

DIVORCE AND RECONCILIATION: AN ETHICAL-PASTORAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Since biblical times the stability of marriage has been challenged in numerous ways. As an institution ordained by God it was meant to be a permanent union. However, human beings have found numerous reasons for violating this most sacred union. In modern times divorce has become the norm rather than the exception. Reconciliation is rarely contemplated even by devout Christians. The objective of this study is to research a practice-directed biblical concept of marriage, divorce and reconciliation, which could serve as preventative and curative measures for ill and broken marriages.

The point of departure in this study is that marriage is part of God's creation order and that the Bible contains important principles that regulate the conduct of husbands and wives within this context. In it can be found the meaning, the purpose of marriage and the roles and responsibilities of each of the spouses. According to the Scripture marriage is an indissoluble bond which cannot be broken at will by people.

The Bible explicitly condemns divorce, as it is a violation of God's perfect plan for mankind. Regarding the grounds for divorce there has been an intense debate on the exact meaning of Christ's words on this matter. The ensuing polemic, as revealed in the literature, aims at finding solutions for this ever-growing problem in society today.

Nevertheless, the Bible is clear with regard to divorce, as guidance in form of commands is given. When Christians, in their rebellion against and disobedience to God's words divorce their spouses, reconciliation is God's way to rectify the situation.

Reconciliation originated in the heart of God and is a theme that runs throughout the Scripture. People are often commanded and encouraged to reconcile with God and with one another. Although reconciliation is accomplished and offered by Christ to all mankind, for it to become a reality in one's life certain requirements need to be met. In order for spouses and estranged people to reconcile it is imperative that a believer first be reconciled with God. The horizontal reconciliation process can be facilitated, *inter alia*, by Christian counselling which forms the main thrust of the present investigation.

The methodology employed in this research rests on three pillars, namely, an extensive survey of the relevant literature, exegeses of crucial Bible texts and terms, and an empirical study done by means of questionnaires.

The literature survey revealed that among scholars there is a wide divergence of interpretations on how and when Christians may divorce without breaking God's commandments and how reconciliation can be established. Careful exegesis brought insight into the meaning of important terms and texts. The results of the empirical research indicated striking deficiencies in the counselling ministries of the churches. This led to the conclusion that biblically based counselling

can help to restore ruptured relationships and prevent divorces. With this in mind, programmed counselling guidelines were developed.

Key terms: Marriage, divorce, remarriage, atonement, forgiveness, reconciliation, marriage counselling.

OPSOMMING

Sedert Bybelse tye word die stabiliteit van die huwelik op baie maniere bedreig. As 'n instelling wat deur God georden is, was dit bedoel as 'n permanente verbintenis. Mense het egter redes gevind om hierdie heilige verbintenis te verbreek. In die huidige tydsgewrig het egskeding eerder die norm as die uitsondering geword. Versoening word selde oorweeg, selfs deur toegewyde Christene. Die oogmerk met hierdie studie is om praktyk-gerigte bybelse begrippe rondom huwelik, egskeding en versoening na te vors met die oog op voorkomende en helende maatreëls, gemik op onstabiele en gebroke huwelike.

Die vertrekpunt van hierdie studie is dat die huwelik deel is van God se skeppingsorde en dat die Bybel belangrike beginsels bevat wat die gedrag van mans en vroue binne hierdie konteks voorskryf. In die Bybel kan die sin en doel van die huwelik en die rolle en verantwoordelikhede van elk van die eggenote gevind word. Volgens die Skrif is die huwelik 'n onverbreekbare band wat nie willekeurig deur mense aangetas mag word nie.

Die Bybel veroordeel egskeding uitdruklik, aangesien dit 'n verbreking is van God se perfekte plan vir die mensdom. Oor die gronde vir egskeding is daar 'n intense debat oor die presiese woorde van Christus in dié verband. Die voortspruitende polemie, soos uit die

literatuur blyk, het te make met 'n soeke na oplossings vir hierdie groeiende probleem in die gemeenskap. Die Bybel is egter duidelik met betrekking tot egskeiding, aangesien leiding in die vorm van sekere gebooië gegee word. Wanneer Christene in hul ongehoorsaamheid en opstand teen die Woord van God van hul eggenote skei, is versoening God se manier om die situasie te herstel.

Versoening het in God se hart ontstaan en is 'n tema wat dwarsdeur die Skrif voorkom. Mense word dikwels beveel en aangemoedig om met God en met mekaar te versoen. Alhoewel versoening deur Christus verwerf is en aan die ganse mensdom aangebied word, moet sekere voorwaardes nagekom word voordat dit 'n werklikheid in mense se lewens kan word. Vir eggenote en vervreemde mense om te versoen, is dit noodsaaklik dat gelowiges eers met God versoen moet word. Die horisontale versoeningsproses kan gefasiliteer word deur, onder andere, Christelike berading, wat die hooftema van die huidige ondersoek vorm.

Die metodologie wat in hierdie navorsing gevolg is, rus op drie pilare, naamlik, eksegetiese van die belangrikste Bybeltekste en -terme, 'n uitgebreide ondersoek van die tersaaklike literatuur en 'n empiriese studie wat deur middel van vraelyste onderneem is.

Die literatuuroorsig het aan die lig gebring dat daar 'n wye divergensie van interpretasies onder wetenskaplikes bestaan oor hoe en wanneer egskeidings vir Christene toelaatbaar is sonder om God se gebooië te verbreek en hoe versoening bewerkstellig kan word. Die resultate van die empiriese navorsing het merkwaardige tekortkominge in die

beradingsbediening van kerke aangetoon. Dit het gelei tot die gevolgtrekking dat Bybels-begronde berading kan help om gebroke verhoudings te herstel en om egskeidings te verhoed. Met hierdie doel voor oë is geprogrammeerde beradingsriglyne ontwikkel.

ABBREVIATIONS FOR THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE (NIV)

Genesis	Ge	Matthew	Mt
Exodus	Ex	Mark	Mk
Leviticus	Lev	Luke	Lk
Numbers	Nu	John	Jn
Deuteronomy	Dt	Acts	Ac
Joshua	Jos	Romans	Ro
Judges	Jdg	1 Corinthians	1Co
Ruth	Ru	2 Corinthians	2Co
1 Samuel	1Sa	Galatians	Gal
2 Samuel	2Sa	Ephesians	Eph
1 Kings	1Ki	Philippians	Php
2 Kings	2Ki	Colossians	Col
1 Chronicles	1Ch	1 Thessalonians	1Th
2 Chronicles	2Ch	2 Thessalonians	2Th
Ezra	Ezr	1 Timothy	1Ti
Nehemiah	Ne	2 Timothy	2Ti
Esther	Est	Titus	Tit
Job	Job	Philemon	Phm
Psalms	Ps	Hebrews	Heb
Proverbs	Pr	James	Jas
Ecclesiastes	Ecc	1 Peter	1Pe
Song of Songs	SS	2 Peter	2Pe
Isaiah	Isa	1 John	1Jn
Jeremiah	Jer	2 John	2Jn
Lamentations	La	3 John	3Jn
Ezekiel	Eze	Jude	Jude
Daniel	Da	Revelation	Rev
Hosea	Hos		
Joel	Joel		
Amos	Am		
Obadiah	Ob		
Jonah	Jnh		
Micah	Mic		
Nahum	Na		
Habakkuk	Hab		
Zephaniah	Zep		
Haggai	Hag		
Zechariah	Zec		
Malachi	Mal		

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 DEFINITION OF KEY WORDS

Marriage is to be understood as a divine and permanent institution, a life-long covenant between a man and a woman.

Divorce is the repudiation and breaking of the marital covenant in which the persons involved are released from the obligations previously required by it.

Reconciliation is the restoration of the individual to fellowship with God and with one another.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

1.2.1 Preliminaries

Reconciliation is a theme often addressed in the Scripture, both in the Old and the New Testaments. Firstly, God is concerned about the reconciliation of man towards Himself, which consequently will lead to the reconciliation between estranged people.

Scholars such as Barret (1968), Calvin (1968), Morris (1971), Laney

(1982), Prior (1985) and Lane (1996), among others, are in full agreement that any other option is contrary to the Word of God. When Paul speaks about this matter he goes back to the teaching of the Lord (1Co 7:10), who Himself, when talking to the Pharisees, led them to the original and real meaning of marriage and God's purpose with it (Mt 19:4-6; Mk 10:6-9).

In spite of the prohibition on divorce and the command to spouses with differences to reconcile, there are many Christians who are divorced and are divorcing. Among these there are many who haven't been reconciled with their spouses and many others who are not even considering the possibility thereof. Here, a question can be raised: Why is that so? Why aren't Christian couples reconciling as they are commanded to do in the Scriptures? First of all, in many cases, one or both of a divorced couple don't want to seek it, or accept reconciliation (see Nieder & Thompson, 1991 and Terrey & Juana, 1995 - side 2). In such a case Christians are acting in disobedience and rebellion against God Himself and His Word. Secondly, one or both spouses don't know, or don't understand what Christian reconciliation really means. In such instance they need to be taught, be instructed on this matter, according to the Word.

Much has been written about marriage and divorce (see second paragraph above), but on the subject of reconciliation of divorcees more can be done. A broad bibliographic research at the Ferdinand Postma Library was made using the following databases: Religious Index, Religious and Theological abstracts, dissertations and theses. This research reveals that not much attention has been given to

Christian reconciliation of the divorcees for very little has been written on this matter in South Africa. So many Christians have divorced, remarried, are divorcing and remarrying and/or are searching for another partner, saying that this is God's will for their lives, and that addressing the question of reconciliation of divorcees is imperative for today. Because it is only when people are conscious of the real meaning of reconciliation, are more aware of the need to teach and practice reconciliation, that the Christian society will make a difference in this world.

1.2.2 A Biblical View of Marriage and Divorce

“Marriage appears in the Scriptures as a covenant between a man and a woman whereby they are joined by God in a life-long companionship of common life and conjugal love (Mal 2:14)” (Jones, 1990:29). Olthuis (1976:20) says, “God called husband and wife to an exclusive, lifelong partnership of love, or a partnership of truth or fidelity. Marriage is a mutual, permanent, exclusive, one-flesh union between husband and wife, characterised by truth or fidelity”.

Whether the marriage bond is soluble or not, divorce and subsequent marriages are a reality all over the world, even among devout Christians. There is much controversy on the subject of divorce and remarriage and theologians such as Heth (1990), Laney (1990a) and Prior (1985) who defend the indissolubility of marriage state also categorically that divorce is prohibited for the believers, with the exception of desertion by a non-believing spouse, and/or infidelity (*porneia*) by one of them, but even in this case, forgiveness and

reconciliation is preferable and advised (Col 3:13; 1Co 7:10-11). Prior (1985:124), speaking about this matter, says that "Paul's fundamental approach to the question of a Christian getting divorced is very simple - 'Don't'. The Lord has expressly forbidden it; so do not even allow yourselves the luxury of entertaining it as a possibility". On the other hand, there are other theologians like Duty (1979), Adams (1982), Stewart (1984), Richards (1990) and Edgar (1990) who believe that divorce is acceptable no matter what the reasons are, and that the divorced person is free to remarry another person, should he/she so wish. Facing such a controversy a question is raised: What is really the view of marriage and divorce expressed in the Bible?

1.2.3 Biblical Foundation and Requirements for Reconciliation

In the New Testament reconciliation is a *fait accompli* through Jesus Christ, and the believers are entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation, encouraged and commanded to reconcile themselves to God and to one another (2Co 5:11-20; Mt 5:24). When addressing the matters of marriages, Christians are forbidden to divorce one another, except in case of unfaithfulness and desertion by one of the spouses because of the other one's belief, and reconciliation is once more a command (1Co 7:10-11). According to these verses reconciliation with the former spouse is one of the only two options a Christian person has after separation or divorce. The other is to remain unmarried. Reconciliation is what is required by the Lord in the form of a command for spouses who have differences (1Co 7:10-11), and a possibility of remarriage to another person, for the believer,

seems to be only possible when one of the spouses has passed away (1Co 7:39; Ro 7:2-3).

But what is reconciliation according to the Scripture? Paul indicates clearly that reconciliation is “not counting men’s sins against them” (2Co 5:19). That is what God has done to become reconciled with men. What God did in this regard must also be an indication to Christian spouses of what they must do when they have differences or when one has transgressed against the other, in order to obtain reconciliation. From this it is clear that only a person reconciled with God through Jesus Christ is able to reach out and seek true reconciliation with those who have harmed him/her. Therefore the command of Paul, “Be reconciled to God” (2Co 5:20) to church members, if they are obedient to it, will and must have the result that they will be willing to be reconciled with each other. Morris (1982c:1371) correctly says, “reconciliation properly applies not to good relations in general but to the doing away of an enmity, of a dispute”. With the endeavour to bring forth a solution for the difficulties related to this command, the question to be researched is: What does the biblical reconciliation really mean for the relationship of the believers towards God and towards each other, and how can reconciliation prevent divorce and unite divorcees again?

1.2.4 Empirical Study

Due to the fact that the matter of reconciliation of divorcees has not received much attention, as far as publication of literature is concerned, it seems that this empirical study is imperative for

obtaining a more meaningful final result of the present investigation. This will be done not with the aim of raising and presenting statistic data and figures, but to gain information about the present ministry of reconciliation of divorcees and couples with problems, accomplished by various ministers, to substantiate the central theoretical statement. In this way the findings and conclusions will not be based on theory or assumptions only, but will also rely on practical experience.

1.2.5 The Reconciliation Process - Possible Pastoral Guidelines

The church has a primary role to play in the process of reconciliation, for the Lord gave her this ministry (2Co 5:17-21). Pastors, counsellors, and lay persons ought to be involved in the lives of those struggling with marital problems or divorce and help them to reach reconciliation and build a better and stronger marriage than before. Needham (1992:35) says that Gustafson "points out that Christians are 'stewards' of marriages and families... it also means that the Church bears ethical and pastoral obligation to its families". Churches ought to teach the biblical view of marriage; lead Christians to self-examination which might be painful but necessary for marriage restoration, and which will lead them to repentance and change of heart; stress the fact that the stability of marriage is based on commitment and not only on love, etc. In order to combat this depravation of society, "the Church must continue to teach, preach, model, and nurture the highest scriptural values on sexual morality, marriage, and family life" (Seamands, 1992:28). In that way also the upcoming generations will be better prepared for the call to marriage.

The main purpose of the church, pastor or counsellor here is to help spouses with marriage problems and ex-spouses to achieve reconciliation in all its forms. Its final purpose is to lead them to remarry each other, and keep the marriage going and growing. But how can the ministry of reconciliation be performed in order to prevent divorces and help divorcees to remarry each other?

1.3 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study are:

- 1) To formulate a biblical view or God's blueprint for marriage, and analyse the concepts of divorce and reconciliation scripturally;
- 2) To present a biblical foundation for reconciliation between people and God, and between other human beings, indicating how reconciliation can prevent divorce and how divorcees can be helped to remarry each other;
- 3) To obtain information on how the ministry of reconciliation among problematic couples and divorcees is being done by pastors, in order to enrich the validity of this study; and
- 4) To present possible pastoral guidelines for the reconciliation process aimed at the restoration of the broken marriages, and indicate how Christian reconciliation can unite the couple again.

1.4 CENTRAL THEORETICAL ARGUMENTS

Marriage, in the Scriptures, is a permanent covenant and Christians when divorced are commanded, according to 1Co 7:10-11, to reconcile and remarry each other. The church should be involved in the process of reconciliation, nurturing and guiding the couples on marriage, divorce and related matters which will lead to restoration of as much broken relationships as possible and prevent, as far as possible, others from happening.

1.5 METHODS OF INVESTIGATION

In order to develop and achieve the purposes mentioned above, the following study methods will be used:

- 1) a literature survey and exegetical study to determine what the biblical view of marriage and divorce is;
- 2) an exegetical study to determine what the biblical view of reconciliation is;
- 3) Greek characters or the corresponding transliterated terms will be retained according to usage by authors;
- 4) an empirical study - interview with pastors of different denominations, in order to observe how they conduct this ministry of reconciliation with the divorced people, if they do it at all;

- 5) synthesis and interpretation of all the data and study done to present guidelines for the process of reconciliation for couples with marital problems, and divorcees.

1.6 CHAPTERS DIVISION

1. Introduction
2. A Biblical view of marriage and divorce
3. Biblical Foundation and requirements for Reconciliation
4. Evaluation of empirical Study
5. Results of theoretical and empirical studies
6. Reconciliation Process - Possible Pastoral Guidelines
7. Conclusions

CHAPTER 2

A BIBLICAL VIEW OF MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The subjects to be discussed in this chapter are marriage and divorce according to Scripture. Both topics are well taught in the Scriptures, but several interpretations with regard to these teachings have arisen throughout the ages. Non-Christians as well as Christians have worked out their concepts or views on marriage and on divorce. Much debate on both topics has taken place, much has been written about it, but consensus seems to be an utopia.

By creating male and female and thereby necessitating the physical union of two persons for human life to continue, God expressed His intention for man and woman in His Word:

...a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh... they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate (Ge 2:24; Mt 19:5,6).

However, such truths are not accepted or interpreted as such by everyone. In this chapter the intention is, in the first place, to discuss marriage: its origin, meaning, purpose, and the role of the spouses in the marriage, as presented in the Scripture. Secondly, the concept of divorce and the view of God regarding divorce both in the Old and New Testaments will be presented.

2.2 THE MEANING OF MARRIAGE

What is the biblical view of marriage? Before presenting a definition of marriage, its origin will be discussed and then some conceptions about it will be subjected to scrutiny.

2.2.1 Origin of Marriage

Marriage as an institution originated and was ordained by the almighty God right there at the beginning of the creation (Ge 2:18-25). Scientists, however, deny this truth and have their own opinion about the origin of marriage and family and say that it is merely a result of societal evolution. But no one knows precisely how it occurred, as no one knows exactly how life came into existence (*cf.* Reisse, 1991:54). Although many scientists such as Chamberlain (1992:137-146), Tobien (1991:67-108), Coppens, (1991:111-133) and Reisse (1991:53-65) have tried to explain the origin of life and family with their theory of evolution, the self-organisation process, self-transformation, and natural selection, it still remains an unclear matter for the scientific world. Westermarck (1891:8-50) writes about the history of marriage and says that it is believed by many that in remote times people lived

freely as far as their relation was concerned, and that only later kings and rulers of the various peoples and tribes of the world instituted marriage among their subjects. It was done according to the needs of the society and for the benefit of the children. According to him the relationships of primitive human beings didn't differ much from that of the animals, the main difference being that men drank without being thirsty and made love at any season. Marriage, for him,

is nothing else than a more or less durable connection between male and female, lasting beyond the mere act of propagation till after the birth of the offspring ... And the tie which joins male and female together a little longer than the other animals, is an instinct developed through the powerful influence of natural selection (Westermarck, 1891:20).

Nearly a century later after so much research and many discoveries, science could still not bring a clear answer for the origin of life and family. Gough (1971:760) expands well on the theory of evolution but writes the following about the origin of the family:

It is not known when the family originated, although it was probably between two million and hundred (*sic* - MAdeO) years ago. It is not known whether it developed once or in separated times and places. It is not known whether some kind of embryonic family came before, with, or after the origin of languages ... The chances are that language

and the family developed together over a long period, but the evidence is sketchy.

For some scholars "the original form of marriage is lost in the oblivion of the prehistoric period" (Locke & Peterson, 1970:311). All that is left is the idea that marriage is something that was always there and that it was probably transmitted to man from some ape-like ancestor. Human mating may have departed from random breeding and later on, by means of natural selection, they may have developed the system of pair-bonding in marriage (*cf.* Tomkins, 1984:18,66). Thus, as time went by people in their process of self-development and in response to their economic needs were shaping up a wedding ceremony and writing marriage regulations (*cf.* Campbell, 1979:317-320).

