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A Biblical Approach to Establishing Marital Intimacy

Part IV: Growth Enrichment Marital Seminar

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Interest in marital intimacy has heightened during the last three decades in the United States. American culture has brought several changes and pressures to bear on the institution of marriage including the rising divorce rate, disillusionment with adolescent and post-adolescent fantasies about romantic love and fulfillment, the changes in the family life cycle, and the emphasis of the human growth and development movement and the marriage and family enrichment movement. Paschal Baute states:

Sociologists, anthropologists, and other observers have noted that contemporary North American culture is driven by achievement, competition, profit, technological change, and mobility; by the drive for security and a higher standard of living. Our industrialization has grown and developed by the deliberate creation of needs, planned obsolescence, and the stimulation of consumer appetites.¹

With the anxiety, tension, frustration, hostility and fear which can come because of these cultural pressures, the family more than ever is the center of emotional life. This factor has increased in importance as other family functions have been shifted to other institutions or have declined in importance (economic, status-giving, educational, religious, recreational and protective bonds).² Increased marital intimacy is also sought in marriage by divorced people who remarry. Individuals and couples whose romantic visions about marriage and life have been unfulfilled are interested in how marital intimacy can be achieved and maintained. Married

couples want to know how to maintain intimacy with changes and crises in the life cycle.

Need for a Marriage Enrichment Program

Nearly every marriage experiences a series of predictable crises. William McRae writes, "One reason for the almost 300 percent increase in the divorce rate over the past few years is that people do not expect these crises and therefore are not prepared to cope with them."³ Edward Shorten notes that these crises can be spotted by surveying the divorce statistics for the length of time the couple has been married.⁴ "In the United States, the big new increases in frequency of divorce have come for couples married less than a year (up 65 percent), married five to nine years (up 45 percent) and married 20 to 29 years (up 48 percent).⁵ All marriages, then, are mined with potential crises from the moment the vows are said, and each one is timed to go off at a certain point in the relationship. Shorten identifies the following danger points to marriage. Estimated times are determined from divorce statistics:

1. The first time you feel trapped (4 months). "I can't go out like I used to go." "All he wants to do is watch TV."
2. The first child (3 years). "Goodbye, simple living." "Hello, fatigue, pressure, responsibility."
3. The first feeling of attraction toward someone else (5 years). "I am bored with my partner but excited by someone else."
4. The first argument about who is married to the job (6 years). "While you're out there becoming famous, who's going to clean up this pigsty?" "What makes you think your job is more important than mine?"
5. The first time you ask yourself, "Am I growing as a person?" (7 years). "Am I realizing my potential?"
6. The first (known) infidelity, hopefully not applicable to a Christian marriage (11 years). "I have been unfaithful to my marriage vows." "I have been shamed, betrayed, and humiliated by my partner."
7. The last child leaves home (27 years). "Now that we are alone, there is little to say and much less to do." "My spouse is like a stranger to me."⁶

A number of these seven predictable crisis points appear in many marriages. If a person adds to these the hundreds of unpredictable crises, he/she will sense the urgent need for a marriage enrichment program. Many pastors have been

overburdened with marriage counseling which is a remedial ministry and too often too late to stop the decision to divorce. Because of time and the ineffectiveness of some crisis marriage counseling, many social organizations, religious groups, churches, pastors and counselors have formulated marriage enrichment programs which are preventive rather than remedial in nature.

Kinds of Marriage Enrichment Program

Catholic Program

The Catholic marriage enrichment program is known as Marriage Encounter which began in Spain in 1958 under the leadership of Father Gabriel Calvo.⁷ It developed out of the Christian Family Movement which had started in Chicago in 1947 and had spread to Spain. Calvo and some couples brought Marriage Encounter to the United States in 1967; the movement in America formed a National Marriage Encounter Board in Chicago.⁸ Marriage Encounter is represented nationally both by the National Marriage Encounter, which is a loose-knit ecumenical organization with local affiliated groups who promise to follow Father Calvo's original manual and by the Worldwide Marriage Encounter, which is tightly structured and more strongly maintains a Catholic identity although it too has Protestant and Jewish affiliates who conduct their own Encounter weekends.⁹

