

4-11-2003

A Failure to Communicate

Donald R. Tucker

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/dmin>



Part of the [Christianity Commons](#)

GEORGE FOX EVANGICAL SEMINARY

A FAILURE TO COMMUNICATE

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE DOCTORATE OF MINISTRY BOARD
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

DONALD R. TUCKER

SHERIDAN, OREGON

APRIL 11, 2003

**PORTLAND CENTER LIBRARY
GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY
PORTLAND, OR. 97223**

GEORGE FOX
EVANGELICAL
SEMINARY

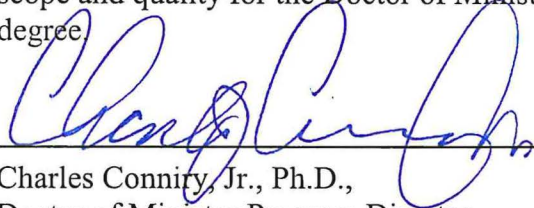
DISSERTATION ACCEPTANCE CERTIFICATE

Title: A FAILURE TO COMMUNICATE

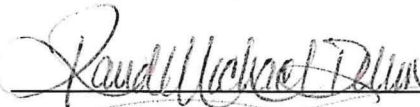
Presented by: Donald R. Tucker

April 3, 2003

We, the undersigned, certify that we have read this thesis and approve it as adequate in scope and quality for the Doctor of Ministry in Leadership and Spiritual Formation degree.



Charles Conniry, Jr., Ph.D.,
Doctor of Ministry Program Director



Rand Michael, D.Min.
Associate Professor and Clinical Director of the Marriage and Family Therapy Program



CONTENTS

ILLUSTRATIONS.....	v
ABSTRACT	
A FAILURE TO COMMUNICATE.....	1
CHAPTER ONE.....	3
WHITE BUFFALO	3
CHAPTER TWO.....	7
BIBLICAL OVERVIEW.....	7
God Communicating with Humanity.....	8
Abraham, Sarah & Hagar.....	17
Joseph & Mary.....	22
God Communicating Through Jesus.....	29
God Communicates through the Holy Spirit.....	32
CHAPTER THREE.....	40
CHRISTIAN HISTORY AND THOUGHT	40
CHAPTER FOUR	47
WHAT IS COMMUNICATION?	47
Joe and Ann	49
Counseling Models and Overview.....	67
Emotional Focused Therapy.....	69
Teaching Couples to Pray	71
The Prayer Model	75

The Presenting of a Therapeutic Diagram to Couples on Metacommunication	78
Intensive Marital Therapy	81
The Forgiving Experience	85
Talking and Listening	89
Model Summary	92
CHAPTER FIVE	96
UNDER THE UMBRELLA OF COMMUNICATION	96
My Model	104
Variables In the Process of Communication	108
Elements of Communication	117
Hearing What Is Spoken	119
Joe and Ann's Element: Careers	124
Acid Deposition	126
CHAPTER SIX	133
CONCLUSION	133
My Testimony	137
APPENDIX	142
WORKS CITED	143

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure	Page
1. Parent-Parent Transaction	110
2. Adult-Adult Transaction.	111
3. Parent-Child Transaction	111
4. Sarah-Tim Transaction.	112
5. Jane-Tom Transaction	113

ABSTRACT

A FAILURE TO COMMUNICATE

The Christian Community is currently divorcing at a rate equal to and in some areas higher than the secular society. “Born again Christians are just as likely to get divorced as are non-born again adults. Overall, 33 percent of all born again individuals who have been married have gone through a divorce, which is statistically identical to the 34 percent incidence among non-born again adults.”¹ In order to intervene in a failing marriage and help prevent divorce, the church will need to develop a new genesis of equipping pastors and lay ministers so that they may effectively model positive communication techniques.

Chapter one will present my introduction and story of a couple whom I have counseled in the past. It tells the story of two people and their difficulty to communicate after the barriers in their relationship kept them apart.

Chapter two will give a biblical overview of how God communicated with biblical characters and how communication was applied. In this section, we will explore a theology of communication.

Chapter three will cover how the world of Christianity has treated and looked at communication in marriage and the effects of these views. This chapter

¹Barna Research Group. 2001. *Born Again Adults Less Likely to Co-Habit, Just as Likely to Divorce* [on line]. Ventura, California: available from <http://www.barna.org/cgi-bin/PagePressRelease.asp?PressReleaseID=95&Reference=D>, accessed 31 August 2002.

will demonstrate how the meaning of communication has been distorted and will reveal what the continued extent of the damage of sin and the fallen condition has brought to humanity.

Chapter four will first address the question, “What is communication?” An overview of a few different counseling methods and models is included and each model gives detail regarding the method and skills involved for each.

Chapter five is my personal model for equipping pastors and lay ministers interested in providing relationship building among their community. This will assist pastors and lay ministers in working toward prevention and intervention with couples that may either need help in learning how to communicate or who want to improve on their communication.

Chapter six is my conclusion. A failure to communicate is a condition of the Fall. Prevailing over the effects of the Fall regarding dominion and sociability continues to be a besetting sin for humanity and therefore creates ineffective communication or corrupts it altogether in the name of or pursuit of happiness, self-fulfillment and liberation. Therefore we need models of intervention and prevention if we are going to make change.

CHAPTER ONE

WHITE BUFFALO

They were a middle-aged couple each in their second marriage sitting across from me in my counseling office. She sat with her hands in her lap clenching and twisting a tear soaked handkerchief gazing into what appeared to be a dark abyss of despair and hopelessness. Bloodshot eyes and dark streaks of mascara flowed down the wife's cheeks as she wept silently beside her husband. He sat with his arms folded and his eyes and jaw fixed as though they were locked in a sculptured mode that was empty of life and emotion. As I looked at this professing Christian couple that had been married for several years, I wondered how such a vast distance grew between them. As they sat on the same couch there appeared to be a thousand emotional miles between them. The wife would lift her head and turn toward her husband and as she wept I heard the words come from her quivering lips, "I just need to know you love me, that you will talk to me and hold me." His jaw grew tighter, as I asked, "What did you hear your wife say?"

"I heard her! I know what she wants but I can't give it to her. There are too many White Buffalo!"

"What do you mean?" I asked.

The man responded, "Well, every time she does something wrong it becomes something I have to forgive, like a white Buffalo, its mystical you can't see

it but you know it is there and there are just too many of them, they are like a large herd, there are just too many."

The wife began to sob and I felt my own heart pound and stomach wrench as I looked at the husband who had not changed his composure. I asked the husband if his wife had violated the covenant of their marriage and he shook his head no. Then I asked what it was he could not forgive.

"I expect her to understand my needs and to respect me as her husband." I asked him if he had explained this to her. "I do not expect to have to tell her more than once and if she continues then it becomes a White Buffalo."

The wife sobbed even deeper and said, "What about my needs? Why do I have to beg you to hold me or touch me or tell me that you love me?"

"You see," he said, "she just does not listen."

I explained to the husband the great opportunity we had to destroy this herd of Buffalo. Buffalo do not run when you shoot them. They stand there and allow you to eliminate them one at a time.

The couple's relationship was eventually destroyed by their failure to communicate effectively with one another. This couple would not work toward the elimination of the confusion, misunderstanding, forgiveness, hurt, anger and resentment that surrounded this herd of White Buffalo.

I was a Christian Counselor at the Church of the Nazarene in McMinnville, Oregon for approximately six years. McMinnville is a town nestled in the heart of the Willamette Valley near the foothills of the Coastal Mountains. It is known for its attractiveness and the friendliness of the residents. Because of its beauty, easy

community access, low crime rate, and climate it has become a retirement haven that has brought many retirees from other states. A diverse group of students seek out Linfield College which is located near the beautiful and picturesque downtown McMinnville. Linfield maintains its affiliation with the American Baptist Churches. McMinnville also supports a satellite community college. The large homes that cover the landscape are appealing to the professionals who are escaping from the larger nearby cities of Portland and Salem.

Educators, writers, corporate leaders, artist, and other professionals migrate to this small city and call it their sanctuary from the high tech rat race of life. Several large churches thrive in this town. The largest denominational church is the Bethel Baptist followed by my denomination, Church of the Nazarene. There are two or three other churches that are closing the statistical gap, one of them being less than a block away from The Church of the Nazarene.

The Nazarene church resides at its new location of twelve years at the edge of town where new community growth and expansions are taking place. It is a large church of approximately 700 and the people who attend seem to be predominately in the upper to middle class economically. The majority of those who attend are white and the remaining numbers, which are very small, are of other race. Attendance consists of retirees (of which half have migrated from other states), white-collar workers such as the educators, writers, corporate leaders, artist and other professionals as well as blue-collar workers, although the latter generally have upper scale union jobs. The political affiliation reflects Republican although the number of closet Democrats would probably surprise many. The Church on the Hill

has everything a community could want, a beautiful facility with a multitude of activities that would draw anyone into an atmosphere of community and belonging. But after six years of counseling at this church I have realized that the shingle that hangs over my door saying “Christian Counselor” would be more appropriate if it said MASH. Not MASH like the medical units used in the military or like the movie but Marriages Are Seemingly Hopeless. At least that is how I felt the day the couple entered my office with their herd of White Buffalo.

I found myself dumbfounded as I pondered whether we treat communication as something that was developed by man or was communication present at the beginning, I mean at the very beginning? After six years of counseling couples this herd of White Buffalo brought realization to me that possibly the church was giving Christians the idea that God had no interest in effective communication. Scripture has demonstrated many styles and methods of communication. It is my purpose to illustrate through scripture styles and methods of communication as it was demonstrated by the Trinity with humanity. God did not leave us with the inability to communicate. God teaches us how to effectively communicate. I will illustrate in Chapter Two the many elements of how the Trinity participated in communication with the creation and how creation has responded.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

It is ironic in today's time to hear someone ask if you have ever heard God speak. It is as though communicating with God is restricted to merely a mystical event. However, the mystical evaporates when you have a relationship. It is this very reason that we must look at how the Great Communicator relates to us. I will illustrate how God has demonstrated to us the very purpose of communication, to express emotions and to define relationships. We will touch on what it means to communicate intimately and why the marital relationship should be guarded in the same way as our spiritual relationship. We will explore what happens when sin separates and hinders communication as a person struggles with repentance and forgiveness.

In the same manner we will find that repentance is also a step toward reconciliation and restoration of relationships. Without communication there would not be an acknowledgement from either party in regards to the motive of the heart and soul. In short, the purpose of communication is found throughout the Bible. Communication is an essential principle and was dramatically expressed when the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

God Communicating with Humanity

Communication was demonstrated when God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit consulted together in creating the image of man. “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness’” (Gen. 1:26a NIV). This consultation between the Trinity was an act of community and relationship. In order to dismiss theological or doctrinal issues concerning the plurality and majesty of the Holy Trinity, I am merely stating that the initial act of creation was initiated through the act of communication.

Before the fall of man, Adam and Eve’s personal identity and attributes were fully functioning as God intended. Adam and Eve were created to live in an unclouded intimate relationship with God. They were magnificently created complete and perfect in the image of God and given dominion (power to rule) over all the earth (Gen. 1:28-30).

The attributes of God would be revealed through Adam and Eve. God would demonstrate His holiness (Ps. 99:3-5); love and patience (1 Cor. 13:4); forbearance (1 Cor. 13:7); wisdom (James 3:13, 17); comfort (2 Cor. 1:3-4); forgiveness (Heb. 10:17); faithfulness (Ps. 89:1, 2, 5, 8); and grace (Ps. 111:4). Adam and Eve experienced a state of spiritual, interpersonal, and psychological harmony prior to the fall.

These attributes revealed the characteristics of a fully functioning human being and the ontological givens in early Genesis. These givens demonstrate the essence of how we reflect the image of God through:

Acceptance (Gen. 1:31a; 2:25)
 Belonging (Gen. 2:18, 22-23)

Competence (Gen. 1:27, 28; 2:15, 19-20)
 Equity (Gen. 2:17, 3:1; 4:7)
 Identity (Gen. 1:26, 27; 2:24; 3:20)
 Security (Gen. 1:29; 2:8-9, 25)
 Significance (Gen. 1:26, 31; 2:15)
 Transcendence (Gen. 1:26; 2-7; 3:4-5)¹

Relationally the wholeness of their humanity was experienced in their body, soul and spirit as they walked in the cool of the day with God in nakedness without shame. It was God who walked with man not God who was above approach.

Why did God walk with His creation in the cool of the day? Why was He not above approach? Is it because God Himself is God of love? Of course God is and God is *Agape*. He is relational. *In His essence He created relationship. In His essence He gave relationship.* How do we know that God is relational? God “breathed” into man the “breath of life.” He gave Adam and Eve to each other. God gave Adam, Eve and all His creation to Himself as written in the book of Genesis. Our Creator *reveals* Himself to us in the image that humanity possesses.

Adam and Eve had no reason to be clothed; they were fully exposed before God, not only physically but also in their soul and spirit.

God honored the relationship He had with man when He placed man in the Garden of Eden to care for it as well as bestowing upon man the honor of naming all the creatures of the fields and birds of the air. Man responded to God and accepted the position of honor placed upon him. Clark Pinnock wrote:

In the biblical worldview to give names to people or things is not simply to label them. It is to decide their places in the nature of things, to determine their meaning. The point is that “Adam” (or humanity) is not given a blueprint for creation to which we must conform. The ongoing creation is not a paint-by-numbers process. It is a work of artistic creativity. As Christians, we believe that this work is preeminently the artistry of God.

¹ Craig W. Ellison, *From Stress to Well-Being*, (Dallas, Texas: Word/Nelson, 1994), 13.

But, like those who served a master painter such as Leonardo de Vinci, we are called to be a master painter such as Leonardo de Vinci; we are called to be God's artisans.²

In order to understand the significance of our created identity God communicated to humankind the essence of their real identity when He said, "Let us make man [Adam, humanity] in our image, in our likeness" (Gen. 1:26 NASB). Had man not understood the image from which he was formed, the ability to distinguish the difference from that which was created with the One who creates may have been skewed. Communication is an element of knowledge which in turn enabled Adam and Eve to understand what God meant as He walked in the garden and commanded them to "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it" (Gen. 1:28a NASB). God openly communicates a significant point in communication by bringing significance to the relationship through positive affirmation, "And God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good" (Gen. 1:31 NASB) referring to all that had been created. Humanity had significance communicated to it. The naming of the beasts and fowl, Adam and Eve walking in the garden hearing God speak the words, "it was very good" (Gen. 1:31a NASB) as well as "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it" (Gen. 1:28a NASB). They were words of affirmation of His acceptance, favor, security, and significance.

Dr. Larry Crabb, in his book *The Marriage Builder*, states "Scripture teaches that relationships offer two elements that are absolutely essential if we are to live as God intended. First is the security of being truly loved and accepted with a love that

² Clark H. Pinnock and Delwin Brown, *Theological Crossfire: An Evangelical/Liberal Dialogue*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1990), 102.

cannot be earned and cannot be lost and the second is the significance of making a substantial, lasting positive impact on another person.”³

God related the significance of humankind in Genesis, chapter one, as God gave them dominion over the fish, the birds, livestock, and creatures and over all the earth. God continued to relate significance in Genesis, chapter one, when He commanded His creation to “Be fruitful and increase... fill the earth.” God engaged Adam and Eve in the significant responsibility of taking care of the Garden of Eden in Genesis, chapter two. This attribute of significance given from the Creator and accepted by the created was not absent in the created life but a fully functional element in their relationship. The security God gave Adam and Eve was yet another fully functional element in their relationship. In Genesis, chapter one, God gave them every seed-bearing plant and every tree that has fruit with seed from the whole face of the earth to sustain them. In Genesis, chapter two, God planted a garden with all kinds of trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food.

Along with their physical being, security of the soul and spirit was experienced when God said it was not good for Adam to be alone and caused him to fall into a deep sleep and made a woman from his rib. “And the man said, ‘this is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, for she was taken out of man’” (Gen. 2:23 NASB).

Genesis, chapter three, introduces the disruption of humanity beginning with the alienation of the true characteristics of God as seen in His created image. That which was afforded to Adam and Eve from the beginning of creation, an intimate

³Larry Crabb, *The Marriage Builder*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 20.

relationship with God, became disrupted through willful sin. Adam and Eve experienced the consequences of sin that lead to brokenness. Intimacy with God as perceived by Adam and Eve was corrupted. Communication between God and man was forever changed. Where shame did not exist it now dwells as a veil over the spiritual essence of human beings and the created “self” became a false god.

This brokenness in turn brought about broken harmony, in the relationship with God, (Gen. 3:8) a broken relationship, with others (Gen. 3:12) and a broken relationship with self/psychologically (Rom. 7:21).⁴

The revelation of their nakedness (Gen. 3:10) introduced into the world and into humanity:

Distress—Gen. 3:10, I was afraid because I was naked.

Deception—Gen. 3:8, and they hid from the Lord.

Defensiveness—Gen. 3:12-13, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

Disorder—Gen. 3:17-19, Cursed is the ground because of you.

Disintegration—Gen. 4:8, Now Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let’s go out to the field.” And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.⁵

Although the attributes and characteristics of the relationship between God and the created have been changed forever they are not lost. After the fall God continued to relate to man offering mercy and salvation through obedience. Therefore God communicating with humankind did not end in Genesis chapter three.

In consideration of how God communicated we can review the entirety of the Bible and find that we have a God who has always initiated communication.

⁴ Ellison, *From Stress to Well-Being*, 13.

⁵ Ibid.

When married couples are in crisis they can search the scripture and find the nature of a God who seeks reconciliation and explore the depths that God has gone to bring about reconciliation. They can explore the emotions as they are expressed by God when His heart is torn because of a rejected love. We have a God who never abandons reconciliation nor imposes His way. We also learn how God's heart was grieved or filled with pain because of the sinful disobedience of people as God decided to destroy His creation with a flood. It is through a right relationship with God that Noah was chosen to preserve human existence. God continues to work toward reconciliation and restoration as demonstrated through His covenant after the flood. However, humankind again defies the need for relationship with God as they determine to build a tower to heaven to illustrate their greatness. This time God confounds their language breaking their ability to communicate therefore disrupting harmony within various tribes or groups of people. This disruption continues today to be a barrier that impacts us throughout the world, at work, and at home with the family.

God called Abram to become the father of nations and Abram is blessed by Melchizedek priest of God Most High. Lot speaks with angels and God's power is displayed through the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah yet Lot is not exempt of the pain brought about through someone else's disobedience when Lot's wife disobeyed God's direction.

God continues to reveal Himself and to communicate as He spoke to Moses through a burning bush, to Pharaoh through plagues and to His people through the parting of the Red Sea, The Ten Commandments, and a cloud by day and a pillar of

fire by night. God has revealed Himself and communicated His desires through fleeces, a small quiet voice, through His prophets, and through the history of His people. God continues to communicate to us His attributes and characteristics regardless of human decisions to respond to or reject His invitation to have relationship. It is because of the unfailing love and continued faithfulness from God that we continue to receive revelation and the opportunity to know God. It is not the hidden attributes that draw us to God but the revelation of how God has placed these attributes and characteristics in us and how we experience from God what humanity really is.

When we consider the significance of communication in the establishment of relationships we find that it is the essence of knowing. Intimacy cannot be obtained without communication whether it is through a voice, through touch, through symbols, dreams or visions. Communication is essential in connecting with the deepest recesses of the soul and spirit. Communication opens the spirit of the created to know the will of the Creator.

Within the concept of marriage and the relationship of the wife and husband communication has become a barrier that inhibits them from entering the essence of intimacy gifted to them by God. From the sin of Adam to the Tower of Babel, communication has been corrupted and instead of being a tool of intimacy it has become a tool of deceit and a barrier for ones self to be able to listen to their own heart. Not only has communication been disrupted between humanity and God it has been corrupted between the soul and spirit of the individual. We have learned to

listen to our own lie. The Apostle Paul wrote of how we learn to listen to our own lie:

ungodliness. . . of men [and women] who by their own wickedness suppress the truth. Although “what can be known about God is plain to them,” Paul says, “they [become] futile in their thinking and their senseless minds [are] darkened (Rom. 1:18-19, 21-22 RSV).

This barrier in communication brings disharmony into a marriage and the possibility of bringing deception, distress, defensiveness, disorder, and disintegration is very real.

This does not prevent God from bringing good out of evil intent. For example, in Genesis, chapter 27, when Rebekah, the wife of Isaac, helped Jacob their younger son deceive his father and steal the blessing and birth right of his older brother Esau, the consequences were disruption in the family. A father was deceived, a husband tricked, and two brothers torn from companionship as Jacob fled from his brother’s anger:

but Rebecca’s children had one and the same father, our father Isaac. Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad – in order that God’s purpose in election might stand; not by works but by him who calls – Rebekah was told, “The older will serve the younger” (Rom. 9:10-12 RSV).

In this Scripture we see once again how humankind is entwined in God’s plan. In *The Soul of Ministry*, Ray Anderson expounds that it is false obedience and wrong belief that is a result from a human way of thinking.⁶ We respond according to our perception and beliefs as to how something should be done verses conversing for clarification.

⁶ Ray S. Anderson, *The Soul of Ministry*, (Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky, 1997), 47.

There is greater clarity to the responsibility given to Adam and Eve when they were granted dominion over all creation. In *Theological Crossfire*, Clark Pinnock declared:

Our being created in God's image refers in part to our ability as persons to set purposes, to decide for ourselves, and to transform the historical process. We have been called to shape history together with God. I see this as an important part of what the image of God means.⁷

God does not allow His purpose to be silent or thwarted by fallen humanity.

Clark Pinnock continued:

God makes us his partners and allows Himself to be limited by what we decide, but this does not mean that God loosens his grip on the world. God remains active even when he is refused.⁸

The Scriptures also tell us that Israel's refusal of God's purposes for them will not in fact derail his purpose either for them or the world as a whole (Rom. 9-11). God can draw straight with crooked lines. He operates with a wisdom that the rulers of this age are ignorant of (1 Cor. 2:8; Acts 2:23). Divine sovereignty linked to the divine wisdom is still very real, even if limited to a degree through delegated human freedom. God can even cause the wrath and unbelief of man to praise him. There is always a counter-plan to what man has foolishly chosen.⁹

Within communication God has placed a secret substance that can only be considered mystical in regards to the power it possess in restoring relationships, moving mountains, conquering countries, and restoring the soul. That substance is faith. As we look at our next couple involved in interactive communication with God we will develop a deeper grasp of the necessity of faith as it is applied to restoring relationships and communicating God's plan in contrast to human plan. We will discover this through the father of faith, Abraham and his relationship with Sarah and Hagar.

⁷Pinnock and Brown, *Theological Crossfire*, 129.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

Abraham, Sarah & Hagar

Scripture describes that the people of God were commended for their faith. Abraham, an ancient of the Bible, was commended for his faith. Even though the fall of human kind has been disrupted and the ontological givens (barring the characteristics of humanity) are corrupted they are still a means of communicating for the purpose of creating a response with God. God will communicate with Abraham and Sarah by means of these ontological givens.

The Lord had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you" (Gen. 12:1, 2 NIV).

In these two verses we can identify all eight givens: acceptance, belonging, competence, equity, identity, security, significance and transcendence.

Abram and Sarai left their country and sought the promises of God. They did not have a map with a destination, just instruction and faith. When God spoke, His words were full of ontological security as he instructed Abram to go to a land that He would show him. Secondly, God related security and belonging in His promise to make Abram into a great nation with blessings.

God again met with Abram in Genesis, chapter 15, affirming His promises regarding an heir. Abram, the father of faith, fails to accept what has been communicated to him and replies with distress and defensiveness as he asked God what good was His blessing when Sarai had not given birth to any children. In defense of his perception of what God had stated, Abram offered the fact that a servant in his household would be his heir. God replied with a clear answer of the competence and identity he gave Abram and responded with attributes of his

holiness and forbearance. God told Abram that his heir would come from his own body and his offspring would number greater than the stars of heaven. God not only demonstrated all the attributes of His ontological givens but sealed them in their original unadulterated form by making the covenant with Himself, “and it came about when the sun had set, that it was very dark, and behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a flaming torch which passed between these pieces” (Gen. 15:17 NIV). Ten years had passed and Abram and Sarai became impatient. Sarai had not become pregnant and believed the Lord kept her from having children. She presented Abram with her Egyptian maidservant, Hagar to bare a child. She offered the fruit of a tree she believed would produce God’s promise of future heirs. Like Eve in the Garden of Eden in Genesis, chapter three, Sarai believed the deception and offered the fruit to Abram. It was Sarai’s solution to God’s promise of an heir as she sought acceptance for the obstacle of her barrenness as well as being a disgrace to her husband and their future. Abram consummated a relationship with Hagar, breaking his covenant with God and his marriage.

Sarai and Abram believed that they were being faithful and obedient to God as they were living their interpretation of the existing culture. The disorder and disintegration of Abram and Sarai’s relationship and marriage began with Sarai’s plan regarding Hagar in Genesis, chapter three. Sarai in defensiveness blamed Abram for this wrong addition to the family as Hagar began to despise Sarai. Hagar found new significance by being able to produce a child for Abram. This aroused Hagar’s inward desire for acceptance, belonging, and security that in turn led to a love for Abram and a jealousy because he belonged to another. Although Hagar had

bore an heir she deceived herself into believing it was the right thing to do as she longed for identity and a sense of belonging from the depths of her soul and spirit.