The puzzle about the origins remains unsolved. Scientists continue in their quest for the origin of families, and although much effort and work has been done throughout the years, the uncertainty about the origin of man remains, due to the lack of clear and definite evidence (*cf.* Lewin, 1989:108; Day, 1995:803; Tobias & Rightmire, 1995:829; Bräuer, 1995:839,843; Anon. 1995a:623; Anon. 1995b:136).

The evolutionists' view about the origin of marriage falls totally away from that rich creation narrative registered in the Scripture. It brings human beings down to the same level as animals and discredits God's working hand in creating all things. It makes of marriage a most trivial and unplanned thing that came to exist by chance, or by following some other animal behaviour. Such a view could never be accepted by a believer in God.

God's own opinion about marriage was that it was a very good thing (Ge 2:18). Man was created by God and was then living alone, separated from someone like him. He was incomplete and God saw it was not good and set out to work out His master plan.

Engelsma (1977:21) says that at that point in life Adam was not aware of his incompleteness, or that he needed someone to be at his side. So God made him aware by bringing him the animals. All of them were paired off except for him. He could not find a companion suitable for him among the animals. In that way God prepared him to accept his wife as someone indispensable for him. Having prepared Adam to receive his wife, God created the woman with the same care as He created Adam, only this time He didn't work with clay, but with Adam's own flesh. He formed her, built her from Adam's rib and then brought her to him (Ge 2:22) (*cf.* Engelsma, 1977:22-23). "God brought the 'ishshah to the man ... which is intended to indicate that God Himself is responsible for establishing marriage" (Bratsiotis, 1983:227). Adam looked at her and he liked what he saw. He said: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman ('ishshah = female human being), for she was taken out of man" (Ge 2:23). These words uttered by Adam are of very great significance. 'My bones and my flesh' refers to "covenant loyalty, in which case Adam is expressing a covenant commitment to his wife" (Mathews, 1996:219). Thus, "in a type of marriage formula he acknowledges the woman as his wife" (*cf.* Davidson, 1973:38; Bratsiotis, 1983:227; Hamilton, 1991:179;) and receives her as his companion. That was the first marriage ceremony instituted and solemnised by God Himself. This marriage was made by God from the beginning to the end. He made

the two people, man and woman, and brought them together in the marriage bond. By making the first marriage God established an institution for all time among all human beings (*cf.* Engelsma, 1977:23-24).

Thus, one can state with confidence that, in line with what is said above, a Christian/Biblical marriage is a union between a man and a woman. Homosexual and lesbian unions, or successive monogamous relationships (i.e. couples living together) can never be regarded as "marriages" according to the Bible (*cf.* Bratsiotis, 1983:228; Mathews, 1996:219,220).

Looking at the inspired record of the creation of man, the first marriage and the first family (Ge 1,2) the Christian is left with no doubt about the origin of the family. In fact, such a clear narrative is the source of security that he/she has that the God who planned and instituted marriage also controls it. Because God instituted marriage, out of His own will, He also regulated it according to His will and laid the foundation for society, for all human beings to follow, at all times. When people conceive of another "origin of marriage" they despise the authority of God and of the Scriptures. The New Testament often directs people back to God's original institution of marriage for instruction as to the Law governing marriage (Mt 19:3-12; Eph 5:22-31; 1Co 11:11,12). The principles and purpose of marriage are also found right at the beginning, at the institution of the first marriage. Therefore, no one has the right to do with marriage as he or she wishes; it belongs to the divine order of creation, it is not a human being's invention.

2.2.2 Definitions

There is a great variety of views on marriage throughout the world, based on culture, custom, and religion. Marriage can be defined as "an institution composed of a culturally accepted union of a man and a woman in husband-wife relationship as well as roles that recognise an order of sexual behaviour and legalise the function of parenthood" (Wynn, 1990:676). This seems to be a well accepted notion of marriage in most societies today. Another secular but broader view of marriage is given by Isaacs (1981:782): Marriage is "the socially, and sometimes legally, acknowledged union between a man or men and a woman or women, such that the resulting children are recognised as legitimate offspring of the parents. Although societies vary greatly in the rules that govern marriage, such legitimacy is always important in determining rights to property, position, rank, group membership, etc.". This definition covers the concepts of polygyny, polyandry, and monogamy.

Monogamy appears as the most common type of marriage throughout history and in the world's current societies. It was also the ideal marriage in the Old and New Testament times and is embraced by all Christians societies today (*cf.* Hamilton, 1992:565). However, polygamy (polygyny and polyandry) has survived throughout the centuries, is recorded in biblical literature (e.g. 1Kings) and is practised in much of Africa, the Near and Middle East, some areas of India and Polynesia (*cf.* Isaacs, 1981:782; Wynn, 1990:676).

The biblical concept of marriage, according to its definition (see §1.1), is a lifelong covenant of love and troth between a man and a woman and is the norm for all Christians. Although this is the ideal model for all marriages it is not accepted and practised by all peoples. In Islamic society, for example, marriage is a State affair, involving the agreement of the families concerned, and it constitutes a written contract (*cf.* Al Faruqi, 1985:55-61).

Although polygamy has been seen negatively and is even banned in certain societies, one must remember that polygamy was not always considered as fornication. In the Old Testament times it was practised and tolerated, although it led to many problems in those households (Ge 30:1-2,15; 1Sa 1:6). Therefore one should consider the underlying reasons for polygamy which is not necessarily based on lust. "In a society that is overwhelmingly seminomadic and agricultural, the maintenance of several wives would supply an abundant work force to tend flocks and work fields" (Hamilton, 1992:565).

2.2.3 Marriage: A Union of Love and Troth

"In marriage the partners exchange pledges of troth. Two people commit themselves to journey together, sharing and enriching each other in love" (Olthuis, 1986:12).

2.2.3.1 Troth

The word troth is an old English term which means truth, faithfulness, loyalty and honesty. This single word captures the nuances of truth,

reliability, stability scrupulousness, ingenuousness, authenticity, integrity, and fidelity (*cf.* Olthuis, 1976:21; see also; Olthuis, 1984:565; Welch, 1987:154-155; Wynn, 1990:677). Fidelity or faithfulness (*troth*) "means that someone keeps his promises, that he honours his word and does what he promised to do, in such a way that people he has made promises to will know that he will honour his word" (De Bruyn, 1993:170).

According to Olthuis (1984:566), *troth*, with all its meanings, is what keeps marriage together. It is the staying power which gives special joy and colour to intimacy in family, friendship, and marriage. The couple, in mutual dependence and trust, can be genuine and real with each other. They can count on each other, be accepted and loved for who they are. They do not need to compete with other men and women for each other's love, affection and attention, because all of it belongs to them when they have committed themselves in marriage. When this commitment is total, clear and unreserved, partners are encouraged freely and openly to share their inner struggles and fears as well as their joys and triumphs. Without the enduring commitment the relationship will always be shaky.

2.2.3.2 Love

Elaborating on the matter of marriage, Olthuis (1984:566) says that love (in all its forms) is an indispensable ingredient of being one flesh union. Love boosts the relationship. In love the spouses celebrate their *troth* in a bodily joining of mutual surrender and ecstasy. There is the delight of being in touch and emotionally connected. Actually a

marriage cannot be a marriage without love, because without love, troth is thin and uninspiring. Therefore, love and troth must always go together in a making of a marriage. Some Puritans have thought the same way about the beauty of love in marriage (cf. Doriani, 1991:123,130-131).

Love is so important in marriage that the Bible presents it as a commandment (Eph 5:25,28,33; Col 3:19; Tit 2:2). Although this command is directed specifically at the husbands, the truth is that spouses ought to love each other. Schillebeeckx (1976:64,65) explains that Paul might have spoken of love as a man's duty because in Near Eastern custom the man took the initiative in love. This choice and initiative caused the woman to feel worthy and splendid in her husband's eyes and ready to respond in love. Wilson (1997:31,37), on the other hand, understands this commandment as one in line with the idea of marriage as ordained by God right at the beginning. For him it has to do with the roles each party plays in marriage. The Bible, he says, "teaches that in the marriage relationship, the initiative, the headship, the leadership, is to be with the male. This is seen in courtship, and carries over into the marriage relationship itself". Comparing his thoughts with Genesis 2:24 the teachings of Paul make great sense.

*i) **Love in the Old Testament***

Love is central in the whole of the Scripture. "It is a divine motivation. It moved God to reach out to the lost; and it enables the lost to look up in response, as well as to reach out to others"

(Richards, 1985:418). But in both Old and New Testaments a variety of terms are used to describe this one thing which is translated into English as love. The most used terms in the Old Testament are: *'ahēb* and *hesed*. The verb *'ahēb* can refer to love between human beings, like a relationship between a father and a son (Ge 22:2; 44:20), a slave and a master (Ex 21:5), love for the neighbour (Lev 19:18), for a stranger visiting the land (Dt 10:19); to love of concrete things or behavioural qualities, love for food (Ge 27:4,9,14), for wealth (Ecc 5:9), for God's commands (Ps 119:47,48,127), pureness of heart (Pr 22:11); to human love for God, (Dt 6:4-5; 10:12; 11:1,22; 30:16); or to God's love for individuals or groups (2Sa 12:24; Ps 47:5; Mal 1:2; Jer 31:3, etc.). This term is also used for the desire or attraction of one person to another of the opposite sex, with the end goal sometimes of marriage, but sometimes a sexual encounter. Examples of this is the love of Jacob for Rachel (Ge 29:18), Michal's love for David (1Sa 18:20; and Amnon's love for Tamar (2Sa 13). It refers also to deep feelings of attachment between people such as husbands and wives (e.g. Elkanah and Hannah 1Sa 1:5), or other familial relationships (e.g. Abraham and Isaac, Ge 22:2; Rebekah and Jacob, Ge 25:28; Ruth and Naomi Ru 4:15) (*cf.* Richards, 1985:418; Sakenfeld, 1992:376).

The term *hesed* occurs approximately 250 times in the Old Testament but it is difficult to find an English term that corresponds to it precisely. It has been translated as loving kindness, kindness, steadfast love, faithfulness, love of God towards individuals or Israel, and love, devotion, or loyalty of individuals or Israel towards

God. The term has all to do with actions (*cf.* Sakenfeld, 1992:377). Theologically the term is used to express divine attitudes and actions and is linked with God's covenant. It was God's deep love that moved Him to establish covenants with man in the first place. His acts of *hesed* are generated from His own loving character. He revealed Himself to Moses as "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love [*hesed*] and faithfulness, maintaining love [*hesed*] to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin" (Ex 34:6-7) (*cf.* Richards, 1985:419). *Hesed* is also seen in intimate personal relationships, usually familial, but also in social and political relationships. In this sense it is also related to action. Examples of this kind of love is seen between Sarah and her husband Abraham (Ge 20:13), Jacob and Joseph (Ge 47:29), Rahab and the spies sent by Joshua (Jos 2:12014), David and Jonathan (1Sa 20:8, 14-15; 2Sa 9:1,3,7), etc. Still another two terms used for love in the Old Testament are *dôd* and *ra'yâ* both relating to intimate relationship and occurring only in Isaiah 5:1 and Song of Songs (*cf.* Wallis, 1983:103; Richards, 1985:419; Sakenfeld, 1992:378).

As one can see, love in the Old Testament is a very rich concept, has a very broad meaning and involves all kinds of intense feelings, passion, romance, commitment, kindness, mercy, will, choice, action, etc. Günther (1976:540) says that "the phenomenon of love is experienced as a spontaneous force which drives one to something or someone over itself. Love means the vital urge of the sexes for one another". And he goes on speaking about the way it is portrayed by Jeremiah (2:25), Ezekiel (16:37) and Salomon (*in*

Song of Songs). God is presented as the source of love and the initiator in love (Jer 31:3). He not only loves human beings but also created in them the ability to give love and receive love. God's love calls for love in response (1Jn 4:8,16), which is pictured in a triangular form: God loves human beings, and human beings love God and others.

ii) Love in the New Testament

The Scripture, especially the New Testament, presents mainly two kinds of love: friendship love and self-denying love. However, many writers like to include erotic love (*eros*) as another kind of love taught in the New Testament. But this concept is not mentioned by any New Testament writers at all (cf. Good, 1962:169; Günther, 1976:542; Richards, 1985:420; McDonagh, 1993:341). The reason for this, says Günther (1976:542), "is that the anthropocentric way of thinking which is inevitably bound up with these words does not correspond with the New Testament approach". These different kinds of love (including romantic love) are all indispensable in marriage and will be discussed briefly.

a) Agape love

Agape means simply "to have love for someone or something, based on sincere appreciation and high regard" (Louw & Nida, 1989:293). This word is widely used in the New Testament (It is used in the LXX to translate Hebrew term *'ahēb* (cf. Fredriksen, 1993:467; Günther, 1976:539). *Agape* love may

also be defined "as a warm, affectionate devotion to and desire for its object, issuing in a genuine concern for the interests and activities of the beloved... it shares with *eros* of pre-Biblical Greek..." (Traina, 1973:396).

Agape is the highest and most noble form of love there is. "It is selfless and giving, concerned about the partner's welfare, and untroubled by self-interest. *Agape* is an all-giving kind of love" (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1992:101). This self-denying love isn't love because of the external appearances (beauty for example), as it is in the case of erotic love, but it is love despite illness, a blemish on one's face, physical deficiency, or stain in one's life (*cf.* De Bruyn, 1993:169). It is an all-accepting and self-sacrificing love for the sake of the well-being of the loved one. This is the kind of love that the Bible commands and expects the spouses to have for each other. The Scriptures in both Old and New Testaments lay tremendous emphasis on self-sacrificing love.

The Old Testament presents this self-sacrificing love using the image of marriage between God and Israel. The terms *hesed* which means love, goodness and inward feeling of tenderness and mercy (Isa 63:7; Joel 2:13; Mic 7:18; Ps 5:7; 36:5; 68:9; Jer 3:12), and *berith* - a covenant between man and woman (Mal 2:14; Eze 16:8; Pr 2:17) are often used to express this love (*cf.* Schillebeeckx, 1976:63). God poured out His love over Israel even when she remained unresponsive. His love was often one-sided as revealed by Jeremiah, Isaiah and Hosea, but He

remained faithful. He chose Israel and loved her unconditionally and sacrificially. "The loving, intimate relationship between God and his chosen people - a relationship full of grace and mystery and far transcending all human comprehension - was expressed, in Israel, in the message of the prophets, in words and concepts - in things intelligible in human terms, drawn from an everyday, human experience, married love" (Schillebeeckx, 1976:32).

The deepest kind of love and forgiveness is taught by the relationship between Hosea and his unfaithful wife, Gomer (Hos 3:1-2). God could not let go of His covenant wife, even when she had gone over to other lovers. He could not stop loving His chosen Israel, even when she was the most detestable type. He honoured His covenant of grace. Thus, by using the marriage union God not only revealed His sovereign and free love towards His people, but He also provided a model for human marriage; He made it clear that the spouses ought to love one another with the same self-denying love that He loved Israel.

In the New Testament *agape* love is seen in the relationship between Christ and His Bride - the Church. He also chooses her and He takes her from her misery, her dirt and shame, and He loves her with the most profound love, He loves her in spite of her blame and filth (cf. Eph 2; 5:25-29). And with His love Christ cleanses her, redeems and purifies her and presents her as the most beautiful bride. Paul describes this love in the Epistle to the Ephesians according to the various phases of

marriage - loving surrender (5:25), cleansing (5:26), the marriage ceremony (5:27) and the union and loving care of married life (5:29-31) (cf. Schillebeeckx, 1976:115-116). Thus, Christ, the one who loves, redeems, and cares for the church, is presented as a model for the husband in his marriage relationship with his wife.

Agape love is based on choice and not on emotions and impulses, or on the intellectual satisfaction of being connected with someone's ideas. Yaweh's love for Israel, as well as "Christ's love for the Church was a choice of His will that led Him to the ultimate act of love" (Wyrzten, 1991:90; cf. Traina, 1973:396). But, on the other hand this love involves profound affection and emotions, undivided devotion, and everything that forms the whole being. When God called Israel to love Him with all her heart, soul, strength, and mind (Dt 6:5), a command that became the greatest of all according to Jesus (Mt 22:37), such command involved everything a person has or is (cf. Traina, 1973:397). In *agape* love one cannot really separate the actions from the feelings, they go hand in hand, and thus form the model for human beings in their relationships.

b) *Philia* love

Phileo is the alternative term for *agapaō* and is used to indicate intimate affection between people (Jn 11:3,36; Rev 3:19), or the pleasure in doing pleasurable things (Mt 6:5) (cf. Palmer, 1979:70). It "focuses upon love or affection based on

interpersonal association" (Louw & Nida, 1989:294). This term is used for the love existent between friends, "a kind of love in which two people are linked in close friendship so that they are really bosom friends. This indicates a very confidential relationship between two people - a relationship characterised by warm-heartedness, tenderness, intimacy and understanding of each other's feelings and opinions" (De Bruyn, 1993:169). Jesus, in the Scriptures (Jn 15:12-15), teaches of this love of friendship, although He uses the term *agapao* in this specific pericope. He Himself had bosom friends and indicates that the "essence of friendship love is companionship, the closeness of allowing someone to know what is happening inside your thoughts" (Wyrzten, 1991:102). However, it is interesting to notice that people are never commanded to love one another with *phileo*, but only with *agape* (cf. Louw & Nida, 1989:294). This shows that although the meanings of these terms sometimes overlap, a significant difference still exist. But it is also interesting to notice that these two terms are sometimes used interchangeably in the Bible as e.g. in John 20:2 and 21:7, 20. Friendship or companionate love does not include the romantic aspect of love. It is a kind of love very high in intimacy and commitment, but very low in passion (cf. Hendrick & Hendrick, 1992:98). Jesus enjoyed friendships with both men and women without sexual impropriety (Lk 10:38-42; Jn 11:5).

Friendship love is indispensable in marriage, in fact a marriage, in a true sense of the word, cannot exist without it. No marriage can exist without commitment, intimacy, tenderness, sharing,

etc. The Bible describes marriage in terms of companionship: "the strange woman... has left the partner (companion) of her youth and ignored the covenant she made before God" (Pr 2:17); also in Malachi 2:14 it is said "...the Lord has been witness between you and the wife of your youth to whom you have been faithless, although she is your companion and your wife by covenant". Even though in these verses God is speaking about unfaithfulness in the relationship, He also mentions that companionship should be part of the marriage relationship. De Bruyn (1993:169) says that in friendship love "the two hearts become one... it is a relationship where two people can laugh, weep and pray together wholeheartedly about the same thing".

c) *Romantic/erotic love (eros)*

Erotic love can be understood as the "love between man and woman which embraces longing, craving and desire" (Günther, 1976:539). Erotic or romantic love as the basis of marriage, according to Russel (1948:56), Veyne (1992:48-49; 183-205) and Hendrick & Hendrick (1992:90-101) was unknown or even unthinkable in ancient times. Women then were uneducated and considered inferior to men in almost all respects, therefore good companionship could be had only with other well-educated males or with a rare female courtesan. Marriage was conceived as a friendship between a man and a woman, and husband and wife could only have intercourse in order to have children, otherwise it would be considered sinful (*cf.* Fisher and

Hart, 1987:36; Ramsey, 1988:69; Veyne, 1992:48). The concept of love was distorted and only the libertine, who violated the taboos and would make love with married women, well-bred maidens, free-born adolescent, vestal virgins, or even their own sisters who experience the pleasure of sex (cf. Veyne, 1992:202-205).