Antionette Bosco's *Marriage Encounter* presents the movement positively and distinguishes the five points of philosophical difference between the two groups. Marriage Encounter weekends are ten to twenty-five couples at retreat lodges or hotels. Its duration is from Friday night through Sunday afternoon. A priest and two "encountered" couples make the presentations. A mass is led by the priest in the meetings. Participants write to their mates and discuss their feelings about what they have heard and written. From a fundamentalist perspective, Marriage Encounter may be critiqued for its unbiblical view of self-esteem, its failure to deal with the sin problem in individual lives, its Roman Catholic theology and its lack of openness with couples about the content of the sessions before they attend.

Protestant Programs

There are many liberal Protestant denominations which have copied/modified the Catholic Marriage Encounter program. These include programs led by people in the United Methodist Church, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Reformed Church in America, Moravian Church in America and others. Many Marriage Encounter weekends are ecumenically oriented and humanistic in nature. Some of the early leaders were David and Vera Mace, Del and Trudy Vander Haars, Bud and Bea Van Eck, Paul and Donna Hopkins, Leon and Antionette Smith, and Howard and Charlotte Clinebell.

Jewish Program

The Jewish Marriage Encounter movement is patterned after the Marriage Encounter movement of the Catholics. Bernard Kligfeld and his wife are the Jewish couple who attended a Catholic Encounter weekend and set up the Jewish Encounter movement in August 1974 as a separate entity.¹⁰ A rabbi and a lay couple lead the sessions. There are religious services, dialogue with the mate, mini-lectures, marital evaluation and writing to the mate. Like the Catholic Marriage Encounter, the Jewish program is tightly structured, theologically incorrect, unbiblical with regard to the self, and limited in its treatment of all the facets of married life.

Evangelical Programs

There are several marriage enrichment programs in evangelical circles. Two Baptist pastors have proposed enrichment programs. Herman Green, Jr leads a Christian Marriage Enrichment Retreat. The retreat is held over a weekend from Friday to Sunday afternoon. It covers such topics as communication, rules, priorities, sex, negative feelings, expression of desired behavior in a mate, worship, and renewal of vows.¹¹

A second enrichment program was originated by J V Cohorn as a presentation of a designed learning experience to enrich the total relationship of the marriage union. Cohorn argues against the "behavioral guidance of humanistic prophets" and argues for biblical insights to help marriages which are struggling for intimacy.¹² He has seminars cover such topics as communication, the biblical concept of marriage, utilizing personality strengths to meet intimacy

needs, relating intimacy strengths with your spouse, sex, hindrances to intimacy, and a plan of commitment.

William McRae presents a model which he calls "Making a Good Thing Better." His enrichment group meets for six two-hour sessions with one hour for presentations and the other hour for personal application by the couples.¹³ McRae urges evangelical churches to promote marriage enrichment retreats and seminars which have three characteristics: (1) biblical in orientation and content; (2) preventive; and (3) participatory.¹⁴

Secular Programs

There are numerous secular psychological marriage enrichment programs. Among them are Herbert Otto's Family Resource Development Program, the Family Fun Council and More Joy in Your Marriage Programs;¹⁵ Abraham and Dorothy Schmitt's Marriage Renewal Retreats which are based on the psychology of Otto Rank, Abraham Maslow, Rollo May, Carl Rogers and others;¹⁶ Don Hayward's Positive Partners;¹⁷ the Gestalt Perspective by Joseph Zinker and Julian Leon;¹⁸ Transactional Analysis Tools for Use in Marriage Enrichment Programs by Hedges and Betty Capers;¹⁹ Choice Awareness by Richard Nelson and Wendell Friest;²⁰ George Bach's Constructive Aggression Sessions;²¹ and The Minnesota Couples Communication Program.²² Many of these enrichment programs are based on different psychological perspectives which are contradictory to a biblical approach to marriage.

