and research stretched and deepened my personal practical theology. The completion of the project provided greater clarity and resolute conviction.

First, marriage is vital to God's plan for displaying His glory. This became very clear as I worked through the Biblical exegesis in the key marriage passages (Gen 2:18-3:21; Eph 5:22-33; 1 Pet 3:1-7) in chapter 2. We were created "to glorify God and enjoy him forever."¹⁰ To this end, the matter of first importance is believing by faith and receiving by grace the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Cor 15:3-4). Therefore marriage, which is presented in Scripture as a primary picture of the gospel, provides a significant opportunity to glorify God by demonstrating the gospel. The integrity of marriage matters for the gospel witness of our church in our community and the world. Marriage at its root is a gospel issue in the life of the church. Strengthening

¹⁰ "The Westminster Shorter Catechism," Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, accessed January 29, 2024, https://prts.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Shorter_Catechism.pdf/.

marriage will contribute to the strength of our gospel witness.

Second, this project deepened my conviction of the sufficiency of Scripture (2 Tim 3:15-17). There is an overabundance of marriage conferences, books, articles, and websites that present perspectives on marriage. Much of this material is comprised of human wisdom and ideas for marriage often presented in a behavioristic or romanticized way. The Scriptures are sufficient for marriage, providing the God-designed vision for marriage (Gen 2:23-25) and the principles needed for a healthy relationship. The Scriptures must be our guide for assisting couples in their marriage. In light of the general challenges to the sufficiency of Scripture in teaching on marriage, it is critical to regularly address this important doctrine in teaching and preaching. We must mentor couples to be anchored to Scripture while facing the joys and challenges of life together. God's Word is sufficient, so it must be central to our lives.

Third, the health of marriages directly correlates to the progressive sanctification of individuals (2 Pet 3:18). The impact of sin and its corresponding fruit (words, attitudes, and behaviors) has a devastating effect on marriage. We must prioritize teaching on growth in Christ-likeness and the ordinary means of grace in the life of the individual (Scripture reading, prayer, worship, etc.). These spiritual disciplines contribute to the ongoing health and growth of marriage. As God reveals our sin to us it must be met with repentance, forgiveness, and restoration, so these must be a heavily weighted part of our teaching on marriage.

Fourth, life-on-life ministry is essential for our spiritual growth and maturity. As we walk through life we are "always a rookie" in some area of our lives and must welcome the investment of others in the body of Christ. The model in Titus 2 for older investing in younger must be taught, encouraged, and nurtured in the life of the church. Biblical wisdom teaches that it is better to learn from someone else's experience rather than our own (Prov 21:11; 29:1). We must continue to contribute to a culture of

discipleship where the experiences of life are shared in a meaningful way between older and younger.

Personal Reflections

The journey from contextualized writing seminar to this completed project was fraught with unforeseen ministry challenges and life changes. In 2019, I was encouraged by our teaching elder to consider pursuing a Doctor of Ministry degree. Though I was favorable to the idea, I had many reasons for why it would be difficult to begin another degree at that time. The counsel I received indicated that there will never be a convenient time and that there was wisdom in pursuing a DMin both personally and professionally. That counsel proved to be true in a number of ways.

The onset and subsequent challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic brought an intensity to ministry not experienced before. At the same time as the pandemic, our church entered a season of unprecedented transition which brought a significant increase in ministry responsibilities and pressure. At the close of these challenges God saw fit to move our family from Pennsylvania to Wisconsin. This pressure and change came in the midst of my DMin program and project. I have been learning by experience the faithfulness of God to sustain under pressure (Jas 1:2-5) and the grace of God to enable a life of faith (Heb 4:16).

The personal and mostly private pressure of laboring in study and writing has revealed my weakness to entrust trouble to the Lord. Along this journey I have considered giving up on my studies, questioned God's purposes for ministry change, and struggled with life-ministry-school balance. The Lord has remained faithful through everything and used this season to bring maturity to my life and ministry. Both the rigors of the study and the relentlessness of pressure have been sovereignly used by God to produce necessary change in my life.

The intense focus on marriage over this last season has revealed the needs in

my own marriage. As I read, wrote, and trained on marriage mentorship I was regularly convicted of the need for growth and change in my own marriage. One of these areas is communication in marriage. The pace of life and urgency of the moment often keep me from effective communication with my wife beyond the details of life. I need to grow in communicating on the heart level rather than the logistics level in my own marriage. A critical area of communication growth is prayer with my wife. This needs to increase in both quantity and quality.

This project has been the catalyst for growth in my skill as a pastor and counselor. My patience has grown in marriage counseling, understanding more of the trauma that afflicts relationships and the necessary patience to walk alongside other's lives. This project has provided an opportunity to deepen my understanding and ability to apply Scripture within a marriage context. I have become more aware of how much marriage counsel in our culture, even our evangelical culture, comes outside of the Scriptures, and the need for intentionally directing a couple back to Scripture as their continual guide.

Finally, this project has stretched my capacity to read. The accountability of classes and research revealed the importance of staying current in reading for continued growth and equipping for ministry. I need to set a reading plan and agenda for the rhythms of my week. The labor of staying current in reading is worth the fruit of sharpness for ministry and longevity in ministry.

Conclusion

The conclusion of this project is just the beginning of opportunity for marriage investment at Lakewood Baptist Church. The purpose of this project was to develop a marriage mentorship ministry, and by God's grace this endeavor has come to fruition at Lakewood. This project has taught me the importance of equipping members for ministry and the significant labor ahead in equipping marriage mentors. Lakewood has benefited

from the fruit of this project and will continue to experience a harvest from the labors of those being raised up to minister. May God continue to bless Lakewood with spiritual opportunity, faithful shepherds, and equipped members for the sake of His name among all peoples until Jesus returns.

APPENDIX 1
MARRIED COUPLES SURVEY¹

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure your knowledge, wisdom, and experience concerning marital problems and issues. Jordan Clark is conducting this research for purposes of evaluating marital mentoring for doctoral research. In this research, you will be asked to answer questions about your level of experience and knowledge of 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 and survey you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

1. Which spouse are you? (circle one) Husband or Wife
2. How many years have you been married? _____
3. Have you received marriage mentorship or counseling? _____
4. If the answer to #3 is yes,
 - Was this biblically based counseling/mentoring? _____
 - Was it before marriage, during marriage, or both? _____
 - How long did you participate? _____
 - Did you find it helpful? _____
5. Do you believe that marriage mentorship or counseling would be helpful for your marriage?

¹ Portions of this survey 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), 106–10.

6. What do you consider the most common marital issues or problems that you perceive need to be addressed in marriage mentorship?

Please rank in order of importance (1 as the most important, 10 as the least important) the most common causes of marital trouble in your opinion.

- ___ Finances
- ___ Intimacy (sex, adultery, pornography, etc.)
- ___ Communication
- ___ Parenting
- ___ Family Issues (including in-laws and immediate family)
- ___ Conflict resolution
- ___ Biblical roles (both submission by wife and headship by husband)
- ___ Expectations for marriage
- ___ Forgiveness
- ___ Priorities of Family/Home (educational choice, career, goals for children)
- ___ Other _____

7. What do you believe to be the greatest reason that marriages struggle that must be included in marriage mentorship?

APPENDIX 2
EXPERT PANEL CURRICULUM EVALUATION¹

The following rubric was given to three expert panel members. The expert panel was comprised of three pastors who practice marriage counseling and have been in ministry for greater than ten years. The rubric evaluated the marriage mentorship curriculum in the following areas: integration of Scripture, the comprehensiveness of the curriculum, and the practicality of the training.

¹ Portions of this evaluation were adapted from Jeremy Earl Conn, “Developing a Marriage Mentoring Training Program at Inter-City Baptist Church in Allen Park, Michigan” (DMin project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2020), 95-97.

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 couple successfully.					

Other Comments:

APPENDIX 3

PRE-TRAINING MENTORING ASSESSMENT¹

The following rubric was given to the participants in the marriage mentorship training prior to training. The rubric evaluated was administered pre-training and provided data for knowledge and confidence relating to marriage mentorship.

¹ Portions of this assessment were adapted from Jeremy Earl Conn, “Developing a Marriage Mentoring Training Program at Inter-City Baptist Church in Allen Park, Michigan” (DMin project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2020), 100-10, and also 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.