It was only in the Middle Ages that romantic love became recognised as a form of passion. At first, between 1000 and 1300 A.D. it emerged as *courtly love* - a male invention directed towards women of the highest respectability, who were separated from their lovers by insuperable barriers of morality and convention. Elements of courtly love were emotional exaltation, adoration, and intense total pursuit of the beloved. But it had nothing to do with marriage, for it was directed mainly towards an unattainable fair lady married to a nobleman. Nevertheless, this kind of courtship continued to be expressed in the form of poetry and songs sang by troubadours, and then by other members of the noble classes. Thus, courtly love was a precursor to full emotional love between the sexes, and it was then during the Renaissance and the Reformation periods (1500 - 1615 AD) that the notion of love in marriage developed (cf. Cooke, 1987:37-38 and Hendrick & Hendrick 1992:83-85). Romantic love, says Russel (1948:61), "reached its apogee in the romantic movement" and in the past 400 years the notion of love as a basis for marriage has ascended slowly taking different shapes and shifts to a point where "the link between romantic love and marriage has changed from the 'unthinkable',

centuries ago to 'absolutely required' in the modern era" (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1992:86).

Looking at this information, one could be led to conclude that erotic or romantic love is something invented or developed by men in most recent times; that sexuality existed only for procreation and that such a thing as "chemistry" between people is something only of the modern times. However, this is not quite the case. Although it seems to be a fact that by the year 200 AD a negativity towards sexuality penetrated the world and a distortion about it developed to the extremes of depravation, as mentioned above (*cf.* Cooke, 1987:36), one can still learn of another era, prior to that when romantic love did exist among married people (*cf.* Cooke, 1987:35). Although the Bible does not say much about the intimate and private side of marriage, now and then something breaks through. The Old Testament uses the word *'ahabh.* and its derivatives to express romantic love or sexual relations very early in Scripture: "the love of first sight" for example (Ge 29:18,20,32) or of intimacy (Dt 21:15-16; 1Sa 1:5; Ecc 9:9) (*cf.* Good, 1962: 165 *cf.* Fredriksen, 1993:467). Elkanah is said to have had great love for his wife Hannah (1Sa 1:5-8). Jacob, in love with Rachel, served his future father-in-law for seven years and "they seemed to him but a few days, because of the love he had for her" (Ge 27:20). Loving and even "petting" is seen in the relationship between Isaac and Rebekah (Ge 26:8,9). Married love is strongly affirmed in Wisdom literature and even Israel's law protected the demands of early married love. The man was

not to be given any public duties for a year after his wedding "to be happy with his wife" (Dt 24:5). (cf. Schillebeeckx, 1976: 87). Even in the account of creation there seems to be an idea of the attraction between the sexes expressed in the words of Adam when God brought the woman to him: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh..." (Ge 2:23). It seems that he was attracted to her as one equal to himself, one he could identify with. The clearest account of erotic love is found in the Song of Songs' collection of poems all praising the wonder of sexual love, where "necking and petting" is obvious. All these books were written centuries before Christ. The Song of Songs, for example, is said to be written at about 915-883 B.C (cf. Delitzsch, 1950:11; Pope, 1985:22), thus, the importance of erotic love cannot be regarded as a modern invention. It is already referred to in the institution of marriage Ge 2:24 - "leave father and mother" - "be united to wife" - "become one flesh" (see also 1Co 6:16).

It is very much the truth that the Old Testament does not lay emphasis on the erotic/romantic side of love as basis for marriage, even because marriage in those days was arranged by the families, but it certainly did not ignore the reality and importance of it in marriage. And the New Testament, as said before, does not make use of this concept, but Paul speaks against the Corinthians' ascetic practices of refraining from sex in marriage (1Co 7:3).

In the present day situation romantic/erotic love has become so important that the media sells this concept as *the basis* for marriage, and thousands of people follow this idea as the norm. Nevertheless, psychologists have written that marriage based on romantic love is shaky and short-lived (*cf.* Hendrick & Hendrick, 1992:90-99). Olthuis (1984:566) says that "sex and romance without truth are capricious, fleeting and, finally unfulfilling". Maybe this can explain why many marriages have failed.

However, romantic/erotic love has indeed an indispensable place in marriage, for love, sexual expression and marriage are closely interconnected. In sexual intercourse, lovers celebrate their truth in a physical way. It has not only the purpose of procreation but it brings the couple together in the most intimate way in which they can enjoy and express their love for each other. And, when husband and wife deny each other the pleasure of sexual intercourse they "rob each other of one of the most important aspects of the experience of marriage" (De Bruyn, 1993:169). Sexual behaviour is also a means of communication in the marriage. May (1975:38) says that

it can mean many things and it can tell us much about ourselves and our readiness to share life and love with other human beings. There is a great difference between an act of rape, of sodomy, of fornication, of adultery, and of love between husband and wife. In the latter alone is there a full

sharing of life and love, a full communion between human beings.

While friendship love and romantic love are equally important in marriage, *agape* love is considered to be the true love. It is much more than emotions, it is much more than sexual expressions, more than companionship, more than caring friendship, it involves it all but is a self-offering love for the well-being and happiness of the loved one. It can also be said that this self-denying love is the basis for all the other kinds of love, because any spouse full of *agape* love will be a tender, committed, respectful, sharing, real companion, and will not deny his or her partner the duties of marriage. Such love is what Christ intends the spouses to have for each other, as a source of a happy and blessed marriage.

2.2.4 A permanent tie

Marriage, as seen according to its definition, was instituted by God to be a permanent covenant or union. The permanence of marriage was started right in the beginning (Ge 2:21-24) "...a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh". The word 'cleave' means to join together, to keep fast, to be glued to someone (*cf.* Wilkinson, 1995a:2.2). In that way marriage, according to God's plan, is a permanent unit glued together, sealed by Himself.

Due to sin, disobedience and hardness of their hearts men started divorcing their wives in the most cruel ways, so God let Moses regulate the situation by allowing a letter of divorce (*cf.* Dt 24:1; Mt 19:8). Nevertheless, such an act is totally against God's will.

Later on Jesus Christ, who came to restore human beings from the power of sin, confirmed the permanence of the marriage bond: "... what God has joined together, let man not put asunder (separate)" (Mt 19:6). For the Christian, who is now restored by Christ, it is Him within his heart who should regulate his life, not the laws of the present world situation. Marriage as a permanent union is still the perfect will and plan of God for the Christian. This idea is once more reinforced by Paul in his teaching when he says that only death can sever the marriage bond (1Co 7:39; Ro 7:2-3). (More about this subject will be discussed in §2.7.2.2). So, when Christians organise their lives in reverence and awe of Christ and His word they will be able to be obedient and keep their marriage vows till death does them part.

2.2.5 A Spiritual Metaphor

Marriage is a union that symbolises the relationship between Christ and the Church (*cf.* Eph 5:22-33). "Paul shows that *Christ* loved his church with a love greater than and unlike any other, revealed in His self-sacrifice for the sake of the salvation of his people (Eph 5:25). The *church* is expected to submit to Christ (Eph 5:24). This relationship should also be represented in the Christian marriage, in the relationship between husband and wife" (De Bruyn, 1993:171).

According to Grenz (1990:55,56), marriage as a spiritual metaphor moves in two directions: First, marriage forms a picture of the community which is present in a prior way within the triune God - the community of Father, Son, and Spirit. Just as the Trinity is a community of love, so also the marital relationship is to be characterised by love, thus revealing the love inherent in God. The exclusive relationship of love found within the Trinity and the exclusive, holy nature of God's love for creation are to be reflected in the exclusive love shared by husband and wife (see also Schillebeeckx, 1976:31-34; *cf.* Wyrzten, 1991:44). Secondly, marriage is intended to be a picture of the divine will to the community among humankind and between humanity and God. As the primary expression of the drive toward bonding, marriage is closely related to the bringing to pass of the corporate fellowship God intends for humans. Marriage then, becomes a picture of the mystery of redemption, the love of God expressed through Christ, which gives rise to the Church (*cf.* Schillebeeckx, 1976:107-110). As husbands and wives live together in the marital relationship, they should be conscious that their lives together is intended to be an important picture both of the mystery of Christ and the Church and of the mystery of the divine love. With this understanding about the purpose of marriage, the development of this depth of community ought to be the goal of husband and wife.

2.2.6 Misconceptions About Marriage

Some misconceptions about marriage have developed throughout the

years and for the purpose of this study it is necessary to comment on them briefly.

a) Because marriage was ordained by God it can never be regarded as a human experience. Marriage was not designed by human beings during the course of their history, as believed by some sociologists (cf. Olthuis, 1976:22), therefore, no individuals, or state may regulate it according to their will. It was God who instituted, established and ordained marriage from the beginning of man's existence (Ge 2,3). Therefore, as a divine institution, marriage is subjected to the regulations set down by God. And He did not leave the individuals in the dark about this matter, He revealed His will in the Scriptures, which is to be taken seriously by Christians (cf. Adams, 1982:4).

b) Because marriage is a covenant established by God it cannot be a contract. It is not uncommon hearing people (even Christians) say that marriage is just a contract between two parties. To maintain such a view is to simplify and lower marriage standards as instituted by God. Marriage is much more than a human contract - it is a covenant established before God (Ro 7:1-3; Pr 2:17; Mal 2:14). Throughout the Bible marriage is seen as a covenant (*berith*) whose very nature is fidelity. "The covenant is not only between husband and wife but also between that couple and God" (Wynn, 1990:677). Schreiber (1975:27,28) makes a clear distinction between contract and covenant. She says that

contracts deal with things; covenants deal with persons.

Contracts are made for a stipulated period of time;

covenants are forever. Contracts can be broken - they can be violated and result in personal loss and broken hearts. Contracts are secular affairs and belong to the marketplace. Covenants are sacred affairs and belong to the hearth or temple or the church. Contracts are best understood by lawyers, civil and ecclesiastical; covenants are appreciated better by poets and theologians. Contracts are witnessed by people with the state as guarantor; covenants are witnessed by God with God as guarantor. Contracts can be made by children who know the value of a penny; covenants can be made only by adults who are mentally, emotionally and spiritually mature (see also Wynn, 1990:677-678).

c) Because marriage is a union of love characterised by truth it is not mere sexual relations. Marriage is neither physical sex nor romantic feelings. If it were so every person who would have a "one-night-stand" sexual intercourse would be married. As a result there would be many married people around without any knowledge of it.

Although sex has a very important place in marriage, it cannot be equated to marriage. Marriage is something much bigger than and different from sex. To equate marriage to sexual intercourse is to make of marriage a very trivial affair. If they were the same thing why would the Bible speak of fornication (illicit sexual intercourse) or adultery when referring to sexuality outside the wedlock? Sexual intercourse does not make a marriage nor does it break a marriage. The idea that sexual union consummates a marriage, as it is believed

by many people (see Olthuis, 1976:29), is a very poor one. This idea is prevalent in the Catholic interpretation and teaching about marriage (Young, 1979:25). The marriage is consummated when a man and a woman exchange their vows and enter into a covenantal relationship (cf. Adams 1982:6; Heth, 1990:100). In the same way, adultery does not dissolve a marriage. It causes many problems for the relationship; it leaves an opening for the faithful spouse to depart (Mt 19:9), but it does not break it. Otherwise a remarriage would be needed when a person commits adultery, repents and is forgiven by the spouse. But this is not the case. The couple is still married. All that is needed is repentance and forgiveness (cf. Olthuis, 1975:29-30; Adams, 1982:3-7).

d) Because marriage is a permanent tie and represents the relationship between Christ and the Church it cannot be accepted as the same as cohabitation. Cohabitation is a relationship of two people sharing a household, including sexual relationship, which has no registered beginning or end. Many people nowadays opt for this kind of relationship as a marriage alternative. There are many reasons, such as: we love each other; it is cheaper; it is not bounding; it is a trial marriage, it is a substitution for marriage, etc. Whatever may be the cohabitants' reason and type of agreement they might have, the fact remain the same - they are not married, nor can they be regarded as such (Wells, 1983:59). There is no such a thing as trial marriage and this idea is unacceptable in Christian ethical terms, for the following reasons as presented by De Bruyn (1993:157-158):

- Firstly, "marriage is essentially not something to be experimented with (Mt 19:6; Mal 2:14)" (De Bruyn, 1993:157). One cannot test out a relationship which is intended to be permanent and binding (Ge 2:24,25). Cohabitation reverses the order of things and "it isn't preparation for marriage: it's training for divorce" (Colson, 1997:1).
- According to the Bible, the marriage relationship should be a representation of the relationship between Christ and the church (Eph 5:22-33). Cohabitation presents not only ethical problems but also social, emotional and financial problems. To say that cohabitation is the same as marriage is to say that fornication is equal to marriage. Cohabitation lacks all biblical support and in many societies moral support as well. People who cohabit live in fornication and do not have the status of marriage. They are violating God's Word (Ge 20:14; 1Co 7:2). Marriage is much higher than living together and was designed for the well being of people (*cf.* Forster, 1994).

Marriage, says Jones (1990:29), can be defined according to the Scriptures "as a covenant between a man and a woman whereby they are joined by God in a life-long companionship of common life and conjugal love (Mal 2:14)". Many scholars agree to virtually every point of this definition (see Dever, 1974:633; Olthuis, 1976:20; Olthuis, 1984:565; Welch, 1987:154; Wynn, 1990:676-677; Smedes, 1992:165; Oppenheimer, 1993:346); only differing in the way of exposing it. Looking at this definition, it is possible to see the complexity and the depth of marriage. It is based upon the permanent

covenant of love and fidelity or troth from which the whole study will be developed.

Summary

Marriage, therefore, is an institution originated in the will of God from the time of the creation of the world. It is a union of love and troth and a covenant meant to be permanent. It is not a human invention, so human beings cannot do to marriage whatever they wish. It belongs to the divine order and should be respected as such.

2.3 THE PURPOSE OF MARRIAGE

In this section the different purposes of marriage according to Scripture will be discussed.

2.3.1 Mutual Help

When God instituted marriage He had a purpose with it. The first thing He had in mind was that husbands and wives should be each others helpers. God said: "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him" (Ge 2:18). The woman, then, was made equal to the man - a counterpart of him to help him to govern and conquer this world (Ge 1:28), (*cf.* Engelsma, 1977:24; Hamilton, 1991:175; Mathews, 1996:213).

The husband's help to his wife is not explicitly mentioned in a verse such as the wife's help to her husband, but rather in his love for her.

God commanded the husbands to love their wives as Christ loves his Church (Eph 5:25) (cf. De Bruyn, 1993:172). That implies service. A husband loving his wife means serving her in all the senses: sacrificing himself (even his own will) for the sake of her; giving himself up - his pride and humbling himself as he serves; helping her to grow in all spheres of her life, etc. It is a love that gives all for the sake of the beloved one (Eph 5:25) (cf. Engelsma, 1977:36). As Christ as their model, husbands are to remember His words: "... the Son of Man (Christ) did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life for many (Church)" (Mt 20:28).

The help that husbands and wives render to each other is not only physical but also emotional and spiritual. They need each other to be complete, to complement each other. As Stevens (1989:100) says:

Each helps the other more completely to resemble and express the nature of God himself. Each person by himself or herself is less than the image of God and therefore can become an idol...

Remembering God's purpose for their marriage, spouses will help to serve one another with joy.

2.3.2 To Propagate the Human Race

After the creation of all things, including that of man and woman, "God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it..." (Ge 1:28). The Hebrew term

used in this verse for "be fruitful" is *perû* (root word *prh*) and *rebû* (root *rbh*) for "multiply" or "become numerous". Both of them are an imperative or command given by God to human beings and all the living creatures. Later on after the Flood this divine imperative to replenish the earth, is repeated using *rbh* (Ge 8:17; 9:7) (cf. Hill, 1997:1038; Hostetter, 1997:678). With that it is clear that one of the purposes of marriage is to have children. God made man and woman with the capacity for having children, but ONLY within marriage.

Although the account of the creation of the woman and of the union of Adam and Eve is registered only in Genesis chapter 2, when God pronounced the words above, He did so after He had made the woman. And, there is no doubt that God made the woman for the man, for being his wife. Then, as a couple they were to beget children. De Bruyn (1993:172) elaborates on this matter saying that "in the New Testament it is also accepted that children should be begotten, born and brought up in the sphere of marriage" (cf. 1Ti 5:14): "I counsel younger widows to marry, to have children..."

The people in Old Testament times followed this command of God faithfully and large families were seen as a blessing from Yahweh (Ps 127-28). Their understanding was that progeny should be ready to replace their ageing parents in society (Ps 127:5); offspring keep alive the name of their parents (Ge 16; 2Sa 18:18) and can perpetuate their value (Sir. 30:4-6); the wife who borne children to a righteous husband is compared to a bearing (*prh*) grapevine (Ps 128:3; cf. Isa. 32:12; Eze 19:10), etc. (cf. Hostetter, 1997:677). Thus, among the Israelites, sons and daughters were considered a sign of prosperity and well-being (Dt

28:4) and the lack of children was a reproach (Ge 30:23). Many poems and hymns were written praising the fruit of the women's belly during those days. Procreation was a strong point for the Hebrews, for according to their literature marriage presents a twofold purpose: procreation (Ge 1:28) and companionship (Ge 2:18), and to these two the Talmud adds another one: the fulfilment of oneself as a person (*cf.* Dever, 1974:633; Fishbein, 1990:679, *cf.* Hamilton, 1992:561). Although much emphasis was laid on procreation, different opinions on the matter arose in early times. Hostetter (1997:677) says that Sirach presents a different view on multiplying offspring (Sir: 16:1-4):

Ben Sira views pride in a large family as inappropriate when that progeny has no fear of God. A great number of descendants is no grounds of joy unless they revere Yahweh... a single child who perform God's will is better than a thousand who do not... Character comes before quantity; better to be childless than have wicked children - regardless of how many. One should not count on long life for ungodly children and grandchildren, since the wicked come to untimely ends (see Ps 55:23 [24]).

The emphasis here is on the importance of raising children who fear the Lord. It is better not to have children than to have them and lose them to the evil one.

The idea of procreation as a purpose for marriage was kept by the Jews and Near Eastern people and entered the Christian era. The early Church Fathers taught that the basic reasons for marriage were

procreation and curbing lust, and the Roman Catholic Church made procreation the main purpose for marriage and the practice of sex only for begetting children (cf. Dever, 1974:634; Cross, 1984:889; Fischer and Hart, 1987:36; Ramsey, 1988: 66-67).

Children do have their special place in marriage, and parents have the duty of bringing them up in the ways of the Lord, so that they will glorify Him (Ex 20:12; Eph 6:14; Tit 2:4) and proclaim His name. So, to refuse to have children for selfish reasons is to refuse God's commandment, and consequently bring disruption in the marriage. Rigby (1957:46) points out that many marriages have been wrecked because one of the partners has refused to have children. Sex is a gift from God designed not only for human beings' joyful intimacy and expression of love but also for procreation. Although the world might have a different view of marriage and sex, the Word of God is still decisive for Christians. Engelsma (1977:73) explains the difference between a God-centred view of marriage and a man-centred view by saying that:

For unbelievers, marriage begins and ends with themselves: their happiness, their pleasure, their comfort, and their will. Our marriages, however, begin and end with God. Our marriages are not ultimately for our sakes, but for God's sake; they are not for our ease and pleasure, but they are in the service of God's purpose and for His honour. Our marriages are *His* in the fullest sense.

Therefore, happiness, fulfilment and success in the marriage, for believers, rest on their submission to God's will, as stated in the Scripture.

