

## Some thoughts on Pre-Marital Mentoring

- 1) As in other counseling, relate warmly, empathetically, and openly so that a sturdy relationship with the couple will grow.
  - i. Establish a trustful relationship with the couple.
- 2) Establish a clear contract for how the session will be used.
- 3) Allow rapport to develop by asking low-threat, open-ended questions, beginning with informational queries about positive aspects of their relationship.
- 4) Do everything possible to reduce any sense of threat so that a couple will feel free to reveal their needs and worries.
  - i. Threat reduction involves communicating to the couple that they are not on trial.
  - ii. The most important thing is to surprise couples who expect a minister's judgment with loving acceptance and an opportunity to learn how to cope healthily with the enormous challenges they face.
- 5) Become aware of the couple's learning readiness and their awareness of problems related to their relationship.
- 6) Learning readiness varies greatly in different areas. It is helpful, therefore, to open up various key topics, watching for increased-energy responses that indicate awareness of need.
- 7) When the signs of interest appear in a couple's responses, concentrate discussion on that area for a while, encouraging them to examine it, and seeking to communicate constructive attitudes and relevant information.
  - i. Begin with what they are interested in and build on that, sharing ideas, experiences, and relationship building and communication skills that seem relevant to the couple's needs.
- 8) Discussion should focus on present feelings and current issues more than on anticipated future problems.

- 9) Take time to teach couples useful communication skills, letting them practice these during as well as between the sessions.
- 10) Carefully selected book chapters and articles should be assigned as homework to be read and discussed together between sessions.
- 11) A primary goal of the prewedding sessions is to relate the couple to the church's ongoing program of marriage enrichment

Throughout premarital counseling, the minister and/or mentor should bear these goals of the process in mind

- 1) giving them some practical guidelines for the early adjustment stages of marriage
- 2) strengthening their sense of adventure and joy within some awareness of the complexities, conflict, and struggles of marriage
- 3) Strengthening their interpersonal competence based on effective communication skills
- 4) Setting an example for them of communication openness
- 5) Supplying them with sound information and guidance to help them develop a satisfying, growing relationship.
- 6) Helping them experience the wonder of the real presence of the love of God in their love

Master Goal: The establishment of a warm, caring, trustful relationship with the couple.