Agreement to Participate

This research is designed to measure your current level of knowledge regarding your perspective and practices of marriage mentoring. Jordan Clark is conducting this assessment 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 are asked to supply your full birthdate as an ID (example: 08021972). Participation in this study is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. By your completion of this questionnaire and giving your birthdate 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 another couples' marital issues. | SD D DS AS A SA |
| 2. Marriage mentoring is a needed ministry at Lakewood. | SD D DS AS A SA |
| 3. I understand and can explain how marriage mentoring advances Lakewood's philosophy of ministry. | SD D DS AS A SA |
| 4. I understand and can explain specific Christ-like traits that should characterize a 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 couple. **SD D DS AS A SA**
9. I understand and can explain the biblical principles of communication in marriage to a couple. **SD D DS AS A SA**
10. I can identify and explain the biblical principles for becoming financially and emotionally independent from parents to a couple. **SD D DS AS A SA**
11. I understand and can explain the biblical principles of conflict resolution in marriage to a couple. **SD D DS AS A SA**
12. I understand and can explain the biblical principles of forgiveness in marriage to a couple. **SD D DS AS A SA**
13. I understand and can explain the biblical principles for the role of a husband to a couple. **SD D DS AS A SA**
14. I understand and can explain the biblical principles for the role of a wife to a couple. **SD D DS AS A SA**

- | | |
|--|------------------------|
| 15. I understand and can explain the biblical principles for expectations in marriage to a 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 S |
| 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 couple needs help beyond my ministry of mentorship with a 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 Lakewood Baptist Church. | SD D DS AS A SA |

APPENDIX 4
PRE-TRAINING MENTORING
ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Table A1. Pre-Mentoring couple assessment results

ID #	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey	Possible Score
01281991	86	94	126
12031990	88	111	126
08271989	102	106	126
04091989	65	84	126
11121987	94	105	126
02131986	77	110	126
06071983	77	100	126
03031982	88	105	126
05251980	91	121	126
07111979	89	121	126
04111979	102	121	126
12281978	99	123	126
07141968	82	106	126
03211968	69	89	126
02291968	72	103	126
02091966	95	105	126
02061956	65	105	126
11111954	40	99	126
Total	1481	1908	2268

APPENDIX 5
POST-TRAINING MENTORING ASSESSMENT¹

The following rubric was given to the participants in the marriage mentorship training. The rubric was administered post-training and provided data for knowledge and confidence relating to marriage mentorship.

¹ Portions of this assessment were adapted from Jeremy Earl Conn, “Developing a Marriage Mentoring Training Program at Inter-City Baptist Church in Allen Park, Michigan” (DMin project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2020), 100-10, and also 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.

Agreement to Participate

This research is designed to measure your current level of knowledge regarding your perspective and practices of marriage mentoring. Jordan Clark is conducting this assessment 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 are asked to supply your full birthdate as an ID (example: 08021972). Participation in this study is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. By your completion of this questionnaire and giving your birthdate 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 another couples' marital issues. | SD D DS AS A SA |
| 2. Marriage mentoring is a needed ministry at Lakewood. | SD D DS AS A SA |
| 3. I understand and can explain how marriage mentoring advances Lakewood's philosophy of ministry. | SD D DS AS A SA |
| 4. I understand and can explain specific Christlike traits that should characterize a 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 couple. **SD D DS AS A SA**
9. I understand and can explain the biblical principles of communication in marriage to a couple. **SD D DS AS A SA**
10. I can identify and explain the biblical principles for becoming financially and emotionally independent from parents to a couple. **SD D DS AS A SA**
11. I understand and can explain the biblical principles of conflict resolution in marriage to a couple. **SD D DS AS A SA**
12. I understand and can explain the biblical principles of forgiveness in marriage to a couple. **SD D DS AS A SA**
13. I understand and can explain the biblical principles for the role of a husband to a couple. **SD D DS AS A SA**
14. I understand and can explain the biblical principles for the role of a wife to a couple. **SD D DS AS A SA**

- | | |
|--|------------------------|
| 15. I understand and can explain the biblical principles for expectations in marriage to a 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 couple needs help beyond my ministry of mentorship with a 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 Lakewood Baptist Church. | SD D DS AS A SA |

APPENDIX 6
 POST-TRAINING MENTORING
 ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Table A2. Post-Mentoring couple assessment results

ID #	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey	Possible Score
04091989	65	84	126
01281991	86	94	126
11121987	94	105	126
11111954	40	99	126
02061956	65	105	126
07141968	82	106	126
02291968	72	103	126
05251980	91	121	126
07111979	89	121	126
03031982	88	105	126
06071983	77	100	126
02091966	95	105	126
03211968	69	89	126
12281978	99	123	126
04111979	102	121	126
12031990	88	111	126
02131986	77	110	126
08271989	102	106	126
Total	1481	1908	2268

APPENDIX 7
TRAINING MATERIAL

This appendix contains the training material that was utilized during the training. These notes were evaluated by my expert panel and include edits in consideration of their feedback.

Training Introduction
The Biblical and Philosophical Basis for Marriage Mentorship.

Lakewood Mission Statement: GROWING PEOPLE THROUGH GOD’S WORD.

Lakewood Purpose Statement: The ultimate purpose of Lakewood Baptist Church is to glorify God. To accomplish this purpose, the church is committed to the work of the Great Commission — making and maturing disciples of Jesus. For these ends, the church will diligently engage in evangelism (seeking the salvation of the lost through the preaching of the Gospel and personal witness), **edification (strengthening believers through the preaching and teaching of God’s Word)**, regular prayer (expressing our corporate dependence on God and seeking His strength), **fellowship (the mutual care of believers in the context of biblically loving relationships)**, and worship (extolling the greatness and goodness of God both corporately in regular public services and personally in individual spiritual service).

How does marriage mentorship accomplish our goals as a church? (Ephesians 4)

1. Marriage mentorship advances our goal of glorifying God. (1 Cor 10:31)
2. Marriage mentorship advances our **Great Commission** mandate by **maturing disciples**. (Matt 28)
 - a. This strengthens believers by **edifying/equipping**. (Heb 3:12-13; Col 3:15-16)
 - b. This strengthens believers through **mutual care**. (Rom 12:9-18; John 15:12-13; Heb 10:24)
 - c. This strengthens believers **worship** (life of obedience). (Eph 4:15-16 James 1:22-25)
3. Marriage mentorship grows people through God’s Word. (Col 1:5-8)
4. Marriage mentorship flows out of our core value of **discipleship**. (2 Tim 2:1-2; Luke 9:23-24; John 13:34-35; Col 1:28-29)

Training 2
The Biblical and Philosophical Basis for Marriage Mentorship.
(continued)

What is marriage mentorship?

First, let's talk about mentorship.

Biblical counseling “is the Christ-like, caring, person-to-person ministry of God’s Word to people struggling with personal and interpersonal problems to help them know and follow Jesus Christ in heart and behavior amid their struggles.”¹

Marriage mentorship - “A happy, growing, experienced couple coaching a younger couple toward growth in their marriage through sharing their wisdom and experience, through encouraging and challenging them to live according to biblical teaching, and through building a supportive relationship with them.”²

Mentorship is pervasive in **organizational culture**.

The concept of mentoring looms large in community and corporate culture, ranging from Little League teams to Fortune 500 companies. Consider some significant iterations of mentorship historically in culture, Freddie Laker mentored Richard Branson, Aristotle mentored Alexander the Great, Bach mentored Mozart, LeBron James mentored Kobe Bryant, and the list could continue.³

Mentorship is patterned in **Scripture**.

The Scriptures are replete with examples of mentorship relationships. Some significant examples include the mentoring of Elisha by Elijah, Joshua by Moses, Samuel by Eli, Paul by Barnabas, and Timothy by Paul.

- It is the pattern for **family** discipleship. (Deut 6)

The practice of mentorship shapes the injunction to the family and community in Deuteronomy 6 for passing on the truth from one generation to another.

- It was the practice of **Jesus** (Mark 3:14; Luke 24:13–35; Acts 4:13).

¹ Robert D. Jones, Kristin L. Kellen, and Rob Green, *The Gospel for Disordered Lives: An Introduction to Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2021), 20.

² James Patrick Curtis, Jr., “A Marriage Mentor Program for the Local Church” (DMin project, Western Seminary, 2004), 183.

³ Catherine McLaughlin, “Mentoring: What Is It? How Do We Do It and How Do We Get More of It?” *Health Services Research*, 45:3 (June 2010): 872.

- It was the experience and teaching of **Paul** (Acts 22:3; Acts 11:25-26; Acts 13; 2 Tim 2:2)
 - Paul states in 1 Corinthians 11:1 “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.”
 - Paul had experienced mentoring from Barnabas, which was a critical investment in his life.
- It is the pattern for **New Testament** discipleship.
 - Discipleship seeks to fulfill the command in Matthew 28:19-20 to “make disciples” by teaching them to learn and obey the whole of Scripture. The practice of mentoring is a strategy for discipleship, focusing on the passing of specific life principles through life on life interaction.
 - The model and mission set for the New Testament church was one of discipleship or mentoring others toward Christ-likeness, and obedience.