Hagar sought to gain her significance as she sealed this promise of dignity physically with Abram. Sarai in her jealousy and envy mistreated Hagar until Hagar's assurance of life left her. Hagar fled leaving the identity, acceptance, and significance, given to her from Sarai and Abram, to a feeling of abuse and abandonment.

What could God possibly say to Hagar to convince her of His holiness, comfort and forbearance? How did He communicate with this woman? All the characteristics of divine love that Hagar expected from the servants of God had dissolved away and vanished into the mere clay representation of the mortal being that man is.

In Genesis, chapter 16, the angel of the Lord approached Hagar reminding her of her present identity and asked her what direction she sought. Hagar, feeling naked in regret and shame, answered in distress with incomplete truth. The angel of the Lord replied to Hagar that she in fact did have identity and significance as well as revealing that he knew the truth about this hidden pregnancy. The angel of the Lord gave significance to the identity of the son that Hagar carried naming him Ishmael as well as transcendence about Ishmael's future. Hagar then acknowledged that she was fully exposed in God's presence, wisdom, and holiness and that He was the One who breathes life into man. Hagar returned to the house of Abram and bore a son, Ishmael.

God continues to illustrate how He communicates in the story of Abram and Sarai. The Lord appeared to Abram when he was ninety-nine years old and declared His own identity, “I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless” (Gen. 17:1 RSV). God communicated the means pertaining to how to have a right relationship. God confirmed Abram and established significance in Abram’s new identity. God changed Abram’s name to Abraham proclaiming that he would be called the father of many nations and God reiterated His covenant with Abraham, in Genesis, chapter 17. God also changed Sarai’s name to Sarah confirming her identity, acceptance, and significance in His kingdom, calling her the mother of nations. God communicated His holiness, forgiveness and grace with Abraham and Sarah.

Abraham and Sarah continued on their journey with God as they sought out trust, hope and faith with Him who promised a significant life that would last throughout ages. Ray Anderson wrote about trust, hope and faith:

The grace of God must first kill before it can make alive. The grace of God requires barrenness, not our own belief as a precondition. True faith and true obedience come as a gift of God’s grace, and the inner logic of that gift requires that where we have inserted a human possibility the grace of God must remove it.¹⁰

Hope requires risk, so much that it hurts. Hope makes us vulnerable to future and even greater loss. Hope exposes us to disappointment, frustration, and betrayal. Faith plants the seed and promises a harvest, and so creates hope. But with the promise of a harvest comes the possibility that the promise will fail. That is the burden that hope must bear.

The gift of faith is not the burden. Rather, faith is the empowerment of God to bear the burden of hope and to sow and tend the seed. This seed is an investment of something precious to us in utter dependence upon the promise of a harvest through a power over which we have no control.

¹⁰Anderson, *The Soul of Ministry*, 47.

To have faith is to be a sower, and not only a reaper. But in that we come face to face with our helplessness.¹¹

Abraham and Sarah were not totally wrong when they sought through their own action a means of fulfilling the promise of God. In *The Soul of Ministry*, Anderson explains how some have misunderstood the inner logic of grace and barrenness. We must put to action this grace and grab the promises of God. Abraham and Sarah found intimacy with God, His covenant, His promises, and with each other through their sexual union. Anderson wrote, "The covenant was made with Abraham but was consecrated through Sarah."¹² He continues:

Ishmael represents thirteen years of Abraham's ministry. Ishmael was an act of faith and obedience on Abraham's part, interpreted by his own context and culture. Ishmael was not produced out of unbelief and disobedience, as far as Abraham was concerned. And yet, Ishmael, along with thirteen years of ministry, must be canceled out. This reminds us that the issue is not so much obedience as contrasted with disobedience, but true obedience as compared with false obedience. It is not so much an issue of unbelief as it is of right belief contrasted with wrong belief. True obedience and right belief are based on apprehension of God's purpose and conformity to God's will. False obedience and wrong belief result from a human way of thinking.¹³

Even though Abraham intervened in God's plan with a flawed obedience in his life, God kept His promise and covenant with Abraham. In the midst of Abraham's many failures as a human, he remained faithful to his belief in God. I spoke earlier of a mystical power that exists within the human to exhibit faith, which is the particular virtue that opens the door to communication with the one who is without comprehension. It is the element of faith that moves the heart to say yes even when the cognitive soul says no. It becomes the highest level of

¹¹Ibid., 49.

¹²Ibid., 51.

¹³Ibid., 46, 47.

communication as it is expressed through both words and action. There can be no greater example found among fallen humanity than how Joseph and Mary responded to God. They were another couple that God communicated with and established His ontological givens and attributes.

A common block to communication is the one-sided story. Joseph and Mary broke through those barriers as they communicated with God. In the next section we will discover how far they moved beyond depraved understanding and entered into the ontological realm for faith and truth. This is what makes exploring a couple in crises so important.

Joseph & Mary

In the birth narratives of Christ we discover separate issues for the couple Mary and Joseph. Each, are individually challenged in how they will establish their relationship with each other under the communicated direction of God. Let us consider Joseph first.

Now this is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary was engaged to be married to Joseph. But while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant by the Holy Spirit. Joseph, her fiancé, being a just man, decided to break the engagement quietly, so as not to disgrace her publicly. As he considered this, he fell asleep, and an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. "Joseph, son of David," the angel said, "do not be afraid to go ahead with your marriage to Mary. For the child within her has been conceived by the Holy Spirit. And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All of this happened to fulfill the Lord's message through his prophet. Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and he will be called Immanuel (meaning, God is with us). When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord commanded. He brought Mary home to be his wife, but she remained a virgin until her son was born. And Joseph named him Jesus (Matt. 1:18-25 NLT).

As God began to inaugurate this new Covenant, Joseph faced a dilemma of a magnitude similar to that of Abraham and Sarah. Joseph would need to overcome the distress and defensiveness of having a pregnant fiancé which had brought disintegration, disorder, and feeling of deception into the relationship. How would Joseph handle this new revelation? This man of clay receives light as the angel of the Lord reveals significance to Joseph reminding him of his lineage and heritage calling him, “Joseph, son of David” (Matt. 1:20 NLT).

Joseph had been taught the prophecies pertaining to the coming of a Savior much like any Jewish man and woman. The angel of the Lord was giving Joseph his identity in the relationship of the coming of the Messiah. He reminded Joseph of the historical promise of God in God’s relationship with Israel. In the book *An Introduction to the Bible*, the authors wrote about Joseph’s dilemma as a Jewish man:

Joseph has a dilemma. Knowing that he has not fathered the child, he is obligated by the Torah to separate himself from the shame of Mary. . . . Through a dream (linking him to another Joseph) he learns of a still more radical form of obedience rooted in a new act of God. The child in Mary’s womb is of the Holy Spirit, a savior of his people. Joseph is challenged to respond by going beyond the letter of the law to faith, or obedience to God. . . . Because God is present with his people in a new way, a new, radical form of obedience, a higher righteousness, is expected.¹⁴

In *The Soul of Ministry*, Ray Anderson describes that there is a rule of theological antecedent. He points out that instances of theological innovation must have a theological antecedent. “Theology is always bound to interpret and set forth

¹⁴Christian E. Hauer and William A. Young, *An Introduction to the Bible: A Journey Into Three Worlds*, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1986), 239.

the inner logic of God's ministry as it occurred in the beginning and continues to take place today through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit."¹⁵

As in the argument of circumcision, the apostle Paul argued with the Jewish Christians whether or not circumcision was required prior to admittance to the kingdom of God. Paul gave them the biblical antecedent of his position in Galatians, chapter 3. His case was Abraham. Abraham received the promise by faith not by keeping the law. He also pointed out that righteousness was accredited to Abraham before he was circumcised, therefore, circumcision could not be a requirement for right standing with God. Tradition and law was weighing in on the Jewish Christians but Paul was teaching them of the new way, righteousness by faith.

It was like this for Joseph as described by Hauer & Young, *An Introduction to the Bible*. Even though Joseph felt bound to the letter of the law, as any good Jew would be, he answered a higher calling. When given the dream and reminded of his heritage he chose obedience to God above all else. Joseph's obedience was not exempt of emotion. When a couple comes together they may find themselves experiencing emotions that if not properly handled, these emotions may begin to disrupt their ability to communicate with one another and with God. Joseph obeyed God but his obedience did not prevent him from bearing the cultural and social shame of Mary's condition.

We could stop here and begin to accept the necessity of applying faith to our relationships when we are involved in the element of communication however, we

¹⁵Anderson, *The Soul of Ministry*, 124-27.

would be stopping short. Joseph does have one side of the story and it is a very legitimate position and this is where couples often stop communicating, when they believe that they are right. There are always two sides to a story and both can or may have equal weight even though their perspective may be different. This is why we must examine how Mary will face this dilemma. We become acquainted with Mary in the book of Luke:

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be marrying a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. Gabriel appeared to her and said, "Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!" Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. "Don't be frightened, Mary," the angel told her, for God has decided to bless you! You will become pregnant and have a son, and you are to name him Jesus. He will be very great and will be called the Son of Most High. And the Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!" Mary asked the angel, "But how can I have a baby? I am a virgin." The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby born to you will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God. What's more, your relative Elizabeth has become pregnant in her old age! People used to say she was barren, but she's already in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God." Mary responded, "I am the Lord's servant, and I am willing to accept whatever he wants. May everything you have said come true." And then the angel left (Luke 1:26-38 NLT).

Joseph faced one form of a dilemma while Mary faced another. Mary could not hide the promised event without the cooperation of Joseph (who according to Jewish custom and law could have her killed). Mary understood Jewish tradition and Law and the dilemma of being pregnant. However, the Gospel of Luke demonstrates beyond the other gospels the place that women, as earthen vessels created in the image of God, hold in the chronicles of Jesus. In Luke, chapter 2,

Mary is the one who will grasp the true significance of the birth of Jesus and is sensitive to the underlying meaning of events by treasuring the meaning in her heart.

Luke related an image of compassion for those of low social esteem. For example, Elizabeth was a woman who was barren and barrenness was considered a failure. Mary was with child prior to the consummation of her marriage to Joseph. Each had their own reasons for their low social esteem but Luke gave light to the identity of God, His love, and compassion for His creation. Even though there are two accounts of the creation of humankind in Genesis, theologians offer that the difference of male and female is an expression of the image of God. Ray Anderson wrote, “The creative power of God is brought to bear in this *ex nihilo* situation, and the result is the completion of the human in the image of God.”¹⁶

Adam reflected the divine attribute of God’s masculinity, yet the fullness of the *ex nihilo* would never be complete until the embodiment of the beauty and attributes of the Lord are seen in God’s finishing touch, Eve. As David prayed, “One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek: that I may...gaze upon the beauty of the LORD” (Ps. 27:4 NIV). To dismiss gender differences and to allow either the feminine or the masculine to be absorbed into the other one denies the ability to understand the fullness of God’s nature.

Ray Anderson also stated that “The mutual empowering that God intended in the original relation was felt as a loss when the identity of the male was obscured.

¹⁶Ibid., 39.

The recovery of self-identity as both male and female is thus grounded in the divine image as a mutual and complementary empowering.”¹⁷

When God communicates with His creation He places hope where there is barrenness. God promised Abraham that he would be the father of nations and a child would come from Sarah’s womb. Hope sometimes presents our soul naked and exposed to disappointment, frustration, and betrayal. The gift of faith is an active response to receive the blessing by bringing us face to face with our helplessness. Mary knew of her helplessness yet God gave her hope, “Don’t be frightened, Mary,” the angel told her, “for God has decided to bless you” (Luke 1:30 NLT). Mary asked the angel, “But how can I have a baby? I am a virgin.” The angel replied, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you” (Luke 1:34-35 NLT).

Like Abraham and Sarah, Mary and Joseph would communicate their hope and faith in God by not believing in the absurdity but by believing in the power of God to do what is impossible for humans.

To ignore the depravity of the human condition is to ignore the possibility that Joseph may have been tempted to believe that he had possibly made a mistake. It is recorded in Matthew, chapter two, that Joseph and Mary traveled from Bethlehem to Egypt to Israel to Nazareth of Galilee protecting their son, the Son of God. Joseph refused to be controlled by Jewish custom and law and self pride as he listened and obeyed God’s directions. Mary trusted Joseph and the message each of them had received from a visit by the angel of the Lord. Mary and Joseph were not

¹⁷Ibid., 40.

much different than many of us. They were very human and very susceptible to sin, yet they chose to obey God. Mary seized the ontological givens of God and accepted that which the angel proclaimed, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you” (Luke 1:28 NIV). As Mary welcomed this holy message in an attitude of obedience she responded, “I am the Lord’s servant, may it be to me as you have said” (Luke 1:38 NIV).

These two models illustrate how knowing God can bring healing into the marriage relationship. They illustrate that there are no obstacles that cannot be overcome if the male and female accept and identify what God communicates beyond the cognitive self. His Spirit bares witness to our spirit the ontological givens found in His image. Both male and female are empowered to ponder how wonderfully and fearfully made they are as written in Psalm 139.

In *Theological Crossfire*, Delwin Brown, explained that our pursuit for a theological understanding is never complete. Our experiences are very diverse and we have imperfect minds. Each time one opens the Bible to read and study certain scriptures they open up to us in different manifestations as we seek the face of God. “Christian theological reflection is a continuing process of intellectual stewardship. It is never a finished achievement.”¹⁸

God has always acted throughout history in an effort to communicate His purpose in creation. The essence of this purpose was completed in His final method of communication. The introduction of the Logos, from its cosmic eminence into flesh, so that God could dwell among us and speak directly to us in a form we would

¹⁸ Pinnock and Brown, *Theological Crossfire*, 110.

most understand; the flesh. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being” (John 1:1-3 NASB). Let us examine how the Word communicated to humanity.

God Communicating Through Jesus

Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, “Show us the Father”? Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work (John 14:9b-10 NIV).

If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you, forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you (John 14:15-17 NIV).

On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you (John 14:20 NIV).

Jesus brought to light the reality, the beauty, and the significance of knowing God. Jesus now brings light to his disciples how they can know God as Adam and Eve did. He reveals to them His full triune identity. Nothing is hid. Furthermore, He brings to depth the union of a man and woman as they become one flesh interweaving the completeness of their humanity as God intended. Christ now interweaves the oneness of the Holy Spirit contained in the Trinity along with the spirit of a person contained in perishable flesh.

Jesus is illustrating the essence of communication by making it clear that the life he lives in the flesh is not a solitaire life but a life that interacts and acts in agreement with God the Father and the Holy Spirit. In Luke chapter four, Jesus

begins his ministry “full of the Holy Spirit,” he returns to Galilee in the power of the Holy Spirit and he fulfills the words of the prophet Isaiah when he announces that “The Spirit of the Lord is on me” (Luke 4:18a NIV). It is in the human experience of Jesus that we begin to understand the fullness of our humanity through the ontological givens and attributes of God. Our nakedness is again exposed but this time we will not be covered with the skins of animals but will be washed in the blood of the Lamb of God.

Jesus is our pattern for understanding true humanity and when we acknowledge Jesus we are acknowledging that he reveals to us humanness as intended by God. It is through this transformed humanness that is precisely God’s design for us: “And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven (1 Cor. 15:49 NIV). Therefore, by looking at the risen Christ we discover that God’s purposes stand in stark contrast to our present human experience: God did not create us for estrangement but for fellowship; not for death, but for life; not for bondage, but for freedom.¹⁹

It has been revealed through the earthly life of Jesus how we are to live as we move toward God’s kingdom. Jesus taught a new paradigm to living. In Mark 8:34-38 and chapter 10:35-45, He illustrated that in the content of community and the world that in relationship to self and others that greatness does not come through self-centeredness, but through servant-hood, suffering, and self-denial. Jesus illustrated kingdom living by modeling the attitudes and characteristics of God in order to communicate to us that we are created for community and that community

¹⁹ Stanley J. Grenz, *Created for Community: Connecting Christian Belief with Christian Living*, 2d ed., (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1998), 120.

is foundational for life with the Father. Jesus illustrated that community has no boundaries and that it reaches out beyond friends to include the hurting, the outcast, and even our enemies. Jesus did not ignore nature as He illustrated in His teaching how God cares for creation through plants and animals, the lilies of the fields, and the fallen sparrow. “In short, ‘Jesus is the true human’ implies that he is our model. As His disciples, we are to pattern our lives after him. That is, we too are to seek to live according to the design of life-in-community Jesus revealed to us.”²⁰

The triune God is a community of Selves in love and communication. In order to find ones spiritual awareness a person must have been drawn into a divine life of mutual fellowship, which results in a life of fellowship in community with other Christians.

When Adam and Eve communicated with God in the Garden their sin became exposed and they were ashamed. When people communicate with Christ, their shame is exposed and their sins forgiven. Jesus as the character and identity of God in the flesh also communicated a new dimension of how we are to understand the Kingdom of God. Jesus made it clear that the Kingdom of God was among us and that in the future the Kingdom would dwell in us. The believer would not be left alone but would receive power from on High the Holy Spirit. This indwelling Communicator speaks to the heart and soul and brings light and understanding to the believer. In this next part we will see how Jesus introduces and explains the purpose of the Comforter the Holy Spirit.

²⁰ Ibid, 121.

God Communicates through the Holy Spirit

Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit telling us, “When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me; but you also must testify” (John 15:26-27a NASB). He gives us transcendence and an identity if one only accepts the love of God, “No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6 NASB), but also gives that love to His Son. “If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever – the Spirit of truth” (John 14:15-16a NASB). Jesus made it personal and individual.

There is a biblical antecedent in our relationship with the Holy Spirit. The Old Testament book of Ezekiel speaks of the individual experience in chapter 36, “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you” (Ezek. 36:26a NIV). In an exchange between God and Moses about His divine presence and what would give God’s community a distinguished identity, God gave Moses a promise. God promised, “My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest” (Exod. 33:14 NIV) and that He would do everything Moses asked, “Because I am pleased with you and I know you by name” (Exod. 33:17 NIV). Moses was “known” by God and Moses “knew” God because Moses was obedient to God. Moses asked God to give him and the community that he led those attributes of security, acceptance and belonging. He asked for the very presence of God to be among them.

How do we hear the Holy Spirit speak? “The response we seek is not a response that we can create by our own efforts.”²¹ Ray Anderson gives us thought about the human word. He explains that the human word is a response created by

²¹ Anderson, *The Soul of Ministry*, 41.

the divine Word. “Without the divine Word there is no possibility of a human word.”²² Anderson also said, “Whatever God addresses by his Word will be given the capacity of response.”²³

God addressed his created in the beginning. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made” (John 1:1-3 NIV). John reminds us the prerequisite of the presence of the Holy Spirit and gives relevance to what Ray Anderson said about the human word being a response created by the divine Word. The Holy Spirit does not exist by Himself nor act on his own. “But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you,” (John 16:13-15 NIV).

Jesus said that we are to be perfect as the Father is perfect. Throughout the Epistles we are reminded that it is God’s will that we be Holy and live a Holy life. How do we walk with God, our Savior, and manifest these attributes? These attributes come to us by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and allows us to be “in Christ” as the Apostle Paul wrote. “In Christ” we take part in the experience of God, the Holy Spirit, communicating to us and living through us these divine characteristics. Robert Hughes writes:

These characteristics or virtues are not attributes of human nature, not even as *capax*, something of which we are inherently capable, apart from the

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

“supernatural” presence of human being before a gracious God in human existence. In the structures of human existence, this being-in-the-presence of God as demand and capax, as generative of all human life, let alone specifically Christian, is always embedded and effective, but only by sheer grace and not as property of human nature. Righteousness, for example, is not even a potentiality for human nature, apart from its being evoked in us as call and gift by God’s righteousness. Hence, there is a fundamental structure of human existence that is “supernatural” in the sense of transcending nature without contradicting it. It is a property of the human being, but not of human nature, precisely because it is a relational property, already mediated by the Holy Spirit even to those who are not fully “in Christ”.²⁴

Effective communication of the Holy Spirit with us depends on our response to the Word. Ray Anderson said, “The speaking creates the hearing....every person bears the responsibility of hearing, because the Word of God summons each one into response. The only way of voiding the Word of God is to hear but not be willing to hear, to see but not be willing to acknowledge what one sees.”²⁵

The Gospel of Luke gives account of the Holy Spirit in several instances. The angel Gabriel told Mary that the Holy Spirit would come upon her, overshadow her so that she would give birth to the Son of God. At Jesus’ baptism a most vivid picture of the Spirit ascending on Jesus in the form of a dove is given. In John, chapter 4, Jesus went into the desert, He was “full of the Holy Spirit” or empowered by the Spirit and “led by the Spirit.” At the end of the gospel of Luke, chapter 24, our Risen Lord gave final instructions to His disciples to remain in Jerusalem until they were “clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:49 NASB). The Holy Spirit had a definite roll in the life of our Lord Jesus. The Holy Trinity in one accord with the purpose of salvation yet fully functioning in separate missions.

²⁴ Robert Hughes, III. “The Holy Spirit as Subject and Locus of Spiritual Theology.” *Anglican Theological Review*; Evanston; Summer 2001, v. 83, n. 3, 455-72.

²⁵ Anderson, *The Soul of Ministry*, 41.

The Gospel of John records Jesus' journey and his teaching. Jesus told the disciples that the Holy Spirit would continue to teach them and remind them of what He had taught and said to them, "But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you" (John 14:17 NIV). Jesus was communicating to them the essence of a Triune security and about His continued presence in the role of the Holy Spirit. The disciples waited to be filled and empowered as they remembered what Jesus said to them, "the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you" (John 14:26 NIV). Jesus was giving transcendence about the continued ministry that the disciples sought. Jesus spoke about the competence they would experience because of the presence of the Holy Spirit. "Without the divine Word there is no possibility of a human word... And whatever God addresses by his Word will be given the capacity of response."²⁶

God communicated through His Holy Spirit and His Word became flesh and walked among them!

Ralph Del Colle writes in his argument regarding the presence, power and person of the Holy Spirit, "The Spirit's procession from the Father (and the Son) contrasts a basically passive modality of hypostatic origin with the more active economy of the third person who spoke through the prophets and in whose provenance the creed also professes the ecclesiological and eschatological dimension of the faith."²⁷

²⁶ Ibid., 41.

²⁷ Ralph Del Colle, "The Holy Spirit: Presence, power, person." *Theological Studies*, Washington vol. 62 (June 2001): 322.

God is Spirit, God is *pneuma*. The self-presence of God is Spirit and is characteristically self-giving vis-à-vis creation and creatures. Jesus unveiled God as Spirit in his conversation with the Samaritan woman, which correlated with the divine search for those who will worship in spirit and truth. What God is, is not exhausted by the presence of the Holy Spirit. Del Colle says:

The proclamation of God as Spirit underscores the Freedom of divine agency (3:8: “The wind blows where it chooses...”) and the gratuity of God’s self-donation via pneumatic presence (7:38: “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me... Out of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water”). If there is an affirmation of an ontological nature to be derived from the saying that God is Spirit, it is simply the presupposition of the donative character of the God revealed in Jesus and the other Paraclete whom he will send. It is all the more proper to speak of the Holy Spirit along these same lines.²⁸

Clark Pinnock, in *Biblical Texts-Past and Future Meanings* describes the work of the Holy Spirit:

Jesus gave the Spirit, so that there might be a fuller understanding of his life and ministry by disciples in the future. We look to the Spirit for unfolding meaning because of the divine presence with and alongside the text, making it a truly living word. The Spirit, being at work in the contexts of our lives, helps us to grasp the divine intent of Scripture for our time. What is given is not (I think) the communication of new information but a deeper understanding of the truth that is there. But it can be surprising, as illustrated in Acts 15 where what the Spirit was evidently doing in the world (pouring the Spirit out on the Gentiles) showed the leaders how to interpret the OT text in a new way: Because Scripture is spiritual, it has to be spiritually appraised, (cf. 1 Cor. 2:13b).²⁹

Summary. Scripture demonstrates how God communicated with humanity through His ontological givens which bare the characteristics of humanity. In Genesis, chapter 12, all eight ontological givens were identified; acceptance, belonging, competence, equity, significance, transcendence, identity and security.

²⁸ Ibid., 327.

²⁹ Clark H. Pinnock, “Biblical Texts-Past and Future Meanings.” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, Lynchburg vol. 43 (March 2000): 74.

God illustrated how He communicates in the story of Abram and Sarai. The Lord appeared to Abram when he was ninety-nine years old and declares His own identity, “I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless” (Gen. 17:1 NIV). God communicated the means to a right relationship. God confirmed Abram and established significance in Abram’s new identity as God changed Abram’s name to Abraham proclaiming that he would be called the father of many nations and God reiterated His covenant with Abraham (Gen. 17:3-14 NIV). God changed Sarai’s name to Sarah, confirming her identity, acceptance, and significance in His kingdom, calling her the mother of nations (Gen. 17:15, 16 NIV). God communicated in His holiness, forgiveness and grace with Abraham and Sarah.

Jesus is illustrating the essence of communication by making it clear that the life he lives in the flesh is not a solitaire life but a life that interacts and acts in agreement with God the Father and the Holy Spirit. In Luke, chapter four, Jesus began his ministry “full of the Holy Spirit,” he returns to Galilee in the power of the Holy Spirit and he fulfills the words of the prophet Isaiah when he announces that “The Spirit of the Lord is on me” (Luke 4:18a NIV). It is in the human experience of Jesus that we begin to understand the fullness of our humanity through the ontological givens and attributes of God. Jesus illustrated kingdom living by modeling the attitudes and characteristics of God in order to communicate to us that we are created for community and that community is foundational for life with the Father. Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit telling us, “When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. And you also must testify” (John 15:26-27a NIV).