Growth Enrichment Marital Seminar

Growth Enrichment Marital Seminar is a program which can be used by local churches as a preventive counseling device. The acronym for the seminar is GEMS -- Christian marriages need to be polished and should sparkle for Christ instead of being fractured and broken.

The objective of GEMS is to restore or improve marital intimacy in Christian marriages. It is a biblically based marital intimacy seminar designed for local, fundamental Baptist churches. It stresses the need for Christian couples to follow God's model and message on intimacy. Marital intimacy includes cognitive intimacy, emotional intimacy and behavioral intimacy (sexual, social, work-related and spiritual).

Restoration or improvement of marital intimacy is growth enrichment since it is the spiritual results of the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the Christian couple. This restoration or improvement of marital intimacy comes as the Christian couple understands and acts according to God's model and message. These cognitive and behavioral changes foster marital intimacy which is a oneness (closeness, communion or unity) between a husband and a wife who have committed themselves to each other before God in marriage.

Creation of GEMS

GEMS is a result of a Doctor of Ministries dissertation project in counseling by the author of this article. The hypothesis which is the basis of GEMS is that "marital intimacy may be established in a Christian marriage by having the couple follow God's model and message on intimacy." The initial seminar involved forty couples from three churches. The couples were evenly divided into a control group and a seminar group. Both groups were pre- and post-tested to determine the effects of the GEMS program on the couples involved in the seminar group.

Aspects of GEMS

The lecture or seminar aspect of the GEMS seminar covers the evidence of the desire for marital intimacy, the causes for the absence of marital intimacy, God's model for intimacy from the relationships in the Trinity and from God's behavior as the Husband in the marriage motif in the Old Testament prophets and as the Husband in Christ's relation to the Church and marital intimacy mirrored in the Scriptures.

Three tests are included in the GEMS seminar to objectively determine the degree of marital intimacy being experienced by each couple. These also served to evaluate the validity of the basic hypothesis involved in the seminar.

The Waring Intimacy Questionnaire (WIQ). Dr E M Waring, a professor in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Western Ontario, has produced a 90-item, self-report questionnaire which measures the quality and quantity of intimacy in a marriage.²³ The questionnaire measures eight facets of marital intimacy: affection, cohesion, conflict resolution, compatibility, expressiveness, sexuality, autonomy, and identity.²⁴ Waring writes:

The sequential strategy employed in the construction of the WIQ has produced scales that are minimally redundant, highly reliable and relatively free from response bias. Convergent and discriminate item validity has been demonstrated and comparison across diverse samples suggest stability of the hypothesized constructs.²⁵

The PAIR Inventory. PAIR is an acronym for Personal Assessment of Intimacy in Relationship. This questionnaire provides systematic information on five types of intimacy: emotional, social, sexual, intellectual and recreational. The inventory includes thirty-six questions and is completed twice. The first time the questions are answered in view of *how it is now* in the relationship. The second time they are answered in view of *how they would like it to be* in the relationship. This PAIR questionnaire was developed over two years by experts in the field of marriage and family counseling and was administered to several hundred couples to perfect it. A comparison of the WIQ and the PAIR questionnaire found that the two scales were significantly related.²⁶

Growth Enrichment Marital Seminar Questionnaire. An intimacy questionnaire was created by formulating eight questions in each of six categories of cognitive intimacy, emotional intimacy, sexual intimacy, social intimacy which includes aesthetic and recreational intimacy, work-related intimacy and spiritual intimacy. The forty-eight questions are scored 0-4: never, seldom, sometimes, frequently and regularly.

By administering these three questionnaires as pre-tests and post-tests, it was possible to evaluate the affect of the GEMS seminar upon the couples. In addition to this objective method of evaluation, there was a subjective method used to determine the effect of the seminar on the couple. The couples wrote out a testimonial as to the changes which had taken place in them individually and together.

Role plays were created to be performed by the couples in the group. The role plays provided a change of pace to the lecture method, helped the couples to apply what they had learned and stimulated discussion about problems and solutions.