Mentorship is a powerful **tool**.

- Mentorship exists at the crossroads of **instruction** and **modeling**.
 - “Six out of ten believers have no sense of what they want to achieve or become.”¹
- Mentorship requires two individuals, or sets of individuals, one of whom has **wisdom** and **experience**, and one who desires to **learn**.
 - The **mentor and mentoree must be drawn to each other** to some degree. If either side is not genuinely interested in the other, true mentoring will never take place. Along with this attractiveness, the **mentoree must be willing and ready to learn from the mentor**. Without a responsive attitude and a receptive spirit on the part of the mentoree, little genuine mentoring can occur.²

¹ George Barna, *Growing True Disciples* (Colorado Springs: Waterbrook Press, 2001), 36.

² Les Parrott and Leslie L. Parrott, *The Complete Guide to Marriage Mentoring: Connecting Couples to Build Better Marriages* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 29.

- The mentor relationship develops **organically** and **voluntarily** because the mentor seeks an impact and the mentee seeks to be impacted.
 - It provides long-term guidance and focused involvement through the stages of life.
 - A mentoring relationship usually involves a relationship that extends from older to younger, a purposeful investment in the next generation.
- Being a mentor requires **transparency** and **risk** as life details, both good and bad, are shared with others.
 - “You get dirty mentoring people. They bring real issues to the table. And those issues require mentors to get personal, transparent, and exposed.”¹
 - The mentor cultivates the relationship, commits to the investment, communicates wisdom and experience, and cares deeply.
- Mentoring involves both **formal** and **informal** personal investment.
 - Skill in living passes through not only instruction and coaching, but also through the patterns of life observed by the mentee.
- The life-on-life process of mentorship aims to **share** and **show** Christ in **practical** and **persistent** ways.
 - A mentee opens their life up to a mentor, knowing that they need the life experience and wisdom that a Christ-centered, traveled life provides.

Mentorship involves applying similar **principles** and **practices** of counseling.

“Biblical counseling carries the gracious message of a gracious Savior. Counselors faithful to that message and Savior must embody the methods that correspond to the message.

- An honest and gentle curiosity probes the reality of another's life.

¹ Regi Campbell and Richard Chancy, *Mentor Like Jesus* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2009), 19.

- Loving candor speaks up truly, frankly, personally, and helpfully.
- Humility is willing to learn, to admit ignorance and fault.
- Boldness does and says what is needed.
- Dependency upon God prays through one's own sins and troubles as the context for speaking into others'.
- Wisdom takes a person's welfare to heart, and considers timing, tone of voice, choice of words, the needs of this moment.
- Gentleness breathes a respectful tenderheartedness for people in their struggles.
- Authority presents the words and calling of God himself, his promises and his commands.
- Kindness demonstrates constructive intention.
- Realism does not shrink from the ugly, painful, and evil.
- Persistence holds on, willing to come back to what matters.
- Courage is not intimidated, distracted, or driven to please.
- Flexibility adapts to the ever-changing conditions of people's lives.
- Generosity is self-giving, willing to enter another's sins and sorrows, willing to make his struggles and concerns one's own.
- Shepherdly pursuit initiates relationship, rather than waiting for those who ask for help.
- Patience is the first word on love for good reason, because lives are always flawed, troubles never cease, and no one's life is ever all better.”¹

*Second, let's talk about **marriage** mentorship.*

- The church shares in the **trauma** of the surrounding **culture**.
 - “For the first time in its history, Western civilization is confronted with the need to define the meaning of the terms *marriage* and *family*. The Judeo-Christian view of marriage and the family with its roots in the Hebrew Scriptures has to a significant extent been replaced with a set of values that prizes

¹ David Powlison, *Speaking Truth in Love* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2005), 46-47.

human rights, self-fulfillment, and pragmatic utility on an individual and societal level.”¹

- The climbing divorce rates, aggressive sexual revolution, rising gender confusion, and ongoing cultural enslavement to pornography, sow confusion and have detrimental effects on lives and marriages.
- The likelihood that a couple received quality biblical **pre-marriage counseling** has diminished.
 - “Americans receive education and training before receiving a driver’s license. Yet when those same people seek a marriage license, relatively few of them receive education about how to establish a successful marriage.”²
- Many couples become believers **after** marriage and need to grow in their **understanding** and **practice** of biblical marriage.
 - Marriage mentorship, as an extension of the discipleship ministry of a church, provides biblical care for healthy marriages.
 - “In the West, the church has flourished when it comes to *impressing people from a distance*, but has failed when it comes to *impacting them close up*.”³
- The mentorship model extends marriage **investment** beyond formal pre-marriage counseling and that extends into the continuing marriage **experience**.
 - Marriage mentors must be grounded in scripture and its teaching on marriage, rather than filled with the secular and popular ideas and teaching on marriage.

¹ Andreas J. Köstenberger and David W. Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 15.

² “Premarital counseling can decrease divorce rates, psychologist says,” The Daily Universe, last modified July 6, 2017, <https://universe.byu.edu/2017/07/06/premarital-counseling-can-decrease-divorce-rates-psychologist-says/>.

³ Dale Losch, *A Better Way: Make Disciples Wherever Life Happens* (Kansas City, MO: Crossworld, 2012), 29.

- “In order to facilitate our spiritual growth and maturation, God, by His grace, has provided a system of accountability that begins with a discipler, a believer whom He has called into our lives to shape and sharpen us into a true disciple of Christ.”¹
- When a marriage mentor speaks into the struggle of a younger couple, they are acting in a spiritually forming and protective way. This call back to following Christ in obedience in marriage functions to protect those believers and that marriage from becoming a corrective discipline issue, such as betrayal or divorce.

*What are the basic building blocks of a **healthy** marriage?*

1. Mutual commitment to God’s glory (pursuing life in Christ)
2. Keeping Christ at the **center** of the marriage and familial relationships (Col 3:18-19).

“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.”²

3. Sacrificial **love** in action.
(1 Cor 13; John 15:13; Matt 22:39)
4. Faithfulness to biblical **roles** and **responsibilities**
(Gen 2; Eph 5; 1 Pet 3; Titus 2).
5. Christ honoring **communication**
(Eph 5).
6. Gospel-motivated **conflict resolution**, **forgiveness** and **restoration**.
(Matt 18; Eph 4:32)

¹ Robert Brantley and Astra Brantley, “The Grace of God’s Accountability,” *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 17, no. 1 (1999): 46.

² Dave Harvey, *When Sinners Say “I Do”: Discovering the Power of the Gospel for Marriage* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 2007), 25.

Training 3 Biblical Mentorship Principles – Titus 2:1-8

The book of Titus is about godly leadership that effectively teaches and models living as a fully devoted follower of Jesus. This leadership extends beyond the ministry of elders (1:5-16) to the discipleship between believers in the church (2:1-8). The gospel transfers through teaching, but also comes through modeling everyday application in practical obedience.

This passage contains four distinct sections addressing older men (2), older women (3), younger woman (4-5), and younger men (6-8). The verbs that shape the passage are “teach,” “train,” and “urge.” These commands shape the culture of discipleship that Paul is advocating between older and younger in the church.

- Paul instructs Titus to “teach” (v.1). He is to speak and live in ways that are consistent with the truth of the gospel, equipping mature members of the congregation to speak and live according to the same rule of faith.
 - Titus, as the ministry leader, invests in mature mentors who are able to participate in the lives of younger believers. (2:1)
- The instructions in or the older provides an example by which mentors (older men and women) minister into the lives of mentees (younger men and women). (2:2-3)
 - In antiquity the lifespan was often shorter, estimated between twenty-five or thirty years.¹ There were always exceptions to average lifespans, and some surmise that “older” refers to “at least somewhere upward of forty years old, possibly into their fifties or sixties.”²
 - It would seem appropriate to consider that the old and young are in reference to experience relative to one another rather than to a season of life.³

¹ Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018), 509.

² Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2006), 720.

³ William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 46 (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 408.

- Paul begins with practical instructions to mentors as they live with spiritual maturity and leadership within the community of faith.¹
 - “older men”
 - “sober-minded” - living life with a clear mind and with good judgment.²
 - “dignified” - worthy of respect
 - “self-controlled” - prudent
 - “sound” in “faith,” “love,” and “steadfastness” - matters of character and competency
 - “older women.”
 - “reverent” in their behavior
 - The conduct of their lives is an “outward expression of an inner character.”³
 - They are not to be “slanderers” or accusers who speak maliciously against others.⁴
 - They are not to be under a negative controlling influence, referred to as “slaves to much wine.”
 - “They are to teach what is good, and so train.” - The passage further develops a life-on-life ministry emphasis.
 - Practice
 - They are “to teach what is good,” which is discipleship among believers within the congregation.