There is biblical antecedent in our relationship with the Holy Spirit. The Old Testament book of Ezekiel speaks of the individual experience, “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you” (Ezek. 36:26a).

How do we hear the Holy Spirit speak? Humankind did not create word but merely became a response to the Word created by the divine Word because it is impossible for human word to respond without the divine Word. Whatever God addresses by his Word will be given the capacity of response. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . .Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made” (John 1:1, 3 NIV). The Holy Spirit does not exist alone nor act alone;

But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. . . . That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you” (John 16:13-15 NIV).

The effective communication of the Holy Spirit depends on our response to the Word. Every person bears the responsibility of hearing because the Word of God summons each one into response: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16 NIV).

I have demonstrated from scripture how communication has been an essential element through the interaction of the Trinity with humanity to how communication is entwined with the body, soul, and spirit to form community and relationship. When the Christian “believer” embraces the means by which God has demonstrated the purpose for communication, not only within the boundary of a

marriage relationship, their own personal wholeness will be broadened and their created identity will begin to illuminate within their being.

In chapter three I will review how our church fathers and the philosophers of Christian History and Thought impacted our understanding of communication.

CHAPTER THREE

CHRISTIAN HISTORY AND THOUGHT

It is the anxious fate of the Bible to win, without much competition, a double award as the best-selling and the least-understood book. Circulation figures appear to increase in direct proportion to pronouncements on the book's unintelligibility and irrelevance. The more study, the less consensus on the meaning.

Both read the Bible day and night,
But thou read'st black where I read white.

William Blake's couplet can be demonstrated *ad infinitum* wherever the Bible is read. It is for this reason that the Bible escapes sustained attack from those who should oppose its use. Why attack a book that is so ambiguous in meaning and so capable of supporting both sides of every issue?¹

In searching Christian history and thought pertaining to communication and how it evolved from our historical roots I embarked on a disappointing discovery.

A primary breakthrough in communication will be in overcoming gender role identity as it pertains to history and thought. What I discovered was the segregation of man and woman and their roles in the order of culture, humanity, and marriage. The disruption between man and woman that occurred from the fall had become deeply entangled in our Christian thought. The battle for dominance was written into our early understanding. In turn it placed a wedge in the marital relationship that has festered like a splinter beneath the skin of the soul. It has finally erupted in many factions of liberation both secular and within the church.

¹Paul S. Minear, "Communication and Community," *Theology Today*, 27 (July 1970): 140-54.

In Rhonda Yon's research she explains the source of contention written into our Christian history and thought regarding the seedlings of gender roles:

The ancient history of Western legal thought has often been blamed for laying the philosophical foundations of gender subordination. Philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle expounded on the natural inferiority of the female gender, while Judeo-Christian doctrine has presented a mixed view on gender inequality. From his theory on the creation of humankind, Plato provided a philosophical foundation for gender inequality that was implicitly adopted by the Jewish and Christian thinkers that followed him. According to Platonic creationism, all souls were originally implanted in male bodies and given volition, sensation, and emotion. Plato only briefly discussed the creation of women in conjunction with the creation of birds, mammals, reptiles, and fish by placing women on the same level as animals, Plato revealed an underlying view of women as not fully human. Plato's theory of creationism thus provided the roots of female subordination.

A student of Plato, Aristotle likewise viewed women as unequal to male because of what was perceived to be their deficient physiology which to Aristotle made them defective in comparison to the male therefore Aristotle concluded that men were intellectually superior to women.

It is clear that the rule of the soul over the body, and the mind and the rational element over the passionate, is natural and expedient. . . . Again, the male is by nature superior, and the female inferior; this principle, of necessity, extends to all mankind. . . . the one rules, and the other is ruled. . . . The courage of men is shown in the commanding, of a woman in obeying.

Despite examples of capable and honorable women featured in scriptures, the Rabbinic tradition generally espoused the view that women were inferior to men. Philo, a Jewish scholar at the time of Christ, wrote concerning men and women: There is in the soul a male and female element just as there is in families, the male corresponding to the men, the female to the women. The male soul assigns itself to God alone as the Father and Maker of the Universe and the Cause of all things. The female clings to all that is born and perishes; it stretches out its faculties like a hand to catch blindly at what comes in the way, and gives the clasp of friendship to the world of created things with all its numberless changes and transmutations, instead of to the divine order, the immutable, the blessed.²

²Rhonda Yon, Eras of Elegance, Inc. 2000-2003. *Gender Issues in Ancient Greek, Roman and Judeo-Christian Writings* [on-line]; available from <http://www.erasofelegance.com/gender.html>; Internet; accessed 5 January 2003.

After Philo's generation, Josephus, a Jewish historian, continued the Judaic teaching of the inferiority of women to the point that Josephus believed that women were inferior to men in all things and because of their moral weakness they should be barred from testifying in court.

The Judeo-Christian account of creation, provided the philosophical basis for gender inequality, that woman derived from man. Augustine suggested that women were not created in the image of God but in the imperfect likeness of man. This caused women to have a greater propensity to sin because of a natural weakness. This is why Augustine viewed celibacy as a holier state than marriage. St. Thomas Aquinas, like Plato, suggested that women lacked the "discernment of reason" which was naturally possessed by men. Aquinas suggested that women were created merely for the reproductive purpose. These views were supported by John Calvin and John Wesley during the Protestant Reformation.

A female is a deformed male, Aristotle taught. Male and female are one in Christ, Paul declared. Women as well as men are to lead in worship, Paul noted. Men and women are to be separate during worship, Jewish custom dictated, and only men count in determining a quorum for worship. Women are to learn, Paul insisted. Women are inferior to men in their ability to reason, Aristotle argued. Sexual intercourse is harmful, many Stoics believed, and marriage distracts a man from the study of philosophy.

Marriage and sexual intimacy are a gift from God, Paul observed... A man's courage is in commanding, a woman's in obeying, asserted Aristotle. Husbands and wives are to be responsive to the needs of each other, Paul instructed... Ever since Eve, the Jews were taught, women have been morally weak and a source of temptation to men. "Woman is the glory of man," Paul stated... The authority of a woman belongs first to her father and then, when she is married, to her husband, Greek and Jewish laws agreed. A woman shall have authority on her own head, Paul insisted.

Although many Judeo-Christian thinkers perpetuated and transformed the patriarchic views of sex inequality that had been espoused by Greek philosophers, some sought to break free from the Greek and Roman tradition

and instead embrace the liberating view of the sexes found in Christ. Moreover, despite the history of misinterpretation and contextual distortion, critical analysis of the Scripture reveals that it in fact provides support for liberating view of gender roles. The Bible emphasizes the fundamental equality of the sexes in the church. As the Apostle Paul wrote to the Galatian Church, “there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

Order based on gender, thus, which was perpetuated through the Church for the human world in marriage and in religious leadership, is ultimately unnecessary in perfect communion with God.³

Our Christian history has demonstrated that the depravity from the fall brought consequences that would ripple over our culture forever. Where man and woman were to have dominion over the earth they became embattled in a struggle for dominance. The break that sin caused with God also wedged itself in all of the human nature. If we were to continue with how history and thought have impacted our culture and combine it with the marital relationship, we would realize that communication loses its desired effect where there is a non-negotiable line of authority. The mere fact that Scripture is considered to be a living and breathing text requires it to also have the ability to transcend generations. It is when we look at the writing in the context of the time in which they were written and in context of those who have written the text that we can obtain a deeper understanding. For Christian history and thought to be used as an effective counseling, ministering, and communicating tool we must ask if elements of passages traditionally assumed to be universally timeless in their authority are indeed culture-bound. It is appropriate to acknowledge every text of Scripture as inspired and authoritative but in order to be

³Ibid.

life giving we must recognize that both interpretations and applications often vary from one culture to the next.

Just as importantly, we need to recognize that women may read the Bible differently than men. Both may discover unique insights that emerge more clearly because of their specific gender. Both, too, may be “blinded” in some contexts because of their gender. In other words, there are two issues at stake. First the biblical texts themselves are culturally conditioned by the overwhelmingly patriarchal societies of their day. They reflect the world as it existed “back then.” Interpreters must consider when, if ever, this conditioning coincides with normative, divinely intended values. Second, all readers are conditioned by their culture and gender and must exercise great care not to impose anachronistic, alien grids from high profile agenda items of modern society onto ancient texts.⁴

When I began reviewing and searching for information pertaining to communication in history and thought, I found myself becoming somewhat defensive. I was repulsed by how some of our Philosophers and Christian forefathers viewed women. If we are to improve in our ability to communicate we must place everyone on equal playing fields and we must acknowledge certain barriers that may hinder communication such as culture, gender, and race. In the Western culture as a white male I have been somewhat shielded from these elements of abuse. Yet, it is my responsibility to be sensitive to the reading of scripture from my Christian brothers and sisters around the world. By becoming sensitive to the diversity and culture of others my ability to communicate will be illuminated and expanded.

Interpretation of Scripture must be understood in context of the culture from which it was written. It must be understood in the context of the writer. In order for Christian history and thought to become beneficial in communication we must view

⁴William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., consulting editor Kermit A. Eckleberger, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1993), 456.

it through the lens of the masculine and feminine eyes that are being led by the Holy Spirit so that they can speak to the culture that exists today. How else could the true art of communication be formed?

Conversation marks the voluntary opening of an invisible door that ends an inner isolation between persons. Their meeting and their conversation create for both a new situation out of which unpredictable developments may emerge. A genuine dialogue produces a new orientation for both participants. Two centers gravitate together, so that by standing at the same point each comes to see what the other sees... In speech, a common past is both discovered and created. . . . Any genuine dialogue is worth studying, for in it life-stories are being told and re-told as a way of celebrating the death of an older world (before this particular meeting) and the birth of a new (in which these two are, as it were, charter members).⁵

The way in which communication was addressed in our Christian history appears to be founded mainly upon a particular role that each sex (male and female) are assigned in the social thought of our founding fathers. As Donald DeMarco observed:

Every society, no matter how primitive, throughout human history has recognized the natural difference between the sexes and has accorded that recognition a high degree of significance. There are cultural influences that are brought to bear on the men and women, to be sure. But one of the clearest manifestations of such cultural conditioning, ironically, is the view that culture is the primary determinant of the differences between the sexes. It is this very "intellectual" or "ideological" notion that is formed by the cultural conditioning, rather than sexual differences themselves.⁶

In communication men and women within any culture that deny their real sexual differences will always be in conflict when dealing with each other, not as incarnate realities, but as political factions. DeMarco goes on to say:

John Paul II's *Theology of the Body* is a concerted attempt to return the discussion of the differences between the sexes to a solid and authoritative

⁵ Minear, *Theology Today*, 140-54.

⁶ Donald DeMarco, "The Nuptial Significance of the Body," *Christian Anthropology*, [online]. Available from <http://www.catholic.net/RCC/Periodicals/Faith/2001-04/demarco.html>. accessed 1 January 2003.

basis. He uses Genesis as his primary text to explain four fundamental points:

1. that masculinity and femininity are constituent features of the *person*;
2. that the human body has a *nuptial* significance and is created by God with the living union of man and woman in mind;
3. that man and woman enter upon this union freely and offer themselves to each other as mutual *gifts*;
4. that sin can subvert the authentic relationship of the sexes, which was intended to be a gift, reducing it to a form of *exploitation* or *dominance*.

The Theology of the Body offers a coherent image of masculinity and femininity. It enjoys a remarkable consistency, not only with Vatican II and Church teaching in general, but also with psychology, philosophy, anthropology, and the natural law. The reason for this lies in the simple fact that the Theology of the Body is centered on truth rather than trend, and takes an approach that is broad and trans-cultural.⁷

This chapter on Christian history and thought has demonstrated the essential need for the twenty-first century church to equip itself to develop communication models and a communication lifestyle that reaches into the homes and lives of families and couples. Communication is not a hierarchy in relationships but a release of a perceived position of power so that one can meet the other eye to eye, heart to heart and soul to soul.

The next chapter will demonstrate a few models of what has been afforded to the Christian community. I have reviewed models that have a variance of cost and style. Prior to the models, I will illustrate a more modern view of the meaning of communication and how it applies corporately within business and how it is synonymous with social means of communication and religion.

⁷Ibid.

CHAPTER FOUR

WHAT IS COMMUNICATION?

Companionship and relationship are mainstays of humanity. In Genesis 2:18 it is recorded that it is not good for man to be alone. God created man and woman and they will forever seek companionship. God ordained it. Men and women will always seek to procreate and multiply. God commanded it. God seeks to reconcile and restore the nakedness, without the shame that humanity had before Adam and Eve fell. As born-again believers, we are commanded to seek lasting relationship not only with God but with each other,

no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief cornerstone. In Him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in Him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit (Eph. 2:19-22 NIV).

In this chapter I will present a clear understanding of the meaning of the word communication. I will illustrate the purpose of communication and the consequences of communication when it has become corrupted. I will use science, counseling, Biblical, and professional illustrations to demonstrate how the elements of communication impact every part of our life. I will demonstrate that communication is not merely a Christian principle for marriage but a primary adhesive in the mainstay of humanity.

A limited science lesson. I want to introduce you to a comparative look at acid rain to communication. God gave the world the phenomenon of precipitation. Rain is naturally acidic. In comparison it is less acidic than tomato juice, but more acidic than milk. Precipitation reacts with alkaline chemicals that are derived from the earth's bedrock and found in the air, soils, lakes and streams. The natural amount of acid in rain is thereby neutralized by that reaction. The pollution created by man released into the atmosphere produces a harmful amount of acid rain that seeks to destroy nature's natural ability to maintain balance.

This pollution is caused by emissions of sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxides. "Although they are natural, 90% of sulphur and 95% of the nitrogen emissions occurring are of human origin."¹ Once released into the atmosphere, they can be converted chemically into such secondary pollutants as nitric acid and sulfuric acid, both of which dissolve easily in water. The resulting acidic water droplets can be carried long distances by prevailing winds, returning to Earth as acid rain, snow, or fog. When describing this harmful element and the means by which it returns to earth the question arises whether acid deposition is always wet. The answer is no. The acids can be transformed chemically into sulphur dioxide gas or into sulphur and nitrogen salts. In this form they are deposited dry causing the same damage as when they land dissolved in rain or snow. The dry form of acid deposition does internal damage to vegetation.

This example of how the damaging effects of pollution in the form of acid rain goes unnoticed on the earth until its effects, in some areas, are too late also

¹ Tracy Gow and Michael Pickwirny. 1996. *Acid Rain and Deposition* [on-line]. Okanagan University College; available from <http://royal.okanagan.bc.ca/mpidwirn/atmosphereandclimate/acidprecip.html>; Internet; accessed 30 November 2001.

demonstrates how noticeable or not that the damage from the collapse of communication within a marriage begins. First it may go unnoticed as family's journey into the regiment of everyday events at work, at home, at school, at church. Initially, how these daily activities are impacting ones perception of their own life may have no outward sign.

Joe and Ann

Every day events impact the way we communicate because of our expectations of others and ourselves. For example Joe was notified that his position at work would be phased out over the next two weeks and after 15 years he will no longer be needed within the company. At the same time his wife, Ann, received notification with the publishing company for which she works that after three short years she was being promoted to the position of Chief Editor. (No matter where we are in life a little rain must fall.) Joe arrives home expecting empathy at the same time Ann arrives home expecting to celebrate. The events of the day have shaped the emotions that will be shared between these two people. This is the rain in its wet form. What happens next could be the dry form. Joe has certain expectations of Ann, he needs a shoulder to cry on, and someone he loves to reinforce his identity. Ann needs loving affirmation and someone to honor her for her accomplishments. What happens when these needs are not met can result in the dry deposition of acid in their relationship. This is how the inward emotions and feelings become suppressed. These hidden feelings are not being disclosed and the issues within the marriage are now deteriorating from the inside.

The church must be equipped to teach couples and families how to

communicate effectively to prevent the erosion from happening in relationships. I will illustrate how people involved in lay ministry can provide small group cells that facilitate and teach methods in communication. Developing marriage and couples support groups within the church community is an essential maintenance program for overcoming the array of issues that are encompassing the family of the twenty-first century. The past has a way of becoming the present and even though some traditions never change, some traditions evolve. Some may need to be eradicated all together because relationships appear to be struggling as much today as they did in previous centuries.

Have you ever been speaking to someone and while you were speaking you could tell by the way they were looking that their body was present but their mind was somewhere else? You wonder if what you were saying was not important to them and that is why they began to think of other things or perhaps they had something serious going on in their life and it was hard for them to concentrate on what you were saying. Maybe you just were not clear on what you were saying and they could not understand you. Unless you ask, if they understood it may have only been your perception that they were not listening. Maybe you were in a position to give a response to what you thought were universal gestures, signals, motions, facial expressions, and the person you were trying to communicate with failed to understand. Last but not least how do you handle this when it is your spouse who appears to have no clue as to what you are communicating? Is communication a difficult word to describe?

According to the Webster's Dictionary the definition of communication is as follows: "Com-mu-ni-ca-tion: a noun. The act or fact of communicating: a document or message imparting views or information."² Reading the definition of communication does not mean we understand communication nor does it mean we know everything we need to know about communication. It is not a difficult word to describe. However, it is a difficult process.

Our life has its expression through communication and communication is the means of that revelation to the heart and soul. Family members interact through verbal and nonverbal exchanges to express their core emotions. Their expressions of love, intimacy, anger, and conflict enable family members to know each other in a very special and personal way. Communication is basically what enables us to grow through the expression of thoughts and feeling in family and other relationships.

When we learn to process through the lenses of our own self-awareness who we are, where we have come from, socially, culturally, our biological origin, and spiritual origin, then we will be half way in the process of communication. When this form of communication in a marriage becomes bilingual then we begin to obtain a level of self and other awareness that brings about a transparency to the marriage enabling both partners to love God, themselves, and each other as Christ loves them.

Learning to communicate will help couples to become equipped with relational sonar that can pick up signals of distress as well as signals that represent security and love. Without the ability to communicate effectively, the family unit

² New Webster's Dictionary of the English Language (1988), s.v. "communication."

would become merely a collection of one's own individual thoughts, feelings, and desires.

In the remaining part of this chapter, I will present factors in communication that lead to either a healthy or unhealthy relationship. The Parrott's emphasize the importance of communication:

I can't emphasize enough the importance of communication in marriage. In a recent poll, almost (97 percent) who rate their communication with their partner as excellent are happily married, compared to only 56 percent who rate their communication as poor. The poll concluded: 'In an era of increasingly fragile marriages, a couple's ability to communicate is the single most important contributor to a stable and satisfying marriage.' (Gallup Poll conducted between September 24 and October 9, 1988).³

On this journey of discovering the meaning of communication, consideration of the source is important. Rudolph Verderber says, "The source is the originator of the communication message. In a two-person conversation the source was one individual; however, it could be a committee, a company, or even a nation."⁴ As the writer of this dissertation I am the source of communication to you. This communication should be stimulating meaning into the mind of the reader and then the reader will become the source if the reader discusses the material with another person. Verderber also writes:

The source has a variety of experiences, feelings, ideas, and moods that overlap and interact to affect its communication. Thus what you say is related to or affected by your past experiences, moods, feelings, attitudes, beliefs, values, upbringing, sex, occupation, religion, and even the climate you live in and the weather you are experiencing today.⁵

³ Les and Leslie Parrott, *Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts: Seven Questions to Ask Before (and After) You Marry*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 73.

⁴ Rudolph F. Verderber, *Communicate!* Belmont, (California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc., 1975), 5.

⁵ Ibid.

The authors of the book *Talking and Listening Together* write that attitude and behavior are two components of communication:

In any communicating you do, every message you send contains two component parts, attitude and behavior. Attitudes derive from the combined beliefs, feelings, and intentions you hold. Behaviors—the verbal and nonverbal actions you take—reflect and stem from your underlying attitudes. So, each exchange you make with your partner reflects your underlying attitude about yourself and about your partner.

Two basic attitudes you can hold toward yourself are:

- I don't Care About Me
- I Care About Me

In every situation you communicate that you do not value, respect, and count yourself—you do not care—or that you do.

Likewise, two corresponding attitudes you can hold toward your partner are:

- I Don't Care About You
- I Care About You

Again, in any exchange, you communicate either that you do not value, respect, and count your partner—you do not care—or that you do.

Behavior reflects attitude. The uncaring or caring attitude you hold about yourself and your partner express your momentary or long-term assumptions about one another's significance. These underlying opinions about your own worth and your partner's worth form a foundation for your relationship, which in turn impacts your own and your partner's communication. All four self-partner attitudinal postures begin with the pronoun "I," illustrating, an important assumption in Couple Communication: Each partner develops his or her own attitudes and is responsible for his or her own behavior. In other words, "I" choose either not to care or to care.⁶

In establishing a lasting relationship Dr. John Gottman, professor of psychology at the University of Washington in Seattle, wrote that there must be at least five positive interactions for every negative one between partners. When we begin to consider our underlying opinions of ourselves we have the opportunity to

⁶ Sherod Miller, Phyllis A. Miller, Elam W. Nunally and Daniel B. Wackman, *Talking and Listening Together: Couple Communication I*, Evergreen, CO, (Interpersonal Communication Programs, Inc., 1991. Reprint, Colorado: 2000), 1-3.

discern our attitude and decide on which course we will choose to take in regards to how we interact with our spouse. David and Claudia Arp state:

We go too far in expressing our negative feelings and experience what Dr. Gottman refers to as “system overload” or “feeling flooded.” When this happens, you feel overwhelmed by your spouse’s negativity. You may feel defensive, hostile, or just want to withdraw and go into your shell.⁷

Communication is not a matter of being right but of starting a flow of energy between two people that can result in mutual understanding —John A. Sanford.⁸

When a person considers effective communication they will realize that it is not based on a specific list of communication rules but its foundation is built on knowing first who you are and then later on what you do.

In Virginia Satir and Michele Baldwin’s book, *Satir Step by Step*, Satir’s description of the meaning of the interplay of mind and body, presents a formative perception of the core of every person although it may be incomplete in its totality. The graphic symbols consist of separate elements or levels interacting with one another exerting constant influence on the well being of the person.

Listed, they are physical (the body); intellectual (the left brain, thoughts, facts); emotional (the right brain, feelings, intuition); sensual (the ears—sound, the eyes—sight, the nose—smell, the mouth—taste, and the skin—tactile-sensation-touch-movement); interactional (the I-Thou, communication between oneself and others, and communication between the self and the self); nutritional (the solids and fluids ingested); contextual (colors, sound, light, air, temperature, forms, movement, space, and time); and the spiritual (one’s relationship to the meaning of life, the soul, spirit, life force).⁹

⁷ David and Claudia Arp, *The Second Half of Marriage: Facing the Eight Challenges of Every Long-term Marriage*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 89.

⁸ Ibid., 87.

⁹ Virginia Satir and Michele Baldwin, *Satir Step by Step: A Guide to Creating Change in Families*, (Palo Alto, California: Science and Behavior Books, 1983), 176-79.

When we begin to ponder the Scripture “to love our neighbor as we love ourselves” then I would suggest that we review these elements. They may help one to look inside themselves and discover what the Psalmist declared “we are wonderful and fearfully made” (Ps. 139:14 NASB). I have briefly summarized these elements as outlined by Satir and Baldwin:

1. The Physical Dimension. Our bodies illustrate the physical make up of our being yet we have frequently been taught to ignore our bodies unless there is something medically wrong or our body does not have the mass or shape that we desire. Understanding that when the physical dimension is wrongly affected it can impact the whole body.
2. The Intellectual Dimension. The intellectual part stems largely from the left brain or left hemisphere of the brain. This is the part where rule making, beliefs, drawing of conclusions and scholarly activities arise. The left side of the brain is the data processor and when it acknowledges its counterpart, the right side of the brain or hemisphere the owner becomes excited and curious to discover. The Western culture has placed a higher value to the left-brain verses the right. Women have been thought to be more right brain oriented and men tend to deny the value of the right brain functions.
3. The Emotional Dimension. This function is given to the right brain along with or nervous and glandular system. This is where we monitor our feelings and the vehicle from which we experience life. The cultural qualifiers to being an acceptable human being sometimes distorts our perceptions of feelings and in turn incorporates a feeling of inadequacy as a being. Therefore, inappropriate or distorted feelings, which are energy and may not go away without first reeking, havoc on our intelligence our emotions and our body.
4. The Sensual Dimension. Our sensory channels are a significantly beautiful part of our being yet they are in part the most affected by our culture and dramatically reflect our perceptions through a list of don't. “Don't look,” “don't touch,” “don't listen” and many more that are not listed. How we respond to our sensual dimension under the influence of don't, can clearly lead to an imbalance.
5. The Interactional Dimension. Every human being came from two other people and was essentially born into a group. This probably accounts for what appears to be an inborn need to be in touch with other human beings. As infants, we had no ability to survive on our own, and we had

to put our survival in the hands of other people. We all had and have needs to be cared for, loved, and respected by others. This puts all of us in a vulnerable position with others, and it puts a tremendous burden on our links with other people. Our ongoing work in the world requires that we work with other people in capacities of trust and competence.