While procreation and child-bearing are very important to marriage and a command of the Lord, it cannot be elevated to its central meaning. Overemphasis should not be laid on this aspect of marriage. A marriage is a marriage whether the couple is able to have children or not (*cf.* Grenz, 1990:53-54). It does not minimise the meaning and purpose of marriage, for marriage in its deepest significance is the symbol of the relationship of love and fellowship between Christ and the Church. "When a believing man and a believing wife live together in love, according to the pattern of Christ and His Bride, God's highest purpose with marriage is realised, even though there are no children in the marriage" (Engelsma, 1977:71). Some people and even churches have erred when making procreation the main or the only purpose of marriage (*cf.* Engelsma, 1977:71). This exaggeration has harmed specially childless couples, who many times wished to have children and could not. Thus, over the centuries it has been debated whether this command represents the 'primary end' of marriage. The Catholic Church re-evaluated her view and in the Second Vatican Council's *Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* concluded that procreation is not the sole purpose of marriage and says that it "persists as a whole manner and communion of life, and maintains its value and indissolubility, even when offspring are lacking - despite, rather often, the very intense desire of the couple" (Dolan, 1975:104). One should look at marriage in its wholesomeness and not only at some aspects of it. God may have a higher calling for a couple without

children, and they should not be regarded differently from other couples.

2.3.3 To Curb Lust and Avoid Immorality

Lust, in this instance, has to do with sexuality. The urge of sex is not easy to control, it is almost an unruly factor in human nature. So difficult it is to control that its misuse (inside and outside marriage) has led to much misery and pain in the world. In order to help human beings control this drive the Scriptures encourages them to marry (1Co 7:2,9). Apostle Paul wished the Christians would stay unmarried in order to work more freely for God, and spare them some troubles, but he recognised that uncontrolled sexual desires lead people to immorality and said that "it is better to marry than to burn in passion" (v.9), that is, to sin (*cf.* Marrow, 1988:4). The avoidance of immorality as a motivation for marriage seems to be entirely in keeping with the Jewish tradition, says Collins (1992:571). He comments further and points out that for Paul marriage is a charisma, a special gift from God (v.7) and a sanctifying and salvific reality benefiting not only the believer but also the unbeliever spouse and the children born from that marriage (vv. 14-16).

It is important to bear in mind that sexual desire/urge is created by God for the well-being of people. However, the verses mentioned above indicate that sexual intercourse belongs within marriage, sex in marriage is wonderfully right, but any other practice of sexuality outside the wedlock is sinful (*cf.* Wheat & Wheat, 1995:23). Marriage, then, presents the solution for the sin of lust, for it provides the context

for the sex act and forms the boundary within which the sex drive is to be exercised (*cf.* Grenz, 1990:52). The Anglican Book of Common Prayer says that marriage "was ordained for remedy against sin, and to avoid fornication; that such persons as have not the gift of continency might marry, and keep themselves undefiled members of Christ" (Rigby, 1957:53). Lust, which has led people to immorality outside marriage, can be better controlled within marriage.

In marriage, the couple should not deny each other the pleasure of sex, in fact they should have intercourse frequently, their sexual desires should be fulfilled so that the satisfied couple can prevent themselves from the sins of fornication (1Co 7:2,3,5) (*cf.* De Bruyn, 1993:173). In fact, married people should only refrain from sexual intercourse when one of the spouses has a physical problem in that intercourse would generate pain or emotional discomfort and the doctor or counsellor has advised them to take that decision, or when mutually they decided to do so in order to dedicate themselves in prayer, but such abstention should not be for long (*cf.* Wyrzten, 1991:120).

Although sexual intercourse is very important in marriage, it should not be the main purpose leading a couple to get married. There are many aspects in married life, and if the only attraction that one partner has for the other is a sexual attraction, then difficulties will soon arise and the marriage will probably fail. Grenz (1990:52) says the following:

There are other aspects of the male-female bond, beyond its serving as the outlet for the human sex drive. In many

cases, the marital bond remains strong even after the sex drive has weakened or in situations where for physical or psychological reasons one or the other partner is unable to engage in the sex act. This phenomenon indicates that other dimensions of marriage are equally important.

2.3.4 To Provide Companionship

Companionship has been over-emphasised as the basis or purpose of marriage in the present day. In a developing, busy, industrialised, secularised, and individualistic society human beings, without time for inter-action or for each other, people often find themselves lonely. Friends are few and sometimes nothing more than casual acquaintances (*cf.* McDonald, 1975:29-37). Nights alone at home become unbearable for many young or single people. The solution then becomes casual relationships or marriage. People today have a far higher expectation of interpersonal companionship and for many marriage is primarily a union of companionship/partnership and mutual support (*cf.* Fischer and Hart, 1987:27; Roberts, 1987:54). Marriage then is supposed to provide that companionship and fill up that void. In fact "the ideal marriage is now pictured as that in which husband and wife become each other closest friends... and the truly happy marriage partners are those who experience intimacy, who enjoy being together, and who share in the interests, goals, and dreams of their spouses" (Grenz, 1990:54).

It seems that the idea and predominance of this understanding of the meaning of marriage is partially due to the influence of nineteenth-

century Romanticism. Furthermore, companionship as the central meaning of marriage is well defended by the social sciences (*cf.* Grenz, 1990:54).

This idea can appeal for biblical support as well, and theologians present their case. Adams (1982:8), for example, comes to the point of saying that companionship is the essence of marriage and that the purpose of marriage is "to solve the problem of loneliness". He uses Genesis 2:18 "... It is not good for man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him" as the basis of his argument. However, not everybody is of the same opinion as he is, and Heth (1990:78) voices his reaction by saying that "Adams understands "aleness" in the sense of "loneliness" and that he reads the ancient biblical text with modern-day psychologically tinted glasses... man's "aleness" is not "loneliness" but his inability, apart from the woman, to carry out God's creation directives to perpetuate and multiply the race and to cultivate and govern the earth (Ge 1:26-28)". Adams' statement is certainly difficult to accept because there are many married people suffering from loneliness, even when they have children. Marriage, then, cannot solve the problem of loneliness. Loneliness is a problem to be solved between God and the person. A person can be single "alone", but not lonely.

In the creation narrative (Ge 1-2) man is presented as incomplete without a woman and God saw that it was not good. "Whether the man felt his aleness at first is not stated; only the divine viewpoint is given. God has created human life to have fellowship with Him but also to be a social entity, building up relationships with one another on

his own level" (Matthews, 1995:213, *cf.* Hamilton, 1991:175). Thus, companionship in marriage seems to be in the heart of God. He is a personal God who also desires to be with us in a personal relationship. Wyrzten (1991:26) says that "He rejoices in the close friendship and relationships we enjoy with one another. And the husband-wife relationship proclaims the richest expression of this intimate companionship. Intimate companionship is priceless and eternal and it is part of the essence of God Himself. Within the unity of the one true God there is the eternal relationship of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit... Human beings, created as male and female, mirror this companionship... The companionship of the Trinity gives significance to companionship in marriage".

The theme of companionship is implicitly seen in the stories of the Hebrew patriarchs. Grenz (1990:54) says that "the narrator gives the sense that the relationships between the spouses in these marriages were characterised by intense companionship. Examples include the marriages of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, and Jacob and Rachel, as well as the tender love story between Ruth and Boaz". Besides the text of the creation (Ge 2:18), two other verses from the Old Testament are also used by Adams (1982:11) to support the idea of companionship as the basis for marriage: Proverbs 2:16a,17 "... the strange woman... who forsakes the companion of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God", and Malachi 2:14 "... the Lord has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, although she is your companion and your wife by covenant". His argument is that in both texts the word translated

"companion" has the idea of "union or association" which imply intimacy.

The New Testament also, although not as directly as the Old Testament, presents implicitly this theme of companionship. It seems that Peter's wife accompanied him on his missionary journeys (1Co 9:5), Priscilla and Aquila shared a ministry from their home (Acts 18). And in Ephesians 5:21-33 a relationship of companionship within marriage is encouraged (*cf.* Grenz, 1990:55).

While companionship is one of the purposes of marriage as instituted by God and crucial to the marital bond, it may present some danger - the danger of the overemphasis of the you-me relationship and the issues of intimacy in marriage, which are so present in Western society today, which can turn marriage into a self-centred system that mirrors the individualistic, self-actualising goals of this society. Because of it some Christians have looked to other models for the primary purpose for marriage. And they came up with something beyond companionship to a partnership model which focuses on "the purpose and calling of the relationship, the task of husband and wife to make their relationship meaningful in the context of God's will" (Grenz, 1990:55). So, sexual activity, procreation, and companionship are all important as expressions of the primary intent of marriage - to express the divine will to the community.

Summary

As seen above marriage does not exist by itself or for the couple's

own benefit only. When God instituted marriage He had in mind something broader. He meant that the couple would help each other in the fulfilment of their tasks as well as in their spiritual growth. They were to have children and raise them in the ways of the Lord, teaching them to praise and revere God. In marriage people can satisfy their sexual needs, thus protecting themselves from the sin of lust. They were also to provide companionship to each other and to enjoy each other. And they were to live in a way that would resemble the unity of Christ and the Church.

2.4 THE ROLE OF THE SPOUSES

Following on the previous section, the role of the spouses will be discussed in this section.

When the family was more stable and the spouses' roles were more defined, the young people grew up knowing what were expected of them as spouses. Today, when family-life is shattered, people grow up not knowing precisely what is expected of them or are insecure about marriage-life altogether (*cf.* McDonald, 1975:60-61). Families, society, even the church have failed to provide a good model for young people to follow. However, the Scripture remains true for all times and defines well the role of the spouses.

2.4.1 The Husband

In marriage the husband's unique role is headship, which entails primarily the role of being a ruler and secondarily as a provider

(caretaker) (*cf.* De Bruyn, 1993: 105-106). This very important office is given to him by God (1Co 11:3; Eph 5:22-24; 1Ti 3:4 *cf.* Ge 2:15-18; 3:16). This is something that he cannot boast about because he does not earn the right to command and lead the home, it is God who appointed him to be a leader. And when he does not lead he sins against God (*cf.* Wheat & Wheat, 1995:32).

Headship has to do with the main direction of the marriage. That simply "means that the husband has the responsibility and authority to call the marriage - his wife as well as himself - to obey the norm of truth" (Olthuis, 1976:27). He has the responsibility for making decisions concerning the happiness and physical and spiritual welfare of the family (*cf.* Bible Course, 1987). However, being a head does not mean that the husband leads or decides every detail, it simply means that he takes the initiative - the leadership - and sets the Christian standards for the family (*cf.* McDonald, 1975:66 *cf.* Wilson, 1997:12-13).

As a head it does not mean that the husband is the boss, or superior to his wife and may command as he pleases. His authority over his wife is rooted in Christ's authority over the Church. He is to follow Christ as he takes the responsibility of leadership, and this applies to every area of the marriage relationship, whether spiritual, emotional, or physical (*cf.* Wheat & Wheat, 1995:32).

De Bruyn (1993:175-176) says that the husband's headship of the wife entails five important points:

- a) ***His faith in Jesus Christ*** - The husband must have a true belief that he and his wife are part of the Church of Christ, saved by Him and for Him, by His endless grace, and that before God there is no difference between man and woman (Eph 5:1,2; Gal 3:28).
- b) ***His following of Christ*** - The husband is to be a head of his wife in the same way Christ is the head of the Church - He saved her and cares for her in all the senses (Eph 5:23).
- c) ***His authority*** - As the head of the home, the husband needs to take official and authoritative action whenever necessary, and he should not back off or hesitate in exercising his authority (Eph 5:22-24; 1Ti 3:4,5,12). Nevertheless, he should keep in mind that his authority is under God's authority. God put him in that position (Ro 13:1,2; Col 2:8,10) and He will hold him accountable for the way he treats his wife.
- d) ***His responsibility*** - The husband must take the responsibility for the material and spiritual well-being of his wife in the same way Christ took responsibility for the salvation, sanctification and justification of His Church (Eph 5:25-27).
- e) ***His call to service*** - In fulfilling his role as head of his wife, the husband is not to rule over her as a tyrant, but rather have in mind to serve her as Christ served and still serves his Church. He did it by dying for her sins, caring for her sanctification, and always nurturing and cherishing her (Eph 5:25-33).

Also based on the Scripture and very much related to the points mentioned above, Wilkinson (1995a:5.3-5.12) says that the husband should lead his wife by being the:

- **Protector** - Protecting her from outside interference in his marriage; from any attack that there might be and standing by her in difficult times; watching out for her moral and spiritual safety (Heb 13:7,17); covering her with his love as Christ did for His Church to a point of sacrificing Himself on her behalf (Eph 5:25).
- **Provider** - As Christ knows of all the needs of His Church and provides for her daily (Mt 6:32,33), so the husband ought to do for his wife, providing for her not only morally and spiritually but also financially. It is his responsibility to provide for the family's financial needs: food, shelter, clothing, etc. (Eph 5:28,29; 1Ti 5:8).
- **Scout** - Taking up the front and leading with boldness; when the family does not know how and where to go in their lives, he stands up and takes the lead. Sometimes in exercising his leadership it means that he will need to surrender this role to his wife, temporarily (Ge 16:1-6).
- **General** - Taking difficult decisions even though it might affect the lives of the others around (Ge 12:1ff), and keeping the peace in the home (1Ti 3:3,4).
- **Priest** - Helping her to grow spiritually; leading her to Christ; leading in the spiritual matters of home; interceding on her behalf as Christ intercedes for His Church and saving her (Eph 5:23; Job 1:5), knowing that God places him as leader over his wife not only for the direction of her activities but for the care of her soul as well (Heb 13:7,17).

- **Physician** - Helping to heal her wounds by even sometimes helping her to cry in order to make her a better and stronger person; a prettier and holier person (Eph 5:26,27).
- **King** - The king is the head, the highest authority and as such he is to rule because this position was given him by God. As king the husband is to rule with love, wisdom, fairness and kindness (Col 3:19), knowing that he will need to pay an account to God for the way he rules over his wife (Heb 13:7,17). He also ought to rule by his example of humility, humbleness and service (Jn 13:15).

The Word of the Lord shows clearly that the husband is the head of his wife whether he functions in that capacity or not. In the present day situation things have been different from this principle. With the emancipation of women, disruption of the homes and rapid role change in modern society, even Christian homes are deeply affected. Many men and women are uncertain about their roles and problems in marital adjustment, arising from ignorance and confusion (*cf.* McDonald, 1975:29-37; 58). Wilkinson (1995a: 5.2-5.3) says that many husbands today are not leading at all. They back-off mainly due to two reasons: **Wrong beliefs**: - They believe they don't know enough to lead; they don't feel confident enough to lead; and they are not successful enough to lead, and **wrong behaviours**: Passivity - backs-off and lets the wife take lead; Abusive - emotionally and physically, assuming that he is leader therefore he can control everyone and do as he pleases; Absence -never at home (*cf.* McDonald, 1975:58-61).

Such obstacles in fulfilling the office of headship, with guidance and help of the Holy Spirit, can be overcome as the Christian husband studies the Word and surrenders himself to the authority of the Lord. Headship is a divine call to men, an office of great responsibility, which requires hard work in its fulfilment. No man is knowledgeable enough, or mature enough, or spiritual enough to be able to lead a home on his own. He needs to look up to Christ as his model, surrender himself to His Word, in humbleness, and take up the leadership. Engelsma (1977:43) says, "We ought to work, and work hard, at this calling. Let us turn daily to our Lord Jesus Christ for the strength. The power to carry out this calling is in Him. In Him we can do all things, including the calling of the Christian husband".

2.4.2 The Wife

Like the husband, the wife also has a special role to play in her marriage. This role entails primarily the role of being a provider (caretaker) and secondarily the role of ruler (*cf.* De Bruyn, 1993: 105-106). There are few sources from which the woman gets her ideas about her role in marriage: family, society, church, and the Scripture (*cf.* Wilkinson, 1995a:3.2).

The Bible defines the role of the wife in a word - helper. And the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper comparable (suitable) to him" (Ge 2:18). "Suitable" (*kenegdô*, means "like what is in front of him") indicates an equality, a correspondence between the man and the woman. 'ezer is the term used for helper which means 'help' in the sense of aid and support and is also used of

the Lord's aiding his people in the face of enemies (Ps 20:2[3]; 121:1-2; 124:8) (cf. Mathews, 1995:214, cf. Hamilton, 1991:175). This was the woman first call - to be a helper. This role of hers is never to be understood as a lower position or a lesser person. Her role is of extreme importance. Helper is a word used by God even in reference to Himself (Ps 70:5). Jesus also referred to the Holy Spirit as "the Helper" (Jn 14:16). "If the role of helper is a legitimate one for the Creator of the universe, the One who holds everything together, then it is hardly a lesser role a demeaning term to refer to a woman in partnership with man as his helper" (Walker, 1989:12). The wife "is an indispensable 'partner' required to achieve the divine commission" (Mathews, 1995:214). The man was alone in what he needed to do and he needed a helper. Someone to help him to accomplish the tasks God had commanded him to do: to multiply, to conquer the world, and rule over it (Ge 1:28). Things he could not do alone. Thus, the woman was made fitting to his needs in every respect: physically and bodily, as well as mentally and emotionally (cf. Engelsma, 1977). The wife's role is above all to help her husband to accomplish the mission God had given him. Wilkinson, (1995a:3:8) says that any marriage can benefit by Scriptural guidelines for each one of the spouses. In Proverbs 31:27 one finds evidence of God's plan for husbands and wives. According to this text the couple ran their marriage on a plan. The husband tended to his civic and vocational duties in the community (v. 23) while the wife watched over the ways of her household (and they were diverse!). The wife serving as a helper to her husband reflects God's blueprint for building an effective marriage - each spouse knowing and fulfilling his or her role.

However, it is important to keep in mind that "to be helper is not to be a slave. And to be a woman is not to be a helper to all men. God created man and woman with equal standing in His sight (Gal 3:28). Women were not created to serve men, rather, wives were appointed to help their husbands. A woman who never marries has no such a role to play in life. Helper is exclusively a wife's role" (Wilkinson, 1995a:3:11).

To be a helper is not a lower position, nor does it indicate inferiority on the wife's side. It is very much a noble position. The husband cannot go without it, and the marriage cannot function well when the woman does not fulfil her role or misinterpret it. When the wife helps her husband in the way she should, it triggers in him that attitude of praise which is mentioned in Pr 31:28-31: "Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: 'Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all'. Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. Give her the reward she has earned, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate". "When a wife makes her husband's life a success through her stability, skill, and sensitive partnering - that is, her helpfulness - it is hard to keep it in" (Wilkinson, 1995a:3:12). In this regard De Bryun (1993:106) also says that "women also had careers (Pr 31:24), and that some even worked outside their homes (31:16), in order to gather whatever they needed to take care of their families... it is also said of the wife that she should manage (*oikodespotein*) her home (1Ti 5:14)... husband and wife have a joint task and call to rule and to take care of their house".

2.5 THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE SPOUSES

Everyone submits to someone in this life. When God calls people for any purpose, He also designates a leader to be responsible for them and direct their activities. This is particularly important in marriage. In this context the responsibilities of the spouses will now be subjected to scrutiny.

2.5.1 The Responsibility of the Husband

"All of a husband's responsibilities in marriage can be summarised in one Biblical command: Love your wife! And all of a husband's expressions of love can be illustrated in one Biblical example: As Christ loved the church" (Wilkinson, 1995a:5:12). Husbands are commanded to love their wives 'as Christ loved the church' and as 'their own bodies' (Eph 5:25-28). For this kind of love Christ is the example. Christ's purpose in giving Himself for His Church was to sanctify her and purify her (v. 26) - a purification from sin through His blood and a sanctification through the operation of the Holy Spirit. According to verse 7 He prepares her to meet with the Groom (Himself), making her beautiful, without blemish, and holy, a continuous process until the church meets with her Groom (*cf.* Wyrzten, 1991:123). This love is the *agape* love - unconditional and irrevocable (*cf.* Davidson, 1979:1265 and Wheat & Wheat, 1995:36). In the same way the husbands should love their wives, that is, sacrificially, continually, and by choice. It is a love which was shown not only once and for all on the cross, but a continuous love aiming at her sanctification and glory (Eph 5:25-33). Christ's love for the Church

is a model of how husbands are to love their wives: that means that they must love their wives even if they act like sinners. In this regard Romans 5:6-11 and specially verse 8 is very important: "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (v.8). And while sin in marriage is a two-way street, Scripture puts upon man the task of loving with Christ-like love.