The homework which was begun in class and completed at home carried the seminar into their weekly activities together. Most of the homework was communication exercises. Ideas for homework came from the writings of Wayne Mack, H Norman Wright, and Howard J

Clinebell, Jr. The homework caused the couple to behaviorally relate with the material which they had received cognitively in the seminar. It enabled them to see where they needed to restructure their thinking and behavior to bring it in line with God's Word. This restructuring led to a deeper marital intimacy (Eph 4:22ff; Col 3:8ff; Amos 3:3).

Content of GEMS

The program of the GEMS seminar was scheduled over a six-week period for two hours, one evening per week. Each evening included two fifty-minute sessions with a twenty minute break. The presentation period included the class work and the role play. The first and last evenings were given to filling out the three questionnaires.

The following is the format for the four instructional weeks of the GEMS program.

First Evening

Session One: Marital Intimacy In The World

- Topics:
- 1) Marital intimacy: its beginning and nature.
What destroyed marital intimacy in the Garden of Eden? What is destroying or causing the lack of marital intimacy today?
 - 2) Desire for marital intimacy.
 - 3) Value of marital intimacy.

Class work: Each is to list the strengths of his/her marriage on a slip of paper which should be kept for a later homework assignment. Ten minutes were allowed for this at the end of the fifty minute session.

Break

Session Two: The Basis for Establishing Marital Intimacy

- Topics:
- 1) The marital relationship's relation to God.
 - 2) Recognition of the qualities of the mate.
 - 3) Separation from the original family unit.
 - 4) Commitment to marriage.
 - 5) Complete intimacy.

Role play 1: It consisted of a workaholic husband with an interfering mother-in-law and a soap opera-watching wife. A discussion identifying the marital problems and what could be done to remedy them biblically was allowed.

Homework: Matthew 7:1-5 was to be read. They were to make log, speak and please lists and share them respectively with each other. They were to list the causes for the lack of intimacy in their marriage and to discuss them with each other. They were to confer with each other about the reasons for these and the solutions which they were going to follow. They were to share the strength-of-their-marriage list with their mate.

Second Evening

Session Three: Interaction in the Trinity as a Model for Intimate Relationships

Topics:

- 1) The value of a model for learning proper behavior.
- 2) God is the Perfect Model for Relationships.
- 3) The nature of the Trinity as a Model.
- 4) Fourteen ways in which the persons of the Trinity relate.

Class work: They were to make a list from the fourteen ways in which the Trinity relates to show which ways they needed to improve. Each mate was to make a list of the ways in which their mate needed to improve. They were to keep the lists for future homework.

Break

Session Four: God's Model for Marital Intimacy in His Relations with Israel and the Church

Topics:

- 1) The marriage motif with God as the Husband in the Old Testament prophets.
- 2) The qualities of the covenant-keeping God: faithfulness, justice, holiness, knowledge, trustworthiness, truthful, and jealous.
- 3) Summary: God's Model for marriage partners.

Role play 2: It consisted of a repentant, lustful husband and an unforgiving wife. A discussion about forgiveness and forgetting took place.

Homework: They were to share the lists which they made regarding the needed improvements relating. They discussed these with their mate and planned how to accomplish these changes.

They were to sit facing their mate and were to say, "I appreciate you because. . . ." They were to continue to enumerate the ways in which they appreciate their mate until they ran out of thoughts. Then the mate was to do the same. After this, they were to discuss how they felt about what they had done. Each was to write on a card all of the things which they could remember that their mate said in appreciation. They were to check with their mate for what they had not remembered.

They were to face each other and say, "I desire from you. . . ." They were to continue to do this until they had nothing more to say. They were to check both lists. They were to place a "B" beside different desires which did not conflict. A "C" was to be placed beside conflicting desires. They were to make sure that the desires were not unbiblical. A plan was then made to meet the desires.

Third Evening

Session Five: Role Responsibilities -- An Aspect of God's Message for Marital Intimacy

Topics:

- 1) Modern efforts to change marital roles.
- 2) Loving leadership and submission.
- 3) Roles and worth.