¹ Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 511.

² Thomas Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 34 (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference), 297.

³ Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 299.

⁴ Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 511.

- This teaching is not incidental or momentary, but a purposeful and continual practice of encouraging, urging, and advising within the body of believers for spiritual benefit.
- Content
 - Instructions for younger women
 - they are “to love their husbands and children.”
 - Paul is urging “strong, godly, and selfless relationships leading to vibrant marriages.”¹
 - they are “to be self-controlled”
 - the nuance here is “restraint of passions and urges that might jeopardize fidelity to her husband.”²
 - they are to be “pure”
 - above reproach morally, particularly in marital devotion.³
 - they are to be “working at home,”
 - diligent household managers.⁴
 - their reputation should be as one who is “kind”
 - one who treats other kindly.⁵
 - they are to be “submissive to their own husbands.”
 - The term used for “submissive” is a present middle participle, denoting a voluntary choice to place themselves under the leadership of their husbands.

¹ Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 514.

² Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 726.

³ Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 300.

⁴ George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, *The New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), 308.

⁵ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 412.

- Instructions for younger men
 - “to be self-controlled”
 - the young men “in all respects” should be “possessing mental and emotional composure, not being distracted; not impulsive but focused.”¹
 - “to be a model of good works.”
 - an example of obedience, an echo of Paul’s instructions to Timothy to “Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in faith, in purity” (1 Tim 4:12)
 - message - “teaching”
 - “integrity”
 - “dignity”
 - “sound speech”
 - “Paul tells Titus that as he teaches, he must maintain purity of motive and a dignity in his behavior,”²
 - Life
 - “cannot be condemned”
 - “put to shame”
 - accused of “evil”
 - “Titus is to be a mold into which others can be impressed and therefore bear a likeness to him.”³
- Mentorship **Principles** (Titus 2:1-8)
 - Intentional **Teaching**.
 - It is the responsibility of leaders in the church to intentionally teach good theology and good practice. The older or mature believers must

¹ Yarborough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 520.

² Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 413.

³ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 413.

be taught to invest in younger or inexperienced believers. It is easy for older believers to criticize or isolate themselves from the younger or less mature believers in the congregation. The content passed between generations includes proper beliefs, proper authority, and practical life choices. Personal discipleship strengthens marriages, develops parents, and shapes lives. This life-on-life ministry is essential to the health of the local church.

- Intentional **Modeling**.
 - The New Testament is replete with directives for leaders and teachers to model the truth (Rom 6:17; Phil 3:17; 1 Thess 1:7; 1 Tim 4:12). Paul's clear and direct instructions in Titus 2:1-8 provide a framework for inter-generational mentorship. Experienced mentors open their lives intentionally to mentees, sharing their lives through words, actions, and practical obedience. The spheres of modeling range from character and deportment to marriage and parenting. It is essential that biblical beliefs translate into day-to-day practical obedience. A commitment to mentorship from older to younger produces growth and stability in the local church.

- Intentional **Obedience**.
 - Mentoring requires intentional obedience. Effective mentorship depends upon mature and experienced believers who are committed to following Jesus in obedience. Paul starts by challenging the older men and women to obedience, and addressing their spiritual needs. The spiritual heritage and life experience of the older generation is a stewardship. God expects that they invest this deposit of truth and wisdom into younger believers with intentionality.

The Scripture calls us to invest in the lives of others. The patterns throughout Scripture demonstrate life-on-life ministry that is patient, loving, truth-filled, and intentional. This mentorship is essential for a young couple recently married, or recently coming to faith in Christ. A mature and older couple can invest the truths and principles for marriage in a personal and practical way. Mentorship in the life of a young couple has an incredible impact, establishes a trusting relationship for counsel, and lays a foundation for a stable and healthy marriage.

Training 4 Foundational Mentorship Values

- **Inspiration** of Scripture (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:19-21; 2 Pet 3:18)
 - **Sufficiency** – provides everything we need to know how to please, glorify, and represent God in the world.
 - A right relationship with God.
 - Know God and share Him with others.
 - From-the-heart, God-shaped obedience.
 - Wisdom toward sin (ours, others, and generally) and suffering (perspective and perseverance).
 - **Authority** – The Scripture is authoritative for all of the human experience.
 - Not suggestions – but decrees for how to live as God designed.
- Heart **Transformation**
 - The goal of mentorship is not outward **conformity** but heart **change**.
 - **Ezekiel 36:26**—And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.
 - **Joel 2:12-13** "Yet even now," declares the LORD, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments." Return to the LORD, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster.
 - This is possible because of the **gospel** and the **indwelling** of the Holy Spirit.
 - **2 Corinthians 3:18** But we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.
 - **Romans 12:2** Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.
 - Change is not a quick **fix**...takes **time**...and is **lifelong**.

- **Philippians 1:6** And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.
- **Bridge of Relationship** – this is not a clinical relationship, but a genuine relationship. Nurturing a close relationship requires building and strengthening a bridge to the couple. This requires collecting and sharpening the tools in your relationship toolbox.
 - **Prayerful**
 - **James 1:5** If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.
 - **Hebrews 4:16** Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.
 - **1 Timothy 2:1** First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people,
 - **Humble**
 - **2 Corinthians 3:4-5** Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God.
 - **2 Corinthians 4:7** But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.
 - **Transparent**
 - **2 Corinthians 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 of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.
 - Share your story; but don't make yourself the trophy.
 - Be honest about your failures
 - Be diligent to share wisdom.

- **Listening**

- **James 1:19** Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger;
- Work toward a safe atmosphere that sets them at ease.
 - **Proverbs 20:5** The purpose in a man's heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out.
- Assure them of your confidentiality
 - **Proverbs 16:28** A dishonest man spreads strife, and a whisperer separates close friends.
 - “I will share this with only those who are a part of the problem or solution.”
- Don't be shocked.
 - **Proverbs 17:27** Whoever restrains his words has knowledge, and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding.
- Don't respond emotionally or before you adequately listen.
 - **Proverbs 29:11** A fool gives full vent to his spirit, but a wise man quietly holds it back.
- Don't ignore what they are saying to think of what you will say next
 - **Proverbs 18:13** If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame.
 - **Proverbs 18:2** A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion.

- **Good Questions**

- Open ended questions
 - Who, what, where, when, how?
 - Knowledge questions. (details)
 - Reasoning questions. (understand)

- Directive questions (issues to consider)
 - Avoid accusations, but probe with questions.
 - Ask questions of affirmation (“am I understanding you correctly?”; “are you saying...?”)
 - Ask for the other spouses’ perspective.
- **Cross-Cultural Relationship**
 - Sensitivity must be given to the potential generational gap between you and the younger couple. It is vital that you are careful and diligent to share wisdom in issues of conscience, and provide teaching in areas of clear command.
- **Romans 14:5-8** One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God. For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.

Training 5
Foundations of Marriage
Genesis 2:7-3:24

1. God sovereignly **planned** the marriage relationship for humankind in the masterpiece of creation (Gen 1:26-31).
2. God graciously **provided** marriage as a gift.
 - The image of God provided Adam and Eve the capacity for deep and genuine relationships with God and with one another in the first marriage relationship. (2:7)
 - God provided a place (Eden) as a place fellowship with God as the center of their lives. (Gen 2:8-9;15)
 - The word “Eden” “should be associated with the Hebrew word for ‘pleasure’ or ‘delight.’”¹
 - This provision of God in “the tree of life” (Gen 2:9) grew in the “middle” of the garden. This abundant garden was a sign of God’s blessing and presence in Eden.²
 - The beautiful and plentiful provision of God (Gen 2:10-14) came with a stewardship of its cultivation (Gen 2:15).

*Adam and eventually Eve will come to the realization that they are not the center of the universe and that the provision of God provides the opportunity to fellowship with God.*³

- Adam was without a complementary **partner**.
 - It is important to note the significance of God’s declaration in Genesis 2:18 concerning the aloneness of Adam. God emphatically said concerning all of His creation “behold, it was very good,” but in a sudden turn, the absence of a companion for Adam was declared “not good.” God was not surprised by this situation or need, but it provided

¹ Bill T. Arnold, *Encountering the Book of Genesis*, Encountering Biblical Studies (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003), 33.

² Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 1 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 61.

³ Arnold, *Encountering the Book of Genesis*, 34.

the opportunity for Adam to recognize the special and personal provision of God.