Until recently these various levels have been treated as separate entities, and the care of each has resided with a specialist. Often these specialists had little or no understanding or appreciation of how that part was related to the other parts. Bodies were put in the hands of physicians, brains with educators, feelings with psycho-therapists, souls with the clergy, and the rest in a no-man's-land.

In any given human being at any point in time, a dynamic interplay exists between all levels. It is as if there were a formula of A (body) + B (brain) + C (emotions) + D (senses) + E (interactions) + F (nutrition) + G (context) + H (soul) = S (self). All parts do add up to a self, although the self is more than the sum of the parts.¹⁰

Good communication is first established on the qualities you possess as a partner otherwise your efforts will be of little consequence. At this time we can consider three personal qualities: warmth, genuineness, and empathy.

Warmth: Les & Leslie Parrott write about warmth, genuineness and empathy within a relationship. "The key to personal warmth is acceptance. Rather than evaluating or requiring change, you simply accept the thoughts, feelings, and actions of the person you love."¹¹ When I think of acceptance I consider the challenge we frequently take on when our spouse has done something that is unpleasant or contradicts our personal style of behavior. Acceptance may say that you have the right to be who you are and I accept you just where you are. Warmth invites the spouse to experience an unconditional safety and acceptance without judgment. When we truly experience this unconditional warmth and acceptance we

¹⁰ Ibid., 179-80.

¹¹ Les and Leslie Parrott, *Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts*, 78.

have invited God's grace to seep into the fabric of our marital relationship, stopping the unhealthy attempts of trying to win one another's approval.

Genuineness: "How is genuineness expressed? Not in words. What you say to your partner is far less important than how you say it—with a smile, a shrug, a frown, or a glare. Consider this: nonverbal communication accounts for 58 percent of the total message. Tone of voice makes up 35 percent of the message. The actual words you say accounts for only 7 percent of the total message.

You can shower your partner with love, but if you are not real, the love is hollow. You can use all the communication techniques in the world, but if you are not genuine, they won't work. Authenticity is something you are, not something you do. It comes from the heart, not the hands."¹²

The statement that authenticity is being something you are and not something you do may be true yet true authenticity has a deeper foundation. True authenticity cuts through the soul and spirit. It is when your love response is in harmony with your understanding of love. Jesus said that we must, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these'" (Mark 12:30-31 NIV).

Many of the couples that I have encountered within my counseling have presented a relationship which from the surface appears to have all the elements of an authentic love yet it is beneath the surface that the un-surrendered heart is blocking the relationship from being genuine. The un-surrendered heart that blocks the relationship is the heart that chooses to protect the self from the reality of God's Grace, a grace that surrenders the emotions that surround faulty communication and embrace the ontological emotions of *agape* love and forgiveness.

¹² Ibid.

Earlier I mentioned that we needed to develop what I call our relational sonar in order to pick up distress signals from our spouse. As communication evolves in a marriage or any relationship we automatically begin to fine tune our relational sonar to pick up and filter signals. A marriage partner, a friend, a close business partner with whom you have relationships with, after a period of time, will have fine tuned their sonar in a way that they will detect for phoniness, fabricated feelings, and insincere intentions long before they are openly expressed. Without the knowledge of how you love God and yourself, your relationship with your spouse and others will generally be held at a cognitive level of love with perceptions based on culture, environment, family origin, and emotions.

Empathy: Jesus had empathy. It is best explained in the Scripture as follows: “Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity. For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted” (Heb. 2:14a, 17a, 18 NIV).

“The best way to avoid stepping on your mate’s toes is to put yourself in his or her shoes. That’s empathy—seeing the world from your partner’s perspective.”¹³ A life of communication is not a life lived within a comfort zone but a life that is always expanding. In part a communicative life is one that is always trying on shoes. It is the awesome dynamics of God’s creation through the sharing of the intrinsic knowledge of oneself with another person. Communication is not a life of assumptions but a journey of experiences as we step beyond assuming the

¹³ Ibid.

knowledge of what another person is experiencing to entering into the heart and mind of what another is experiencing so as to understand how they arrived at their perception of an experience. The Parrott's also state, "Loving with our heart alone is only sympathizing, while loving with our head alone is simply analyzing. Empathy, however brings together both sympathetic and analytic abilities, both heart and head, to fully understand our partners. Empathy says, 'If I were you, I would act as you do; I understand why you feel the way you feel.'"¹⁴

On numerous occasions I have heard the statement "keep church and state separate." The response seems to be that there is not a place that they can link together to form any mutual benefit. It has also been said that you cannot handle a relationship at home in the same manner you do your business or at work. I have discovered that the way communication operates in work relationships is linked to personal relationships at home or outside of business. This is what Max DePree, who became one of the Presidents of Herman Miller, a leader in the furniture industry, says about communication:

In most vital organizations, there is a common bond of interdependence, mutual interest, interlocking contributions, and simple joy. Part of the art of leadership is to see that the common bond is maintained and strengthened, a task certainly requiring good communication. Just as any relationship requires honest and open communication to stay healthy, so the relationships within corporations improve when information is shared accurately and freely.¹⁵

DePree makes it clear that some of the same needs for a healthy corporation are also the basic needs of a relationship.

¹⁴ Ibid., 80.

¹⁵ Max DePree, *Leadership Is an Art*, (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 101.

DePree states that communication through behavior happens all the time and corporations need additional ways of communication because corporations are spread out all over the world. Therefore a means other than behavior must be implemented to handle intangible, crucial, and fragile information to a widespread group. In a corporation good communication is for teaching and learning the way people can bridge the gaps formed through growing companies (or growing families) in order to stay in touch, build trust, seeking help, monitor performance, and share their vision. DePree also states, "Communication clarifies the vision of participative ownership as a way of building relationships within and without corporation."¹⁶

Attributes of good communication in the corporate world are:

- Good listening. If no one listens then all communication is lost therefore being a good listener is an absolute.
- Communication is an ethical question because dishonest or careless communication tells much about the character of the people involved.
- Communication means a respect for individuals.
- "Access to pertinent information is essential to completing a task or job.

The right to know is basic. Moreover, it is better to err on the side of sharing too much information than risk leaving someone in the dark. Information is power, but it is pointless power if hoarded. Power must be shared for an organization or a relationship to work."¹⁷

¹⁶ Ibid., 102.

¹⁷ Ibid., 104.

- Everyone has a right and obligation to make communication simple and clear.
- Everyone is owed truth and courtesy, though truth and courtesy may be constraint and inconvenient.
- Communication requires us to practice scrutiny. Scrutiny encompasses several points.
 1. Respect for the English language or language of the culture.
 2. An acknowledgement that muddies speech or language usually means that the thinking is polluted and that our listener may need something special from us.
 3. Scrutinizing will uncover what DePree calls “third-class mail,” missives (words or statements) without meaning. This form of communication has no benefit in the corporation or in the family.
 4. Good communication brings about an awareness of the meaning of working together corporately or as a family unit.
 5. Good communication preserves the common vision.
 6. Good communication liberates.
 7. Good communication must be founded on logic, compassion, and sound reasoning.

These attributes within the corporate world are a harmonious blend with the attributes of communication throughout and will make communication a handy and well-used tool in all of life's issues. We must seek to discover how communication is applicable throughout all of life to even begin to incorporate it effectively within

the marital relationship. The purpose is not to treat our spouse as an employee that we are trying to manipulate for greater performance or productivity therefore enhancing profits but to treat our spouse with the dignity, respect, trust, and moral integrity fitting his or her role in the relationship.

We have viewed communication from a corporate and therapeutic viewpoint. Now I would like for us to compare the above corporate attributions of leadership and communication with scripture to determine if they are or are not applicable.

“My dear brothers and sisters, be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry” (James 1:19, NLT). Communication is more than just talking. Two people talking at the same time are not communicating, they are just making noise and communication only occurs as James wrote, when people are quicker to listen than they are to speak. This was one of DePree’s first attributes. “If a person sins because he does not speak up when he hears a public charge to testify regarding something he has seen or learned about, he will be held responsible” (Lev. 5:1 NIV).

The second point from DePree dealt with communication being an ethical issue. God saw it as an ethical issue as well and dishonesty carried the consequences of bearing the guilt. Telling the truth should be a way of life for the Christian and it is of high demand in the corporate world. “Instead, we will hold to the truth in love, becoming more and more in every way like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church” (Eph. 4:15, NLT).

Point seven of DePree's outline concerning truth: If we were to consider how many times we open our mouths and then note that the words we have spoken will pass through a sieve of truthfulness, love and edification we would probably become speechless. We would do well to consider what we have to say before we say it yet it is in the home that this seems to be most difficult. As Christians we seem to attend to our speech and be more careful in the world, where at home where we can be ourselves and those "selves" should continue to show the Christ-like character that was demonstrated to the world. To speak truth in love brings honesty and openness into the relationship and love brings about a seasoning that always respects the other person, seeking his or her best interest.

DePree speaks of scrutinizing communication. "Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them" (Eph. 4:29, NLT). We must respect our language and culture and allow no place for vulgar or improper language to be used. Such language does not rate the postage required of "third-class mail" and is without benefit. It is clear that words are powerful and that they can either wound or heal a relationship or an organization. In couple communication we should develop a pattern of speech that imparts grace to our listeners. If we would only remember that words spoken can impact the life of the hearer for years, we would learn to choose our words carefully and consider them in light of our relationship with Christ.

This is the purpose that the Epistle James calls us into account. In chapter 3, James compares the damage the tongue can do to a raging fire. Hurtful words can

cause deep wounds and people dare not be careless in what they say believing they can apologize later. The secular childhood rhyme or response to harmful words is “sticks and stones may break my bones but words cannot hurt me” is one of the greatest emotional deceivers there is. This little rhyme illustrates the power and smoothness of a lie. In truth this rhyme should go “stick and stones may break my bones but words will break my spirit.” Words have destroyed more families and relationships than any other form of abuse. The tongue may be small but it will either be the instrument of great harm or great good. Whichever the direction, it is up to us.

We find the corporate and biblical illustration clearly in Acts 15:36, where Paul and Barnabas communicate truth in life. In *The Soul Care Bible*, a personality profile expounds on the communication Paul and Barnabas experienced.

Paul and Barnabas formed a powerful missionary team. They met because Barnabas saw Christ in Paul's life before other people did. Barnabas, whose name means Son of Encouragement (Acts 4:36 NIV), believed God actually could transform someone like Paul into a genuine disciple. Until the end of their first missionary journey Paul (the former Saul) still needed Barnabas as a character witness. But their partnership was temporary because their reasons for participating were different. Paul was called to a worldwide mission; Barnabas was called to recognize and encourage those who needed it.

Eventually their different purposes took them in different directions. A dispute over the young disciple John Mark became the occasion of their separation. Paul thought Mark had proven himself unreliable and Barnabas believed Mark was worth another chance. They settled their honest differences of opinion with a solution that allowed each of them to continue to pursue his calling from God. Something important would have been lost if either had given in to the other. The missionary's task might have been effected if Paul had agreed to allow someone he did not trust to accompany them. Mark's life might have taken a far different course if Barnabas had agreed to leave him behind.

People sometimes believe that communication and action are separate parts of life. They wrongly assume that we can communicate one way and live another. If what we say and what we do contradict each other, one of them is a lie. Both Paul and Barnabas acted consistently with what they honestly believed to be true. They parted as brothers on different missions. They did not make staying together more important than obeying God. The Lord, in turn, blessed each one of them.

Christians throughout history have repeatedly failed to apply this lesson about obedience to God. Believers have separated or stayed together too often for the wrong reasons. When we decide to win an argument rather than obey God, we have already taken a wrong turn.¹⁸

Communication is any behavior that transmits information between people.

Within marriage communication makes the needs of one spouse known to the other in order that they may be met. Failure in communicating usually involves each spouse centering on communicating his or her needs while ignoring the communicated needs of the other. This problem ultimately stems from self-gratification and self-centeredness. Regardless of being Christian or non-Christian this can only be remedied when the couple chooses to become other-centered.

Everett Worthington in *Marriage Counseling*, writes:

Good communication differs from couple to couple. Essentially, good communication is that which effectively accomplishes the goals of communication while being (a) consistent with Scripture and (b) within Gods' will. Scripture does not describe precisely how people should communicate. Neither should counselors. Many theories have described good communication. Research has later shown that both distressed and non-distressed couples engaged in the 'good' communication as well as the 'bad' communication.¹⁹

When ministering to couples that appear to be in distress you can assume that they have developed communication patterns that are not working for them. If

¹⁸Tim Clinton, ed. *The Soul Care Bible*. Edward Hindson, general editor and George Ohlschlager, consulting editor. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001), 1441.

¹⁹Everett L. Worthington, Jr., *Marriage Counseling: A Christian Approach to Counseling Couples*, (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1989), 240.

the couple is to become more satisfied in their relationship and you are to help in intervention then they must change the unhealthy patterns. As a counselor, minister, or lay person who has felt the call to intervention for couples who are having a difficult time communicating, a part of the task will be to help direct couples in a journey to discovering other-centered and God-centeredness in their communication. Here are three steps to consider:

1. Help the couple journey into an awareness of the problems in their communication.
2. The decision must be made to break the old patterns of communication before considering step three.
3. Implement a process that will help the couple in a journey to building new and better communication patterns that meet the needs of their spouse through a focus on God's will in their relationship.

This section of chapter four has demonstrated how essential it is for us to grasp the true essence of communication. This chapter has illustrated that the elements of communication is multi-dimensional in how it affects every aspect of our existence. Without communication we would not have a means of connection. It reaches all aspects of the human life, spiritual, physical, and intellectual.

By looking at communication from a corporate and therapeutic viewpoint I was able to compare the above corporate attributes of leadership and communication with Scripture and they were applicable. Communicative life is one that is always active and dynamic. It is the awesome dynamics of God's creation through the sharing of the intrinsic knowledge of oneself with another person.

Communication is not a life of assumptions but a journey of experiences as we step beyond assuming the knowledge of what another person is experiencing to entering into the heart and mind of that persons experience so as to understand how they arrived at their perception of an experience.

Now that we have a workable grasp on the meaning of communication it is appropriate to examine an overview of counseling models.

Counseling Models and Overview

As seen above, experts agree that communication is one of if not the most essential means of connecting with self, others, and God. The need to establish and define clarity in our perceptions and expressions is essential to the dynamics of a healthy relationship.

This self-awareness brings transparency to the marriage allowing both partners to genuinely love each other as Christ loves us. Learning to communicate with others helps us to learn how to explore the core of our self-being. We learn how to love our neighbor, spouse, children, and our parents as we love ourselves. When communication in a marriage becomes bilingual (learning to speak each others love language) we will find that our personal needs will be met because we have learned how to meet our spouse's needs.

In making an assessment of some of the marriage and communication models currently at our disposal we are able to explore various attributes of these different models and shape a model that can be used at your specific church or even create an eclectic model to be used by any church to better meet the needs of their particular social cultural economic group.

Gary Chapman has written a few relationship-building books. The titles have been nearly duplicated and many models and methods pertaining to the principles he applies to relationships are also duplicated. The wheel is not being reinvented but the tread design does change. In his book, *The Five Love Languages*, Chapman outlines a model to teach spouses to learn and speak one another's primary love language.

As I illustrated earlier in regards to Joe and Ann it will be essential for them to be bilingual concerning the events that have arose. At the same time they will need to be transparent enough to express inward feelings that may arise from coping with self-worth and identity. If they do not listen to the messages communicated to each other either through words or actions and parrot them back then what one may interpret to mean war may really mean peace. Like interpreting the acidic levels on the Earth or in the atmosphere, couples must become equipped with relational sonar that can pick up signals of distress as well as signals that represent security and love. When the sonar has been turned off, shut down or blocked without repair then each member in the relationship (family or couple) will begin to drift away from each other.

When considering a technique for marital counseling the response is easily over-whelming. Researching marital issues as a topic on self-help one would probably find more on the subject of family communication or communication in general than any other subject matter. Therefore a brief overview of some current techniques to marital counseling will help clarify the essential need for communication in relationships as the principle behind God and communication.

I will describe some of the current models offered to the Christian community. This will give a flavor of techniques along with presenting ways of shaping various aspects to meet the needs within a community.

Emotional Focused Therapy

Susan M. Johnson is co-creator with Leslie Greenberg of emotionally focused therapy (EFT) for couples. Their work is based on the idea of how an emotional experience from the past can dominate and ravage a system of relationship that is toxic. Their goal is to discover the primacy of the emotional experience in order to undo the lasting effects of the emotional event. Everett Worthington, editor of *Marriage & Family* states, "Perhaps EFT for couples has more empirical support for its efficacy than does any other approach to couples counseling except for behavioral therapy."²⁰

The following is a reflection of the spiritual influences in Dr. Johnson's life and how she incorporates spirituality into her therapy sessions.

Dr. Johnson followed the EFT with *The Practice of Emotionally Focused Marital Therapy: Creating Connection* in 1996. She was recently presented the AAMFT Outstanding Contribution to Marriage and Family Therapy Award. She travels the world teaching EFT, an empirically supported approach. A recent research review found 70-73% of initially distressed couples were nondistressed after 10 sessions of EFT (Johnson, Hunsley, Greenberg, & Schindler, 1999).²¹

Emotionally Focused Therapy for Couples argues that the processing of primary emotion plays a pivotal role in successful couple's therapy. It is a brief couple's therapy approach promoting lasting change by focusing on both intrapsychic and interpersonal dimensions. Pastors may find the

²⁰Everett Worthington, Jr., ed., "The Busy Researcher's Digest." *Marriage & Family: A Christian Journal* 4, no. 2 (2001): 109.

²¹Brent A. Bradley, "An Intimate Look into Emotionally Focused Therapy: An Interview with Susan M. Johnson." *Marriage & Family: A Christian Journal* 4, no. 2 (2001): 117-124.

presentation on the impact of emotions upon intimate relationships a powerful and relevant perspective for understanding marital intimacy.²²

The EFT model is an experiential approach where you try and expand people's experience of the moment by encouraging them to process the experience and examine the way in which they process the experience. An EFT therapist involves engagement and contact with the client. You strive for an empathic, collaborative contact where you are connecting with your client instead of an expert orientated contact. EFT will help people stay in contact with their experience. A challenge for the EFT is to not allow individual stereotyped ideas to affect what a particular emotion means. The EFT considers emotional responses as central and they focus on what is happening in the here and now in the room. The EFT is always playing with the interaction between the interpersonal and intrapsychic discovering how emotions get you to respond a certain way with your partner and how a relational dance evolves and is evoked thus evoking other emotions and responses. The EFT goes with the emotions because they believe that emotions lead to people's basic perceptions and the meaning they make of a situation. The purpose of this is to help couples look at their relationship not in segments but as a whole dance. "By doing this the EFT model helps people contact, articulate, and integrate their inner emotional experience of relatedness in a new way. Then, gradually we help them shape new kinds of interaction, new kinds of dialogue."²³

Attachment theory is compatible with system theory because attachment theory says that the way people define themselves and create the most basic ways that they operate in the world—their personality, if you like—are

²² Brent A. Bradley and James L. Furrow. "Annotated Bibliography of a Sampling of the Work of Susan M. Johnson," *Marriage & Family: A Christian Journal* 4, no. 2 (2001): 127-29.

²³ Brent A. Bradley, "An Intimate Look Into Emotionally Focused Therapy: An Interview With Susan M. Johnson," *Marriage & Family: A Christian Journal* 4, no. 2 (2001): 117-24.

constructed mostly in powerful emotionally loaded interactions with a few significant others. There's no reason to think of emotions unsystemic. Such a proposition is not inherent in the theory (Johnson, 1998). There's no reason to define a focus on inner experience as unsystemic. Somehow we did in the way systems theory evolved within family therapy. But exclusion of focus of inner experience is not inherent in the theory. For me, people's emotions are *leading elements* in a system of interactions. They organize the dance.²⁴

Comments. Emotional Focused Therapy warrants strong consideration within a church setting provided the pastoral staff or lay person receives adequate training in EFT. It has therapeutic qualities without the burden of an elaborate knowledge of all the behavioral science. A benefit to EFT in a church setting is the fact that it is short term and the role it plays in processing or organizing the relational dance and intimacy. In my introduction concerning the husband who spoke of white buffalo this process could be used to help experience emotionally what it means to have a heard of white buffalo building a herd of emotional blocks. The EFT model focuses on emotions and the role they play in evoking responses.

Discovering our emotions and how they lead to our perceptions are a part of communication. Without understanding that emotions are equally corrupted from the consequences of the fall, may give way to believing we can obtain a once and for all definition of how we are feeling. There may be a multitude of variances to one particular emotion and we need to understand how to respond when various triggers engage that emotion.

Teaching Couples to Pray

A couple who seeks out a Christian therapist, pastors, spiritual advisors, or lay leaders when difficulties arise in their marriage is not something new in

²⁴ Ibid.

ministry. Neither is the encouragement to go and pray together. The concern is that they frequently leave the office of the therapist, spiritual advisor, pastor or lay leader discouraged and disillusioned and generally rendering it impossible for them to do so. Often times the admonition to pray together just becomes another area of conflict because of their inability to communicate when, how, where, and who should initiate the prayer or a matter of praying at all.

Edward Decker in *Teaching Couples to Pray Together* describes his model as

joint prayer by Christian couples in pastoral or explicitly Christian counseling. A rationale is suggested for the spiritual and marital benefits that occur with joint prayer. References are provided that demonstrate that such an intervention is consistent with integrative behavioral couples therapy (though prayer is indicated for spiritual reasons rather than simply because it is therapeutic). Instructions are provided on how to teach couples to pray together. Special considerations are identified, including when to teach the procedure to troubled couples. A 3-step prayer model is introduced.

Teaching couples to pray together in a manner that will strengthen their marriage relationship requires a matter of timing, skill, and specific instructions. In order for pastors and lay leaders to do this they need a method in teaching couples to pray together through an intervention consistent with social learning-cognitive marital therapy.

Social learning-cognitive marital therapy is a particular application of behavioral marital therapy characterized by a dual emphasis on the social environment and cognitive-perceptual processes as determinants of behavior. "More to the point, marital distress is thought to be related to the ratio of positive-to-negative interactions and a person's causal attributions for those interactions" (Gottman, 1998). As originally formulated by Stuart (1980), social learning-cognitive marital therapy was based on two philosophical ideas: philosophical humanism and idealistic positivism.²⁵

²⁵ Edward E. Decker, Jr., "Teaching Couples to Pray Together: A Spiritual Application Consistent With the Social Learning-Cognitive Approach to Marital Therapy," *Marriage & Family: A Christian Journal* 4, no. 2 (2001): 131-37.

Philosophical humanism refers simply to an indicative of the capacity of humans to change creatively and idealistic. Positivism refers to how a person has the ability to formulate a vision of how they wish for their relationship to be in the future. Couples who develop the perspective that they are mutually responsible for problems in their relationship and realize that they both need to implement change are going to improve their relationship. This requires accepting each other as being creative and as a collaborative set. By helping couples to identify with these two principles, in the context of their relationship, this will work in fostering change and leads to more positive interactions, hence lowering levels of marital distress resulting in the opportunity to approach the issue of couple's prayer.

Within the context of marital therapy introducing prayer as an intervention depends on several factors which need to be ascertained during an initial interview. It should be determined as to how the couple's relationship is influenced by factors external to prayer as well as the consequent level of distress and commitment. Although a couple may share basic Christian beliefs and attest to the importance of prayer when an erosion of values or issues arises, the reinforcement of such values may no longer result in marital satisfaction. For this reason a pastor or layperson should know the extent to which the couples view their religious faith and how it pertains to praying together.

Introducing prayer in this model as an intervention is designed for the purpose of intervention through a collaborative set of contingency-based reinforcement schedules based on reciprocity. The purpose of establishing this contingency-based reinforcement methodology is to insist on reciprocity and an

exchange of mutually desired behaviors which will facilitate an increase in marital satisfaction through positive behavioral exchanges enhancing a natural consequence of behavioral change. When there is a supportive environment, cognitive and effective changes will generally result. The use of prayer as intervention is also a part of the setting in which counseling takes place.

A limiting factor to the use of prayer surrounds the ethical issues of prayer in a secular setting. This form of intervention will generally be best suited in the pastoral counseling or a Christian counseling setting and would not be appropriate for non-Christian partners. This is one of the limiting factors to this model. However, in the context of the church there may be a time when non-Christian couples may be seeking the spiritual alternative and it may open the door to opportunities when such couples approach people in ministry for help.

We must remember that teaching couples to pray is an intervention that requires commitment on both parties. As with other interventions, social learning-cognitive marital therapy is best used after couples have established a level of emotional acceptance. This opens the way to teach couples to pray together.

Instructions for the use of this model are best presented orally and in writing giving a greater likelihood of comprehension. Helping couples to understand the time requirements for this activity may help couples that are estranged and believe they must spend a concerted time in prayer, from the impression that it is impractical and impossible. The reason for this is that most couples have reported that when they pray through the three steps that they have spent less than five minutes. Along with this the pastor or counselor should discuss with the couple the

location where they will pray. The emphasis needs to be on the fact that it is not location, such as the dinner table, in the morning at the door leaving home, or in bed before they go to sleep. It is not an emphasis on physical location or style but an emphasis of the attitude of their heart and mind that matters. Along with being specific with these points couples are encouraged to touch each other in a safe manner because generally touch is non-existent in estranged couples and there is need to change a negative to positive emotion that can become safe and reestablish a new closeness.