Class work: They were to list what they did when they felt close or intimate with their mate. They were to list what they felt and how they felt when they were intimate with their mate. These lists were to be saved for future homework.

Break

Session Six: Communication -- The Key to Maintaining and Improving Marital Intimacy

- Topics:**
- 1) Improving Marital Intimacy.
 - 2) Types of couples.
 - 3) Levels of communication.
 - 4) Speaking and listening principles.
 - 5) Conflict resolution methods.

Role play 3: It consisted of an authoritarian husband whose wife had had enough. A discussion of biblical role functioning was to follow.

Homework: They were to share their list of what they did with their mate when they felt close. Also, they were to share what and how they felt when they were intimate with their mate. They were to discuss this.

They were instructed to read a translation of the Song of Solomon. They were to list the love names which each called the other and the frequency. They were to note, also, who initiated physical relations. They were to discuss this with their mate.

They also were to fill out a priorities sheet and discuss this with their mate.

Assignment: Each partner was requested to bring a stamped envelope and stationery for the next week's sessions.

Fourth Evening

Session Seven: Thinking and Feeling Closely (Aspects of Marital Intimacy -- Cognitive and Emotional Intimacy)

- Topics:**
- 1) A permanent one-flesh union.
 - 2) A covenant of companionship.
 - 3) Understanding the mate.
 - 4) Honoring the mate.
 - 5) Expressing and experiencing emotions.

Class work: The stationery was to be used to write a love letter to their mate. They were to seal the letter in the stamped

envelope. These were given to the leader. The letters were mailed out that week.

Break

Session Eight: **Behaving Together (Aspects of Marital Intimacy -- Social, Spiritual, Work-Related and Sexual)**

- Topics: 1) Consideration of the four kinds of intimate behavior.
2) Coverage of Jay Adams' summary of I Corinthians 7:1-5 was made.

Discussion: Questions were permitted over all the content of the presentations in the four meetings.

Homework: They were to read "How To Find Time For Your Marriage" by Bill Blackburn in *Virtue* magazine (July/August, 1987, 24-26). They were to plan out a week's schedule of daily time together as a couple.

The six-week seminar was concluded with post-testing by both the control and seminar groups to measure change in marital intimacy which had taken place during the duration of the seminar. Then the seminar group filled out an evaluation sheet on the seminar. Each person in the seminar group was asked to write out how the seminar affected him/her and their marriage.

Evaluations of GEMS

A comparison of the pre-test questionnaires with the post-test questionnaires indicated how effective the seminar was in improving marital intimacy in the lives of the participants. The testimonials also disclosed the personal impact of the GEMS seminar. A consideration of the evaluations enabled the leader to know how to improve the GEMS seminar.

There was ninety-five percent attendance by the participants. Those who were absent at times had sick children or job responsibilities out of the state. The seminar participants were kept anonymous by assigning each couple a letter of the alphabet and using F for female and M for male. The control group was identified by numbers with F and M.

Results of the WIQ. The overall average improvement of the control group on the Warring Intimacy Questionnaire was minimal, only 2.15 percent. The overall average improvement by the seminar group was 27.4 percent. The seminar group improved in all areas, except cohesiveness which was unchanged. The control group remained the same in all areas, except in identity and social desirability where the average increased one point. The control group did score higher on the pre-test in most categories. This may have been due to the fact that some of the couples in the control group were married longer and had been Christians longer. Yet, the seminar group improved much more than the control group on the Waring Intimacy Questionnaire. The results of WIQ confirmed the hypothesis of the seminar.

Results of the PAIR Questionnaire. The PAIR Intimacy Questionnaire measures emotional, social, sexual, intellectual and recreational intimacy. On emotional intimacy, the seminar group improved an average of twenty-three points; whereas, the control group only improved an average of one point. Socially, the control group went down a point on the average, while the seminar group increased ten points on the average. The sexual intimacy rating of the seminar group gained eighteen points on the average as compared to a two-point average gain for the control group. The intellectual intimacy rating showed a four-point average gain for the control group and a twenty-point average gain for the seminar group. Recreational intimacy showed a nine-point average gain for the seminar group as compared to a four-point average gain for the control group. Once again, the seminar group greatly surpassed the improvement of the control group. The control group's total average improvement was 3.25 percent; whereas, the seminar group's advance was 32.83 percent. Thus, the findings on the PAIR Questionnaire also substantiated the seminar's hypothesis.