- God provided a “fitting helper” for Adam as he accomplished God’s good purposes in the garden. (Gen 2:18)
 - The Hebrew word “helper” indicates a function “to honor his vocation, to share his enjoyment, and to respect the prohibition.”¹
 - It is used in the Old Testament to describe aid or support, specifically God’s protective care (Ps 121:1-2) and supportive care (Exod 18:4).
- This special provision for Adam was “built” by God, as distinct from all other living creatures, made of the same substance and endowed with the same capacity for a relationship of intimacy and harmony.
- God provided an opportunity for human **companionship** and **intimacy**.
 - The first and only words of a human being in the creation narrative are “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.”²
 - This exuberant expectation comes from the recognition of the complementary match, relational closeness, and mutual commitment that was initiated by the creation of the woman.
 - Adam received this provision from God - a choice that would bear the fruit of intimacy.

The woman is created as God’s special provision for Adam, designed to complement him as a companion and participate in the plan of God.

3. God designed a **purpose** and **pattern** for marriage. (Gen 2:24-25)

¹ Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 88.

² Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapter 1-17*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 179.

- Jesus uses this text to defend the monogamous lifetime commitment divinely intended for marriage.
- Paul uses this text to provide instruction on marriage and to illustrate the relationship of Christ to the church (Eph 5:31), and also in regard to the threat of immorality to marriage and the testimony of the church (1 Cor 6:16).
- **Leave**
 - This does not mean...
 - Abandoning or forsaking your parents

1 Timothy 5:8 But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

- Not always, but preferably “geographical” leaving
- This does mean...
 - Your relationship to your parents must transition from a dependent child to an adult relationship.
 - You become dependent on one another for needs that parents once provided.
 - physical needs
 - emotional needs
 - spiritual needs
 - You must deal with unresolved issues in your parent relationship, or you will be held captive to that relationship.
 - You must not attempt to change your spouse based upon your parent’s expectations...the expectations are from God and your spouse.
 - The marriage relationship is the priority relationship...above all others.

- The spouse replaces the parents as the primary source of encouragement, advice, comfort, and support.

- **Cleave**

- The word “flesh” (בָּשָׂר) used in Genesis 2:24 is also used to describe the creation of Eve from the “flesh” of Adam. This relationship becomes like a blood relation in closeness and connection. The coherence of the marriage relationship extends to the most basic realities of life, with the result that intimacy is characteristic of every aspect of life.
- Despite being “naked” (Gen 2:25), they were not “ashamed.” The vulnerability and openness shared between Adam and Eve was without shame and without barriers in trust and confidence.
- This does not mean...
 - That other relationships are excluded.
- This does mean...
 - This is permanent.

Mark 10:7-9 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

- That the marriage vows are to be remembered and kept in “real time.”
- That feelings are not the glue, but commitment (truth) and choice (grace).

- **Weave**

- This does not mean...
 - marriage is equal to “legal” sex
- This does mean...
 - **Physically** becoming one.

Hebrews 13:4 ⁴ Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.

- **Spiritually** becoming one.
 - 1+1=1, this is the establishment of a whole new reality.
 - It is no longer “mine,” it is “ours.”
 - Abandoning singular goals for together goals...a new identity together.
 - It is the combined strength and weakness into a unique and special “oneness.”
- It will take **work!**
 - Selfishness
 - Pride
 - Fear
 - Communication (honesty, forgiveness)
- The challenge to this vision for marriage – our **sin** problem. (Gen 3:1-24)
 - The relational harmony of marriage God designed was upended by the curse of sin.
 - The most acute marital impact comes in Genesis 3:16 when God declares, “Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.”
 - The word “desire” occurs in two other places in Scripture (Gen 4:7; Song 7:10).
 - John Collins describes, the word “desire” “has the sense ‘craving,’ with the context telling us what kind of craving is in view.”¹ The word “desire” occurs in two other places in Scripture (Gen 4:7; Song 7:10). The closest context in Genesis 4:7 contains God’s warning to Cain about the desire of sin and

¹ C. John Collins, *Genesis 1-4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2006), 160.

his prescribed response. This context contains the same parallel with the word “rule” that occurs in Genesis 3:16.

- This is competition for **control**.
 - The relational harmony and marital roles God designed were upended by the curse of sin. The curse of sin brought conflict for dominance, but rather than be commandeered by his wife, the husband must seek effective and loving leadership.

Summary

God’s perfect character. The authority and centrality of God permeates every part of creation, and specifically man and woman. The purpose of all creation is the glory of God. All creation declares the glory of God (Ps 19:1). In every aspect, this new creation reflects the character of God in greatness and goodness. The authority and centrality of God is evident, and must characterize the marriage relationship. The horizontal human relationship that God created has a greater and essential vertical relationship. The spiritual health of each individual has a direct impact on the spouse. This newly established marriage brought a unified and meaningful relationship with God at the center. A husband and wife must live in mutual submission to God in every aspect of life. The health of a marriage is directly correlated to the rule of Christ in their lives individually and their relationship with God together.

God’s perfect Word. The Word of God is the source of truth and life in marriage. His divine instructions and wisdom provide the nourishment and protection for a healthy marriage. God’s abundant provision comes through His word. These words are essential to successfully living in relationship with God and each other. This stewardship of God’s Word must shape our view of God’s world and all our relationships. The importance of God’s Word cannot be overstated. The words of God were the centerpiece of attack by Satan. The distortion of God’s message and the questioning of God’s integrity fueled temptation. Satan injected doubt about God’s good character and good provision. Lack of clarity and commitment to God’s Word brought confusion, brokenness, and shame to Adam and Eve. The impact of this first sin saturated every aspect of life and relationships. A healthy marriage is committed to the ongoing transformation that comes with heart submission and active obedience to the Word of God. This is essential for life in a broken world as broken individuals.

God’s perfect design. God created man and woman, established their mutual purpose, and declared it “very good” (Gen 1:27-31). God endowed Adam with headship over all creation as the steward of God. This stewardship of God shared by Adam and Eve always took work. The result of sin brought pain and hardship to this labor, but work itself is not a result of the curse. The abundant provision of God came with a corresponding

responsibility. The marriage relationship flows out of the unique design of man and woman. This unity is reflected in the instructions to leave (primacy of this relationship), cleave (nurturing of this relationship), and weave (one flesh binding of this relationship). The marriage is a “one flesh” union that weaves the physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects of personhood. The sexual design for man and woman is an expression of the “one flesh” relationship. It is not only the means to accomplish the commission to “be fruitful and multiply,” but it also brings a deeper and more significant unity connected to spiritual realities of the inner man (1 Cor 6:15-17). Marriage, by God’s design, can be experienced “naked” and “not ashamed” (Gen 2:25). The entrance of sin into hearts resulted in fear and hiding in relationships (Gen 3:7-8). A husband and wife should pursue openness, transparency, and vulnerability. This yields the intimacy that characterized God’s original design.

God’s perfect redemption. The gospel fuels a healthy marriage. The gospel hope for sin’s brokenness is unveiled in the protoevangelium (first gospel) of Genesis 3:15. The crushing blow to the head of Satan came through the perfect obedience and satisfactory death of Jesus Christ. He resurrected from the grave, defeating sin’s power, providing forgiveness, and restoring what sin has broken. The primary tools for marriage are borne out of that same gospel. The most basic tools are repentance and faith, forgiveness and trust, and love and commitment. Marriage as God intended is possible because of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Lord created marriage and provided the necessary resources for healthy marriage. The impact of sin complicates relationships. The gospel and the indwelling Holy Spirit enable obedience, forgiveness, and genuine love. Through Christ, marriage can glorify God and fulfill the purposes for which God designed it.

Training 6
Roles and Responsibilities in a Healthy and Biblical Marriage
Ephesians 5:21-33

Context

This Ephesians passage provides a rich Christ-centered theology of marriage, the longest marriage discussion in the New Testament, and a vibrant picture of biblical marriage with the mutual responsibilities of husbands and wives.

- The responsibility of leadership in the church is to “equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ” (Eph 4:12). This takes specific shape in the context of marriage in Ephesians 5:21-33. The instructions in this passage connect directly back to the main imperative in 5:18 to “be filled with the Spirit.” The control and empowering of the Holy Spirit has specific expression in relationships, particularly the husband/wife relationship. This obedience to the work of the Spirit is an ongoing expression of “walking worthy of your calling” (Eph 4:1) and is the specific curriculum for carrying out the work to “equip the saints” (Eph 4:12). Spirit-filled believers are equipped and empowered to fulfill their responsibility to live blameless in their relationships.¹

We submit to Christ by submitting to the God-ordained **order** of relationships.

The next section in Ephesians 5:22-24 contains specific instructions for wives.

Submission

- It is important to note that Paul gives this instruction to the wives and not to the husbands.
- It is a matter of personal obedience “to the Lord,” rather than an obligation placed over the wife by her husband.
- The statement in Ephesians 5:23, “For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church,” puts the emphasis on the husband’s responsibility as a Christ-like head.
- The submission is to be “in everything.” This extends to an attitude of support, affirmation, and respect for her husband, without controlling him

¹ Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 729.

in certain areas of life.¹

- A wife's submission assumes the godly leadership of a husband. Since submission is first to Christ, biblical submission demands a godly and grace-filled confrontation of sin and abuse of authority (Eph 5:8-11).