Husbands should also show this love by dwelling with their wives and honouring them (1Pe 3:7-12).

This command of Peter for the husband to dwell with his wife indicates that he is not only to live with her physically, in a home, but also that he is not to live independently from her. It is possible that a husband would want to pursue his own interests, his own ambitions, his own entertainment apart from his wife. Such behaviour will cause tremendous friction in the marriage and is, at the same time, contrary to the institution of marriage itself. The fact that the woman was created for the man so that he would not be alone indicates that dependency on each other. Likewise, the man being the head of his wife shows that he cannot live independently from his wife because a head cannot exist apart from the body. The apostle Paul, after insisting that "the head of the woman is the man" (1Co 11:3) adds: "Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God" (vv.1 1,12). So, the man does not live apart from the woman, in independency; he lives "by the woman", that is, "through" her (*cf.*

Engelsma, 1977:33). The institution of marriage consists of this, that God made the man and his wife one flesh. They become one, therefore dependent on each other.

Independency in marriage is also contrary to the great standard for the Christian man as a husband - Jesus Christ. The attitude and behaviour of Jesus is the guideline for the man. Jesus, as the bridegroom, does not live apart from His church. He lives with the church and through her. He shares His life with her, He communes with her His desires and plans, His activities and He brings her into His life fully. This is the pattern for the Christian husband and he is called to follow it: "Likewise you husbands, dwell with them" (*cf.* Engelsma, 1977:33,34).

To dwell with one's wife is to be understood in a literal, physical sense as well. It means that the husband be at home with his wife. And when he is at home he must live in fellowship with his wife, treating her with love. The apostle Peter insists also that the husbands are to live with their wives in ways that communicate and show understanding toward her needs (1Pe3:7) (*cf.* Wilkinson, 1995a:6.9). This understanding is the warm, personal knowledge of the heart. It is also an intellectual knowledge, a knowledge of his wife as being a weaker vessel. Having an understanding of it the husband will treat his wife with kindness and respect. He will be careful in his behaviour towards her, so that he does not injure or break the weaker vessel. Because of her weakness, he will nourish, cherish and honour her, in the same way that Christ treats his wife, the weaker vessel, the Church (Eph 5:29). He will honour her by treating her with respect and not contempt, brutality and

tyranny, and also by appreciating her ideas, her requests, and her desires, her abilities and actions, in particular those she is able to do because she is a woman, and of which he is incapable. He will praise her for her attitude and conduct. But the most important thing she should be praised for is the fact that she serves and fears the Lord (Pr 31 :30) (cf. De Bruyn, 1993: 176).

Another way in which the husband is to love his wife is by enjoying his life with his wife. Ecclesiastes 9:9 says: "Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love". This includes sexual enjoyment as well as any kind of fun the couple might have together (Pr 5:18-20; SS 7:2,7,8; Pr 31:10-31).

2.5.2 The Responsibility of the Wife

Everybody in this world lives under the authority of someone. Whether in the state, in the church, in the work, or in the marriage, God has given clear guidance on these structures. And He says that in marriage the wife should submit to the husband. In modern times the mere mentioning of the word submission might bring a look of intense anger to the face of a wife. However, submission is God's command for the wives and not merely a choice. The New Testament contains many references on this subject leaving the readers in no doubt (1Co 11:3-12; Eph 5:22-33; 1Ti 2:11-14; 1Pe 3:1,5,6; Col 3:18).

Submission (in the Greek *hypotasso*) means 'to place under', 'to subject to', 'to obey', etc. In household codes subordination and obedience are mostly used: wives towards their husbands (Col 3:18; Eph 5:24b.; 1Pe 3:1,5; Tit 2:5); slaves towards their masters (1Pe

2:18); the younger towards the elders (1Pe 5:5), etc. Submission was such a required behaviour in the early Christian era that it was expressed in a form of command like in Eph 5:21 and 1Pe 2:13 (*cf.* Littleton, 1988:15). In relation to marriage it means that the wife is to organise herself underneath her husband (Wilkinson, 1995a:4.2). That is, all her activities, plans, her profession, etc. must be organised in consultation with her husband.

In ancient cultures submission of wives was the standard. Roman law gave men the authority over their wives and unmarried daughters; Egyptian marriage contracts stipulated that the wife must be submissive to her husband; philosophers wrote and praised this virtue in women; Jewish writers shared this view and later on the rabbis recognised the authority of the husband over the wife as the standard. Thus, submitting to one's husband and other male relatives was considered to be a virtue of a good woman in ancient society (*cf.* Keener, 1992:165-166). It is against this background that Paul writes about the submission of the wives, but he defines it as respect rather than obedience and he places it in the context of mutual submission and calls on husbands to love their wives in such a way that they become their wives' servants, too (*cf.* Keener, 1992:166).

The wife's submission to her husband is an imperative command and not an option for the modern woman. And it is the wife who is the responsible agent in submission, not the husband. The husband cannot make the wife submit herself unto him, it is her responsibility before the Lord. If it is enforced by him it is not submission. She will submit in obedience to God, to please Him above all. Her submission

is not so much to her husband as it is to the Lord. When the woman rebels and refuses to submit to her husband she is not disobeying him, she is disregarding the will of God for her in her marriage (Col 3:18) (*cf.* Wilkinson, 1995a:4:10 *cf.* McDonald, 1975:62). There must also be a mutual submission of the husband and wife, but this issue will be addressed later in section 2.6.2.

Wilkinson (1995a:4.3) describes seven characteristics of a Biblically submissive wife as follows:

1. Wives are to submit to their *own husbands* (Col 3:18) and not to all men.
2. It is *fitting*, it is *right*, for the wife to submit to her own husband (Col 3:18).
3. The wife is to submit *with joy* as the Church does to Christ (Eph 5:22-24).
4. The wife is to submit to her husband *in everything* (Eph 5:24).
5. The wife is to submit by her conduct, *without a word* (1Pe 3:1).
6. Submission is to be accompanied by *reverence*, or very strong respect (1Pe 3:2).
7. The wife is to submit with a *gentle* and *quiet* spirit (1Pe 3:3-4).

Unlike Roman wives that remained subjected to their husbands' legal control as long as they lived, this submission should be spontaneous, in reverence to the Lord and triggered by the love of the husband (*cf.* Keener, 1992:188).

Summary

The responsibilities of the husband and wife can be summarised in two words respectively: love and submission - but both in the Lord. The husband is to love his wife as Christ loves His church. He is to love in such a way that it will trigger his wife's response of submission and also love. And the wife is to submit to her husband as unto the Lord.

2.6 MUTUAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF HUSBAND AND WIFE

There are several guidelines and commands for the Church of Christ in the Bible, which are worthy of mentioning here because they apply to the couple in their marriage as well. As Christians, husband and wife have a personal responsibility in growing spiritually, in observing the Scripture and in applying it in their daily life. These are mutual responsibilities because it is God addressing the believer, as an individual, or as a member of the body of Christ. When the spouses follow these instructions, not only their personal lives will be enriched, but also their marriage as well. A marriage in which husband and wife take serious responsibility for their Christian growth, fearing and honouring God and His Word, it will be, without doubt, a blessed and successful marriage.

2.6.1 Mutual Love

One does not find in the Scripture an explicit command for the wife to

love her husband in the same way as it addresses the husband (Eph 5:25). Nevertheless, the Bible indicates that Saul's daughter was in love with David (1Sa 18:20); Song of Songs speaks of the love of the for woman for her beloved (2:5; 5:8; 8:6,7), and Paul in Tit 2:4 encourages young women to love their husbands (*cf.* De Bruyn, 1993:177). Also, as a believer the wife is challenged to love her husband as she loves herself. Jesus regards the love towards one's neighbours as the second greatest commandment (Mt 22:39) and the husband is the wife's closest neighbour.

This love with which the wife should love her husband is rooted in the love of God, in His very nature. The driving force and motive of this love is the fact that God is love, that He has loved her first, and dwells within her (1Jn 4:7-21). And then He commands the believers to love others with this same *agapic* love. In I John 4:11 one reads "since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" Also in John 13:34 the Lord commands all the believers to love each other: "A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another" (*cf.* Traina, 1973:396; Louw & Nida, 1989:292). Based on this commandment, husband and wife ought to mutually love and care for each other in the same way God loves and cares for them personally. This love should also be mutual and spontaneous, in the same way that Christ, the Bridegroom and the church, the Bride, relate to each other in love and respect.

2.6.2 Mutual Submission

Although submission is a command directed specifically to the wives,

as their responsibility in the marriage (see §2.5.2), as a general guideline it is also addressed to the husbands (Eph 5:21). The believers are well instructed in how to relate to one another, in their living, as children of Light (Eph 5), and before he gives instructions to the spouses, the children, and the servants, Paul addresses everyone saying "submit to one another out of reverence" (v.21). This mutual submission, like the worship in Eph 5:19-20, flows from being filled with God's Spirit. A couple full of the Holy Spirit will organise themselves under the authority of Christ (*cf.* Littleton, 1977:15; Keener, 1992:158). This means that, even though in the marriage husband and wives have their specific roles and responsibilities, they need to fulfil them taking each other in consideration. They need also to keep in mind that it is the Lord who put them in their position. Therefore, they should act out of reverence for Christ and do everything to glorify Him. They should bear in mind that even though one is the head, both are under the authority of God and they should fulfil their duties as unto the Lord, considering one another better than himself or herself (Php 2:3) (*cf.* De Bruyn, 1993:173-4, *cf.* Engelsma, 1977:31; Littleton, 1977:20-21).

Submission to one another out of reverence for Christ, as stated in Ephesians 5:21 means, in a practical way, that "husband and wife are mutually dependent and that they must help each other to function as a unit for the sake of their marriage. In a *negative* sense, this means that all selfishness, self-assertiveness, intolerance, individualism and pettiness, i.e. all self-centredness, should be excluded. In a *positive* sense, it means to listen patiently and without prejudice to each other, to grant each other sufficient living-space, to respect each other's

feelings, opinions and abilities, to further each other's interests and grant each other the opportunities for further development of gifts" (De Bruyn, 1993:174).

However, it is important to bear in mind that mutual submission is possible only when the couple revere Christ as Lord of their lives, and then they are filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph 5:18) who guide their lives in every way.

2.7 DIVORCE

In this section the matter of divorce will be addressed. A brief definition of the term will be given and the biblical teaching, both in the Old as well as in the New Testaments, will be discussed.

2.7.1 Definition

Today, when speaking about divorce one understands it as "the official declaration by a judge that a marriage performed either by a practitioner of religion or an empowered authority of the government has become legally dissolved" (Zodhiates, 1989;45, *cf.* COD, 1987:281).

According to Adams (1980:32), "divorce is the repudiation and breaking of the covenant (or agreement) in which both parties promised to provide companionship (in all its ramifications) for one another...divorce is a declaration that these promises are no longer expected, required or permitted". Divorce is, therefore, the breaking

up, the ending of the wedlock. In the Old Testament the word for divorce is expressed in the sentence "*sepher kerithuth*" "bill or certificate of divorce" (Dt 24; Isa 50:1; Jer 3:8) which means "to cut off", "to make final". It means that the marriage covenant and all its obligations and privileges are terminated. Other words were also used, e.g. "*aragsh*" "to expel or to put away" (cf. Lev 21:7, 14; 22:13; Nu 30:10; Eze 44:22), and "*shalach*" "to dismiss, to send away, let go, put away" (cf. Dt 21:14; 22:19, 29; 24:1,3,4; Isa 50: 1; Jer 3:1; 3:8) (cf. Adams, 1980:32; Wakely, 1997:718, 721).

In the New Testament, the words used to express the ending of marriage are a "*aphieemi*" which means "to put away, or to dismiss" "*apoluoo*" "to send away from him" and "*choorizomai*" "to separate oneself, by divorce" (cf. Zodhiates, 1989:46, cf. Louw & Nida, 1989:457; Bauer, 1993:492;).

Among the Hebrews divorce was an option for the husbands alone. Women were not allowed to ask for it. Although divorce was a legal institution, it was not so accepted within the community. In the Greek and Roman societies it was different and divorce was frequent, specially in the upper classes. With the rising of Christianity divorce became rare among the Christians because the Church taught the principles of good morals and the value and meaning of marriage. In the Middle Ages and even latter, ecclesiastical laws against divorce were as strict as civil laws. It was then at the Enlightenment that divorce reappeared in Western culture. And in the twentieth century it became very common in many societies (cf. Murray, 1980:8; Zodhiates, 1989:40-41; Grenz, 1990:100).

Today divorce is a reality all over the world, even among devout Christians, affecting all kinds of people and all the spheres of society. Unlike marriage, divorce was not instituted by God, it is rather a human institution, and it is clearly seen as a result of sin (Mt 19:8). Theologians and Christian writers, such as Adams (1980), Keener (1991), De Bruyn (1993), Zodhiates (1989) and many others all interpret and agree on the sinfulness of divorce, as it is seen as a rejection of God's Word and will for mankind. Psychologists, sociologists, counsellors, and pastors are all concerned about the consequences or impact of divorce on society, and they are all mobilised, trying to slow down the divorce rate or at least to provide a cure for the ill already existent in the victims of it. In dealing with this subject, the different counsellors differ in their opinion and approach towards the matter, viewing divorce through the glasses of their own field of work, experiences and study. God expresses His will about divorce, leaving guidelines in the Bible for all the believers.

2.7.2 The Biblical Teaching on Divorce

Divorce is rampant in society today. Christians have to face it and seek God's will in various situations involving divorce and not merely religious guidance.

2.7.2.1 *In the Old Testament*

The Old Testament talks about divorce firstly and mainly in the book of Deuteronomy 24:1-4. This passage bears specific legislation on divorce and its significance is seen later on when this subject again

comes to the fore and reference is made to the words of Moses (*cf.* Isa 50:1; Jer 3:1; Mt 19:7,8; Mk 10:3-5) (*cf.* Murray, 1980:3).

As was mentioned before, divorce was largely practised among the Jews, and for any and every reason (*cf.* Duty, 1979:19-20; Murray, 1980:7,8; Zodhiates, 1989:45). So, Moses seeing the loose way in which it was practised, legalised it, aiming to bring some order in the society, regarding this practice. Divorce was legalised in order to protect the women who were often sent away without any concern or proof of their freedom from marital obligations, and also to restrict it, to restrain men of dismissing their wives hastily, for thoughtless and frivolous reasons. In the same text (Dt 24:1-4) there is a prohibition of remarriage, in certain cases as it is seen in God's words, through Moses. He says that after having divorced his wife, a man was not to take her back, into marriage again, if she had married somebody else and now finds herself free once more (by a second divorce, or death) (*cf.* Laney, 1990a:21; Wall, 1992:218). The reason for this prohibition was that such a thing was an abomination before the Lord, that is, a detestable thing and sin before the Lord. And it would also bring guilt upon the land (*cf.* Wiseman, 1974:244; Murray, 1980:7,9).

The reason for divorce mentioned in this text is "something indecent" or "unclean" found in her behaviour. The meaning of this "indecent" or "unclean" thing is obscure. Although much study on this matter has been done, no clear conclusion has been reached. The expression (*'erwat dabar*) "nakedness of a thing" is never clearly defined. How should one interpret it: literally or metaphorically? The word *'erwâ* is used metaphorically of "nakedness" of Egypt, meaning the "private

parts" of Egypt that spies would seek out for weaknesses in her defences (Ge 42:9,12). It is also figuratively used in La 1:8 and Eze 16:37. On the other hand, this word is also used literally referring to shameful or immoral exposure of the genitals in Exodus 20:26. Besides, "nakedness of a thing" seems not to be understood as adultery because adultery was punished by death and not considered ground for divorce (*cf.* Graigie, 1979:305; Murray, 1980:10; Laney, 1990a:22; Sprinkle, 1997:530,540). Despite much research and effort this subject remains an enigma.

However, looking more broadly on other instances, one can conclude that this indecency, or unclean thing mentioned in the text has to do with infidelity or unfaithfulness, because otherwise God would not have used it as a metaphor for the lack of good relationship between Israel and Him. It seems that whenever He uses divorce as a metaphor of the breaking up of their relationship, He refers to the divorce law of Deuteronomy 24 and says that the reason for their divorce is because Israel was unfaithful, adulterous, etc. (*cf.* Isa 50:1; Jer 3:1, 8; Mal 2:11-16) (*cf.* Engelsma, 1975:86). Then, later on in the New Testament, Jesus speaking of divorce, refers to the Old Testament and speaks of adultery as the only reason for divorce (Mt 5:31-32; 19:3-12 and Mk 10:2). God does not mention any other reason for His "divorce" to Israel, so one can conclude that the "indecency" or "unclean thing" of Deuteronomy 24 may well be an act of unfaithfulness.

From the Scripture point of view, divorce, from the beginning, has been God's object of hate (Mal 2:16; Mt 19:8), because it destroys

God's perfect plan for marriage - the unity of the couple as one flesh until death. He hates divorce because of its sinfulness; because it causes heartbreak, psychological and spiritual damage, hurt and much misery to all involved in it. In Malachi 2:10-16 God clearly expresses His disgust towards divorce and condemns any Jew who divorces his Jewish wife and marries "the daughter of a foreign god" (v.11), that is a foreign woman. The fundamental offence is the violation of the marriage covenant: "You have broken faith with her... the wife of your marriage covenant"(v. 14). In this passage one finds the most comprehensive condemnation of divorce *per se* in the Old Testament: "I hate divorce, says the Lord God of Israel" (v. 16) (cf. Sprinkle, 1997:539).

When dealing with the matter of divorce, Adams (1980:24) says that God does not hate all kinds of divorce - i.e. those "obtained according to the principles and regulations laid down in the Scriptures". However, such a statement seems to present some problems because the hate God has for divorce is addressed towards what divorce means in relation to His plans for human beings (couples), who should be living together until death. God hates it in all circumstances because divorce in all circumstances is a disruption of His plan, a direct result of sin (Mt 19:8), and a destructive deed to everyone involved. The only thing that comforts our hearts about divorce is that, though detested by God, it is also forgivable by Him in the same way He forgives a person's lies, drunkenness, etc. when truly repented and confessed (1Jn 1:9).

2.7.2.2 *In the New Testament*

In the New Testament one finds Jesus' teaching on divorce expressed in two traditions, the Synoptic tradition (Luke 16:18; Mark 10:2-12; Matthew 5:31, 32 and 19:3-12) and the Pauline tradition (1 Corinthians 7:1-16). Much controversy exists on the interpretation of these teachings and agreement on this topic is far from being reached. Difficulties arise not only regarding the question of divorce, but also regarding the remarriage of a divorcee to another partner. Writers and theologians of any and every kind of Christian denomination and theological background (e.g. Zodhiates, 1984; Heth & Wenham, 1984; Green, 1990; Laney, 1990; Heth, 1990; Edgar, 1990; Richards, 1990) have their approach to this matter and their conclusions are varied. A quick look at the texts will help to bring clarity to the subject.

The reports of Luke and Mark are parallel and seem not to present any problems as they are quite clear and straightforward:

Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery (Mark 10:11,12).

Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery, and the man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery (Luke 16:18).