In order for prayer to be meaningful the pastor or counselor should move away from presenting prayer as a task or homework assignment. The pastor or counselor may encourage them to agree to pray a certain number of times before the next session. This empowers the couple to create the time and put forth the effort to allow this act of faith to work in their relationship.

The Prayer Model

1. First each person is instructed to thank God for something specific about his or her mate. Beginning prayer with something which they are thankful not only fulfills the biblical admonition to do so but also continues the emphasis on one of the central tasks of behavioral marriage counseling: increasing positive interactions (Jacobson & Holtzworth-Monroe, 1986; N. S. Jacobson, 1984; Stuart, 1980).
2. Second, each person is to pray for something specific that is important to his or her mate. This kind of specificity compels each partner to be aware of the other and to tune into the external circumstances and events of his or her partner's life and to his or her innermost thoughts and feelings. Vocalizing this awareness in prayer fosters a change in the internal reality of each person. The person praying becomes increasingly sensitive to his or her partner.
3. Third, each person is to pray to change something specific about him or herself that he or she knows is important to the mate. Often marital

conflicts are centered in power and control struggles (Crane, 1996; Jacobson & Holtzworth-Monroe, 1986; Stuart, 1980).

Couples need continued encouragement to pray together and to hear again why prayer is important because, according to behavioral marital therapies, most change takes place outside of the counseling office, in the “natural environment.”²⁶

Comments. The statement that this model is explicitly for Christian counseling diminishes the purpose of the model and destines it to be regarded as just another “go and pray,” “blab it and grab it,” “name it and claim it” illustration. We often stand back when we hear the statement teaching couples to pray yet, the disciples asked that very question of Jesus. Prayer is essential in the Christian life and should not be held in abeyance when the opportunity is afforded even in the non-Christian context. Ethical principles and professionalism do not have to be compromised merely because of a secular setting.

There is enough scientific and medical documentation where prayer has been a positive influence. Prayer is synonymous with words like appeal, request, desire, hope, and wish. Even in the context of a non-Christian marriage to teach couples to present their request before a higher power or by merely expressing them in the form of a prayer illustrates the two originally formulated philosophical ideas by Stuart, *Helping Couples Change: A Social-learning Approach to Marital Therapy* (1980): humanism and idealistic positivism. Prayer has meaning and is not limited to those who profess Christianity.

I consider implementation of prayer into therapy, counseling, group instructing, and in the context of a retreat to be an essential tool. Although it is one of the most desired elements it is also the hardest to implement regularly into the

²⁶ Ibid.

models or for your on personal communication and marriage building model.

The Presenting of a Therapeutic Diagram to Couples on Metacommunication

Timothy A. Bryant, Ph.D., of Cornerstone Family Health, PC., Williamsport, Pennsylvania, states:

Metacommunication, a process-oriented communication style, is presented through a step-by-step pictorial presentation. This tool provides a foundation onto which a couple can shift from wrangling over specific issues to learning to manage their relating. . . . It can be used as a specific couple's therapy tool or an overall perspective from which to structure therapy. Many additional relational dynamics can easily be fit on this foundation as well.²⁷

The purpose is to discover how couples talk with one another and how significant the visual aid is in helping couples learn how to communicate.

Working with couples in marital therapy requires that they make a paradigm shift if lasting and significant progress is to be accomplished. I believe we have normally learned to live by issues rather than by process. We have learned to take positions on various issues, stand our ground, and defend them as a primary strategy of relating. Metacommunication is focusing on the process—that is, the way a couple communicates, not what the couple communicates about.”²⁸

Timothy Bryant thinks that couples come to therapy looking for someone to referee or manage their conflicts. His model is for the purpose of helping them to help themselves. He utilizes a drawing board to draw what he calls his metacommunication diagram that consists mainly of two wheels. These wheels describe how the couple is currently communicating. As he processes with the couple he utilizes the wheels to draw illustrations of how they are communicating

²⁷ Timothy A. Bryant, “The Presenting of a Therapeutic Diagram to Couples on Metacommunication,” *Marriage & Family: A Christian Journal* 4, no. 2 (2001): 147-52.

²⁸ Ibid.

while emphasizing a need for a maintenance language to help them better manage their marriage relationship. He considers the diagram to be foundational along with a companion handout identifying a list of communication roadblocks. This allows the couple to identify his or her side of unhealthy communication patterns and gives them a place to begin. I understand the purpose of this is to assist the couple in shifting from an adversarial relationship style to a cooperative approach and refocusing on the process allowing the partner to shift to addressing the pattern between them and their own part in the pattern. The couple is then invited to co-create a new pattern.

Within the step-by-step process the therapist, pastor or counselor will address the word *issue* and *process* to illustrate that they are *the what* that people talk about. The therapist, pastor or counselor then adds the word *how* to indicate the way people talk about the issue. Bryant suggests that people are trained culturally to be aware of their position and this frequently leads them into becoming locked into defending and debating their particular view point. Too often this leads couples into bitter struggles.

In utilizing the two wheels you are able to draw arrows representing the “he said” “she said” back and forth of a conversation. By adding the word *pattern* to illustrate that over a period of time (which he believes are shaped by the family of origin) the couple will be able to see that they have developed a certain style of communicating regardless of the issue they are discussing. Adding the word *react* two times over each other illustrates the ping pong effect of this unhealthy pattern illustrating that the pattern eventually seems to take on a life of its own.

Placing the word process above the word issue does some reemphasizing on the process. It is to illustrate that the process is more important than the issue without an effort to diminish the issue but to inform that if the process is not managed well the issue may become sabotaged by an unhealthy process.

After viewing the *process* over the *issue* you now place the word *relationship* above the word *issue* to demonstrate consequences and priority of placing their relationship over any given issue. An issue focused relationship results in a win-lose struggle because the issue is at the primary expense of the relationship.

After completion of this process you can then continue with the two circles by utilizing another color of marker to draw a positive cycle of interaction. You have the couple co-create this new cycle and label it as a response-response cycle. This develops deliberate choice making.

Once the couple becomes receptive to developing the response-response cycle, Bryant contrasts them to different cycles such as 50-50 versus 100-100. The 50-50 relationship is one in which says, "if you do your part, I will do mine," whereas the 100-100 relationship requires one to be committed to do his or her part completely. Each person is 100% responsible for their own behavior.

Couples are drawn to review their react-react cycle and to monitor unhealthy behavioral patterns with the goal of stopping the reemergence of the old cycle. By stepping out and looking at the unhealthy react-react pattern couples can then place a *do not symbol* over the area that seems to draw them back into the unhealthy pattern. When these patterns are identified an additional word *time-out* can be added. The purpose is to utilize a time-out in the same manner in which people on

the same team do. They take the time to discuss how they are currently relating and determine if they need to make changes to continue to accomplish the goal of a healthy relationship. When couples can reach this point in their communication then they can begin to utilize the meta-communication model as a specific tool for breaking through on resolving issues that have become harmful in their marriage.

Comments. The model on Metacommunication is applicable to any church. The old cliché, “A picture is worth a thousand words,” appears to hold true to the benefit that is brought about with this model. Its adaptability to other models would be either complementary or it could become the primary resource. When we realize that we are dealing with multiple families, as well as their core values, the utilization of a tool that helps couples visualize how they are communicating is paramount. Within my own adaptation of counseling and teaching (which is frequently done in a co-facilitating manner) the use of visual aids are essential.

Access to a general list of communication roadblocks can be found through libraries as well as in Timothy Bryant’s material or by making your own personal list.

There are many benefits to adapting the Metacommunication model to any current model in order to provide the intrinsic value of the visual aid in helping couples to help themselves by seeing patterns of communication.

Intensive Marital Therapy

Ronald G. Vogt, Ph.D., director of Philhaven’s Recovery of Hope Program describes an intensive intervention model to help troubled couples regain hope by spending a lot of time in one concentrated period. The focus is specifically on

couples in trouble and this method is thought to be more effective than spreading out the same amount of time through several hourly sessions. An explanation of the program is as follows:

In 1984, therapists at Philhaven Behavioral Health a private, non-profit institution Mt. Gretna, Pennsylvania, designed and began offering the "Recovery of Hope Intensive Week Program." This intensive approach follows a weeklong Monday-to-Friday format with 3 to 4 hours of direct counseling per day. While created to care for couples with severe relational distress, stable couples seeking marital growth have also been attracted to this format. Recovery of Hope's identity is grounded in providing professional marriage therapy within Christian values. While the program stance is pro-marriage, the therapists primarily work to assist distressed couples in understanding what contributed to the current difficulties and to assist them in making good choices on how to proceed. The therapists for each of the couples are male-female teams who treat one couple at a time.

Couples entering the intensive week program begin by completing the MCMI-III and the 16PF. During the week, couples examine family-of-origin issues through use of the geno-gram, participate in a one and a half hour psychodrama focusing on their marriage, spend time in one individual session with a therapist of the same gender, and receive oral and written feedback from the psychological testing. Each evening couples engage in a communication exercise and watch a video or read an article selected by their therapists. The overarching goal for all work is individual growth and owning one's personal and relational shortcomings.

The couples take Thursday and Friday to create a mutually negotiated contract to commit to their own individual growth goals and to restructure their relationship.

Since 1984, over 400 couples have gone through the intensive week and follow up evaluations of the program have demonstrated that 95% of the participating couples said that they were glad they went and that they would recommend the program to other couples.²⁹

An unpublished dissertation and their own resources from Philhaven Behavioral Health state that there are two areas that the intensive week is extremely adept. First it utilizes communication tools to reduce the intense negative emotional

²⁹ Ronald G. Vogt, "Intensive Marital Therapy," *Marriage & Family: A Christian Journal* 4, no. 2 (2001): 163-65.

exchange between a couple that incites the fight or flight response in the male. Intensive and thorough exploration of the marital relationship provides alternative explanations to marriage difficulties that lead to compassion rather than blame is the second significant factor:

The intensive week is appropriate for couples who want to gain a firm understanding of their marital dynamics and acquire interventions that are specifically designed for their shortcomings and marital issues. Typically, however, because of the cost, the intensive intervention attracts couples that are in highly distressed marriages. For instance, 42% of the participants declared their primary goal for the intensive week was not to improve the marriage, but to decide whether to end it. The intensive format is inappropriate if one of the spouses is severely limited due to addiction, brain injury, or is easily fatigued and overwhelmed. Disadvantages of the intensive approach include taking a week off from work and parenting responsibilities, which may be difficult for some clients. Moreover, few insurance companies at present cover intensive treatment in a couple's format.³⁰

Some benefits to consider with the intensive format for marital therapy are how it condenses six months of therapy into one week. In the case of couples contemplating divorce the intensive format may make all the difference. For couples in crisis considering one week verses six weeks can be quite appealing. The intensive format may also bring about the intensity necessary to create a radical shift in the marriage relationship including the ratio of positive to negative interactions between wife and husband. The intensive format would also be advantageous for the therapist by allowing the therapist to observe more of the relational dance and lastly the most important for this approach is the prolonged experience of the clients in the daily interaction provided by the therapist and with each other.

Comments. The Recovery of Hope Intensive Week Program cost is \$1,950.00. Because of the cost of this program it may be most suitable as a source

³⁰ Ibid., 165.

for referral versus a church intervention program. It is a method or therapy that the pastoral team and lay ministers should be aware of and use for referral. A marriage in crisis could certainly lead to volatile situations that trained personnel would be more prepared to intervene. Hopefully, pastor and lay people would be able to identify situations that are beyond their training and seek other avenues of help for the marriage in crisis.

Personality assessments and inventories have advantages; however, they are an item that can be eliminated without diminishing an intensive week of therapy. I stated earlier that I utilize a co-facilitating technique in much of my own marital counseling and class work. To have male-female teams trained in marriage and family therapy is a very good idea but may not be accepted by one or both of the seeking couple or suitable in every situation.

Some of the shortcomings evolve around setting aside an entire week to go through the program, expense, low number of clients treated over a vast period of time and the fact that the program uses "host homes." Regardless, Philhaven's research outcome is impressive. Making a difference in people's lives does not always come in huge numbers:

In summarizing the couples that come through our program, 42% either have been or are currently separated from this partner, 24% have had (or are currently involved in) an affair in this marriage, 39% have used physical violence during arguments, and 54% are seriously considering divorce and threaten divorce as a solution to their problems. One year after going through the program, 22% have divorced. However, 92% say that the program was beneficial to them personally and 98% said they would highly recommend the program to others.³¹

³¹Ronald G. Vogt, Philhaven's Recovery of Hope Program results [on-line]. Available from http://www.philhaven.com/pages/pageview.cfm?section=services&dir=services/roh/intensive_week&page=results; accessed 4 January 2003.

**The Forgiving Experience:
A Technique to Help Couples Heal
Soul-Murdering Wounds.**

Research is showing that the ability to forgive is a key factor in healthy marriages (Fenell, 1993). Because the bond of a marital relationship is a sacred, fragile one, it can be bruised and broken easily. The technique described in this article is designed to give couples simple steps in walking toward forgiveness. It is structured to heal even the most serious of offenses committed within a marriage, offenses we call soul-murdering-wounds.³²

As stated the purpose of the soul-healing model of therapy is to provide a technique that would bring understanding, enhance empathy, and foster forgiveness. Beverly Rodgers and Tom Rodgers discovered that couples suffering from deep hurts such as addictions, abuse, and adultery needed extra help. These three acts in the marriage can have no other name other than the identified sin that they are as well as the understanding that they can and frequently do murder the soul of a partner as well as the soul of the marriage. I have personally used the term soul-rape as an identifier of these marriage destroyers.

Foundation theories to the Forgiving Experience model are derived from the Alcoholics Anonymous process by replication of the fourth and fifth step where individuals are encouraged to do a moral inventory of the wrongs they have done and to begin making amends for them. An addition to these steps is the inclusion of a list of offenses that have been committed against them by their mate that they feel they cannot forgive. The reason for including a list of offenses that have been committed that are thought to be unforgivable is to once and for all wipe the slate clean of past hurts and begin moving toward healing. In order to wipe the slate

³² Beverly Rodgers and Tom Rodgers, "The Forgiving Experience: A Technique to Help Couples Heal Soul-Murdering Wounds," *Marriage & Family: A Christian Journal* 4, no. 2 (2001) 167-70.

clean and not merely suppress the offense into some emotional black hole a method of expressing anger in a safe and constructive environment is found in the second premise of The Forgiving Experience.

The second premise of the forgiving experience is based upon the exercise called the *container*, which is a part of Hendrix's (1990) imago relationship theory. Hendrix used this tool to enable couples to express anger and resentment toward each other in a safe and constructive environment. One partner shares his or her anger about past wounds and hurts and the other serves as a container for their rage. Rather than reacting, the listener puts on his or her psychic armor (or in our model, spiritual armor) and stays calm and focused as the rage washes over them.

This allows the listener to hear what the mate is saying. There are two main purposes for this exercise. First, it allows the offender partner to say what hurts him or her and give the situation the anger and emotion it deserves. Second, it enables the emotion to once and for all be expressed and resolved so partners can put the past behind them and move ahead in the relationship, unencumbered by past pain (Hendrix).³³

The Hendrix model allowed couples to exercise their rage but it did not provide the motivation to bring couples into true forgiveness. This is why the spiritual component was added to the forgiveness model. In the forgiveness model couples are encouraged to view themselves and their partner as wounded-souls that have been victimized by life's traumas, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23 NIV). In addition to viewing each other as wounded-souls couples are taught to use God's grace for man's sin as inspiration to forgive each other:

The last premise of the forgiving experience is based on the work of Lewis Smedes (1984), which postulated that in order for true forgiveness to occur and trust to be rebuilt, several things must happen. The person asking for forgiveness must truly feel the pain that he or she has inflicted upon the other person. The partner requesting forgiveness needs to be willing to empathize with his or her victim and needs to understand why he or she committed the offense so that change can occur. This is not an easy task

³³ Ibid.

because it often brings up guilt that the perpetrator does not want to feel.³⁴

There are eight steps in the technique for the forgiving experience model developed by Rodgers and Rodgers. Following is a brief summary of each step.

1. The sender/offender makes a list of hurts and resentments in the marriage and then they pray over them prior to making an effort to state them and let them go.
2. The sender/offender shares the list with the receiver/offender along with the painful feelings including giving each action the anger it deserves without causing harm to tissue, property or soul. The sender/offended partner shares personal feelings, not attitudes or opinions. This is where we use communication dialogue such as when you do “this,” “I feel this.”
3. The receive/offender feels the pain.
4. The receiver/offender makes a statement to the effect that the pain has caused.
5. Out of humility the receiver/offender asks for forgiveness.
6. The sender/offended partner prayerfully grants forgiveness.
7. The receiver/offender promises to change in the future. Trust is a major factor and a barrier for forgiveness. Change must be with the intent of the heart and soul.
8. When forgiven the sender/offender responds with a gratitude of appreciation.

³⁴ Ibid.

Comments. Rodgers and Rodgers describe a forgiving experience to help couples deal with soul-murdering wounds and Shann Ferch discussed how he helps clients deal with divorce by addressing intergenerational patterns that might prevent one spouse from forgiving the ex-spouse. Something unique to this technique was the invitation to the client to share a subjective experience of the counseling. It may be beneficial to consider what proactive method we could take to apply this intergenerational technique along with the forgiving experience in order to prevent a divorce.

I have used the term soul-rape to define the consequences of sinful acts within marriages that wreak such a level of devastation. My preference is still toward the word soul-rape because as hideous as it is, it is something that recovery is possible whereas murder is a final term. The elements of this model are easy to understand, concise, and quite applicable. Without an element of forgiveness within any model it would be incomplete. I see this as a process that any ministry team can glean information from and learn how to apply it. After all, forgiveness is taught by Jesus throughout the Scripture. “Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times? ‘No!’ Jesus replied, ‘seventy times seven!’” (Matt. 18:21a, 22 NIV). It is also an element that can be formulated to fit a more generic and inclusive group of couples.

It is more advantageous to ask clients to reflect on what occurred in therapy and what they got out of it than to merely allow them to leave with the assumption that something productive happened. By having some form of exit interview from couples who have passed through your model of intervention you have the ability to

reevaluate and shape the model to become more practical and efficient in your church.

Talking and Listening

A program called *Couple Communication I: Talking and Listening Together* has its beginnings as far back as the 1960's at The University of Minnesota Family Study Center. Since the beginning, research and the practical experiences of the instructors and participant couples have provided new information about teaching communication skills to partners. "To date, more than 500,000 couples have participated in the Couple Communication program."³⁵

This program teaches the attitudes and behaviors, along with the skills in the process of communication. "No substitute exists for love and caring in communication! However, even with a genuine caring attitude, communication can be unclear, inept, or misunderstood. This is where skill enters."³⁶ Here is a brief summary of each chapter.

Chapter one teaches caring about you. This chapter helps the individual recognize and expand their self-awareness. Learning this process would be a great help in learning what the Balswick's wrote about in *The Family* regarding self-expression.³⁷ It also helps one identify six related talking skills for expressing their awareness completely and as accurately as possible by developing of a map, The Awareness Wheel, broken down into the areas of Actions, Sensory Data, Wants,

³⁵ Sherod Miller, Phyllis A. Miller, Elam W. Nunnally, Daniel B. Wackman. *Talking and Listening Together: Couple Communication I*. (Evergreen, Colorado: Interpersonal Communication Programs, Inc., 1991). Eleventh printing: Interpersonal Communication, 2000, iv.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

³⁷ Jack O. Balswick and Judith K. Balswick. *The Family: A Christian Perspective on the Contemporary Home*. 1989, 2d ed., (Grand Rapids, Michigan. Baker Books), 2000.

Thoughts, and Feelings. Through these five “zones” one will learn how they interact as you become conscious of them while communicating with your partner.

Chapter two teaches caring about your partner. In this chapter couples learn five powerful listening skills and the Listening Cycle.

Chapter three is about resolving conflicts. Couples learn how to map their issues so that they may turn their issues into a cooperative decision-making and conflict-resolving process.

Chapter four helps you choose a communication style. They outline four styles of talking and listening and the positive and negative impacts of the styles on conversations with their partner. Along the way there are exercises, pre- and post-questionnaires to help couples to set goals and evaluate their progress.

Comments. This book stands alone as a program in itself. Whether participating in a course as a couple, in a group of couples, or reading the book alone, it is sure to heighten one’s awareness of “how” one has been communicating. Learning the skills taught in this model helps define a *process* of communication so that you may enhance your skills and identify areas of needed improvement.

Summary. In this chapter I have shown that communication is a valued yet misunderstood part of the daily human life. Communication between couples is like the rain that falls on the earth which nurtures and replenishes the valued life it sustains. Along with the natural state of rainfall come the damaging effects of pollution in the form of acid rain. It goes unnoticed on the earth until, its effects, in some areas, are too late. This demonstrates how noticeable or not that the damage from the collapse of communication within a marriage begins. First it may go

unnoticed as family's journey into the regiment of everyday events at work, at home, at school, at church. Initially, how these daily activities are impacting ones perception of their own life may have no outward sign.

This depiction of "acid" that could form in a relationship eats away at communication. In this chapter, discovery and answering the lingering question, "What is communication?" is answered in many ways and forms via verbal and nonverbal exchanges through many forms of expression. Understanding the process and importance of self-awareness brings about a transparency in the source or originator of the message being sent. Expression of behavior and attitude of verbal or nonverbal exchanges are derived from beliefs, feelings, and intentions that one holds. These exchanges could be reflections of one's own attitude about self and their partner.

Virginia Satir and Michele Baldwin suggests that there is interplay of mind and body represented in the physical, intellectual, emotional, nutritional, contextual, sensual, and spiritual influences on our behavior in communication.

Personal qualities that one possesses of warmth, genuineness, and empathy play a role in communication. Communication is not a life of assumptions but a journey of experiences. Couples in empathy of each other's experiences bring about other qualities to enhance their communication between each other.

Max DePree, President of Herman Miller, a leading furniture industry iterates how important and vital good communication is in the corporate world. Good communication bridges gaps formed by staying in touch, building trust, seeking help, monitoring performance, and sharing vision. All of these attributes of

communication are clearly supported throughout the Word of God and uphold the other elements of communication. Building skills to communicate for relationships at work could prove to enhance the marital relationship.

Model Summary

Emotional Focused Therapy warrants strong consideration within a church setting provided the pastoral staff or lay person has had adequate training in EFT. It has therapeutic qualities without the burden of an elaborate knowledge of all the behavioral science. A benefit of EFT in a church setting is the fact that it is short term and the role it plays in processing or organizing the relational dance and intimacy. The EFT model focuses on emotions and the role they play in evoking responses.

Discovering our emotions and how they lead to our perceptions are a part of communication. There may be a multitude of variances to any particular emotion and we need to understand how to respond when various triggers engage that emotion. Emotional Focused Therapy is a gateway to understanding our emotions from which we are able to define how we see ourselves.

The model, Teaching Couples to Pray, is essential in every church. Once the couple displays that some of the conflict and anger has subsided and both are moving toward acceptance of working congruently with each other, they may accept praying together. Using the prayer model may be easier to initiate on couples that do not have deep rooted issues. Depending on the depth of marital conflict, couples who commit to this model will not only benefit in their marital relationship but in the relationship with God. Once the couple has learned how to move through road

blocks in their communication, the couple may use prayer as a skill and tool in future conflicts.

The metacommunication model by Timothy A. Bryant focuses on the process; the way a couple communicates, not what the couple communicates about. Teaching the couple to shift from an adversarial relationship style to cooperative approach and refocusing on the process allows the partners to shift to addressing the pattern between them, and their own part in the pattern. The couples are then invited to co-create a new pattern.

Intensive Marital Therapy, the one-week intensive recovery developed by Ronald Vogt is intensive. Whereas, a couple may spend six months in therapy, this intensive model is a concentrated effort for those in marital crisis. A model for clinically trained therapists, the church may lay groundwork in seeing the couple in crisis pursue this type of therapy but because of the time involved, expense of the program and the possibility of insurance not covering this couple therapy, the church may want to help out in financial or other ways. The current outcome is reasonably effective enough for anyone to invest in if they want to save their marriage.

Theories of the Forgiving Experience model are derived from Alcoholics Anonymous' twelve-step process using or replicating the fourth and fifth steps.

The second premise is based upon the exercise called the *container*. This premise enables one partner at a time, to express anger and resentment toward each other in a safe and constructive environment, sharing past wounds and hurts. The other partner acts as a container for their rage.

In the Forgiving Experience model individuals are encouraged to view themselves and their partners as wounded-souls that have been victimized by life's traumas. In addition to viewing each other as wounded-souls couples are taught to use God's grace for humankind's sin as inspiration to forgive each other.

The third premise is the forgiving experience based on the work of Lewis Smedes (1984). This process encourages either partner asking for forgiveness to truly feel the pain that he or she has inflicted upon the other. Empathy and understanding play a huge role in this act of forgiveness as the couple learns eight steps in the technique involved in the Forgiving Experience model developed by Rodgers and Rodgers.

In the Talking and Listening model developed at The University of Minnesota Family Study Center teaches that attitudes and behaviors along with skills are important to the process of communication. Included in the workbook is the approach to individual skill building, i.e., first learning to care about yourself and your sensory zones; then your partner and listening to your partner; resolving conflicts and how to map those issues; and choosing a communication style as outlined in the workbook.