The text turns to address the husband in Ephesians 5:25-32.

- **Sacrificial**

- “The example that Christ sets is for a husband to be willing to sacrifice everything for the benefit and well-being of his wife.”²

- **Loving**

- The imperative verb “love” means “to love irrespective of merit, even to the undeserving.”³
- The word used for “hold fast” in Ephesians 5:31 “means ‘to glue, cement,’ as the welding of two metals together.”⁴ In marriage, the husband and wife join in an impenetrable bond. This love encompasses every aspect of their beings – emotional, physical, and spiritual.⁵

- **Servant**

- In a similar way as the husband's headship follows Christ's headship of the church, so Christ's love for His church is the model for the husband.
 - The leadership and love of the husband is as an ambassador of Christ. A husband can follow the example modeled by Christ in His care for the church (Eph 5:26-27) as he seeks to tangibly express the love of Christ toward his wife (Eph 28-29).

¹ Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 383.

² Arnold, *Ephesians*, 383.

³ Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, 747.

⁴ Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, 773.

⁵ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 393.

- This includes investing in the spiritual growth within marriage, cultivating closeness through the Word, and growing together in obedience to Christ.
- **Selfless**
 - The response of love modeled by Christ toward the church, “nourishes” and “cherishes” (Eph 5:29). The terms (care for) and (cherish) describe the nurture and support of the husband for his wife.

This section ends with a summary statement in Ephesians 5:33, speaking directly and personally to husbands and wives as a final appeal.

- Paul restates with emphasis, that the husband is to love his wife as himself.
- The final instruction to wives shifts from submission to “respect,” which means fear, reverence, or respect.

Principles for Marriage Mentorship in Ephesians 5:21-33

Both Following Christ.

The roles and responsibilities for husband and wife taught in Ephesians are all secondary to the rule of Christ in the life of a husband and wife. The filling of the Spirit (5:18) is essential to marriage. The control and transformation of the Spirit is a prerequisite and essential to following Christ in obedience. Christ is central to every instruction to husbands and wives. Submission is always “out of reverence for Christ” (Eph 5:21). A wife submits to her husband, not directly as obedience to him, but “as to the Lord.”

A heart submitted to the authority of Christ is empowered to submit to the authority of God-ordained earthly authorities. It is indispensable for a husband to model the sacrificial heart and actions of Christ (Eph 5:23). A wife’s submission is not predicated on a perfect husband (Eph 5:22; 24), but a husband’s Christ-like leadership encourages submission in marriage (Eph 5:23). The husband looks to Christ for his leadership. The wife is submitting to Christ in her response to her husband. They follow Christ together as “one flesh.”

Principles for the wife.

The instructions given to wives are to submit and show respect to her husband. Both of these directives are counter-cultural in a contemporary context that value female dominance, independence, and individualism. The first area of emphasis for wives is

submission. A wife submits to her husband, not by her husband's compulsion, but as a voluntary act of obedience to Christ. The wife lives within the structure of the marriage relationship, supporting and contributing to the leadership of her husband. As Wayne Mack states, "She is her husband's teammate striving for the same goal. She has ideas, opinions, desires, requests, and insights, and she lovingly makes them known."¹ A wife's submission to her husband does not diminish her value or contribution. Rather, the practice of submission reflects the spiritual health of a wife and her obedience to Christ. The attitude and act of submission is a blessing to a husband and glorifying to the Lord. The second area of emphasis for wives is **respect** or fear. The focus of this reverence is on the position of her husband, as she would reverence the position of Christ in her life. The wife gives respect to the husband due to his God-appointed position of leadership. A husband provides leadership in the marriage relationship; the wife receives that leadership with a spirit of humility before God.

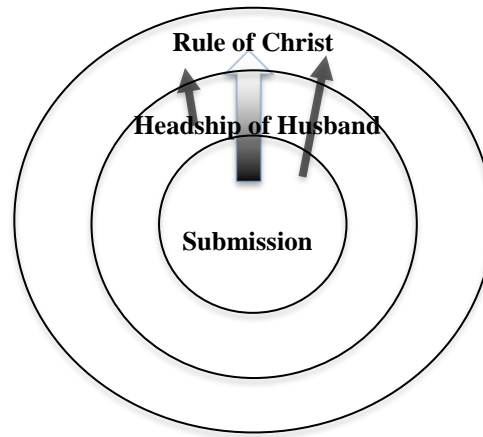
Principles for the husband.

The instructions given to the husband are to lead his wife with love, sacrifice, and care. The first area of emphasis for the husband is **loving leadership**. Paul's dominant theme defining the husband's leadership is love. The husband's love is not dependent on his wife's submission. The standard for a husband's love is Christ. Christ demonstrated His love for us, despite our sin and resistance (Rom 5:8). This love is freely given and not earned, deserved, or purchased. This responsibility transcends a wife's behavior, health, appearance or any other constraint.² It requires paying the highest cost, including losing one's life. The husband provides a safe place of security and intimacy in the marriage relationship. This portrait of leadership is tender and compassionate, the husband considering the needs of his wife above his own. The resultant effect contributes to growing as "one flesh," superglued together as one. The second area of emphasis for the husband is **directional leadership**. The description of the husband as head implies an under-charge authority. The example of the headship of Christ implies authority (Eph 1:22). The husband must lead his wife as a stewardship from Christ, following the

¹ Wayne Mack, *Strengthening Your Marriage* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing Company, 1999), 19.

² Arnold, *Ephesians*, 383.

sacrificial and servanthood of Christ (Eph 5:23-24).



Summary

The culture's depiction of male leadership is either abusive or absent. The picture that Paul provides is radically different. The husband exercises his leadership with love and sacrifice as a servant leader. He cultivates closeness through a care that protects, provides, and fosters an atmosphere of security and intimacy.

Training 7
Principles for Marriage
1 Peter 3:1-7

Context

Peter provides instructions for the marriage relationship, providing a portrait for the marriage relationship in the middle of a sinful and antagonistic world. This section divides into two sections, 1 Peter 3:1-6 provides teaching for wives and 1 Peter 3:7 provides teaching for husbands.

Wives

- The wife’s position of submission is an assigned position of God, not as inferior or devalued, but empowered “by the authority and example of the crucified and resurrected Christ”¹ (1 Peter 2:21-24).
- The wife’s joyful and faithful response of submission has a positive spiritual effect on her husband.
 - Peter calls for spoken words to be interchanged with godly living and faith-filled submission. The consequence is spiritual transformation in her husband.
 - The wife’s conduct is “respectful” and “pure.” The Greek word, which means fear or respect, is not fear toward the husband, but in 1 Peter this kind of fear is always directed toward God.² The testimony of a godly and submissive wife demonstrates respect and holiness before God.
- The focus of instruction for wives in 1 Peter 3:3-6 centers on “the hidden person of the heart.”
 - This further reinforces the priority of a heart yielded to the Lord in humble obedience, living in submission to her husband as a testimony of her faith and trust in the Lord.

Husbands

The second section (1 Peter 3:7) provides pointed instructions to husbands concerning their relationship to their wives.

¹ Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 204.

² Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 152.

- The husband is to live skillfully with his wife.
 - The phrase “live with your wives in an understanding way” means to be considerate, knowledgeable, and skillful in relationship with your wife.¹ The husband is to grow in knowledge about his wife and apply this knowledge actively in the marriage relationship.
- This knowledge extends directly to understanding the woman as “the weaker vessel.”
 - The weaker vessel has a variety of interpretations as referring to physical weakness, emotional weakness, tendency to deception (1 Tim 2:14), and valuable (to be honored, treasured and protected). The latter interpretation being preferred.
 - The husband’s response to understanding this weakness is “showing honor,” which can also be translated “showing her respect.”²
 - The husband is to care for his wife by treating her with respect and value, and serving her as uniquely made by God.
 - This reality deepens with the recognition that the husband and wife are equal heirs of eternal life.
 - A husband’s responsibility to his wife is of the utmost importance to God, as indicated by the stated consequence of hindered prayers.

Principles for Marriage Mentorship in 1 Peter 3:1-7

There is a direct correlation between marital investment and marital health.

- Peter’s address to husbands and wives includes purposeful and strategic investment in one another. Both the husband and wife are to consider how their life contributes to the spiritual and practical benefit of the other. They must invest continually in their relationship, guided specifically by their understanding of their spouse.
- The wife must care for her husband skillfully, by submitting her attitudes and actions. The culture values independence, outward appearance, and the perception of a person’s image. In contrast, Peter commands submission

¹ D. Edmond Hiebert, *1 Peter* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1992), 205.