According to these two texts the one who "divorces and remarries (another person)" commits adultery. There is nothing in Jesus' sayings that suggests divorce and remarriage, not even for one exception or another. However, both Evangelists leave open the possibility that Jesus might have conceded the possibility of divorce without remarriage. But a second marriage would be an act of adultery. Even the marriage of a single man to a divorced woman is adultery, a violation of the seventh commandment, according to Luke 16:18 and Matthew 5:32. The reason for it is because, even though divorce did take place then, Jewish and Roman laws did not have the power to really dissolve the marriage (*cf.* Engelsma, 1975:111-120; Heth, 1990:108). Jesus once more explains the significance of Genesis 1:27 and 2:24 to those who were questioning Him in Matthew 19:6 and Mark 10:9, "Therefore what God has joined together, let no man separate", thus emphasising the permanence of marriage as a life-long covenant.

In Matthew 5:31,32 one reads:

It has been said, 'Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce'. But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery.

At first sight this text seems to be in contrast with Moses' teaching on divorce in Dt 24:1-4. In Matthew 19 (which will be discussed latter) the Pharisees tempted Jesus regarding this matter and His answer was in

fact a prohibition of divorce: (v.6) "What God has joined together, let man not separate". Then the Pharisees questioned Him on why Moses commanded them to give a letter of divorce (v.7). It is here where the misunderstanding about the teaching of Jesus arises even today. Jesus answers categorically that Moses did not command divorce, nor accepted or approved it, he merely *tolerated* it, or *permitted* it, because of the attitude of disobedience and rebelliousness in the people's hearts (cf. Murray, 1980:8). Moses was just regulating a situation. Thus, Jesus is not in opposition to the sayings of the Old Testament, rather He teaches a little further, and presents the real truth about divorce, which is a rejection of God's plan for mankind, therefore it is a sin. Although not all writers agree on this matter (cf. Carroll, 1982:225-226; Young, 1985:206-207), several scholars have argued that in Old Testament times (and at least in the beginning of Jesus' time) divorce was tolerated for a variety of reasons (cf. Steward, 1984:51-52; Morris, 1992:484). Now when Jesus says in Matthew 5:31,32: "It has been said... but I say" He abrogates the tolerance of Deuteronomy 24; divorce for any reason except adultery is not tolerated anymore. He insists in the original doctrine of marriage as an unbreakable bond (cf. Engelsma, 1977:81-86; Heth & Wenham, 1984:120-123; Heth, 1990:94).

It is important to notice that in these verses Jesus condemns and forbids the putting away of a wife. Here He is not concerned with remarriage, but divorce. He condemns divorce not only because it leads to another evil, but also because it is itself evil. It breaks God's law of marriage and causes too much damage. The man who divorces his wife sins by virtue of the fact that he divorces her. It is forbidden

because of what may happen with the divorced person. And one aspect of the sin is the exposure of the other person to adultery. By divorcing his wife, except in case of adultery, a man is responsible for putting her in a position where she may be tempted to commit adultery by remarrying another man, for this remarriage is adultery, according to Christ's words (v. 32). Or she may be tempted to fall in adultery without remarrying, by engaging in relationships with other men. It is important to bear in mind, however, that a divorced woman or man, should not commit adultery even if she or he is wickedly divorced. If he/she does, he/she is guilty of sin (v.32), and the partner who instigated the divorce will also be blamed, for God will hold him responsible (*cf.* Engelsma, 1977:87-90;).

Thus, according to Matthew 5:31,32, Jesus not only prohibits divorce but also the remarriage of the wronged divorced woman, saying that she and her new husband are guilty of adultery, should she remarry. By doing so Jesus is defending the bond of marriage which He considers unbreakable. It is also stated that if a man's wife is unfaithful to him he may divorce her (and vice-versa). However, he does not need to divorce her. If the unfaithful spouse repents and seek forgiveness it should be given to her/him and reconciliation should be re-established.

The repetition of Jesus' teachings on divorce in Matthew 19:9 seems to be the one to pose problems for many interpreters:

I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman

commits adultery. And whosoever marries the divorced woman also commits adultery.

As said before, Jesus is not dealing with the matter of remarriage, but divorce. And what He literally says is that if man divorces his wife for any other reason except on the ground of her fornication, and marries another woman, he commits adultery. Jesus says that if this man remarries, he is guilty of breaking the seventh commandment of God's law (*cf.* Plekker, 1980:71; Heth and Wenham, 1984:129; Heth, 1990:93).

With regard to the understanding of Jesus' words in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9, much has been said by many scholars throughout the centuries but a consensus has not been reached. Early church writers, Reformers, and contemporary scholars have endeavoured to obtain thorough exegeses of the above texts and to present their conclusions. The polemic stems from Jesus' statement "except for fornication" in these two texts. What does this expression mean? In Matthew 5:32 one reads *παρεκτὸς λόγος πορνείας* which means "except for fornication" and in 19:9 *μὴ ἐπὶ πορνείας* meaning "not for fornication" both translated as "except for marital unfaithfulness" in the NIV Bible. *παρεκτὸς* means "outside", "without", "apart from", "except", and *πορνείας* usually rendered as fornication denotes in the *Koine* any sexual irregularity: prostitution, unchastity, fornication, adultery, and every kind of unlawful or immoral sexual intercourse (*cf.* Robertson, 1930:155; Vawter, 1954:164; Mahoney, 1968:31; Hill, 1972:124; Jones, 1990:31; Blomberg, 1992:291). It is believed by some exegetes that these two expressions in Matthew correspond to 'erwat

dābār of Deuteronomy 24:1. Mahoney (1968:31) elaborates on this matter and says that

it is frequently conceded that *mē epi porneia* is a reference to the *‘erwat dābār* of Dt 24,1. This phrase, *‘erwat dābār* (lit. "nakedness of a thing", i.e., "something shameful") has an even closer parallel in the *logos porneias* of 5,32, which seems to confirm the link with Dt, especially, if it is observed that *logos porneias* exhibits the same transposition as Shammai's formulation *debar ‘erwā*. Our contention is that the *‘erwā* of Dt and its translation by *porneia* sets up beneath the *porneia* of Mt 19,9 and 5,32 an interplay between the two Hebrew words *rwā –z^onūt*, which gives the true significance of the exceptive clauses... the exceptive clauses are elliptical expressions which are to be translated as follows: *mē epi porneia* = "not because of *porneia* (i.e., something unseemly [in the eyes of God]," and *pareketos logou porneias* = "except for *porneia* (i.e., something unseemly [in the eyes of God]" (se also Hill, 1972:124).

For a detailed textual, structural, and linguistic exposition on Matthew 5:32 and 19:9, one may consult Mahoney (1968:29-38), Wiebe (1989:327-333), Porter & Buchanan (1991:335-339)

On the interpretation of the exceptive clause in Matthew opinions diverge. Several writers and theologians believe that *porneia* refers to adultery and that that constitutes the only exception given by which an

innocent believer can divorce. The Westminster Confession of Faith 1647 asserts that adultery committed either before or after marriage gives the innocent party the right to sue for divorce (*cf.* Schaff, 1919:656; Jones, 1990:17). Stott (1984:170) also says that "*porneia* means physical sexual immorality; the reason why Jesus made it the sole permissible ground for divorce must be that it violates the 'one's flesh' principle which is foundational to marriage as divinely ordained and biblically defined". Similarly, Murray (1980:20) states that "fornication is unequivocally stated to be the only legitimate ground for which a man may put away his wife".

There are other scholars who believe that there are more reasons for divorce than just adultery or fornication as stated by Jesus. Early church theologians already questioned the strict interpretation of the exception clause in Matthew. Origin's interpretation made provision for a wider scope which included reasons such as parricide, poisoning, or witchcraft (*cf.* Olsen, 1971:22; Katschke-Jennings, 1984:44). Jones (1990:38) argues that *porneia* has a wider meaning "though *porneia* in the exceptive clause in Matthew may refer in the first instance to the specifically sexual sin of adultery, its pervasive use in the Old Testament for Israel's covenant breaking creates the possibility that it is used here as a synecdoche, that is, as a part (adultery) for the whole (gross violation of the marriage covenant)". Desiderius Erasmus, in his pragmatic humanistic approach, defends charity against the institutionalism of the Church and makes provision for a wide variety of possibilities for divorce.

He brings the readers face to face with the problems of the many thousands who are unhappily coupled together with the result that both parties thereby perish. They could be saved if they were divorced and able to marry someone else. If this were possible without doing injury to the Word of God, then it ought to delight all godly men. Furthermore, charity sometimes does what it legally is not able to do, and is justified in doing so (cf. Olsen, 1971:22).

Zwingli's interpretation of the exception clause also opens the door for various additional possibilities to soften Jesus' words. He asserts that there are other evils which are even worse than adultery, e.g. treachery, sorcery, and parricide. He also struggles with the question: Why did the Lord mention only adultery and not other evils as legitimate grounds for divorce? In order to prove his point he makes use of illustrations which in Semitic imagery is known as *māšāl* (cf. Brown, 1970:668). Other prominent writers also agree on the use of this exegetical approach in order to explain the words of Jesus in Matthew 5 and 19 (cf. De Bruyn, 1975:26-28). One of the examples used by Zwingli is Deuteronomy 19:5 where a single instance (accidental killing with an axe) is given, from which other cases may easily be inferred. He concludes:

But we do not want, in the way of the Jews, to cling so closely and superstitiously to the mere letter of the law, that we ignore other laws which have been dictated and given in the same spirit. The Lord condemned all trivial

divorce of the Jews, but not all putting away. Nor did He exempt one cause, although He mentions only one. This in fact is the way with the Hebrews, that under one instance all like cases, little or bigger, are understood and included. So the least important cause of adultery or fornication is mentioned as it were putting the limit below no one ought to put away his wife (*cf.* Olsen, 1971:65).

Bullinger follows Zwingli closely in his interpretation of Christ's words to include further causes other than adultery, as grounds for divorce (*cf.* Katschke-Jennings, 1984:47).

Still based on exegeses, other writers believe that the use of the word *παρεκτός* in Matthew 5 and 19 indicates that adultery is one but not the only reason for divorce. They *inter alia* base their arguments on the use of this term in Acts 26:29 and 2 Corinthians 11:28 (*cf.* Grosheide, 1954a:86).

A fuller understanding of the arguments around divorce is gained by also including the question of remarriage. Several theologians believe that *porneia* not only permits divorce but also remarriage. Most of the above-mentioned writers as well as the reformers, and post-Reformation theologians share this opinion. Initially the Reformation as a whole was extremely reluctant to grant divorce and permit remarriage, but gradually the reformers changed their position. Luther, at first, had difficulty in accepting divorce for the Christian. He even preferred bigamy to divorce, but later he granted his approval when adultery or desertion was involved (*cf.* Katschke-Jennings, 1984:46).

When commenting on Christ's words on divorce, Luther states emphatically that Christ allowed divorce only on the ground of adultery. But later he contradicts himself by allowing other reasons for divorce besides adultery. He also allowed the innocent divorcee to remarry another person. His justifications and exegetical reasons are that the offender is considered dead, therefore the believing innocent spouse is free to marry again (*cf.* Heth & Wenham, 1985:79-80). A clearer explanation about Luther's exegesis is presented by Olsen (1971:52):

Luther's starting point is that only death can separate the marriage tie and make the partner free to marry again. However, the act of adultery makes the offender as dead, in his relationship both to the spouse and to God. Referring to the fact that the laws of Moses demanded that the adulterer be put to death, Luther expressed the opinion that the secular powers ought to do the same in the Christian dispensation. Even though this is not done, the adulterer is still considered as dead in the eyes of God.

In principle Luther may have only granted two causes for divorce - adultery and desertion - but many concessions grew out of these. For example, "efforts were made to broaden the definition of desertion - so as to give it a wide range without seeming to transgress the letter of Scriptural authority. Such things as cruelty, refusal of conjugal duty, impotence, and quasi-desertion were included" (Katschke-Jennings, 1984:47).

Calvin, concurring with Luther strongly, argues against marriage as a sacrament, pointing out that the Catholic Church is inconsistent in this respect by banning their own priests from one of their "sacraments". He is equally rigorous in his attack on divorce and remarriage as a divine ordinance. For him, Christ's exception to the sacred and indissoluble tie of marriage would not have been necessary if adultery would have been punished by death. The exception was aimed at the innocent party. Calvin's exegesis comes close to Luther, but the practical application of his exegeses is more rigid. He brings his interpretation of Christ's exception for adultery in Matthew into line with his interpretation of Deuteronomy 24:1 and Malachi 2:14. In his arguments Calvin concludes that even among the Israelites only one cause for divorce was allowed, namely, adultery (*cf.* Heth & Wenham, 1985:81). Therefore, he allowed no reason for divorce other than adultery. Those who search for other reasons "ought justly to be set to naught because they choose to be wise above the heavenly teacher" (Olsen, 1971:97).

The question as to whether Calvin remained true to his interpretation provides insight into a remarkable shift in his position which resulted in a wide discrepancy between his practice and his theology. Calvin's family disasters with divorce included his sister-in-law and later his stepdaughter, both divorced for adultery, seem to have pushed him to re-examine the traditional position of the church on the topic of divorce and remarriage. Thus he became a preacher of one thing and a doer of another. Calvin remained consistent to his interpretation of only one cause for divorce exegetically and theologically, but not in his practice. He admitted three other grounds for divorce, besides adultery -

impotence/frigidity, extreme religious incompatibility, and desertion (cf. Olsen, 1971:99; Katschke-Jennings, 1984:48).

Beza, not deviating from Calvin, interpreted Mt 5:32 in the light of the historical fact that when Christ added the exception, the law of the stoning had already fallen in disuse among the Jews. Had stoning for adultery still been practised, the exception would have been needless (cf. Olsen, 1971:105). As the marriage tie is indissoluble, adultery theoretically leads to the 'death' of the adulterer, he argued.

As the other Reformers, Beza attempted to harmonise Christ's logia on divorce with Mosaic laws, but following Calvin, he arrives at a strict interpretation of both. In opposition to Luther, he neglects the notion that Paul expressed a second cause for divorce in 1 Co 7:15, and maintains that Christ's dictum allowed only one cause for divorce (cf. Olsen, 1971:105).

John Milton has been called "the first Protagonist in Christendom in favour of divorce by mutual consent" (Katschke-Jennings, 1984:50). Calvin spoke against this principle (cf. Heth & Wenham, 1985:82). Although Milton did not advocate new ideas, to his contemporaries his exegesis and proposals sounded radical and even heretical. Milton employed rationality (like Erasmus) and did not consider Reformation and Renaissance contradictory. This was reflected in his exegesis (cf. Olsen, 1971:140).

Milton stressed the unity of mind and soul - mental and emotional fellowship as opposed to body and conjugal duty. Relying on the

earlier freer interpretations of Bucer and Bullinger, Milton argued that divorce should be allowed on the basis of fundamental incompatibility. He stressed the importance of companionship rather than procreation, constraint of lust or sacramentality. Today his approach is followed by many Christians (*cf.* Everett, 1990:300).

It is important to remember that the thrust of Jesus' words is a prohibition of divorce, with one exception only: fornication. He grants one ground for divorce when He says "except for fornication". However, following the above-mentioned writers, there are current interpreters who view the text of Matthew 19:9 as permitting remarriage as well (*cf.* Boettner, 1972:21; Murray, 1980:43; Edgar, 1990:155-157; Keener, 1991:37 De Bruyn, 1993:202, etc.). They read Jesus' words "exception for fornication" as if they also apply to "marries another" and thus conclude that the Scripture gives one ground for divorce and one ground for remarriage - that is, fornication. The 'innocent party' is then free to remarry.

Nevertheless, it is important to observe that the text does not say that the "innocent party" may remarry. To state that Jesus, in this text, is also establishing a ground for remarriage is to read further on, beyond His statement and draw conclusions. It is true that sometimes the truth is implied in a text. But, as Engelsma (1977:114,115) says:

it is dangerous to base so weighty a doctrine as remarriage, and one so critically important for the practical life of God's people, on the shallow foundation of a mere implication. ... This is positively wrong when the

inference that is supposed to be drawn from the text contradicts the explicit testimony of Scripture in other passages, where the subject of the possibility of remarriage is on the foreground.

In the other texts already discussed, remarriage is absolutely and unconditionally forbidden as long as one of the spouses is alive (*cf.* Lk 16:18; Mk 10:10-12). Also, 1 Corinthians 7:39 teaches that the woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives, and that she has the right to remarry only when he dies, and this new husband must be a child of the Lord. Similar instruction is given in Romans 7:2,3: "...by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage. So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress, even though she marries another man". For Paul, marriage is dissoluble only by death (*cf.* Laney, 1982:292; Zodhiates, 1989:264-5). Laney (1990b:132) puts it concisely: "it seems that from God's point of view, marriage ends with death, not divorce". All these passages of the Scripture make it clear that marriage is a lifelong, indissoluble bond. And any other teaching different from this is based on conclusions, not on Jesus' statement. In the text of 1 Corinthians 7 where Paul instructs the church about marriage and related matters, he speaks in the name of the Lord and also prohibits the Christian couples to divorce one another and remarry:

A wife must not separate from her husband. But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife (v.10,11).

Paul's commands are Jesus' commands and no exception for divorce is made, but he recognises that due to the hardness of the heart, Christians might divorce. Here the words of Paul are a command in the form of a negative imperative - "must not". A wife must not separate from her husband and the husband must not divorce his wife. His command is based on the authority of Christ and not on his own. He does not mention the exceptional clause of Matthew but rather gives support to the claims of Mark 10. He refers to Jesus' teaching very rarely. The reason for it could be the fact that 1 Corinthians pre-dates the Gospels, or that he knew only a few of them, or that he chose only those which differ sharply from those prevailing in Judaism, and the matter of divorce was one of them: Jesus' prohibition of divorce differed from the Old Testament (Dt 24) and from the schools of Hillel and Shammai (*cf.* Barrett, 1968:162; Laney, 1982:293). It could also be that Paul understood Jesus' teachings as forbidding remarriage altogether. If the texts of Matthew implies both divorce and remarriage, these are the only two places in the New Testament where such an exception appears in the middle of a sentence and modifies both the preceding and following verbs. Laney (1982:294) says that, "If Jesus allows divorce and remarriage, then Mt 5:32 permits remarriage for the adulterous wife (v.32a) but apparently prohibits it for the faithful partner (v.32b). At least no one could marry a faithful but divorced wife without committing adultery".

On the other hand, Paul understood that divorce among the believers could happen. If such a thing happened they had two options: to remain unmarried or else be reconciled to their spouses. Whenever Paul speaks of the possibility of remarriage, he mentions the death of one the spouses (v.39 and Ro 7:2-3). In the same context he makes it clear that the Christian divorcee is permitted to remarry only after the death of his/her spouse, and also that this new husband or wife must be a believer (v.39), as mentioned before.

Controversy has also arisen about the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 7:15:

But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called you to live in peace.

Heth (1990:110) says that the opinion of several interpreters (e.g. Adams, 1980:84-91; Edgar, 1990:187-190; Richards, 1990:240; Keener, 1991:61) is that the deserted believer (for religious reason) is free to remarry, as they believe she is in the same position as the 'innocent party' referred to in Matthew 19. The expression "not bound" seems to lead many to believe that now they are free to remarry whoever they may wish. For a better understanding of the various arguments it is important to have a brief look at the meaning of this expression. The verb "bound" in the original Greek is *δεδούλωται* (from *δουλόω*), which literally means "enslaved". This is found in verse 15 "...the brother or sister is not *bound*...". Then in verse 39 "A wife is bound as long as her husband lives...", the original word for *bound* being *δέδεται* (from *δέω*) (cf. Plekker, 1980:49; Laney,

1982:287; Heth, 1995:87). Some interpreters have made use of these two terms as the bases of their argument to prove their point either pro or against another exception for divorce in the Bible. Among them one may mention Duty (1979:91-102) who wrote with passion on the subject and quoted several writers, such as Luther, Trench, Robertson, etc. to prove his point. He contrasts slavery and freedom and concludes that as the term 'bondage' means total slavery, the term 'freedom' means total liberty. Thus, a person free from the bondage of marriage is totally free to remarry if desired. Calvin (1954:244) asserts that in verse 15 Paul frees the faithful believing spouse when put away by his/her unbelieving spouse. He says that in such circumstances the unbeliever makes a breach with God rather than with his/her partner.