Results of the GEMS Questionnaire. The GEMS Intimacy Questionnaire was designed to measure the degree of intimacy in six categories of marital intimacy -- cognitive, emotional, sexual, social, work-related and spiritual. The average score of the control group did not change in the category of cognitive intimacy; whereas, the seminar group increased an average of five points. With regard to emotional intimacy, the seminar group advanced four points on the average as compared with a one-point gain on the average for the control group. Social intimacy improved an average of one point for the control group and three points on the average for the seminar group. The statistics on work-related intimacy showed that the

control group remained unchanged, while the seminar group improved four points on the average. The control group gained only one point on the average in the category of spiritual intimacy, the seminar group gained three points on the average. The control group remained unchanged in their average on sexual intimacy; whereas, the seminar group advanced four points on the average. The total improvement of the seminar group on the average was 16.9 percent, while the control group showed an average improvement of 2.56 percent.

The statistics from the Waring, the PAIR, and the GEMS questionnaires all confirm the hypothesis of the project.²⁷ They show that marital intimacy may be established in a Christian marriage by having the couple follow God's model and message on intimacy.

Personal Testimonies of GEMS Participants. On the evening of the post-testing, the seminar group turned in personal testimonies regarding the impact of the seminar on their lives and their marriages. Selected representative responses from ten women (AF, CF, etc.) and ten men (AM, BM, etc.) are included to reflect the impact of the GEMS seminar.

- AF The seminar has caused us to become more open about our marriage and to draw closer.
- CF I feel closer to my husband than I had been before the seminars. We thank each other for a job well done. Because of this, I have noticed that my self-image has improved and I've found myself trying to make sure I look attractive for my husband. Now, he is more talkative about problems bothering him, and he is careful to let me know his whereabouts.
- DF This seminar has definitely been very worthwhile. I have noticed a real sincere, earnest desire on my mate's part towards our marriage. What a difference it has made. Also, I have never been so eager to be my mate's helpmeet. The closeness of our marriage has been more profound in the last six weeks than it has been in six years. I have a whole new perspective on my marriage with very positive steps in mind.
- EF After we opened up, feelings were not hurt, but a true forgiveness and a new beginning in our relationship and marriage has been experienced.
- GF I believe these seminars have really helped us grow closer as a couple. The homework we had made us communicate about things we haven't discussed for a long time. I really believe these seminars helped us to see many, many things that were being overlooked in everyday life that are so vital in growing together as a couple.

- JF The course on marital intimacy helped our marriage very much. I feel we have become much closer to each other since we started the course.
- KF We have become closer to each other and I love it. He has been very appreciative and more attentive towards me. I truly desire to understand him and his needs. Our physical relationship has been more passionate as well.
- NF We have honestly begun looking at each other in new lights. I don't believe I can fully say how much this course has helped because I believe we have just begun to reap the benefits.
- PF The discussions really forced us to sit down and "bare our inner feelings," whereas this was only done occasionally before. It's easier now that we know each other better. All activities were geared to and did help closeness.
- QF Attending these classes has added the icing on the cake. It helped closeness because it was a project we did together. Biblical principles have healed old wounds. We were able to talk about past hurts and people without bitterness because God has filled our hearts and lives with much love for each other.
- AM I came to realize how little I knew about marriage and how little I was putting into my marriage. I really do feel closer to my wife now. We both realize we have to work hard to have the kind of life together God wants us to have.
- BM The seminar on marital intimacy has made my relationship with my wife more intimate. We were drawn closer to each other because we were able to be more open with each other.
- CM We have to work on our personal time together, but really have been drawn closer together. The course has really opened my eyes to what the Word of God has to say.
- DM I always have prayed and without any success that God would cause me to love my wife. And then I would look for stronger feelings but to no avail. My marriage continued the same. I praise the Lord for working in my heart through these lessons. I now see not only what is wrong, but how to make things better. I believe the strength of my testimony is my need to be selfless which is also my desire.
- EM I have learned how to really get my thoughts across which has enabled us to talk and appreciate each other even more.
- GM This seminar has helped me in the area of seeing my weaknesses in my marriage and my relationship with my Lord. Seeing the problems is fine, but the seminar gave me the tools to take care of the sins in my own life and in our marriage. Intimacy between each other is what we are striving for in our marriage as it was pictured between God the Father and God the Son.