² J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 49 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1982), 169.

for the wife with a desire to please the Lord and to contribute to the leadership and spiritual health of her husband. The focus of submission centers on the inner disposition of her heart. When a wife nurtures a close relationship with Jesus, it has a positive spiritual impact on her husband. Peter places a priority on the inner person, warning against inordinate attention to outward extravagance.

A heart **submitted** to Christ and growing in outward **obedience** to Christ, cultivates a **healthy** marriage.

- The husband must care for his wife skillfully, with a growing and particular knowledge of her person.
 - Knowledge of the inner person requires a current and growing understanding of her struggles, desires, fears, dreams, and goals.
 - Knowledge of the outer person requires an accurate knowledge of how to care for her as a “weaker vessel.” The wife is not inferior in her personhood, but made vulnerable by placing herself in the position of submission to her husband. The husband’s leadership is tempered and shaped by an accurate understanding of his wife.

As the husband submits to God in his role as a **loving** and **learning** leader, **closeness** is cultivated in the marriage relationship.

Summary

The instructions for marriage in 1 Peter 3:1-7 establish a vibrant picture of mutual care between husband and wife. Their relationship thrives around mutual submission to Christ. A vibrant investment in their individual relationship with Christ cultivates closeness. This investment is whole-hearted and skillful. It requires a growing knowledge and careful consideration of the uniqueness of both the husband and wife.

Training 8
Open Discussion and Question and Answer

Questions from the training to this point.

Discuss the results of the church survey with communication rated overwhelmingly as highest priority for mentorship by Lakewood couples.

What are some of the challenges of communications?

Training 9 Communication in Marriage

Foundation for Communication

- A mutual love and commitment to Jesus is the foundation and stability of your marriage.
 - Preemptive to communication...this is the first matter.

- Apart from God Himself, the marriage relationship is to be the closest relationship.
 - Priority of communication...we have to figure this out.

Why is Communication such a big deal?

- Because God says it is **essential** to a healthy relationship!

Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. (Ephesians 4:29)

There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing. (Proverbs 12:18)

A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver. (Proverbs 25:11)

If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame. (Proverbs 18:13)

Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ... (Ephesians 4:15)

Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits. (Proverbs 18:21)

- Because it is one of the **greatest** challenges of marriage!
 - Communication fails before any marriage fails, keep talking together and you will keep walking together!
 - Differences in nature – you are 2 different people with different languages
 - Differences in nurture – you have 2 different life experiences and styles of communication

Biblical Principles of Communication

- **Honesty** and **Transparency** (Ephesians 4:15)
 - This means actually talking with **openness**.
 - This is what they are in their heart, not what I observe or want to see, but the real person.
 - This means speaking **truth**. (Ephesians 4:25)
 - not lies, sugar-coated words, or avoiding true feelings
 - This means speaking the truth in **love**.
 - The goal of helping not hurting (Proverbs 12:18)
 - Looking to encourage or address problems selflessly (Ephesians 4:29)
 - Considerate of the timing and method of communication (Proverbs 25:11)
 - Prayerful in dealing with delicate things (Proverbs 3:5-6)
 - This means speaking the truth in love with **self**-control and **Spirit**-control. (Ephesians 4:26-27)
 - Your words can do damage. (Proverbs 18:21)
 - Not clamming up or blowing up, using either overpowering words or silent treatment.
 - Dealing with the problem or action, not attacking the person. (James 1:19-26)
 - Questions prick the conscience, but accusations harden the will.
 - Not refusing to talk about issues in your relationship, kicking the can down the road will mean multiplied problems.
- **Patience** (Ephesians 4:32)
 - Humbly approaching issues, rather than reacting to issues with pride.

- Anger and crocodile tears complicate and cloud the issues.
 - Looking to be transparent and forgiving with each other's struggles and failures. (Proverbs 28:13)
 - This means listening with the intention of hearing. (James 1:19)
 - Let each other speak without interrupting.
 - Give your undivided attention.
 - Really work at not having the goal of agreement, but understanding, considering the other's vantage point.
- **Repentance** (Proverbs 28:13)
 - God's Word regularly informing your communication.
 - Confessing sinful ways of communication.
 - Avoidance / Denial
 - Sulking / Pouting / "Silent Treatment"
 - Anger / Yelling / Physical
 - Emotionally charged language
 - Recognizing the enemies of your relationship
 - Harboring sin in your own heart.
 - Ignoring the concerns of your spouse.
 - Ignoring the differences between men and women.
 - Accepting mediocre and status quo in your relationship.
 - Not dealing biblically and responsibly with these issues...
 - Finances
 - In-Laws
 - Sex
 - Spiritual life
 - Habits
 - Recreation
 - Competing relationships of friends and social life
 - Affection toward one another
- **Obedience**
 - Recognizing, confessing, forsaking.

- Asking God for wisdom, strength, and grace.
- Accepting mutual responsibility for the problems in your communication.
- Compromising on non-Biblical or non-moral issues.
- Husband lovingly leading when agreement is not reached, being careful, considerate, and selfless.
- Getting help when there are consistent struggles and difficulty.

Training 10a Mentoring Issues: Finances and Sex

Financial Stewardship and Responsibility

Principles

1. Our relationship to money reveals our **hearts**.
2. My values must come from God's Word and not the **culture**.
3. True riches are found in pursuing God's **agenda**.

Practice¹

1. Work **hard** at all times.

Genesis 2:15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.

Ecclesiastes 9:10 Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might.

2. Be a good steward of your God given **gifts**.

Ephesians 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

1 Corinthians 10:31 So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

3. Don't be a **slave to debt**, or use debt to satisfy your unruly **desires**.

Proverbs 22:7 The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is the slave of the lender.

- Generally avoid consumer borrowing.
 - Over-extending credit cards
 - Loans from family and friends
 - Paycheck advances
 - Store credit payment plans
 - Rent to own

¹ Adapted from Chuck Bentley, *The Root of Riches* (Arlington Heights, IL: Foriam Publishers, 2011), 145-161.

- Develop a spending plan.
 - Spending with purpose and strategy
 - Simplifies daily decisions and keeps priorities in focus
 - Higher debt means more restrictive spending plan.
- Work out a payback plan with your creditors.
 - Negotiate for best rates and shortest time-tables
- Learn to trust God and you will experience self-control
 - Trusting God rather than trying to control circumstances.
- Break the hold materialism has on your heart through giving.
 - The medicine for wanting is giving.
 - Tithing and generosity.
- Seek counsel and advice.
 - Don't let pride keep you from getting help.

4. Prioritize the needs of others, particularly your own family.

1 Timothy 5:8 But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

- Avoid being addicted to the ever-increasing lifestyle of comfort.

“The issue is not how much a person makes. Big industry and big salaries are a fact of our times, and they are not necessarily evil. The evil is in being deceived into thinking a \$100,000 salary must be accompanied by a \$100,000 lifestyle. God has made us to be conduits of grace. The danger is in thinking the conduit should be lined with gold. It shouldn't. Copper will do.”¹

A Biblical View of Sex in Marriage

¹ John Piper, *Desiring God* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Publishers, 2003), 203.

1. Sex in marriage must be viewed as **pure** and **holy**.

- It is "undefiled" – to be treasured (See Song of Solomon 7), valued (Hebrews 13:4), prioritized (1 Corinthians 7:1-5), and spiritual worship/service (Rom 12:1-2)

Hebrews 13:4 Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.

- A traumatic **abuse** situation in the past could affect one's viewpoint.
- Your sexuality is a **gift** from God (holiness and sexuality go together).

2. Sex is to be **enjoyed** and **pleasurable**, not **endured**, and **tolerated**.

- It's to be a **playtime**.

Proverbs 5:15-19 Drink water from your own cistern, flowing water from your own well. Should your springs be scattered abroad, streams of water in the streets? Let them be for yourself alone, and not for strangers with you. Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth, a lovely deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight; be intoxicated always in her love.

3. Primary Goal - **giving** of pleasure, not **receiving** of pleasure

- It is an "obligation" - debt owed to another – an act of service to one another.

1 Corinthians 7:1-5 Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman." But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

- **Communication** is needed for knowledge and understanding
- Know the "**language**" of your spouse

4. Sex should happen **regularly**.

- To avoid temptations.

Proverbs 27:7 One who is full loathes honey, but to one who is hungry everything bitter is sweet.

- It can be **interrupted** for the pursuit of a spiritual goal, but only short-term.

1 Corinthians 7:5 – see scripture above

5. What is **acceptable** in the sexual relationship?

- Nothing that would be **sinful**.
- No physical/emotional **harm** should come to either partner.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

- The **conscience** of both partners must not be offended.