It is an intense model and requires a commitment by the couples to be attentive, open to new methods of communication, and willing to learn and discard the destructive ways of prior communication and participate in the exercises. This model can be used in the church group or secular setting provided lay people become trained.

This chapter has demonstrated that there are a number of sufficient models in order for the Pastor to have a working knowledge of what is available to them. It will help those who seek deeper avenues for helping couples and families to explore the significance of communication. There are many ways of shaping a program that may be led by either a pastor or lay person provided they have explored their own communicative relationship.

In chapter five, I will illustrate the model that my wife, Tammy, and I developed and applied in classroom settings ranging from six to thirty-five attendee's.

The background of this model has been shaped from my own counseling practice, training, classroom experiences, and personal study as well as gleaning from other professional's ideas, methods, theology, philosophies, and experiences.

A scenario of a couple's desire to communicate and the effects of how acidic the rain can fall in any situation are shown in my model.

CHAPTER FIVE

UNDER THE UMBRELLA OF COMMUNICATION

It has been said that communication is the number-one topic that couples list as needing improvement. This became more believable as my contact with couples increased. When I ask couples, whom I have counseled or have attended one of my relationship-building classes, what their deepest desire for their relationship is, and they respond, “Better communication.” My research began when I asked myself the question “What is communication, *really*?” My wife and I have come to believe that the term “communication” is a term that covers many elements in relating to one another. To use the word “communicate” is like looking at a sealed box and without the owner’s authorization the contents will not be disclosed to you. You see the outer existence of the box, but what is inside? And what is the method of relating those elements to our lives?

We can ask ourselves many questions about communication. We may look at it in many different ways and try to describe it. Many times our difficulties are not with the outer box of communication, it is what is on the inside: the elements of communication and how to communicate. Those elements are the issues, subjects, causes and effects, people, places, and things of one’s life. These elements are not only on the inside, they surface on the outside. So if we compare ourselves to a

lump of clay as Isaiah did in chapter 64 of his book, those elements will forever shape us. They are a part of our environment.

A person's environment is an extremely important factor in their life.

The word environment comes from the French word meaning "circle" or "surroundings." Environment is the space you occupy, your place and your natural and social surroundings.

People modify environments to make them more or less productive or more or less comfortable. Each environment presents opportunities and limitations to human activity. How people change environments and adapt to them depends on their beliefs, ideas, economy, social organization, and technology.¹

Environment begins in the womb. An unborn child is said to experience many things in the womb of his or her mother. The unborn child's environment enlarges and changes after birth as the child leaves the womb into the arms of many people. The child continues to grow from toddler to adolescent to young adult. Everything that happens in one's environment from conception on affects his or her ability to translate and interact with another, to communicate. The environment may limit or present opportunities in which one learns *how* to communicate.

There are many different environments that exist on Earth. In all of these environments God gave the phenomenon of precipitation. Before the fall of humankind, "the Lord God had not sent rain on the earth" (Gen. 2:5b NIV), "but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground" (Gen. 2:6 NIV). After the fall, during the time of Noah, God said, "I will send rain on the earth" (Gen. 7:4 NIV).

¹ Paul Ward English and Brian Robinson, *Geography: People and Places in a Changing World*. Revised 2d ed., (St. Paul, MN: West Publishing Company, 1997), 31.

If we compare the elements of communication to that of rain then we must first get “under the umbrella of communication” in order to discuss the elements that are raining down on any given relationship. These elements already exist in each person’s environment and are either raining down or locked up inside the psyche of one’s soul (more will be discussed on this later). Without any connection to one’s partner, or whoever you may be trying to connect with, i.e., parent, child, friend, neighbor, co-worker, an environment is created that ultimately becomes impossible to grow and survive in.

Some of the elements of one’s environment may be raining down like acid rain. To better understand acid rain and how I would like to apply it to “under the umbrella of communication,” I am going to recap from chapter four and expand on what scientists are reporting about the Earth’s environment and how humans have changed it:

Scientists discovered, and have confirmed, that sulfur dioxide (SO₂) and nitrogen oxides (NO_x) are the primary causes of acid rain. Acid rain occurs when these gases react in the atmosphere with water, oxygen, and other chemicals to form various acidic compounds. Acid rain is a serious environmental problem. Acid rain is a broad term used to describe several ways that acids fall out of the atmosphere. A more precise term is acid deposition, which has two parts: wet and dry.²

The term acid precipitation is used to specifically describe wet forms of acid pollution that can be found in rain, sleet, snow, fog and cloud vapor. The acidity of substances dissolved in water is commonly measured in terms of pH (defined as the negative logarithm of the concentration of hydrogen ions). According to this measurement scale solutions with PHS less than 7 are described as being acidic, while a pH greater than is considered alkaline. Precipitation normally has a pH between 5.0 to 5.6 because of natural atmospheric reactions involving carbon dioxide.³

² Tracy Gow and Michael Pickwirny. *Acid Rain and Deposition*, 1996, [on-line] Okanagan University College; available from <http://royal.okanagan.bc.ca/mpidwrm/atmosphereandclimate/acidprecip.html>; Internet; accessed 30 November 2001.

³ Ibid.

The atmosphere is made of gases. “Dry, pure air contains about 78 percent nitrogen, 21 percent oxygen, and 0.03 percent carbon dioxide.”⁴

Acid deposition can form by two processes. In some cases, hydrochloric acid is expelled and more commonly by secondary pollutants. These secondary pollutants form from oxidation of nitrogen oxides or sulphur dioxide being released into the atmosphere. This process of altering the atmosphere can take days and be carried hundreds of miles away from their original source.

More than 90% of the sulphur in the atmosphere is of human origin. The main sources of sulphur include coal burning and smelting of metal sulfide ores to obtain the pure metals. Some 95% of the elevated levels of nitrogen oxides in the atmosphere are the result of human activities. The major sources include combustion of oil, coal and gas, bacterial action in soil and forest fires. The concentrations of both nitrogen oxides and sulphur dioxides are much lower than atmospheric carbon dioxide which is mainly responsible for making natural rainwater slightly acidic.⁵

Acid deposition influences the environment in several different ways. Aquatically, it lowers the pH, but not all systems are affected equally. One obvious effect is the decline in fish. There is also a build up in snow pack. When the snow melts in the spring, acid concentrations are released up to five to ten times more acidic than rainfall. This is called acid shock.

The impact that acid deposition has on vegetation depends on the type of soil the plants grow in. Many soils have a natural buffering capacity and are able to neutralize acid inputs. Some vegetation is effected by acid deposition because the acidity is like a leach sucking the life out of the plant, root damage, germination of seeds inhibited, and death of organisms, plant structure weakening, and in some

⁴ English and Robinson. *Geography*. 53.

⁵ Gow and Pickwirny. *Acid Rain and Deposition*, 1996, [on-line].

cases over-fertilization. The combinations of these effects make vegetation more vulnerable to diseases, insects, droughts, and frosts.

Acidic deposition also has effects on humans through toxic metals (when ingested), respiratory illness, and on children increased chest colds, allergies, and coughs. Acid deposition also influences the economic livelihoods of people as well as human construction such as buildings from iron or steel and paint on cars may fade. Thus, the best solution to acid deposition is to

limit the emission of pollutants at their source. Acid deposition penetrates deeply into the fabric of an ecosystem, changing the chemistry of the soil, streams and the space where certain plants and animals can survive. Because there are so many changes, it takes many years for ecosystems to recover from acid deposition, even after emissions are reduced and the rain becomes normal again.⁶

Jesus mastered the use of parables in His teaching. He used these comparisons to convey a meaning to those who would see, hear, and receive His message. Whether one believes that a parable conveys a single truth or a complex of truths, depends on the one receiving the truth.

Using the concept that communication is an umbrella over many elements in a relationship is somewhat like a story derived from truths about the Earth but like an allegory the meanings are under the control of this author. The phenomenon of rain, its acidity and the increased acidity of the rain caused by pollution bears a representation of how humans relate. Humankind created in relationship by God,

⁶Clean Air Markets Division/Environmental Protection Agency. *Acid Rain*. [on-line]. Available from <http://www.epa.gov/airmarkets/acidrain/>; Internet; accessed 30 November, 2001.

but disrupted through sin, today is still struggling with the question of how to have better communication in their relationships and is still a mystery to most.

While we seek a connection with the one we are speaking to, does the one we are speaking to want to connect? Jesus experienced the same dilemma. Jesus quoted Isaiah's prophesy, "You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving" (Matt. 13:14b NIV). Jesus taught us about communicating and how success is dependent on a human response. The human response does not depend on *one* but *two* individuals that see with their eyes, hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts to seek a relationship that is being made whole and healed (Matt. 13:15b NIV).

The mystery of the Gospel is proclaimed to all humanity even though only those who believe, those who have faith and respond to the One who is communicating to us, understand it.

So it takes a belief in your partner and a willingness to understand your partner to receive the message your partner is conveying. The same is true for your partner, willing to express and willing to listen.

What are the elements in communication? They differ yet are much alike. All couples have elements, such as in-laws, finances, children, personality and the list can go on forever. How are we connecting (or not) with our partner in regard to these elements? It is like rain. These elements are raining down upon the relationship as they exist with each individual. The pollution that causes the rain to become acidic is created from many sources such as expectations and hidden issues

regarding family of origin history, children, physical probabilities, and the list could and will go on forever.

In the illustration provided in the Appendix you will see the symbols for male and female “under the umbrella” representing partners in a relationship and all the issues surrounding it. Each partner brings into the relationship his or her own set of these elements. Each partner’s issues are complex and are like a sealed box waiting to be opened to reveal the specifics of the contents. These elements have shaped and given life or death to the individual’s body, soul, and spirit.

The question still begs to be answered, “How can we communicate better?” The therapist, counselor, pastor, layperson, or friend may or may not be asking the question, “What about communication is it that you want to communicate better?”

Couples want to connect. When a relationship begins, all the dreams partners have together are based on the connection they initially have. Larry Crabb, in his book *Connecting*, describes connection as

profound meeting when the truest part of one soul meets the emptiest recesses in another and finds something there, when life passes from one to the other. We were designed to connect with others, connecting is life. In connecting with God, we gain life. In connecting with others, we nourish and experience that life as we freely share it.⁷

Connecting happens when one feels secure and significant in the relationship. In *The Marriage Builder*, Larry Crabb describes security as being truly loved and accepted and significance as making a substantial, lasting, positive impact on another person. As time marches on couples become distraught with the

⁷ Larry Crabb, *Connecting: Healing for Ourselves and Our Relationships, A Radical New Vision*, (Nashville, Tennessee, Word Publishing, 1997), 31.

relationship because they no longer “feel” that security and significance from each other or experience the connection with their partner as desired.

The elements that rain down on the relationship no longer drop like soft pitter-patter background music but at times pound like thunder and lightening invading one’s environment. This change in the environment may go unnoticed as a couple begins their journey into the regiment of everyday events at work, home, school, or church. Everyday events of life impact the way one communicates because of personal expectations regarding all the elements that couples desperately want to connect about.

For example, in Joe and Ann’s story, he had a long-term career with a company of fifteen years. He was notified that he had a choice to make with the company. His position was being terminated and he could move to another location, seven states away, or terminate his employment with the company altogether. At the same time, his partner, Ann, received notification that she was being promoted to Chief Editor of the publishing company where she had worked three years. No matter where we are in life the rain falls.

The two separate individuals, Joe and Ann, are going to join at home. One is struggling with a decision to make and the other is ecstatic about the new promotion. Both desire to meet under the umbrella of communication to be able to express the highs and lows of their day. Each person desires to be listened to and their feelings to be understood. In a perfect relationship it would be easy and there would be no conflict. But for most the story is written before a couple joins together. Already in one’s mind they might be contemplating how their partner will

react to the news. Mind pollution may already be involved from those preconceived notions that take their place from history, which could be as far back as family of origin (the past has a way of becoming the present). All the other elements fight for their place in the existing environment; extended family, finances, self-esteem, individuality, gender roles, spirituality, approach on decision-making (which may include gender roles), trust, personal security, and significance. Many elements get involved in one single life event. How do couples connect in the midst of all the different elements that could be involved in one single life event?

My Model

The model is one of eclectic (assorted and diverse) value. Many models, strategies, counsel, and skill building exist today. While some believe that men are from Mars and women are from Venus and we need to become aware of our *alien ways* in order to have a lasting relationship, others will tell you that only you can rescue your relationship. In my research, I have gleaned from a number of models to pick up the necessary tools to open up your relationship extensively to growth and lasting commitment. There is a warning though to couples who focus more on the “how” rather than actually focusing on the “element” in their environment. Couples are also encouraged to incorporate communication into their daily living to experience the intimate connection desired between them, not set it aside for a different place and time. Planned moments of togetherness are necessary but work better if the elements involved are not piled up like snow balls waiting to be thrown (acid shock) at the other partner. The reason my wife and I developed a diverse model was to make it more effective and available in the church. By developing a

model that could be used in the classroom setting we were able to help couples explore communication within their own marriage while identifying couples in crisis so we could act as interveners. When a special program or class is offered in the church I suggest that the teachers and facilitators be prepared to minister to the full spectrum of relationships, those in crisis and those that merely want to grow deeper. This model can easily be shaped to compliment a marriage enrichment retreat where couples are not in crisis but seeking to enrich their relationship. It is our chosen training ground for interveners. Regardless of how the model is used I have found that even in the relationship where the couple sought only enrichment and growth, their relationship was found to also have some acid deposits. The greatest avenue to prevent any harm always comes from regular check ups and early detection.

In small group classroom settings my wife and I have introduced methods and exercises from the training guide and manual of the Association for Couples in Marriage Enrichment.⁸ We revised these methods to fit in our classroom setting. Each class setting comprises of approximately one hour to one and one half hour. My wife and I have developed this weekly relationship class along the line of informal “group” counseling.

I have adopted the Ground Rules and Objectives from the Association for Couples in Marriage Enrichment manual and utilize visual props of the Ground Rules and the Objectives. During the introduction of the class we review these ground rules and objectives verbally. They are as follows:

⁸ Phyllis E. Michael and Randy Michael, ed., “Basic Training Workshop Participants Guide and Resource Manual” in Association for Couples in Marriage Enrichment, (Winston-Salem, NC.: by Chi Chi Z. Messick, 1992), 15.

1. There is no confrontation. All participation in activities is voluntary. Everything done in the group is voluntary. Each person decides to what extent to participate. If a couple decides not to do an exercise or activity, that is all right as long as they do not interfere with other couples.
2. We are here to share experiences, not to exchange opinions. Intellectualizing, diagnosing, analyzing, and advice giving should be avoided. Sharing experiences from relationships increases options and reduces isolation.
3. Speak for self. Each individual speaks for himself or herself. "I" statements are used rather than "you" statements which assume the speaker knows what another person is feeling, thinking or wanting. Each person takes responsibility for only his or her own perceptions, thoughts, feelings and wants.
4. Everything shared in the group is confidential. Confidentiality is expected. Assured of confidentiality, couples are more comfortable sharing relationship experiences. It is a privilege to hear other couples discuss something personal in their relationship. To preserve this privilege, it is essential that such sharing be treated with respect and confidence.
5. Concerns come first. A concern is a worry or preoccupation that interferes with a person's full participation within the group. It may be sickness, the need for a break, room temperature, a digression from the ground rules or anything else that inhibits full participation. When someone has a concern, it takes precedence within the group. Any individual may say, "I have a concern," and the group action stops to allow that person to share the concern.

Objectives:

1. To increase each partners awareness of self and partner with an emphasis on the positive aspects, strengths, and growth potential of the individuals and the relationship.
2. To identify within the relationship directions for relationship growth.
3. To develop and encourage the use of effective communication, problem solving and conflict resolution skills.
4. To learn skills and discover ways in which positive growth can take place.

5. To increase mutual intimacy and empathy.⁹

My wife and I introduce an ice-breaker or two as a method to warm the couples up to participate with the group in developing an agenda, a set of relationship topics they would like to discuss. The most frequent topic that receives “top billing” in our groups is always “communication.” After listing five to ten topics (depending on class size), we introduce our supposition “under the umbrella of communication.”

As co-facilitators we describe our supposition to the participants to stimulate their thoughts and feelings regarding how they may have been “communicating” to each other in the topics listed. We explain our philosophy regarding “communication” and redefine “topics” to “elements of communication.”

In each class, my wife and I announce that although we are facilitating the class, we are also students of the class, expecting that we will learn from them as well. We ask them to participate in every segment to develop thoughts and ideas regarding communicating.

Before moving into the elements of communication we will discuss the variables of the *process* of communication. The variables include many parts, which will be described later.

Many of the books and journals that I have read deal with the “process” of communication and are involved in the “elements” of communication. The discussion of the “process” is a segment of class input that the class is encouraged to

⁹Ibid.

produce themselves while we give direction in the methods we have encompassed including the definition of “communication” from Rudolph F. Verdeber.

Verdeber asks how many times the word “communication” popped up in one’s conversation. We have probably encountered many statements like “That painting just doesn’t communicate anything to me;” “She seems to communicate so many different things at the same time;” “He communicates pretty well in conversation, but not in the classroom;” or “Her house communicates such a feeling of warmth.”

Verdeber described communication as a process of stimulation:

We know that this phenomenon we call communication is important. We have realized that communication can refer to many different things. What ties all the various uses of the word together? Meaning. If we get *meaning* from a person, an idea, an action, a painting, a building, a room, or whatever we are dealing with, we say that it communicated. By definition then, *communication is the process of stimulating meaning*.¹⁰

Variables In the Process of Communication

1. The Source: The source is the origination of the message. The source could be one individual, an idea, an action, an object or whatever. The source has a variety of experiences, feelings, ideas and moods that overlap and interact to affect its communication.
2. The Message: The message is the idea or feeling that the source communicates. For purposes of analysis, messages have three components: meaning, symbols used to express meaning, and form/organization of the message.
3. The Channel: The channel is the means used to convey the symbols. Words are delivered from one person to another via; air waves; facial expressions, gestures and movement are delivered by light waves. Although human communication is basically two-channeled (light and sound), we do communicate by any of the sensory channels – a fragrant scent and a firm handshake are both forms of communication.

¹⁰ Rudolph F. Verderber, *Communicate!* (Belmont, California: Wadsworth, 1975), 5-7.

4. The Receiver: The receiver is the destination of the message. The message is received in the form of symbols by means of sound waves and light waves. The receiver then turns these symbols back into meaning, which is called decoding. Just as his or her entire field of experience affects the source of a message, so is the receiver affected. As a result, the meaning that is stimulated in the receiver may not be the same as or even analogous to that of the source.
5. Feedback: *The Response*: (We have changed “feedback” to “response”.) The response tells the source whether his message was heard, seen, or understood. The lack of direct response is one of the weaknesses in any of the forms of communication.
6. Noise: Noise is both the external factors in the channels and the internal perceptions and experiences that affect communication. Our capabilities for interpreting, understanding, or responding to symbols are often inhibited by the amount of noise accompanying the communication. External noise refers to the physical interruptions. Anything from a lawnmower outside the window to someone who may have a speech impediment. Internal or semantic noise that grows from our perceptions and experiences; semantic noises may cause us to misinterpret or misunderstand without our even knowing it. Noises, both external and internal can be a barrier to the communication process.¹¹

Self-Analysis. The next step would be a self-analysis or awareness of how one communicates. Your self-concept and perception has much to do with your communication ability. “The collection of perceptions that makes up your self-concept relates to every facet of your being; your attractiveness, physical capabilities, vocational potential, sexual capabilities, strength, size, and so on. How do we determine the perceptions that form our self-concept?”¹² One is by our experience, second is feedback or response from others and thirdly perception of roles we choose to play. Role definitions are often products of the value systems of our society or of a specific group or individual value systems.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., 34.

Another effective way to analyze the nature of your communication is to discover the source of your communication and behavioral decisions through what is called a Transactional Analysis. “In Transactional Analysis, everyone is seen as having three ego states called Parent, Adult, and Child, and each of these three ego states ‘talks’ to him to try to direct his thoughts and actions.”¹³ Each ego state feels and behaves accordingly to you as a parent, you as a child or you as an adult. Effective communication is a result of complementary transactions. “The first rule of Transactional Analysis states: When transaction between ego states of people makes parallel lines on the transactional diagram, the transaction is complementary and can go on indefinitely.”¹⁴ Following are diagrams reflecting transactional examples.

A Parent-Parent Transaction

Sarah, looking at her watch: “Planes never take off on time.” This is an evaluative statement coming from Sarah’s Parent ego state and directed to Tim’s Parent ego state.

Tim replies, “It never fails, they are always late.” This response is likewise an evaluative statement from Tim’s Parent ego state back to Sarah.

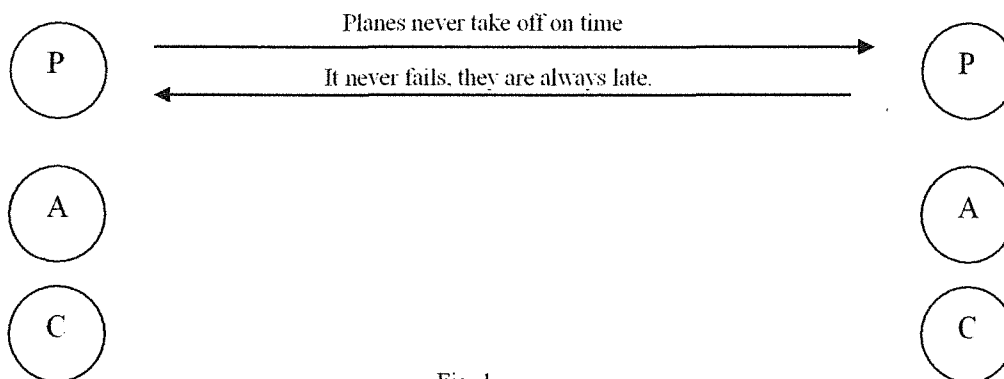


Fig. 1

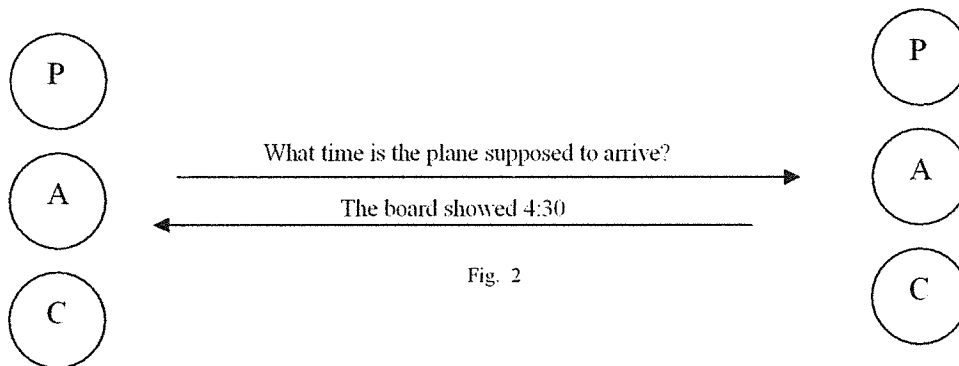
¹³ Ibid., 37.

¹⁴ Ibid., 90.

An Adult-Adult Transaction

Sarah asks, "What time is the plane supposed to get in?" This question looking for acts expects a factual reply. The question comes from the Adult ego state and is directed to the Adult state of Tim.

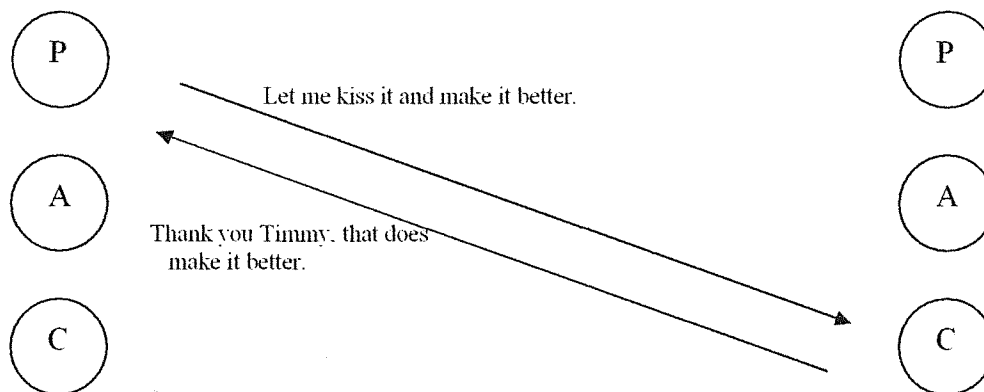
Tim replies, "The call board showed 4:30." This factual response is in keeping with the Adult-Adult transaction and may be diagrammed like this:



Parent-Child Transaction

Sarah and Tim were playfully wrestling when Tim accidentally smashes Sarah's pinky finger. Sarah lets out a scream and Tim reaching for Sarah says, "Let me kiss it and make it better." This is a benevolent Parent statement directed to the emotional Child ego state of Sarah.

Sarah moves closer to Tim and holds out her hurt finger. She replies, "Thank you Timmy, that does make it better." This is a Child's reply to the benevolent Parent of Tim. It accepts the dependent relationship, as shown here:



In figures one, two and three we see examples of complementary interactions that can continue indefinitely. The breakdown occurs when the different ego states get crossed. The second rule of Transactional Analysis states: When stimulus and response cross the different ego states of parent, child or adult, communication stops. Crossed transactions provide short circuits. Look at the following figures showing the transactions.¹⁵

Crossed Transactions

Sarah to her husband, Tim: "I would like to work in an atmosphere where I could be with kids all day." This is an Adult-to-Adult statement.