- JM The more things I learned about intimacy in our marriage, it made me stop and think of ways I could please her and be of more help to her in certain situations. I also realized the importance of being a loving leader and the affect it has on the family as a whole. I was really blessed by the amount of couples who attended so faithfully and the times of fellowship we had with one another. The seminar had a positive affect on me and was a real rebuke and encouragement to me.
- LM The discussions on the sessions and the times we spent together doing the homework assignments helped us reach a higher level of intimacy. The seminar has inspired us to actively attempt to spend more time together and to seek to make our good marriage even better.
- NM I know this class has helped to draw us closer as a couple. It has helped both of us to see areas that need work.
- OM My mate and I didn't have a very good marriage before the seminar. After four short weeks, there was a definite turn around in our marriage. God's way is the right way.

The testimonies of the seminar group provided a subjective confirmation of the hypothesis. The seminar presentations and the homework assignments were found to have produced the greatest contribution to marital closeness. The role plays were considered to be exciting times for the application of what they had learned. The results of this initial GEMS seminar were very rewarding.

Adaptation of GEMS

The six-week GEMS seminar has been adapted into a weekend retreat format entitled *Symphony In Marital Intimacy*. The context of the presentations is only about half or less of the material presented in the GEMS seminar. The agenda and content of the *Symphony of Marital Intimacy* was as follows:

Friday evening

- 6:45 Registration, coffee, refreshments, fellowship.
- 7:15 **LEARNING THE SCALES:** An accurate self-concept that flows from God's image would show us that we are moral, social, and purposeful beings. We will look at these and how they affect the foundation of our marriage. We will also check our attitudes toward God and our partners and discuss conversion, commitment, and the completion of the family unit.

- 8:00 Role play and discussion: "The Engagement Scene" - Find the cracks in this foundation.
- 8:20 Break - coffee and desserts.
- 8:50 PRACTICING THE RIGHT SOUNDS: What type of couple are you? At what level do you communicate? What speaking and listening principles do you apply? Do you edify your partner in your speech? Some conflict resolution methods to help you.
- 9:35 THE NOT-SO-NEWLYWED GAME: All play with a chance to win "White elephant" prizes!
- 10:00 Your homework assignment will be given. Fellowship time as long as you can stay.

Saturday

- 9:45 Coffee, danish, fellowship.
- 10:15 THE SYMPHONY (Part 1): We will look at each of the following and examine what it is, Scripture that applies, and how to enhance it: spiritual intimacy; work-related intimacy; cognitive intimacy.
- 11:00 Creative discussion time.
- Break
- 12:00 THE SYMPHONY (Part 2): Social intimacy; emotional intimacy; sexual intimacy.
- 12:45 Lunch break; couple's private discussion over lunch.
- 1:30 GAMES - fun and a bit of exercise.
- 2:30 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER: how to develop new patterns and ways to improve old habits.
- 3:00 Three skits and discussion time.
- 3:30 TESTIMONY TIME

Conclusion

The Growth Enrichment Marital Seminar or the Symphony in Marital Intimacy, a mini-GEMS Seminar is a marriage enrichment seminar which can be presented in local churches to improve closeness (intimacy) in marriage. This restoration or improvement of marital intimacy comes as the Christian couple understands and acts according to God's model and message. Growth Enrichment Marital Seminar is a program which can be used by local churches as a preventive counseling device. Pastors need to consider such a seminar or retreat for their married couples.