Romans 14:13-23 So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding...But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.

Training 10b
Mentoring Issues: Conflict and Forgiveness

Handling Conflict¹

James 4:1-3 What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? ² You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. ³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

1. Conflicts are opportunities for **growth** and **transformation**, they reveal your **heart**.
2. Do not blame **circumstances** or your **spouse** for conflict, first consider your own **heart**.
3. Ruling and inordinate **desires** meet unfulfilled **expectations** and result in **punishment** for the person(s) who is the obstacle.
4. The answer to conflict is **pleasing** God, a **repentant** heart (heart and behavior sins), godly and grace-filled **confrontation**, the pursuit of **love** and **grace**.

¹ This Handling Conflict section adapted and influenced by Robert D. Jones, *Pursuing Peace: A Christian Guide to Handling Our Conflicts* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012).

Forgiveness

Matthew 18

1. God takes **offenses** very seriously, especially towards those under your **care** or **protection**. (5-6)
2. God pursues wayward **sinner**s and seeks **restoration**. (12-14)
3. God expects us to do the **same**. (15-17)
4. The **question** that we all ask, or want to ask. (21-22)
5. Forgiveness requires **accuracy** as to the offense. (23)
6. Forgiveness **begins** with the extravagant **forgiveness** of God. (24-27)
7. Our eternal **forgiveness** demands that we forgive **earthly** offenses. (28-34)
8. **Forgiven** people **forgive** people. (35)

A spirit of forgiveness with an offer of restoration should be offered to the offending person.

Reconciliation can only be achieved when there is repentance from the offender.

When I forgive in this way I can relate to the offender with compassion, avoid bitterness, and be in a place of readiness for reconciliation.

Training 10c

Getting Started with Mentoring

1. Start with relationship building.
 - Host them for dinner/take them out for dinner.
 - Share your story; hear their story.
 - Share basic goals for the mentorship relationship.

2. Set a reasonable expectation for meeting.
 - Once a month usually fits most situations.
 - Potentially more often if acute need.
 - Every other month is enough in some cases
 - Settle on dates for a season of time.
 - “the third Tuesday night of the month for the next year”

3. Discuss the potential topics that they would perceive to be important for their situation.
 - Plan to include foundation topics along the way if they don’t naturally come up. (communication, biblical foundation for marriage, roles and responsibilities, handling conflict, etc.)

4. Utilize resources for your meetings.
 - Read a book and discuss.
 - Help them with details that need attention. (constructing a budget)
 - Plan a scope and sequence of areas to discuss.

5. Assign homework.
 - Allows for progress between meetings.
 - Keeps your mentoring times more productive.
 - Establishes their commitment to the process.

Homework Reading for Discussion

In preparation for Lesson 2:

Clark, Jordan. "Faithful Leadership in the Home: Deuteronomy 6:4-9." Paper presented at The Humanity Conference at Lakewood Baptist Church, Pewaukee, Wisconsin, March 18-19, 2023.

In preparation for Lesson 3:

Whitman, Lauren. "How to Begin Marriage Counseling." *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 31, No. 2 (2017): 73-88.

In preparation for Lesson 5:

Jones, Robert. "God's Place in Your Marriage." *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 17, No. 1 (1998): 44-46.

In preparation for Lesson 6:

Hawkins, Marshall. "Blind Faith." *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 9, No. 4 (1989): 23-25.

In preparation for Lesson 7:

Smith, Winston. "Understanding Headship and Submission." *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 16, No. 2 (1998): 54-55.

In preparation for Lesson 9:

Mack, Wayne. "Ways a Husband May Express Love to His Wife." *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 3, No. 3 (1979): 63-66.

In preparation for Lesson 10:

Powlison, David. "Picturing the Heart of Conflict." *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 16, No. 1 (1997): 21-24.

Case Studies

Case Study – Invitation to Mentorship

Bob and Jill have been involved in training to be marriage mentors at their church. They have been approached by one of their elders about pursuing a newlywed couple (Paul and Jen) for mentorship. They have prayed about it, believe that God desires this for them, and let their pastor know they would pursue a mentoring relationship with Paul and Jen.

How should Bob and Jill pursue this relationship? Please give some actionable steps that they could take to initiate this relationship. What should they communicate to Paul and Jen in an initial meeting?

Case Study – Roles

Paul and Jen have been struggling in their roles. Jen mentions that Paul sleeps as long as possible on Sunday mornings, barely getting out the door for worship. He does not seem interested in spiritually taking the lead. Jen says that she doesn't think she should confront Paul in submission.

What would you say to Paul?

What would you say to Jen?

Case Study – Communication

Paul and Jen have been struggling in their communication. During an evening with Bob and Jill (their mentors) they express some miscues. Paul has been coming home from work later than Jen would desire. Jen has been trying to have a consistent dinner ready at 5:30 on workdays, but Paul has been regularly late. This has been frustrating for both Paul and Jen, since Paul is trying to become established in his new job and Jen wants quality time together around a regular dinner time.

How would you help Paul and Jen through this difficulty? What are some biblical principles that you would want them to understand? What is some practical advice that might help them?

Case Study - Money

Paul and Jen share with you that they are not able to pay their credit card balances in full each month. As you probe a little deeper, Paul expresses concern over the many packages that arrive from Amazon. Jen says that it is stuff they need for their home and nothing more than her parents have in their home.

How would you approach this situation?

What practical steps, biblical principles, or input could you give Paul and Jen?

Case Study – Forgiveness

Paul and Jen mention a disagreement they had this past week. Paul continues to ignore Jen's request for him to place his dirty clothes in the hamper, rather than leave them on the floor next to their bed. Jen reminded Paul one evening this past week when Paul changed from his work clothes. Paul sharply disagreed with Jen and she pushed back with her own cutting remarks. They both walked out of the room and didn't talk to one another for the rest of the evening. They came to bed irritated, woke up the following day, and both decided to pretend that it didn't happen. Paul says he is sorry "that Jen feels this way about his clothes"...Jen says she is sorry "that Paul is so upset."

How would you help them through this issue?

Helpful Resources for Further Study

- Bentley, Chuck. *The Root of Riches*. Arlington Heights, IL: Foriam Publishers, 2011.
- Chester, Tim. *Closing the Window: Steps to Living Porn Free*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010.
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APPENDIX 8

MINISTRY PLAN FOR MARRIAGE MENTORSHIP

The following strategic ministry plan was provided to the Lakewood elders. It provided both launching initiatives and long-term initiatives for establishing and maintaining a marriage mentorship program.

Launching Initiatives for Marriage Mentorship Ministry

- Invite further feedback from the participants in the marriage mentorship class for areas of further training or areas of interest for training.
- Establish an initial list of Marriage Mentoring Couples from this initial training.
- Further refine and develop the marriage mentorship training curriculum for regular trainings.
- A regular cadence of marriage mentorship training opportunities to further equip the team and also raise up new mentors to join the team.

Long-term Initiatives for Marriage Mentorship Ministry

- Team of well-trained marriage mentors for use at Lakewood with newlywed couples and also newly saved couples.
- An expectation within our congregation that newly married couples participate in marriage mentorship beyond basic pre-marital training.
- An active partnering of couples to marriage mentors as opportunity arises within the body.
- Offer a basic marriage mentorship training class every two years during our Fall Life Together session. (10 week session)
- Offer an advanced marriage mentorship training class every two years to further develop the marriage mentorship team. (Saturday or Sunday multi session format)
- Develop a standardized handbook for Lakewood pastoral pre-marriage counseling that encapsulates the basics of the marriage mentorship curriculum.

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ABSTRACT

DEVELOPING A MARRIAGE MENTORSHIP MINISTRY AT LAKEWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH IN PEWAUKEE, WISCONSIN

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2024
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This project sought to equip members of Lakewood Baptist Church, Pewaukee, Wisconsin, for marriage mentorship ministry. Chapter 1 presents the history and background of Lakewood, the rationale for this project, and the goals for success. Chapter 2 provides exegesis of four passages of Scripture (Gen 2:18-3:21; Eph 5:22-33; 1 Pet 3:1-7, Titus 2:1-8) to establish instructions for mentoring couples to a healthy and biblical marriage. Chapter 3 establishes mentorship as an effective tool to combat cultural opposition to biblical marriage and to support couples through the challenges of marriage. Chapter 4 describes the project, explains the implementation of the curriculum, and gives the results of the rubrics. Chapter 5 evaluates the effectiveness of the project based on completion of the specified goals. Ultimately, this project sought to equip an initial group of couples in marriage mentorship for the launch of a marriage mentorship ministry at Lakewood.

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Assistant Camp Director, Camp Calvary, Lansdale, Pennsylvania, 2003-2008

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