Tim replies, "It seems to me you have enough trouble keeping up with our own kids and keeping this house clean." This reply is Parent-to-Child and crosses the transaction.

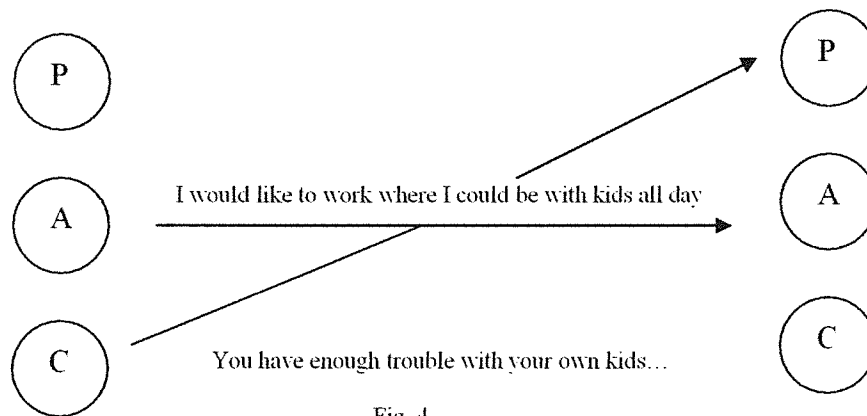


Fig. 4

¹⁵ Ibid., 92.

Jane says, “Tom please come in here and put your dirty socks in the laundry.” This is the beginning of a Parent-Child transaction.

Tom replies, “Who do you think you are? – You’re not the boss!” This also represents a Parent-to-Child statement. The end result is a crossed transaction.

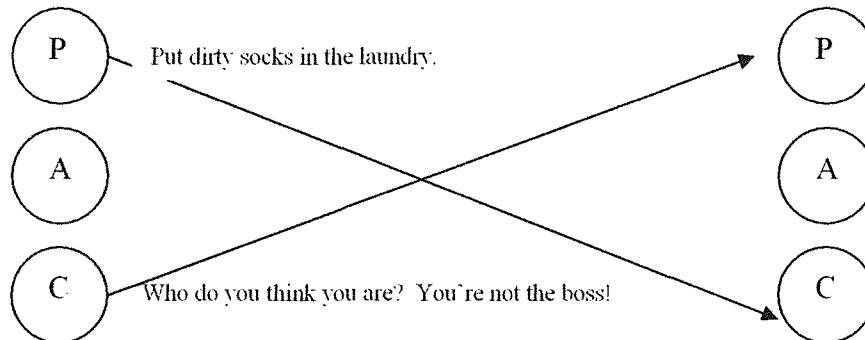


Fig. 5

In figure four Sarah and Tim need to settle why Sarah cannot handle her own kids as well as why Tim is unhappy with the way she keeps house. In figure five those dirty socks will lay on the floor while Jane and Tom finish arguing about who the boss is.

What causes transactions to cross? In TA terms, a person who is dominated by the Not OK Child reads negative intentions into other's comments and responds by crossing the transaction.

Trying to keep transactions complementary is hard work, but it can be done. The first thing you must do is to learn to recognize your own Parent-Adult-Child statements and to become sensitive to the P-A-C statements in others.¹⁶

Examining yourself and discovering “how” you are communicating helps you discover “how” your partner is communicating to you. This awareness brings growth and understanding in the relationship as well as your own personal growth

¹⁶ Ibid., 93.

and understanding of how your environment nurtured the way you communicate. Attitudes and behaviors are not only “taught” but “caught.”

In the next meeting on the *process* of communication we develop ideas of intimacy together along with findings from our own research what writers, counselors and doctors offer regarding healthy relationships.

Intimacy. Many have addressed the question of the level of communication that one seeks regarding their personal relationships. If you have asked yourself that question you might come up with an answer such as intimacy. James Osterhaus stated, “In our culture, we regularly use the word *intimacy* as a synonym for *sex*.”¹⁷ Intimacy refers to a dimension of the marriage relationship that is much deeper and more fundamental to marriage than sex as well as being the emotional and intellectual component of the relationship. Intimacy has many facets, including:

- emotional intimacy (the level of deep feelings)
- intellectual intimacy (the sharing of ideas)
- aesthetic intimacy (the sharing of experiences of beauty & pleasure)
- creative intimacy (the sharing of creativity, imagination & enterprise)
- spiritual intimacy (the sharing of spiritual meaning & nurture)¹⁸

A couple of other facets of intimacy I have included are physical intimacy (the act of physical touch; kissing, holding hands, hugs) and sexual intimacy (sexual intercourse).

Gary Smalley asserts that there are five levels of intimacy when communicating:

Level one is a superficial level. Couples speak in clichés as though they were speaking to a store clerk. This is the “safe” level.

¹⁷ James Osterhaus, *Questions Couples Ask Behind Closed Doors*, (Wheaton, Illinois. Tyndale House, 1996), 146.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Level two is sharing facts or information. “The weather person reports rain today.” It is a shallow level and still safe, not much conflict develops at this level.

Level three is stating opinions. “How could you vote for that man to come and be the church’s new Pastor?” Insecurity will keep us from moving into this level of marriage.

Level four is when one speaks about how they are feeling. “I was really hurt by what your brother said to me at the Christmas dinner.” This seems like a risky level to put oneself in but couples can experience this deeper level of loving and being loved when putting oneself in a state of vulnerability. Asking your partner what they may be feeling is one of the healthiest questions one can ask.

Level five is revealing needs. This is another level of risk with vulnerability. Expressing this level of verbal intimacy means that one is feeling security in the relationship.¹⁹

The first man, Adam, was recorded as defining intimacy, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman’ for she was taken out of man. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame” (Gen.2:23-25 NIV).

God intended for this first couple to be in relationship with each other as well as with Him. One can only dream how the perfect relationship must have been like before the day of Adam and Eve’s disobedience; total security, complete acceptance, perfect environment, great sex every time, intriguing conversation, and irreplaceable, matchless *phileo*, *eros* and *agape* love, all in perfect harmony.

Adam and Eve lived together and with God, naked, not only in the flesh but also in their soul and spirits. They shared everything with each other and God. They experienced no limitations and had complete freedom to be the person God

¹⁹ Gary Smalley, *Making Love Last Forever*. (Dallas, Texas: Word Publishing, 1996), 143.

designed each of them to be. “In His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Gen. 1:27 NIV).

In the image of God, male and female are uniquely woven and interlaced, connected in the bareness of their soul, spirit, and bodies.

Once a relationship’s erotic “eros” era dissipates, intimacy rarely occurs by itself or without complications. Intimacy is developed when safety and honesty are being created in a relationship. “Safety is created by promises that are made and kept. Trust is built upon commitment, upon the ability to make and keep a promise. Trust is the foundation upon which a solid relationship is built – and a protective canopy beneath which a relationship unfolds.”²⁰ James Osterhaus also says the two crucial ingredients of trust are predictability, one is assured of the other’s behavior and reliability; and dependability, one is assured that the other is available, keeps agreements, and respects boundaries. If betrayal is experienced, it takes much longer to build a base of trust.

Adam and Eve destroyed this type of relationship and set in motion the beginning of the “me” generation. Only the Living Son of God can strip away the power of the ongoing generation of self-centeredness. Osterhaus addressed self-centeredness and honesty:

To be honest with another person, you must first be honest with yourself. You must know yourself – and that’s not as easy as it sounds. Most of us, to some degree, are distanced from our emotions. We are in denial about some of our bad habits and traits. We have blocked out painful memories. We reject the knowledge of some of our worst sins and try to pretend we have no dark side. As we become more honest with ourselves, we become more capable of sharing our true selves with our marriage partner.²¹

²⁰ Osterhaus, *Questions Coupes Ask Behind Closed Doors*, 31.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 147.

Honesty with self along with personal growth requires a heart of volunteerism, i.e., desire for change. Jack Balswick observed, "Some individuals are so out of touch with their feelings that they recognize them only as good or bad vibrations. Such people lack the self-awareness which is necessary for intimate relationships."²² He continues:

Finally, traditional cultural expectations serve to inhibit males from expressing love. This may in fact be the most significant factor. There is some biological evidence that males have a harder time than females in verbalizing feelings (Rossi 1984, 13). But while this may explain the origin of the problem of male inexpressiveness, it does not speak to the magnitude of the difference between the sexes. What usually happens is that in the socialization process parents inadvertently accentuate tendencies, which already exist in their children. An inborn tendency becomes a label, so to speak, for the child, who then proceeds to behave as expected. Thus, an inborn tendency toward inexpressiveness becomes part of the child's self-image and a self-fulfilling prophecy.²³

Thus incorporating into the thoughts and ideas of individuals what the Scriptures teach about intimacy, how intimacy develops through safety, honesty, and trust will help in the *process* of communicating.

Elements of Communication

Listening to your partner when they send a message involves deciphering or decoding the message. One's interpretation is affected by experiences, perceptions and expectations that come from personal past history (including family of origin history) but operate in the present. All the elements in our environment are affected by our interpretation. Each individual brings into his or her relationship personal history that lives in his or her present.

²² Jack O. Balswick and Judith K. Balswick, *The Family: A Christian Perspective on the Contemporary Home*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1999), 248.

²³ *Ibid.*, 249.

I have expounded on the *process* of communication so that one may improve their skills in relating to their partner. When couples connect or not “under the umbrella of communication” they use the skills they have learned from their past history. This is why it is important for each individual to seek to enhance their communicating skills in order to develop self-awareness as well as discovering their partners. It would be impossible when a new relationship begins for one partner to understand everything about the other. But educating oneself in skills, self-awareness, and a willingness to believe and understand their partner is essential.

There is a very seductive temptation described by Mary Stewart VanLeeuwen in *Gender and Grace*, which masquerades as virtue. It is a deterrent, a temptation, for Christians to be seduced into believing that God created woman as an “afterthought” to meet man’s needs and the Fall was and is her fault. Even though VanLeeuwen addresses it toward women, it could be real for male or female, who both identify themselves as Christians.

The man and the woman were equally created for sociability and dominion. But in reaching out to take the fruit, the woman over-stepped the bounds of accountable dominion. As a consequence, her sociability was mixed with the problem of social enmeshment, which continues to hamper the proper exercise of her dominion in the world at large. By contrast, the man, in accepting the fruit from his wife, overstepped the bounds of human social unity. As a consequence, his legitimate, accountable dominion became laced with the problem of domination, which has been interfering with his relationships – to God, to the creation and to other people, including women – ever since.²⁴

Jesus taught the importance of relationship. Did He teach that one is superior over the other? Looking into the Word we find Jesus washing the disciple’s feet. He said, “I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master,

²⁴ Mary Stewart VanLeeuwen. *Gender & Grace: Love, Work & Parenting in a Changing World*. (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 47.

nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him” (John 13:16 NIV). Scripture also teaches that we are to “submit to one another out of reverence for Christ” (Eph. 5:21 NIV). These verses remind us that nobody should hold others in domination.

Each element brings on daily events in the relationship that enhances the connectedness one feels with one’s partner. This is when partners begin to discover each other’s identity. “A person’s identity is formed in the family of origin.”²⁵ How one perceives his or her identity of spirituality, physical, and mental wholeness effects one’s expectations, spoken or not, and are all formed by family, culture and experience. All play a significant part in “how” one connects with another.

Hearing What Is Spoken

Are there different levels of how one hears what is spoken? Is it real listening or pseudo-listening? Your body is present but your mind is concentrating on another thought or in a different place. The authors of *Messages* write that

pseudo-listening masquerades as the real thing. The intention is not to listen, but to meet some other need. Some of the typical needs met by pseudo-listening are:

Making people think you’re interested so they will like you.

Being alert to see if you are in danger of getting rejected.

Buying time to prepare your next comment.

Half-listening so someone will listen to you.

Looking for the weak points in an argument so you can always be right, listening to get ammunition for attack.²⁶

The receiver is the destination of what is spoken. Like the source of the message is effected by one’s entire environment, so is the receiver’s. When the receiver hears the message much depends on their experience and perception. The

²⁵ Balswick and Balswick. *The Family*, 75.

²⁶ Matthew McKay, Martha Davis, Patrick Fanning. *Messages: The Communication Skills Book*. 2d ed., (Oakland, California: New Harbinger Publications, 1995), 6.

hearing is often disrupted by experience and perception because of “taught” or “caught” behaviors and attitudes that are enhancers or barriers to intimacy. This will be expounded upon later.

In the *process* of communication the part of the listener is just as important as the sender relating the message. The question here is, “How does one become a better listener?” The following is Rudolph Verderber’s advice:

Get ready to listen. Mentally we need to stop thinking about any of the thousands of miscellaneous thoughts that constantly pass through our mind; all our attention should be directed to the speaker and to what he/she is saying. Physically, we need to adopt a posture that is most conducive to good listening. Look the speaker in the eye and sit upright.

Make the shift from speaker to listener a complete one. In conversation, we switch roles from speaker to listener and back to speaker again quite frequently. Don’t spend time preparing your next speech or your listening efficiency will take a nosedive.

Listen actively. Because we think faster than most people can talk, we can utilize our thinking capacities to make us better listeners. If you use your time to raise questions about the nature of the material – both the content and the intent; try to couple what the speaker is saying with your own experience; mentally repeat key ideas or associate key points with related ideas, you may be able to raise your listening efficiency. Good listening is hard work that requires concentration and a willingness to mull over what is said.

Withhold evaluation. This suggestion involves being in control of our emotional responses to content. Often poor listeners are given an emotional jolt by a speaker invading an area of personal sensitivity. When a person trips the switch to your emotional reaction, let a warning light go off before you go off. Good listening depends upon comprehension of what is being said. Withhold your evaluation of the message until you have mastered the content and the intent.²⁷

The second part of improving one’s listening skills is what one speaks back to the sender of the message. As pointed out earlier, communicating goes on and on. One does not always do the speaking or listening when relating to another

²⁷ Rudolph Verderber, *Communicate!*, 43.

human being (or any species) because the cycle of communication is ongoing.

What should the listener be doing when it is their turn to speak back to the origin of the message?

Clarify messages by (1) paraphrasing or restate the sender's message showing showing what you think you have heard. It is not just 'repeating' what someone said, it is rephrasing it to the sender to better understand the message. (2) Dating. Our judgments of people, things, and ideas that we use in our communication were formed sometime in the past – perhaps only a few minutes ago, perhaps many years ago. When dating a statement, one allows for the possibility of change. For example:

Max: You have Professor Morgan?

Sid: Right, what do you know about him?

Max: Well, two years ago, when I had him, he didn't seem to be very sure of his material. As a result, none of us thought much of him.

Max could have said, 'Morgan's a loser – he doesn't know what he's talking about.' By dating this statement, Max allows for the possibility of change.

Indexing. One of the great powers of the human intellect is the power to generalize. Yet, at least two common problems of communication relate directly to our misuse of this power. One problem is our tendency to delegate characteristics of a classification about which we are talking to all the members within that classification. This particular problem is called "allness."²⁸

The September 11, 2001, attack on the United States has some people saying all Muslim's and Arab's hate the United States. The President of United States has been communicating that not *all people* of the Muslim religion or of Arab descent are terrorists. By indexing, we mean accounting for individual differences. Not *all* Arab's are practicing Muslim religion nor are *all* Arab's terrorists.

"Separating Fact from Inference. A fact is a verifiable statement – usually verifiable through direct observation; an inference is the drawing of a conclusion from or about things we have observed. For instance, if we saw Hector run from his house, start his car quickly, and without pausing race his car down the street, our observation would be factual. If we then chuckled and said, 'O' Hector is late again,' that would be inference. What is the

²⁸ Ibid., 45.

effect on your communication of separating fact from inference? (1) It helps you eliminate embarrassment; (2) it helps you keep from creating the impression that what you are saying is fact; and (3) it helps you avoid making statements that may be the source of costly behavior for yourself or others.

Describe feelings. Why? Because it is an aspect of self-disclosure that is fundamental to interpersonal communication and interpersonal growth. Describing accurately how we are feeling at the moment is difficult for many of us. Moreover, the more personal and the stronger our feelings are, the less likely we are to describe them. A good starting point is with positive feelings. As your communication improves, you will be encouraged about describing your feelings more accurately on all levels.

Feedback. As with any other skill, there are right ways and wrong ways as well as right times and wrong times for giving feedback. Valuable feedback requires a kind of sensitivity to the situation and to the person. (1) Feedback is most valuable when the receiver indicates a readiness for feedback. Look for a sign of receptiveness, and then proceed with caution. (2) If you want feedback, ask for it and be specific. (3) If you would like to give feedback but are not sure whether a person wishes to hear it, ask him/her. (4) Feedback can and should often be positive. (5) Feedback should be specific and not general. (6) Feedback should be given at the earliest possible time. If you have to spend all your time recreating the situation, you are not going to have the best climate for dealing with the feedback. (7) Direct feedback toward a behavior the receiver can do something about. Telling a person he would be a better basketball player if he were taller may be true, but it will not help them improve their skill. (8) Feedback should be given in a way that is descriptive and not evaluative or judgmental. Your goal is not to anger the person but to help him/her.²⁹

The Scriptures are full of the *process* of communicating. Some of the Scripture we love about communication are in the book of Matthew. Jesus began His teaching about communication as He called the first disciples. He spoke to them right where they were at, in the midst of everyday life. In the case of Peter and Andrew Jesus said, "Come follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19 NIV). To follow His great example our goal when speaking to our partner is to be a "fisher of men."

²⁹ Ibid., 56, 57.

Jesus teaches us many things in the Sermon on the Mount:

- Speak to our partner's (and others) in humility and lower our pride, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:3 NIV).
- Jesus is asking us to desire to be filled by His Spirit. When filled with His Holy Spirit our intentions when communicating will not be filled with "evil." "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled" (Matt. 5:6 NIV).
- Jesus teaches us to seek resolution in our conflicts. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God" (Matt 5:9 NIV). The apostle Paul echo's the great Teacher, "Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and mutual edification" (Rom. 14:19 NIV).
- If we loose our saltiness how may a "fisher of men" be an influence? Jesus proclaims, "You are the salt of the earth" (Matt. 5:13 NIV). Salt is a preservative and a healing agent. "Everyone will be salted with fire" (Mark 9:49 NIV). Tongues of fire that separated and rested on all who were present the day of Pentecost. At that moment "All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them" (Acts 2:4 NIV). Jesus encourages us that to be a good communicator we must retain our saltiness and purification to be a person of influence.

- Plug into the Power Source so that as “fisher of men” you can be a person who communicates well. “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house” (Matt. 5:14 NIV). A “fisher of men” will also be a beacon of light to their mates, to everyone in the house and their community.
- Keep your oaths says the Lord! Quit saying things to “please.” Speak directly about the issue(s) and, “Simply let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one” (Matt. 5:37 NIV). Speak in truth and honesty taking in consideration all the circumstances that surround the issue. (This does not allow for uncensored venting on your partner.)

Joe and Ann’s Element: Careers

Stories like Joe and Ann have become more common in the 1990’s moving right into the new millennium. Most couples are double income as both seek careers. The decision that Joe and Ann will be making will affect both of them greatly. How will they communicate their individual desires and needs as well as recognizing their goals as a couple and their future?

Self-Talk. Joe is going through much emotional turmoil after he hears the news from his supervisor. He feels very sad that his position has been terminated yet he feels glad that the company has offered him a position at another location. Joe begins his self-talk. “As man of the house my career should come first.

Besides, Ann makes a few thousand dollars less than me. She will just have to understand, even though we will be moving half way across the country.

What will my parents say? What will HER parents say? She is much closer to her parents and siblings than I am. Boy that will be a tough one. She ought to be happy that they offered me a different location – I am sure she will be very glad for that. But she likes her job. She is very capable of finding another one like it or even better.

Ann the major supporter? I do not think so! Even if it would be only until I find another job. It is not right for women to be the major wage earners! I just cannot stand that thought! Ephesians says for wives to submit to their husband. The husband is the head of the household. Yeah, that is what it says; husbands are head of the household. Dad will be proud of me because the company sees value in me and is offering to move me to another location. He would not be able to bear the thought of ‘my Ann’ being the wage earner – even if it would only be for a little while. It will go my way, it is biblical.”

Now Ann, on her drive home begins her self-talk. “Joe will be so excited about my promotion! Just think. With my new position as Chief Editor I will be bringing home BIG BACON! Wow seven thousand more dollars a year! I am a pretty important member of this relationship now. He won’t feel a bit jealous that I AM making more money than him now. Will he? His dad will probably have a fit. Men bring home the bacon – I can just hear him now. He will probably chide Joe – but Joe will handle it. Joe is much stronger now that he is out of his dad’s control.

This is so wonderful! Me, a Chief Editor! In just three years! I am so excited! A Chief Editor today – company manager someday? Mom and dad will be so proud of me! My sisters – well I am sure they will be proud but somewhat jealous. They never did show much approval toward my successes.” And the self-talk goes on until they both reach home.

Acid Deposition

Joe and Ann have all the elements of their lives together as well as their personal elements. Career changes in the twenty-first century are considered normal everyday events in a couple’s life. Changes in one’s life are like changes in the environment of the Earth. We have sunny days and stormy days. The rain comes but when the pollution is heavy the rain becomes acidic. How will Joe and Ann intervene in the acidic deposition and prevent it from decaying and destroying their relationship?

Joe and Ann will arrive home each desiring to share, each desiring to be heard, each desiring for the other to understand, and each desiring for that deep connection. Already in their self-talk they each recognized potential acidic conditions. Ann’s news is good news yet she realizes it could cause some self-esteem issues for Joe because of the way his dad sees the role of men and women. Joe is ready to take a stand for his position on the role of men and women.

From the conception of life, life begins to experience communication from those in contact with his or her mother. The impact of the type of communication the unborn child receives depends on the environment. Just like the impact that acid deposition has on vegetation depends on the type of soil the plants grows in, acidic

deposition could begin as early as conception. Science has proven the physical effects of what alcohol, tobacco and other drug use imbeds upon a child. This includes the soul and spirit. But there is hope and deliverance from those parental sins.

Leviticus says that “because of their fathers’ sins they will waste away” (Lev. 26:39b NIV), but Deuteronomy tells us “each is to die for his own sin.” Jesus explained to his disciples that the Kingdom of Heaven is like someone who humbles himself like a child. We are to become responsible for our own decisions as we grow out of childhood, yet we are to go to our Heavenly Father with the faith of a child. Scripture reminds us that God “heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds” (Ps. 147:3) and Jesus taught and preached the good news of the kingdom everywhere “healing every disease and sickness” (Matt. 9:35). Jesus heals every disease, sickness and the brokenhearted. Whatever acid deposition exists in one’s life inside and out, the Savior waits patiently for men and women to communicate with Him and be set free. “To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand” (Rom. 14:4b NIV).

The Meeting. Ann’s expectations are that Joe will be extremely excited about her new promotion and the increase of income. She expects that Joe will completely accept the idea of her making more money than him as well as his being able to handle any scuff from his father.

Joe’s expectations are that Ann will immediately decide that Joe’s career is far more important than hers and that the move is inevitable, after all, his career

tenor is much longer than hers. He is banking on the thought that Ann will submit to him and his situation because it is her wifely, Christian duty.

Who speaks first? Who listens first? While Ann is bubbly with joy, Joe is apprehensive. It is a toss up but if Ann is sensitive to Joe's non-verbal communication, she will ask him about his day first. Joe may sense Ann's joy and ask her to share her day. But in this case Ann shared first. Can you hear her? Which transactional ego state would she use?

Ann says, "Joe today I was called into the big boss's office and I received a promotion!"

Joe replies, "Ann that sounds wonderful."

Ann remarked, "I am the new Chief Editor and I will be bringing home seven thousand more dollars a year!"

"Ann, that is, that is, awesome," Joe replies with hesitation.

Joe feels a little ambivalent. He is extremely happy for Ann's promotion and the increased income but Joe asks himself, "What about the termination of my position, what about the decision to move, what about my retirement, what about me wearing the pants in the family, what about me? How am I going to tell her?" Joe spends the rest of the evening hearing Ann bubble over about her promotion and goals. He decides not to reveal to her his news that evening. He just does not quite feel like it is the right time.

Joe refused to share his news immediately. He is feeling insecure about sharing his true feelings. It is impossible for him to reach a level of intimacy he wants to achieve because he fears bursting Ann's bubble. He knows he will have to

tell Ann soon because the company gave him seven days to make his decision on whether to terminate his employment or relocate. He spends the evening with Ann at the safe level of communicating, denying his feelings and withholding information pertinent to their future. Joe modified his environment to make it comfortable for him. Pollution has entered into their atmosphere and the “career” element in their lives is becoming acidic. Joe has moved to the outside of the umbrella of real intimate communication.

Joe has shut down. That is what happens when one partner refuses to listen to the other or when one partner refuses to share what they are feeling because fear, anger and self-preservation are present in the environment.

Joe begins to self-talk. He now is trying to convince himself that maybe he should just tell Ann that he has been promoted, relocated and he has to take the position. This way the decision is already made and Ann will have to accept it. Then it will not really be his fault if she does not like the thought of giving up her job.