Notes:

- 1 Paschal B Baute, "Intimacy In The Conjugal Relationship: A Descriptive Analysis Of The Felt Experience" (EdD dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1967) 2
- 2 Ibid, 6
- 3 William J McRae, "The Church's Role in Marriage Enrichment" *BibSac* (1987) 332
- 4 Edward Shorten, "Danger: Marriage Crises Ahead" *Chatelaine* (1979) 59
- 5 Ibid
- 6 Ibid
- 7 Alan J DeYoung, "Marriage Encounter: A Critical Examination" *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy* (1979) 27
- 8 Ibid
- 9 William J Doherty, Patricia McCabe, and Robert G Ryder, "Marriage Encounter: A Critical Appraisal" *Journal of Marriage and Family Counseling* (1978) 99
- 10 Bernard Klingfeld, "The Jewish Marriage Encounter" *Marriage and Family Enrichment: New Perspectives and Programs* edited by Herbert A Otto (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976) 129
- 11 Herman Green, "A Christian Marriage Enrichment Retreat" *Marriage and Family Enrichment* edited by Herbert A Otto (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976) 87-92
- 12 J V Cohorn, "Meeting Intimacy Needs In Christian Marriage: A Seminar For Marriage Enrichment In The Local Church" (DMin dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Seminary, 1979) 10
- 13 McRae, "Marriage Enrichment," 337-338
- 14 Ibid, 334
- 15 Otto, "Marriage and Family," 13, 101-109

- ¹⁴ Abraham and Dorothy Schmitt, "Marriage Renewal Retreats" *Marriage and Family Enrichment* edited by Herbert A Otto (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976) 110-120
- ¹⁷ Don Hayward, "Positive Partners: A Marriage Enrichment Communication Course" *Marriage and Family Enrichment* edited by Herbert A Otto (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976) 121-128
- ¹⁸ Joseph C Zinker and Julian P Leon, "The Gestalt Perspective: A Marriage Enrichment Program" *Marriage and Family Enrichment* edited by Herbert A Otto (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976) 144
- ¹⁹ Hedges and Betty Capers, "Transactional Analysis Tools for Use in Marriage Enrichment Programs" *Marriage and Family Enrichment* edited by Herbert A Otto (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976) 158-169
- ²⁰ Richard Nelson and Wendell P Friest, "Marriage Enrichment Through Choice Awareness" *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy* (1980) 406
- ²¹ George R Bach and Peter Wyden, *The Intimate Enemy* (New York: Avon Books, 1968) 325-326
- ²² Elam W Nunnally, Sherod Miller, and Daniel Wackman, "The Minnesota Couples Communication Program" *Marriage and Family Enrichment* edited by Herbert A Otto (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976) 190
- ²³ E M Waring, "The Measurement of Marital Intimacy" *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy* (1984) 185-192
- ²⁴ Waring defines the terms as follows: (1) conflict resolution -- the ease with which differences of opinion are resolved; (2) affection -- the degree to which feelings of emotional closeness are expressed by the couple; (3) cohesion -- a feeling of commitment to the marriage; (4) sexuality -- the degree to which sexual needs are communicated and fulfilled by the marriage; (5) identity -- the couple's level of self-confidence and self-esteem; (6) compatibility -- the degree to which the couple is able to work and play together comfortably; (7) expressiveness -- the degree to which thoughts, beliefs, attitudes and feelings are shared within the marriage and as well, their level of self-disclosure; (8) autonomy -- the success with which the couple gains independence from their families of origin and their offspring ("Measure of Marital Intimacy" 187).
- ²⁵ *Ibid*, 191
- ²⁶ Mark T Schaefer and David H Olson, "Assessing Intimacy: The PAIR Inventory" *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy* (1981) 47-60
- ²⁷ For complete documentation of conclusions including graphs and charts see Larry R Thornton, "A Biblical Approach to Establishing Marital Intimacy" (DMin dissertation, Westminster Theological Seminary, 1988).