Erasmus comments on 1 Co 7:15 are: that more serious offences are included in the statement made by Paul. Within this category is the case of an unbelieving husband refusing to live with the wife who has become a Christian, the crime of adultery, and similar or even worse cases. In such serious and sometimes dangerous cases, he believes the marriage should be dissolved and the couple should be allowed to marry again (*cf.* Olsen, 1971:26).

Several modern-day theologians follow the views of Erasmus and appeal not to "Pauline Privilege", but rather to individual meanings of words and various psychological and humanistic reasons for allowing remarriage (*cf.* Heth & Wenham, 1985:140). Keener (1991:105) regards Jesus' sayings in Mark and Luke as rhetorical overstatements or hyperbole. He develops this hermeneutical approach as follows:

Assuming that Jesus' teaching on the subject is a general principle meant to admit exceptions (as Mathew and Paul demonstrate), and acknowledging the probability that the teaching is hyperbolic, we may allow some exceptions not addressed by Matthew or Paul because they were not specifically relevant to the situations these writers addressed.

Keener develops his insights further based on the belief that divorce and remarriage is the normal course of events as implied in Deuteronomy 24. He also states that "the ancient Jewish marriage contracts agree: in the context of divorce 'free' meant precisely that the woman was free to remarry, and meant nothing else than this" (Keener, 1991:61). He thus, concludes that the innocent party in verse 15 is free to remarry.

Edgar (1990:189-192) presents arguments, based on a grammatical-contextual approach, that there can be no doubt that remarriage after divorce as a result of desertion is permitted. He states that "since Paul presents it as acceptable for the believer to allow this to happen and since a biblically valid divorce allows for remarriage, it is most probable that Paul allows not only divorce but subsequent remarriage in the case of desertion by an unbeliever" (Edgar, 1990:191).

Notwithstanding the above views that sanction remarriage, Heth (1990:109) cites seven reasons why 1 Co 7:15 should not be construed to permit remarriage:

1. Church history teaches that the Church father Ambrosiaster was the only writer in the first five centuries to allow remarriage to a believer deserted by an unbeliever (which illustrates the rarity of this occurrence);
2. The lexical argument offered by many defenders of remarriage rests on the assumption of an equivalence between "release" in Ro 7:2-3 and "free" in 1 Co 7:39. Paul, however is consistent in using different terms in these disparate contexts. The passage in 1 Co 7:15 deals with the situation where husband and wife are still both alive, while Ro 7:2-3 and 1 Co 7:39 deal with a situation after the death of the husband;
3. As a creation order Paul never intended 1 Co 7:15 to be understood as freeing believers or non-believers for remarriages. The creation order was understood by him as binding for all mankind (*cf.* 1 Co 11;12-16; Eph 5;22-33; 1 Ti 2:12-15);
4. In 1 Co 7:15 Paul exempts the Christian from responsibility from the divorce which is brought about by an unbelieving mate. Nothing is said about the possibility of remarriage by the believer;
5. In verse 15 Paul acknowledges a believer's freedom to divorce an unbeliever but in verse 11 it is added "she must remain unmarried";
6. In verse 11 it must be noted that the hope for reconciliation is kept alive because of the added possibility that the unbelieving partner can be brought to faith; and
7. The principle which Paul elaborates in verses 17-24, immediately following the question of desertion, is further evidence that Paul did not permit the deserted believer to change his or her status.

Heth's exegeses and arguments are convincing and in line with the Scripture. In the development of his research he brings evidence of numerous books and articles on divorce and remarriage presently available. Several other writers are in agreement with his views on this matter. Among them one may mention Plekker (1980:37-52), Laney (1982:283-294 and 1990:130-134), Engelsma (1977:110-122), etc. Boettner (1972:26-27), writing on this very topic, quotes able writers such as Kuiper and Norbie who also held the same view.

However, one must observe that the whole argument of Paul in 1 Corinthians centres around the Lord's command that a believer should not separate (*chorizo*) or divorce (*aphiemi*). Further on, when he counselled the Church, he saw that many new converts were pushed away by his or her partner because of their belief. The non-believer did not want to continue the marriage after the change in the life of the partner. In such a case the believer may let the unbeliever go, he or she is not bound. That is, he or she is free from the responsibilities that a marriage may require from him/her; free from violating Christ's command not to divorce, which in this case is brought about by the unbeliever (*cf.* Grosheide, 1953:166; Plekker, 1980:49; Murray, 1980:68; Heth & Wenham, 1985:144; Heth, 1990:112). He or she may let the spouse go without being guilty of the sin of divorce. As early as 1573 Beza said that the axiom of 1 Co 7:15 in that the term bondage expresses the obligations of marriage. When it is therefore said that the believer is not "under bondage", then it is understood that he is released from his obligations. This, however, does not invalidate Christ's words regarding adultery as being the only exception. Neither should it be defined, as some do, as an additional reason for divorce,

justified by the fact that Christ Himself spoke through Paul. He then writes: "I prefer to answer that nothing was absolutely added by Paul to the dictum of Christ" (Olsen, 1971:107). Once more, one can see that the text says nothing about the possibility of remarriage for the deserted person. To state such a thing would be to draw one's own conclusion from the text (*cf.* Plekker, 1980:48-52; Carroll, 1982:228). And further in the same passage, when Paul speaks of remarriage, he emphasises that for the believer this possibility is only after the death of the spouse (Ro 7:2-3; 1Co 7:39) (*cf.* Heth, 1992:34).

Although opinions on this matter are varied, as seen above, the Bible presents only two possibilities by which a believer may be divorced without breaking God's commands: unfaithfulness and desertion. However, in a broken world people, including Christians, do get divorced for various reasons nowadays. In such cases one should be reminded of the grace and forgiveness of God who will forgive all sins, when truly confessed. Even in the face of the exceptive clause one must remember that the common theme of Scripture is reconciliation. It was man who sinfully contrived divorce. Reconciliation is, was, and will always be God's way of dealing with sin. He wants his followers to practice forgiveness, even as He demonstrated it with his bride Israel. This should also be the believer's chief goal.

2.8 CONCLUSION

Marriage, according to the Scripture, is a life-long covenant of love (in all its forms) which cannot be broken by people, when they so wish. It

was instituted by God with the noble purpose of mutual help, procreation, protection against adultery, companionship and pleasure.

In a marriage the spouses have specific roles and responsibilities towards one another, given by the Lord, that when fulfilled and obeyed they provide the key for a successful and happy marriage.

Divorce as a disruption of God's plan for mankind is much condemned by both Old and New Testaments. God hates divorce because it is a repudiation of His plan and will, and because of the evil it causes to everyone involved in it. The teaching of the Scripture is that the believer is forbidden to divorce his spouse except for fornication and desertion. Even though unfaithfulness might happen, the Lord encourages the believer to forgive and seek reconciliation.

Once divorced, because of the hardness of the heart, the believer is commanded to seek reconciliation with his/her spouse. When that is not possible anymore he/she is to remain single. The possibility of remarriage, for the believer, seems to be only after the death of the spouse. If he/she remarries he/she is guilty of breaking the seventh commandment. That marriage is an adultery, because of the indissolubility of the marriage covenant.

Such teachings seem to be too hard for many people to accept. However, they were given not to be unfair, or to cause harm and pain to people. On the contrary, they were given to protect the people from sin, from pain and sorrow, to provide successful and happy marriages and the wellbeing of the whole family.

CHAPTER 3

BIBLICAL FOUNDATION AND REQUIREMENTS FOR RECONCILIATION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

For the development of this study, it is important to properly understand reconciliation and its use in the Scripture. In this chapter reconciliation between God and human beings is addressed firstly, since this is the basis for reconciliation between all human beings. Secondly, the aspects of and the need for reconciliation between human beings, as well as between husband and wife after divorce, will be addressed. Therefore, the objective of this chapter is to establish a biblical foundation for reconciliation in these aspects.

Reconciliation means to make peace; to restore unity and harmony after an enmity or quarrel; to restore fellowship or the right relationship between two parties. "To reconcile is to end a relation of enmity, and to substitute for it one of peace and goodwill" (Brown, 1978:166-168; cf. Ridderbos, 1975:182; Morris, 1973:567). After the Fall human beings became estranged from God. As the result of man's rebellion and disobedience towards God, sin entered the world

and created a breach between the Creator and His wonderful creation (Ge 3). The effect of sin upon man was to estrange him from God, to lead him further and further away from his Maker. Man became an enemy of God (*cf.* Ro 11:28). Sin separated them (Isa 59:2) and raised a barrier between them. Morris (1982b:1077) states that this "barrier arises because God demands holiness in man" whose life is totally stained by sin. Sin is described in the Bible as transgressing the divine command, breaking the covenant, missing the mark, falling away from God, etc, all of it brought about guilt and alienation which must be covered or removed if fellowship is to be restored (*cf.* Bromiley, 1988:55). It is this alienation, this state of enmity that makes reconciliation a necessity not only between God and the human race but also between all human beings themselves. God has compassion towards sinners, and does not hold any grudges against humanity, but on the other hand, because of His holiness and righteousness, He cannot tolerate sin or be indifferent to it (*cf.* Morro, 1982:343). Thus, human beings, in this state, are totally lost, under the wrath of God (Ro 1:18-3:20), and worst of all, without any possibility of regaining that relationship of perfect fellowship that existed between them and God before (*cf.* Eph 2:1-3, 5:12). "But the Bible affirms that God has taken steps to overcome this alienation, and has in Christ provided the means of reconciliation" (Blackman, 1962:16).

3.2 TERMS FOR RECONCILIATION AND THEIR USAGE IN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

Due to the complexity of the word, the writers of the Old Testament use several terms to convey the meaning of reconciliation, such as: ransom, forgiveness, atonement, redemption, expiation, propitiation, adoption, justification, restoration to fellowship, etc. (cf. Taylor, 1946:84; Blackman, 1962:17; Morro, 1982:343). Some of these terms will be discussed in more detail while others will be mentioned briefly only.

The Old Testament uses the verb and words derived from the root *kpr* to convey the idea of reconciliation. The verb *kpr* is most often translated into English as "to cover", "to paint", "to atone", "to make amends", "to wipe away", "to forgive", etc. (cf. Quanbeck, 1962:315; Lang, 1995:290; Averbeck, 1997:689). These verbs occur 102 times in the Old Testament, the majority of them in the priestly ritual sections of Exodus - Numbers and other ritual passages spread throughout the rest of the Old Testament (cf. Averbeck, 1997:690). Words like *koper* – ransom, *kippurim* – atonement, *kipper* – purify, redeem, wipe away, and mostly forgiveness (cf. Lang, 1995:293-294; Averbeck, 1997:690-692) also occur several times in the Old Testament, always carrying the idea of restoring harmony between God and man, or making peace between two parties (Blackman, 1962:17).

Apart from atonement, reconciliation is predominantly a New Testament concept and appears mostly in the Pauline corpus (cf. Bromiley, 1988:55). As in the Old Testament, the Greek also uses a variety of terms when speaking about reconciliation. Four verbs (with their compounds) and a noun are used for reconciliation: *diallássō*, *synalássō*, *katallássō*, *apokatallássō*, and *katallagē*. The first of these terms occurs in Mt 5:24; the second in Ac 7:26; the third is a more important word occurring in passages such as Ro 5:10, 1Co 7:11 and 2Co 5:18-20, and fourth occurs in Eph 2:16 and Col 1:20,22. The noun *katallagē* appears four times in Ro 5:11, 11:15 and 2Co 5:18,19. The first four verbs are compounds of *allássō* – "to alter, to change, to exchange" which then means to reconcile. And *katallagē* – the word for reconciliation, which is used only by Paul - is probably a term coined by him to express the deep concepts of his theology (cf. Vorländer & Brown, 1978:166; Bromiley, 1988:55; Merkel, 1991:261; Garland, 1999:289).

For a better understanding of the subject of reconciliation and the link between the thought exposed in the Old Testament and the work of reconciliation wrought by Christ later, some terms of great importance to the topic need to be discussed.

3.2.1 Atonement

The usual Hebrew word for "atone" or "atonement" is of the root group *kpr*, which means "cover" or "coverings", rendered in the New

Testament as *katallagē*, which is better translated as "reconciliation" (cf. Mitton, 1962:310; Morris, 1980c:107; Reid, 1979:352; Averbeck, 1997:689).

Atonement in English means "a making at one", and points to a process of bringing those who are estranged into a unity. To be "at one" with someone is to be in harmonious personal relationship with him. To atone, says Reid (1979:352), "is to bring together in mutual agreement, with the added idea, in theology, of reconciliation through the vicarious suffering of one on behalf of another". The phrase "to make atonement" frequently occurs in the Old Testament in a ceremonial context (Lev 23:26ff.). "It denoted an action or series of actions by means of which guilt could be removed" (Dillistone, 1993:50). To atone for a wrong is to take some action, which cancels out the ill effects it has had (Mitton, 1962:309). Atonement then denoted the means, an act or payment, through which harmony was restored.

The doctrine of the atonement is central in biblical doctrine, both in the Old and New Testaments (Lk 22:19ff. Heb 9), for throughout the Scriptures the actions of God are visible in dealing with the problem of man – his sins, and bringing him back into fellowship with Him. Some important aspects of atonement should be considered. The first thing to bear in mind is that:

3.2.1.1 *Atonement is solely an initiative of God*

Atonement is seen throughout the Scripture as a gracious and merciful act of God on behalf of all human beings (Jn 17:6ff; Eph 1:4; 2Ti 1:9ff). It stems from the heart of God. The Old Testament presents God as the "merciful" and "gracious" one, who reveals "steadfast love" and "faithfulness" (Ex 34:6f), and who promises forgiveness and restoration of the covenant as his sovereign work (Isa 43:25; 54:7ff; Jer 31:31ff.) (cf. Vorländer & Brown, 1978:167). God provides the means and approaches human beings in order to bring them back into fellowship with Him, even when they were in a total state of misery and enmity (Ro 5:10). Even the sacrifices of the Old Testament which were thought to be a means through which the people could obtain forgiveness from God, were instituted by Him in order to provide for man's needs. The means of atonement is proclaimed unanimously and insistently as a gift from God, in the New Testament. "Christ's coming to earth and His self-giving on the cross for man's sin are all God's doing. Nor is it merely that God conceived and initiated the plan; God was in Christ actually carrying it forward to completion" (Mitton, 1962:311).

3.2.1.2 *It reveals God's love for mankind*

The Scriptures make it perfectly clear that atonement proceeds from the heart of God towards human beings who could do nothing to help themselves out of their state of misery and sin (Ro 5:8; 2Co 5:14-21,

etc) (cf. Sinton, 1995:725). It demonstrates the love of the Father as much as it does the love of the Son. Ridderbos (1975:191) says:

it is divine love that evidences itself in the death of Christ and which to that end did not spare his own Son (Ro 5:8; 8:32), but delivered him up for us all... the depth of this love only becomes manifest in all its grandeur when, in the holy order of the justice appointed by God, Christ is made to be sin and delivers himself up as the atoning sacrifice to cover the sin of the world before the face of God.

Paul states with confidence (Ro 5:8) that "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (See also Mk 8:31; John 3:16; Heb 2:9). By sending His Son to die in man's place God was showing His love for the sinner, the ungodly (Ro 5:6), the weak (v.6), and His enemies (v. 9). Who could do such a thing? Certainly only a loving and forgiving Father. The death of Christ was well planned by Him from the very moment sin entered the world and disrupted the relationship between man and God. It was no accident that it was rooted in the compelling divine necessity (cf. Morris, 1980c:108). Therefore, the subject of reconciliation or atonement "is exclusively God; it proceeds entirely from him, and it is entirely his work" says Merkel (1991:262). Taylor, (1946:193) elaborating on this subject, also says that:

The Atonement is also the final proof of the love of God, both in itself, as a disclosure of His nature, and in the form it takes for man's renewal and recovery... it is accomplished in the work of Christ, in that He reveals the love of God in His redeeming activity, and because in His life, death, resurrection, and exaltation He provides all things necessary for man's Salvation.

3.2.1.3 *Atonement required a sacrifice*

From the beginning of redemption-history, sacrifices offered in faith assumed a central place in the matter of atonement. The first recorded occurrence of it in the Scripture is the sacrifices of Cain and Abel (Ge 4:3-7). During the patriarchal period sacrifice was equally important in the lives of God's people and held a similar position in their cult. Look at Noah, as soon as he came out of the ark he offered a sacrifice to the Lord as a response to God's promise to never destroy the earth with a flood again (Ge 8:20ff) (cf. Reid, 1979:353). Abraham and his descendants sacrificed to God, believing and hoping for the time when One would come and make full atonement for their sins (Ge 13:18; 26:25; 33:20; 35:6; cf. Jn 8:56ff; Ro 4:3ff). The liberation of Israel from Egypt brings forth a clearer understanding of atonement. Only those who believed in the liberating power of the Lord and were protected by the blood of the Passover Lamb escaped death (Ex 12:27; cf. Jn 2:29). Thus the idea of atonement through believing stands at the heart of the Passover. Furthermore, the Law of Moses contains fuller reference to the concept of atonement by

sacrifice as recorded in Leviticus 1-7. In these chapters of the Bible, detailed teachings of the use of sacrifices and their meaning is presented (cf. Mitton, 1962:310; Reid, 1979:353).

Atonement in the Old Testament is often associated with blood sacrifice – the death of a victim. In the ritual for the consecration of the priests, for example, it is required: “Everyday you shall offer a bull as a sin offering for atonement” (Ex 29:36). The same thing happened when the priests offered a sacrifice for the sins of all the people that they might be forgiven (Lev 4:20). On the Atonement Day one of the goats was slain (Lev 16:9) (cf. Mitton, 1962:310). Although sacrifice was required for atonement, over-emphasis should not be laid upon it as such, for it is God who pronounced blood sacrifice as a means of atonement. He says, “I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls” (Lev 17:11). Atonement, says Morris (1980c:108), “is secured, not by any value inherent in the sacrificial victim, but because sacrifice is the divinely appointed way of securing atonement” (see also Mitton, 1962:310 and Ridderbos, 1975:189). The sacrifices served to bring forward certain truths concerning atonement: The victim (i.e. the animal to be slaughtered) had to be unblemished, which indicted the necessity for perfection; the victim cost something – atonement is not cheap and sin is never to be taken lightly. The death of the victim is important because it is the price stipulated by God for the sins of mankind. In the Jewish religious system sacrifice “was a God-given way of dealing with sin, and as such was to be accepted gratefully and humbly” (Tuckett, 1992:519). There are, however, several allusions of atonement effected on

behalf of someone by means other than a sacrifice (Ex 30:16; 32:30-32; Nu 25:6-8,13), but it seems that "where these bear on the problem they point out to death as the way" says Morris (1980c:108). The Old Testament definitely recognises that death is the penalty for sin (Eze 18:20), but also that "God graciously permitted the death of a sacrificial victim to substitute for the death of the sinner" (Morris, 1980c:108). In agreement with this, the writer to the Hebrews claims categorically that "without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Heb 9:22).