For Joe to reduce the acid developing in his relationship he is going to have to approach Ann and in vulnerability take the risk of telling her the truth. When Joe decides to open up and be honest with his feelings to himself and Ann, then they can begin to discuss all the other elements involved in this life-changing career decision. He must decide to move back under the umbrella and be willing to express and be willing to listen to his partner.

At times expression is the hardest thing to do. Expressing what is going on inside begins with a journey of questions between you and the Holy Spirit. One has to be willing to probe deep beneath the surface to find what needs to express.

Joe and Ann will have to discuss many items:

(1) Finances and Retirement. Where they are currently and where they want to be in the future financially. What are the risks involved if Joe decided to change his line of career as opposed to relocating and their expectations concerning the “standard” of living they want to keep must be on the table for discussion.

(2) In-laws. They live in a town where they both have been raised. Both of their families are employed in and reside in that town. They will have to discuss whether or not they are both willing to give up the extended family support as well as frequent visitations.

(3) Self-esteem. Ann will grapple with possibly having to start at the bottom again. This promotion meant a lot to her. It gave her the feeling of being a “successful woman.” She felt as though she had met one of her goals in life. Joe will grapple with having no employment and possibly starting over again as well. Revising and updating his resume may not appeal to him.

(4) Gender roles and decision-making. Joe and Ann both have expectations regarding gender roles and decision-making. Ann is feeling like a pretty equal partner in the relationship, whereas Joe’s expectations are that the “men make all the major decisions” of the family and wives submit.

(5) Spirituality. A second part of the conversation in gender roles and decision-making is spirituality. Joe may be wondering just how “spiritual” Ann is if

she does not submit immediately to his decision. He may get all his security and significance as a man as long as Ann sees his interpretation of Scripture to be correct.

Through the many elements of discussion, Joe and Ann must be quick to recognize which ego state comes into play as they move forward. They must try to stay aware of any noise or pollution that may interfere with their process of stimulating meaning to one another to either reduce or eliminate it altogether.

Pollution causes acidic deposition, wet and dry. The wet form drenches the outside of each individual sucking the life out of the close and connecting relationship each desires to have. Drought (no intimacy), disease (seeking other companions), insects (the minor irritations that cause deterioration) and frost (a cold atmosphere) destroy the environment that does not experience the warmth of love and communicating in a safe environment.

Pollution from unspoken expectations, hidden agendas, and past history will form like dry deposition. You cannot see it but it exists within the individual. It is locked up inside the soul and spirit and will destroy the relationship slowly. When one chooses to keep all the pollution inside and not express himself or herself, then decay and rot begins and will not be visible until the individual wilts and has no life or love to give.

The best solution to keep one's life free from acidic deposition in one's relationship is to limit the emission of pollutants at their source. Acid deposition penetrates deeply into the fabric of relationships. Keeping a vigil for those pollutants whether created in the family of origin or in the current activity of life is

of major importance. Learning the *process* of communicating and *how* one is stimulating meaning to another, e.g., through a self-analysis and evaluating what ego states you are using may make all the difference in two people staying under the umbrella of communication. The listening and speaking technique will improve and be balanced if one desires to stay true and committed to God, to self, to the relationship and to their partner.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

The Christian community has been divorcing at a rate equal to and in some areas higher than secular society. Providing a new genesis of equipping pastors and lay ministers so that they may effectively model positive communication techniques within the Christian community and church will produce a relationship lifestyle that will be desired by others within the church and outside the church. Divorce in the church would no longer be comparable to that of secular society.

Relationship started with God and God communicated to humanity. Adam and Eve experienced the presence of God as God walked with them in the cool of the day and the ontological givens of acceptance, belonging, competence, equity, identity, security, significance, and transcendence were revealed to them.

A look at different historical biblical characters revealed how God communicated with them and how they accepted His call to relationship. A new covenant from God began when Joseph and Mary were chosen to be the earthly parents of Christ. Their relationship could have been doomed prior to their marriage but the obedience of Mary and Joseph to God raised them above the initial challenge and awakened their commitment first to God, then to each other and their children.

Jesus, all God, all human, continued to demonstrate the original ontological givens of God as He demonstrated community is “foremost” for life within the

Trinity and the Trinity makes it possible to “have and be” community. Teaching and bringing to awareness that effective communication of the Holy Spirit depends on one’s response to the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. As VanLeeuwen observed, “Marriage is part and parcel of what God has approved for human life on earth, reflecting the unity-in-diversity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, as well as being the vehicle through which future imagers of God are procreated.”¹

Chapter three demonstrated how communication had been skewed through Christian History and Thought as the Church Fathers neglected to focus on the relationship afforded by communication and instead chose to embrace philosophical teachings that have driven a psychological, sociological, and spiritual wedge between man and woman. Philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle expounded on their view of natural inferiority of the female gender, while Judeo-Christian doctrine has presented a mixed view on gender inequality. In Plato’s theory on the creation of humankind, Plato provided a philosophical foundation for gender inequality that was adopted by the Jewish and Christian thinkers that followed him.

In chapter four a broader understanding of communication illustrated that it was not only something to be utilized in developing a successful couple and family relationship but it was a key element in having a successful business. The effects of clear communication were synonymous to the corporate world, the spiritual and family world.

I stated that companionship and relationship are mainstays of humanity. Reflecting on how God communicates with us and that the relationship begins and

¹ Mary Stewart VanLeeuwen. *Gender & Grace: Love, Work & Parenting in a Changing World*. (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 172.

ends with our Creator simply reinforces this statement “it is not good for man to be alone” (Gen. 2:18 NIV).

With that in mind, statistics and studies regarding marriage and divorce have shown how difficult it is for relationships to survive and remain committed. Whether one chooses to remain single or seek a partner for life, companionship and relationship are important to every human being.

Difficulties and issues arise in relationship like acidity in rain. Components of life may often become negative and the way two people try to resolve them or not can be complicated. When normal rain falls, it is good for the earth, causing growth and nutrients to flourish. Pollution causes the acid level to rise, harm and imbalance result. Whether acidic build-up is in the wet, dry or snowball (acid shock) form, it causes damage to the environment.

Much like this anomaly of the earth is “relationship.” The collapse of communication within a marriage may first go unnoticed as the normal regiment of everyday life takes place. Couples begin to struggle with the wet form of acidic levels because they are somewhat tangible and seen. Couples sometimes deny the effects of dry forms of acidic levels in their life because it is “unseen.” In the soul and spirit of people, lurking in the heart and mind of unopened doors, internal acidic levels rise and quickly eat away and destroy effective forms of communication.

Many scholars have come up with models of communicating effectively. Most of them boil down to the nitty-gritty of life. But as they have lectured and wrote about these skill-building relational tools, it all comes back to the nature of humanity. The Christian community simply must “deny themselves” and search for

God our Father, Christ our Savior and the Holy Spirit to be completely obedient to His call of holiness. God's holiness and character are revealed in His ontological givens throughout the Scriptures. God is the "Great Communicator" (this term still lacks when trying to describe Him) as He demonstrates acceptance, belonging, competence, equity, identity, security, significance and transcendence among His creation. The joy of the Trinitarian God in one's life will metamorphose into our earthly relationships, transforming the one who bears His name and communicates His name. Jesus said to "go and make disciples" (Matt. 28:19 NIV). Is the church successfully discipling couples and individuals on "how" to communicate? This is a question but it is also the answer. When Christians adopt a model or models to help build their skills and overlay them with God's plan, lasting relationships will soar.

Several years ago if I had been asked if there were any communication problems in the relationship between my wife and me, I would have probably said no. However, it was the blessing of an academic requirement that brought us to a Marriage Enrichment group where the ugly debris of inward acidic damage was discovered and the process of correcting, healing, and building our relationship began.

Will educating couples about communication and marriage in the twenty-first century work? Will it work for everyone? It will very likely work for everyone willing to accept new found meaning of how tradition has led and continues to lead us in our society today. Educating (for prevention) and counseling (for intervention) of the baby boomers and all the generations who follow or came before will ultimately change where the society has affected the institution of marriage and

relationship. The Balswicks, in *The Family: A Christian Perspective on the Contemporary Home* state that the “self-fulfillment” movement of the 1960’s and 1970’s gave rise in the divorce rate:

The youth counterculture movement of the 1960s challenged these traditional ideas and asserted that commitment to the institution was an invalid reason to remain in a marriage. ... The self-fulfillment movement continued in the 1970s in form of various sensitivity and encounter groups, and eventually an attitude of narcissism became firmly implanted in our culture.

Accordingly, in the early 1970s a dramatic rise in the divorce rate began, which was to last for nearly ten years. Social scientists now believe that one of the major reasons for this phenomenon was that persons who were unhappy increasingly turned to divorce as a way to remove themselves from their past and to find happiness. Since they believed that they had a right to personal happiness, this value took precedence over commitment to the sanctity of marriage as an institution.

In the modern marriage, continued commitment is contingent on Self-fulfillment.²

The Balswicks go on to state that a balance will result in marriages where both partners are committed to the institution, to the relationship, and to each other as persons. “A commitment to the institution only results in legalism and being committed only to the other person [*or self*] results in humanism.”³ Couples with balanced commitments do search for ways to effectively communicate with each other. My following “testimony” explains.

My Testimony

It has been seven years since my wife and I began this journey on marriage and communication and we find new growth in our relationship frequently but there

² Jack O. Balswick and Judith K. Balswick. *The Family: A Christian Perspective on the Contemporary Home*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1999), 86.

³ *Ibid.*, 87.

are times that acidic deposits are uncovered. Such an event happened during the writing of this paper and this is why I believe it is important for the church to grab hold of developing models to work with couples. As I conclude I am currently working at ridding myself of acidic deposits that have become imbedded deep into my character. Without my spouse who I can communicate with, these deposits will flow over into the soil of our marital relationship and begin the slow process of destruction. I recently found myself withdrawn and angry and ready to attack versus communicate. I rained on my wife one afternoon with all the fury of an acidic rain storm could muster and I went to bed that evening refusing to communicate.

I awoke the next morning dressed for work and left the house. It was later that day that I felt something in my hip pocket so I reached back and withdrew a computer generated card, with a rabbit on the front looking somewhat puzzled but irritated with these words written above its head. "Sometimes you make me so mad." I opened the card and this is what I read.

Donald, I apologize for the way I acted yesterday. It hurt when I felt like you were accusing me of someone who does not walk her walk and that my talk is cheap. It sounds like your hurt and anger is very deep. I want to understand. Please help me understand. I don't want us to keep moving in this stuck place as we have been the past three weeks—you were sitting at the table and ask for the password to let me by. I said "connection—I want us to connect. And I know you want to connect as well but you seem preoccupied. Your body is here but you seem to be occupied elsewhere. And so when I think about this and seem not to get responsive conversation from you, it makes me mad and thus my actions toward you because I ask myself, 'Why isn't he listening when I share with him?' and it could be anything. I want to get through this storm and make repair where we can and build new where we have to. I don't want us to give up. Donald, we need new memories together. We've made it thru some rough and windy times; our feet our sore, our faces chapped. We know what to do – let's use the skills we know to do it. I love you very much. Tammy.

Today's church and the twenty-first century family not only have a multi-cultural challenge, but also the challenge of teaching how gender roles of the past have developed into our society and the Christian society. Expectations about how a married couple "will" and "should" communicate is still phenomenal within our world. Prevailing over the effects of the Fall regarding dominion and sociability is still a besetting sin for humanity and therefore creates ineffective communication or corrupts it altogether in the name of or pursuit of happiness, self-fulfillment, and liberation. Mary Stewart VanLeeuwen explains that

the human abuse of power is possible only because we were originally given that power by God – the power and freedom to exercise accountable dominion over the creation. . . .there will be a propensity in men to let their dominion run wild, to impose it in cavalier and illegitimate ways not only on the earth and on other men, but also upon the person who is bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh – upon the helper corresponding to his very self. Legitimate, accountable dominion all too easily becomes male domination. . . .this is not to say that all men at all times behave this way. . . . But it does mean that there is something akin to a congenital flaw in males that makes it all too easy for them to assume that they have a right to dominate women.⁴

VanLeeuwen goes on to explain her account of the woman's abuse of sociability becoming social enmeshment:

Just as there is something creationally legitimate about the man's desire for dominion. . . .so there is also something creationally right about the woman's desire for union and intimacy with the man....Because of the Fall, Genesis 3:16 warns us, this desire on the part of the women for community is also distorted by sin....two opposite ways we can abuse our God-given exercise of accountable dominion. The first (the man's sin) is to try to exercise dominion without regard for God's original plan for male/female relationships. . . .the peculiarly female sin – is to use the preservation of those relationships as an excuse not to exercise accountable dominion in the

⁴ Mary Stewart VanLeeuwen. *Gender and Grace: Love, Work & Parenting in a Changing World*. (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 45.

first place. . . . [her] temptation is to void taking risks that might upset relationships. It is the temptation to let creational sociability become fallen “social enmeshment.”⁵

There is no reason for professing couples in the Christian Church to continue to have a divorce rate that is synonymous with that of the non-Christian community. It is more than a simple cliché that knowledge is power. It is essential that we as a church not only empower our people concerning their spiritual lives but that they become empowered with the tools that may help them stay away from and identify the deadly acidic influence of the failure to communicate.

Ministers and lay leaders are not exempt from the power of acidic rain or a besetting sin as described by Mary Stewart VanLeeuwen. We have grown in a bent and broken world where we need to continuously keep our eyes fixed on Christ and we must become Christ’s’ model to the world in our marital vows and relationship.

Regardless of the amount of rain that falls upon a marriage and even though the sea may rage acid against the relationship, when the voice of the Great Communicator commands us to get out of the boat, it is because God is willing to equip us to walk on water. I stated earlier that we can model communication provided we are willing to venture into the depths of what communication encompasses.

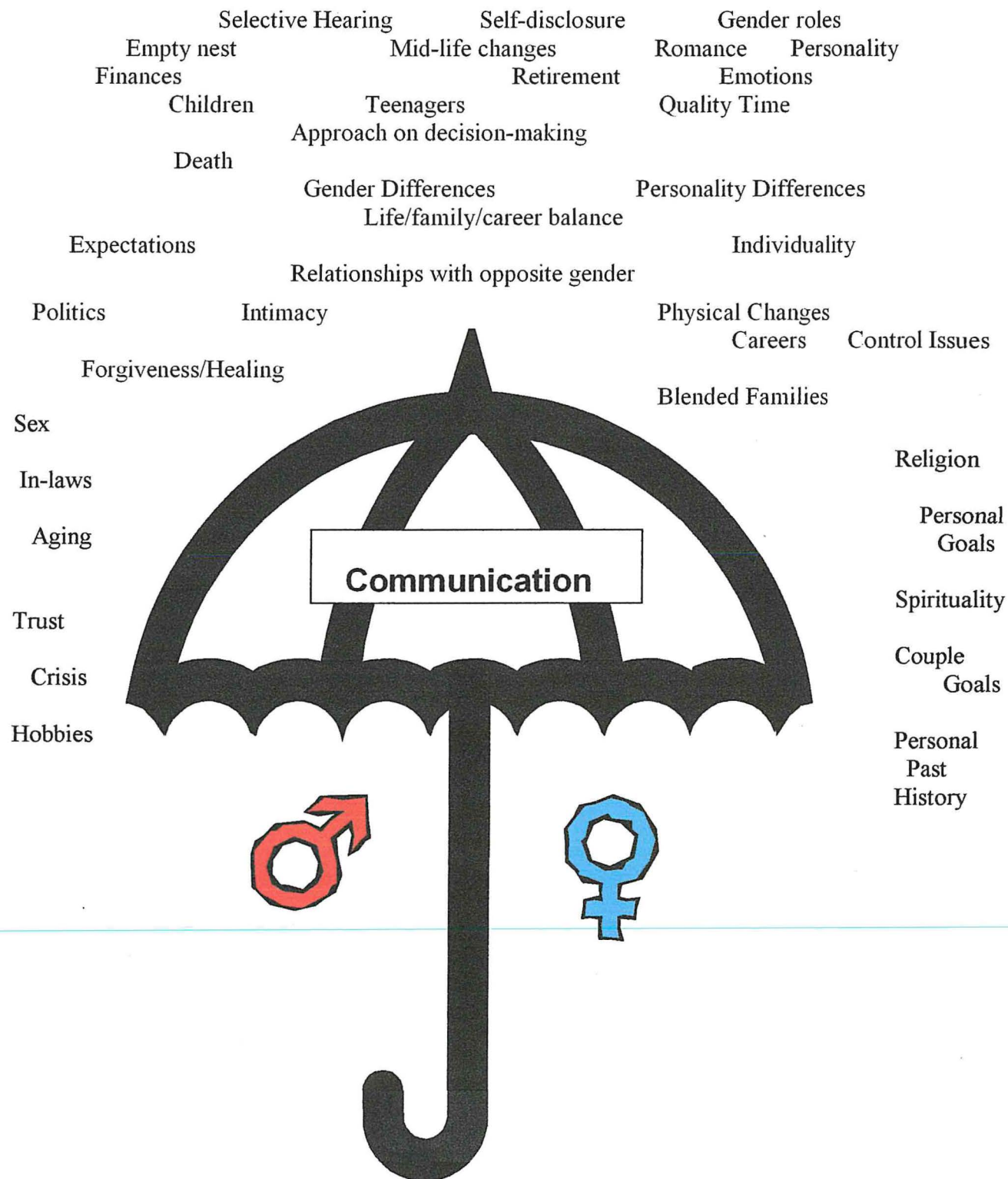
It will last as long as we choose for it too. The same way our relationship lasts with God. The Scripture depicting that the rain will fall on the just the same way it does on the unjust coincides with the thought that learning communication techniques and skill does not prevent the rain from falling but it does provide the tools that prevents damage, if utilized. As long as we exist in this current world our

⁵ Ibid., 45, 46.

church will experience loss through divorcing couples and spiritual falling away. This does not give us the right to make excuses or ignore our responsibility to identify a serious problem in the church and take action.

Any action must (or should) have a plan. The principles for communication have been demonstrated in a solid biblical foundation. Just as if we were building a house we frequently view several floor plans or blueprints. After viewing what is available we select a particular plan or we combine several to create or establish the most feasible plan or model that best fits our particular needs. I have provided several plans and models, including my own. After evaluating the particular need, any church or ministry team may shape a plan that fits them best.

APPENDIX



Works Cited

- Anderson, Ray S. *The Soul of Ministry: Forming Leaders for God's People*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997.
- Arp, Dave, and Claudia Arp. *The Second Half of Marriage: Facing the Eight Challenges of Every Long-term Marriage*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996.
- Balswick, Jack O., and Judith K. Balswick. *The Family: A Christian Perspective on the Contemporary Home*, 2d ed. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2000.
- Barna Research Group. 2001. *Born Again Adults Less Likely to Co-Habit, Just as Likely to Divorce* [on line]. Ventura, California: [on-line] available from <http://www.barna.org/cgi-bin/PagePressRelease.asp?PressReleaseID=95&Reference=D>; Internet; accessed 31 August 2002.
- Beck, James. "Let's Keep Talking: A Response to Ohlschager and Hawkins." *Marriage & Family: A Christian Journal* 4, no. 1 (2001): 47-51.
- Bradley, Brent A. "An Intimate Look Into Emotionally Focused Therapy." *Marriage & Family: A Christian Journal*: 4, no. 2 (2001): 117-25.
- Bradley, Brent A, and James L. Furrow. "Annotated Bibliography of a Sampling of the Work of Susan M. Johnson," *Marriage & Family: A Christian Journal* 4, no. 2, 2001: 127-129.
- Bryant, Timothy A. "The Presenting of a Therapeutic Diagram to Couples on Metacommunication." *Marriage & Family: A Christian Journal* 4, no. 2 (2001): 147-52.
- Chapman, Gary. *The Five Love Languages: How to Express Heartfelt Commitment to Your Mate*. Chicago, Illinois: Northfield Publishing, 1995.
- Clean Air Markets Division/Environmental Protection Agency. *Acid Rain*. [on-line]. Available from <http://www.epa.gov/airmarkets/acidrain/>; Internet; accessed 30 November, 2001.

- Clinton, Tim, ed. *The Soul Care Bible*. Edward Hindson, general editor and George Ohlschlager, consulting editor. Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001.
- Crabb, Larry. *Connecting: Healing for Ourselves and Our Relationships, A Radical New Vision*. Nashville, Tennessee: Word Publishing, 1997.
- . *The Marriage Builder*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992.
- DeMarco, Donald. "The Nuptial Significance of the Body," *Christian Anthropology*, [on-line]. Available from <http://www.catholic.net/RCC/Periodicals/Faith/2001-04/demarco.html>. accessed 1 January 2003.
- DePree, Max. *Leadership Is an Art*. New York, New York: Doubleday, 1990.
- Decker, Edward E. Jr. "Teaching Couples to Pray Together. A Spiritual Application Consistent With the Social Learning-Cognitive Approach to Marital Therapy." *Marriage & Family: A Christian Journal* 4, no. 2 (2001): 131-37.
- Del Colle, Ralph. "The Holy Spirit: Presence, Power, Person." *Theological Studies* 62, no. 2 (June 2001): 322-40.
- Ellison, Craig W. *From Stress to Well-Being*. Dallas, Texas: Word/Nelson, 1994.
- English, Paul Ward, and Brian Robinson. *Geography: People and Places in a Changing World*. Revised, 2d ed., St. Paul, MN: West Publishing Company, 1997.
- Gow, Tracy and Michael Pickwirny. 1996. *Acid Rain and Deposition* [on-line]. Okanagan University College; available from <http://royal.okanagan.bc.ca/mpidwirn/atmosphereandclimate/acidprecip.html>; Internet; accessed 30 November 2001.
- Grenz, Stanley J. *Created For Community: Connecting Christian Belief with Christian Living*, 2d ed., Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1998.
- Hauer, Christian E. and William A. Young. *An Introduction to the Bible: A Journey Into Three Worlds*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1986.
- Hughes III, Robert D. "Starting Over: The Holy Spirit as Subject and Locus of Spiritual Theology." *Anglican Theological Review* 83, no. 3 (Summer 2001): 455-472.

- Klein, William W., Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. consulting editor
Kermit A. Ecklebarger, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, Dallas,
Texas: Word Publishing, 1993.
- Mace, David, and Vera Mace. "Basic Training Workshop Participants Guide and
Resource Manual." *Association for Couples in Marriage Enrichment*, 1992,
edited by Phyllis E. Michael and Randy Michael. Winston-Salem, NC:
A.C.M.E., 1992.
- McKay, Matthew, and Martha Davis. *Messages: The Communications Skills Book*.
2d. Oakland, California: New Harbinger Publications, Inc., 1995.
- Miller, Sherod, Phyllis A. Miller, Elam W. Nunnally, and Daniel B. Wackman, eds.
*Couple Communication I: Talking and Listening Together: Couple
Communication I*. Evergreen, Colorado: Interpersonal Communication
Programs, Inc., 1991. Reprint, Colorado: 2000.
- Minear, Paul S. "Communication and Community," *Theology Today*, 27, (July
1970): 140-154.
- Ohlschlager, George, and Ron Hawkins. "Toward a Clinical Theology of Marriage."
Marriage & Family: A Christian Journal 4, no. 1 (2001): 31-45.
- Osterhaus, James. *Questions Couples Ask Behind Closed Doors*. Wheaton, Illinois:
Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1996.
- Parrot III, Les, and Leslie Parrot. *Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts: Seven
Questions to Ask Before (and After) You Marry*. Grand Rapids, Michigan:
Zondervan Publishing House, 1995.
- Pinnock, Clark H. "Biblical Texts - Past and Future Meanings." *Journal of
Evangelical Theological Society* 43, no. 1 (March 2000).
- Pinnock, Clark H. and Delwin Brown. *Theological Crossfire*. Grand Rapids,
Michigan: Zondervan Publishing, 1990.
- Rodgers, Beverly and Tom Rodgers. "Two Communication Techniques From the
Soul-Healing Love Model That Aid in Marital Conflict Resolution."
Marriage & Family: A Christian Journal 4, no. 2 (2001): 155-62.
- Satir, Virginia. *Conjoint Family Therapy*. 1967. 3d ed. Palo Alto, California:
Science and Behavior Books, Inc., 1983.
- Satir, Virginia and Michele Baldwin. *Satir Step by Step*. Palo Alto, California:
Science and Behavior Books, Inc., 1983.

Smalley, Gary. *Making Love Last Forever*. Dallas, Texas: Word Publishing, 1996.

VanLeeuwen, Mary Stewart. *Gender & Grace: Love, Work & Parenting in a Changing World*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1990.

Verderber, Rudolph F. *Communicate!* Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc., 1975.

Vogt, Ronald G. "Intensive Marital Therapy." *Marriage & Family: A Christian Journal* 4, no. 2 (2001): 163-71.

Vogt, Ronald G. Philhaven's Recovery of Hope Program results [on-line]. Available from http://www.philhaven.com/pages/pageview.cfm?section=services&dir=services/roh/intensive_week&page=results; Internet; accessed 4 January 2003.

Worthington, Everett L, Jr. *Marriage Counseling: A Christian Approach to Counseling Couples*, Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1989.

_____. "The Busy Researcher's Digest," *Marriage & Family: A Christian Journal*. 4, no. 2, 2001: 109-110.

Yon, Rhonda. Eras of Elegance, Inc. 2000-2003. *Gender Issues in Ancient Greek, Roman and Judeo-Christian Writings* [on-line]; available from <http://www.erasofelegance.com/gender.html>; Internet; accessed 5 January 2003.