In the New Testament Jesus Christ's death is presented as the perfect sacrifice for the redemption of all mankind (Heb 9:15). The cross is absolutely central, not only to the New Testament but also to the whole Bible. "All before leads up to it. All after looks back to it", says Morris (1980c:108). Christ was delivered to die on the cross for the sins of the world. He came specifically to die for the sins of humanity. The writers of the NT bring this message clearly forward so many times in so many ways: "He was delivered for ours sins" (Ro 4:25); His blood was shed "for many for the remission of sins" (Mt 26:28); He "purged our sins" (Heb 1:3); He "bore our sins in his own body on the tree" (1Pe 2:24); He "is the propitiation for our sins" (1Jn 2:2), etc. Jesus Himself referred to His blood as "the blood of the covenant" (Mk 14:24) and Peter speaks of the "precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1Pe 1:19), which indicates that in one aspect Christ's death was a sacrifice. Sacrifice was a well known and practised religious rite of the first century and the writers of the New Testament made use of this term to bring out what Christ

had fully accomplished, by His death, for all humanity (cf. Morris, 1980c:109).

3.2.1.4 *Atonement required a mediator*

A mediator between God and the people was necessary because God wanted it to be so. "God required that one could find atonement for sin only through the sacrifice offered by the appointed priest, or, in certain extraordinary cases, a prophet (1Sa 13:8; 1Ki 18:21ff)" (Reid, 1979:353). The priest acted on behalf of the sinner. He would come into God's presence with the offering and sacrifice it before the Lord in order to obtain God's forgiveness for men's sins. The writer to the Hebrews speaks about it so clearly when he says: "Every high priest is selected from among men and is appointed to represent them in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins" (5:1).

In the New Testament times when Jesus Christ came, He became the perfect priest and the perfect sacrifice offering Himself on behalf of the whole world, making atonement for all mankind (Heb 9:11ff). Since then He is the ONLY mediator between man and God, He fulfilled the requirements of the Law and He is the only One who can make atonement for the sins of all. In 1 Timothy 2:5,6 Paul gives his instructions to Timothy and stresses firmly that "there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men".

3.2.1.5 Atonement required repentance and faith

For atonement to take place, the sacrifices and the offerings had to be originated in the sinner's repentance and faith (cf. Reid, 1979:353). Although the Israelites would offer sacrifices and perform ceremonies, if it did not come out of a changed heart, it meant nothing before the Lord (cf. Isa1:10ff; Jer 7:21ff). What God wanted from them and from all people is faith and repentance and not merely the habitual way of doing sacrifices. David expressed it so well when he said: "You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; You do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart..." (Ps 51:16,17).

With time, the spiritual life of the people of God declined and the prophets continually stressed the need for atoning sacrifice whereby repentant believers might find redemption and reconciliation. They also suggested that this would ultimately find fulfilment in the One who was to come (Isa 53; 63:9; Jer 23:6; 33:15ff). After captivity the believing remnant of the tribes of Israel continued to offer sacrifices as a means of atonement but prided themselves on their covenant relationship and on fulfilment of the Law as their means of forgiveness (2Ch 36:14ff). Nevertheless, the post-captivity prophets preached and taught that forgiveness and acceptance by God could only be obtained through atoning sacrifice accepted by faith, faith in the One who would redeem and save His people (Zec 6:12; 3:1; 4:2). In this way the Old Testament had fulfilled its function of preparing the way for the Redeemer (Gal 3:19ff) (cf. Reid, 1979:353). In the

New Testament the message of repentance and faith for the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed with clarity in the four Gospels as well in the Epistles. Among the many texts on this subject one can find the accounts of John on the sermons of Christ (John, 3, 6, 8, 10). Here, as well as in his Epistles, the concept of vicarious atonement accepted in repentance and faith becomes crystal clear (see also 1Jn 2:2; 3:5; Rev 5:9) (*cf.* Taylor, 1946:196ff also Reid, 1979:354). On man's side repentance is insisted upon again and again. John the Baptist preached "the baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (Mk 1:4, *cf.* Jn 1) and Peter later on spoke about it with reference to the Christian baptism (Ac 2:38). Jesus Himself insisted that "repentance and remission should be preached in His name" (Lk 24:47). Faith and repentance are not to be understood as merits for forgiveness, but rather as the means whereby one appropriates the grace of God (*cf.* Morris, 1982a:436).

3.2.1.6 *Atonement is fully accomplished in Christ*

In the New Testament, the writers do not use a specific term for "atonement" but the meaning behind the word is present in all their teachings. They use a variety of models and images to convey the doctrine of atonement and their belief with regard to the work of Christ of behalf of the sinner (*cf.* Mitton, 1962:311; Tuckett, 1992:522). Atonement in the NT is no longer associated with temple sacrifices, or with payment of money, or incense or even with prayers. It is related entirely to the coming of Jesus to earth, His death on the cross and His resurrection, which the writers unanimously believed was the work

of God Himself acting in love on behalf of all men (*cf.* Tuckett, 1992:522). As God-man Jesus obeyed the Law of God perfectly on man's behalf, fulfilling all righteousness; He suffered and died on the cross, bearing the penalty of man's sins. Thus He made atonement for sin, voluntarily submitting Himself to the positive and negative aspects of the Law, showing active and passive obedience, that man might be saved from the just wrath of God (Isa 53; Jn 10:11ff; Ro 3:24ff; Gal 3:13; 4:5; Heb 8) (*cf.* Reid, 1979:354).

The final work of atonement accomplished by Christ had an impact on the whole world. The new Christians claimed to have such a deep experience of forgiveness, new life and joy that the writers had to find words such as redemption, victory, freedom, fellowship with Christ, forgiveness, reconciliation, etc., to express that which Christ had done on the cross. He is presented then as the One who can overcome the estrangement between man and God. By doing that once and for all He fulfilled all that was required by the Law and obtained eternal redemption (Heb 9:11ff) (*cf.* Milton, 1962:311). The sacrifices and all the ceremonies regarding atonement in the Old Testament were merely a shadow of the redemptive and final work of Christ to bring man back into fellowship with God. Thus, in the New Testament, atonement or reconciliation is not a process, but a complete act of Christ. As Blackman (1962:17) says, "Christ is the agent of reconciliation; more particularly, his atoning death (Ro 5:6-9)".

3.2.2 Redemption/Ransom

Redemption and ransom are two concepts so related and interwoven in themselves that it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to speak about them separately. The word "redemption" is a translation of two Hebrew roots, *gā'al* and *pdh* and "ransom" of the root *kpr* which is already mentioned above as the term also used for atonement. Redemption means deliverance from some evil or a transaction in which some item or person is exchanged or released by payment of a price (*cf.* Morris, 1980b:1013; Alsup, 1985b:856; Vinson, 1991:739). Ransom (*kōper*), on the other hand, is the agreed or required price in this transaction (*cf.* Morris, 1980b:1013). It refers to the material gift that establishes a settlement between an injured party and the offending party. The best example of it is found in Exodus 21:28-30 where it refers to the case of a man whose ox, known to be vicious, kills someone. The ox's owner must give to the family injured by the loss of its member whatever *kōper* it requires. The injured family may insist that the owner be put to death, but may also accept the payment of *kōper* as an agreed settlement. In such an example *kōper* presents several aspects: for the injured party it is compensation, reparation, indemnification; from the offender's perspective, it represents a ransom for his life which is forfeit (*cf.* Unterman, 1992:651; Lang, 1995:301; Averbec, 1997:693ff).

In the Old Testament redemption is used in a variety of senses and is expressed in metaphors drawn from observable natural and social phenomena (including politics, family, law, etc.) (*cf.* Unterman,

1992:650). In socio-legal contexts, redemption refers to the rescue of inheritance, of an individual from servitude or difficulties, of tithes, or of various objects and property by means of monetary payment (*cf.* Alsup, 1985b:856; Unterman, 1992:650ff). In case of houses or land, the next of kin, for example, was obliged to redeem or buy back any property of a deceased or impoverished kinsman (Lev 25:25); a man had to raise up children by his brother's widow (Dt 25:5). In relation to this see also Ru 2:20; 3:12-13; 4:1-13; Jer 32:6-15. Persons also could be rescued from servitude by monetary payment (Ex 21:8; Lev 19:20; Nu 5:53ff). A first-born child and a first-born of an unclean animal were legally redeemed or spared by a fixed "redemption price" (Nu 18:15-16). The life of a negligent owner of a goring ox that might have killed someone could be saved by the payment of a "ransom... for the redemption of his life" (Ex 21:30) (*cf.* Cochran, 1991:740).

In a metaphorical sense, the focus is on the relationship between God and Israel. The archetypical divine act of redemption was God's liberation of Israel from Egypt. In Exodus God redeems Israel from suffering and slavery (6:6) in order to make them His people (v.7) and to bring them to the Promised Land. Numerous references are found throughout the Old Testament to the nation redeemed by the Lord (Dt 13:5; 2Sa 7:23; Isa 49:26, etc.). Nevertheless, some scholars (*cf.* Mitton, 1962:312 also Tuckett, 1992:520) find it difficult to regard this act of God at the Exodus as redemption because, according to them, no ransom price is involved. And the characteristic thing about redemption is the ransom price. Counter arguing this idea, Morris (1980b:1013) points out that "where redemption occurs there is a

thought of effort. Yahweh redeems 'with a stretched out arm'. He makes known his strength. Because he loves his people he redeems them at a cost to himself. His effort is regarded as the 'price'. The Israelites understood and believed in Yahweh as the sole agent of redemption. They not only believed that God had redeemed them but also that He would continue to redeem the individual and the group from present distress and would finally redeem them completely at "the end of days" (Isa 52:3) (cf. Cochran, 1991:740 also Unterman, 1992:652).

The word for redemption in the New Testament Greek is *apolytrōsis*, which means "deliverance on payment of a price", and *lytron* a legal term used for "ransom price" (cf. Morris, 1980b:1013; Tuckett, 1992:520). The language of redemption was, for first century readers, familiar and evocative. First of all, the Jewish people were well acquainted with the legal custom set out in the law, according to which a ransom could be given for the forfeited life (Ex 21:30). Secondly, prisoners of war could be redeemed by paying a suitable ransom price and so too could the slaves. This so-called sacral redemption of slaves was a familiar practice in the Hellenistic world. Through solemn formality the slave was actually sold to a god. The slave would pay into the hand of a priest the price required for his freedom and the latter would pronounce him free in the name of the deity, while the money was put into the temple treasury or into the hands of the owner. By means of this legal form the slave would in fact redeem himself, and the deity only appeared as a fictitious purchaser (cf. Ridderbos, 1975:193; Morris, 1980b:1013). Thus, the

idea of freedom secured by payment of a price was common to all. This is what makes the concept so useful for the first Christians. Jesus taught that "everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin" (Jn 8:34). Paul stresses it and reminds the Romans that they were, in earlier days, "slaves of sin" (Ro 6:17; 7:14). According to him, sinners are slaves (Ro 6:23) – slaves of many masters: sin (Ro 7:14; Tit 2:14), the Law (Gal 3:13; 4:1-7), death (Ro 8:21, 23), false gods (Gal 4:8-9), and Satan's kingdom (Col 1:13; Heb 2:14-15) and in desperate need of redemption. The cross of Christ is seen against this background. His blood, His life is the price paid for the release of the slaves (*cf.* Morris, 1980b:1013; Shogren, 1992:655).

In the New Testament, redemption is accomplished exclusively in the sacrificial death of Jesus of Nazareth (e.g. Ro 3:23-25; 8:23; 1Co 1:30; Gal 3:13; 4:5; Eph 1:7, 14; 4:30; Col 1:14; Heb 9:15; 1Pè 1:18-19; Rev 5:9; 14:4). Jesus Himself spoke about it (Mt 20:28; Mk 10:45). Paul taught in all his letters that redemption is through the cross of Christ. In Col 1:20 he says that the death of Christ is God "making peace by the blood of His cross". According to Hebrews, Christ "entered once and for all into the Holy Place, taking... his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption" (9:12). The blood of Christ, then, is the price required for the penalty of man's sins. He bought men back into fellowship with God at the price of His blood. "You were bought with a price, so glorify God in your body" (1Co 6:20) (*cf.* Shogren, 1992:656; Morris, 1980b:1014; Alsup, 1985b:857). This is redemption – deliverance, freedom purchased with a ransom price – through the blood of Jesus.

3.2.3 Propitiation and Expiation

Propitiation and expiation are another two terms very important for the understanding of reconciliation in the Scripture. Both terms derive from the Hebrew verb *kipper* (atonement) and its cognates: *kippurîm*, *kappōret*, *kōper*; and both from the same word group in the NT Greek: *hiláskomai*, *exiláskomai*, *hilasmós*, *hilastērion* (cf. Morris, 1980a:986; Hartley, 1990:246; Smith, 1991:281).

These two terms have created confusion for some modern readers because of their infrequent use in contemporary language and also because of their synonymity. Sometimes one finds the same original term being translated either by expiation or propitiation. Despite their similarity they are to be differentiated, however, and their distinction is of considerable importance (cf. Alsup, 1985a:291). "Expiation" is a term that focuses on the removal, cleansing, or forgiveness of sins, and "propitiation" on the appeasement of wrath by the offering of a gift (cf. Louw & Nida, 1989:504). Both terms presuppose a common starting point as fundamental: God established a covenant with His people. They sinned corporately and individually, and God again provides the means to restore that relationship, i.e., atonement is possible. Atonement in the Scripture gives room for the use of both concepts (cf. Alsup, 1985a:292; Hartley, 1992:246).

Expiation is usually obtained by means of a sacrifice. But according to Old Testament's understanding it can also be achieved by intercession (Ex 32:30), a burning coal from the heavenly altar (Isa

6:6ff), the death of a guilty person (2Sa 21:3-6), loyalty and faithfulness (Pr 16:6), or the purging out of idolatry along with captivity (Isa 27:8ff). And the final result of expiation is "atonement", i.e., the reconciliation of God and the sinner by removing the cause of God's wrath – sin (*cf.* Hartley, 1992:246).

Debate and controversy with regard to the use of the word "propitiation" arise from an objection to the whole idea of the wrath of God. Some scholars argue that the meaning of atonement in the Bible is exclusively expiation and the idea of an angry God being appeased is not accepted as they feel that such idea is archaic and not held by modern men. For them, the term "propitiation" should be abandoned in favour of "expiation", which is evident in selected passages in the RSV (*cf.* Morris, 1980a:986; Louw & Nida, 1989:504; Smith, 1990:246). Nevertheless, the idea of propitiation is presented in the Scripture in both Testaments. An example may be cited where Jacob seeks to appease his brother with gifts (Ge 32:20). Also, when Moses intercedes on behalf of the people who had sinned against God by worshipping the golden calf, he hopes his prayers would make atonement for the people and remove God's wrath (Ex 32:30). Another incident is recorded in Numbers 25:1-13 (*cf.* Hartley, 1990:247).

Morris (1980a:986) strongly argues on behalf of the idea of propitiation. For him the anger of God is justifiable. The sins of men provoked His wrath and His people had no doubt about it: "God is angry with the wicked every day", says the Psalmist (Ps 7:11) (see

also Nu 14:18; Ne 9:17). But as sure as they were of God's wrath against sin, they were equally sure that this wrath could be averted, by the offering of an appropriated sacrifice (Lev 17:11). According to Morris the idea of propitiation in the New Testament is clearly brought forward in Romans 3:24ff: which says: "We are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood" (AV), (see also Ro 1:18). Others translate *hilastērion* by "mercy seat". Hartley (1990:247) states that "the substitutionary work of Christ has averted God's wrath and established men into a new relationship with God. Justification was obtained by *hilastērion*". In chapters 1-2 of Romans Paul argues that both Gentile and Jew are under the wrath of God (*cf.* 1:18; 2:5). The solution for this problem is Christ's expiatory work that guarantees the removal of God's wrath. As it is in the Old Testament, atonement in New Testament is obtained by expiation, which results in propitiation (*cf.* Hartley, 1990:247-8).

According to Alsup (1985a:292), expiation on the whole seems to be more in line with atonement in the Scripture than propitiation. But it does not counter the notions of propitiation as though they were groundless. In fact, one complements the other and both should be considered when speaking about forgiveness of sins. He says:

The provision of a means of atonement is itself a strong indication that, while God's wrath over the transgression of his order and his covenant is real and justified, it is important to concentrate on the initiative taken to remove

the transgression. This angle of vision seeks to honour the perspective of God who makes forgiveness possible because of his mercy, love, and grace.

Based on these arguments one may conclude the following: Sin is expiated by sacrifice, for that represents the basis of justice, a life for a life. Reconciliation is possible only by expiation. No human being is able to propitiate Yahweh's wrath (Isa 47:11). Nevertheless, His wrath is fully rational and under His control (Jer 30:23ff), and He must execute it unless expiation is made (*cf.* Hartley, 1990:248). Because of His mercy God provides the appropriated means for atonement. The main focus of atonement is on the cause of the wrath, not on the wrath itself. Jesus Christ comes as the subject of expiation, and Hartley (1990:248) puts it clearly that "the emphasis is on the object of God's activity, namely the purging of sin and the cleansing of mankind... As a result of expiation God is propitiated".

3.2.4 Forgiveness

Forgiveness is another very important term when studying reconciliation. It has often been used when referring to reconciliation and some theologians believe that the terms mean the same thing and no difference between them exists at all (*cf.* Taylor, 1946:1). This arises because of the definitions given to either reconciliation or forgiveness, the translation of the original terms, and their use in the Scripture. Among the many terms used to express the idea of forgiveness is the verb *kāpar* (to cover over) which is often used for

atonement, in which the sins were "covered" by offering a sacrifice as a substitute for the life of the sinner. In this sense it can only be used when referring to God's forgiveness of the sinner (Dt 21:8; Ps 78:38; Jer 18:23). Another term is *sālah* "to send away" which always refers to an act or function of forgiveness on the part of God to mankind (*cf.* Nu 30:5, 8,12; 1Ki 8:30ff; 2Ki 24:4; Da 9:9, etc.). And *nāśā* "to take away", "to lift up", which is forgiveness in terms of guilt being taken away, atoned for, or borne, results in divine pardon (Ex 28:43; 32:32; Lev 5:1,7; Nu 14:19,34, etc.) (*cf.* Quanbeck, 1962:315; Cartledge, 1990:306; Kselman; 1992:831ff).

The correlated terms most used in the New Testament are *charizomai* "to deal graciously with" (*cf.* 2Co 2:7; 12:13; Eph 4:32, etc), *aphiēmi* which means "to let go", "to send away", "to forgive" and its cognate noun *aphesis* "remission" (*cf.* Mt 6:12ff; 9:6; Mk 2:7; Lk 23:34; 1Jn 1:9), *apolyō* "to release" (Lk 6:37), and *kalyptō* "to take away" "to cover"; (Ro 5:10; Col 1:22; 1Pe 4:8) (*cf.* Morris, 1982a:435; Harris, 1973:564; Morro, 1982:340; Cartledge, 1990:306). All these terms, among others, are used to describe this very important act of God - the forgiveness of sins.

Forgiveness can be defined as "the wiping out of an offence from memory" (Kselman, 1992:831), or in theological sense it is "a restoration of the sinner to communion with God; the breaking down of the barriers between them" (Taylor, 1946:1, also Quanbeck, 1962:316). By looking at the definitions and the translation and use of the original terms in the Scripture, it is

not difficult to understand why some scholars have equated forgiveness with reconciliation. Although very inter-related with each other, the two are different concepts used to convey the greatness of God's work towards mankind and equal attention should be given to each of them separately. Forgiveness, says Childs (1990:438), "is not the equivalent of reconciliation... it is the means by which barriers to reconciliation (which may or may not follow) are removed". He comments further on this topic and adds:

it is a mistake to equate forgiveness with reconciliation, for while forgiveness is an indispensable prelude to reconciliation, reconciliation does not necessarily follow forgiveness. Frequently one may forgive violations of a contract or covenant but not desire to continue in relationship with the offender (1990:439).

Taylor (1946:3) agrees with this view and states that forgiveness "is that which makes reconciliation possible". Only a few examples on this subject will be sufficient. Important passages are Lk 24:47; Ac 2:38; 5:31; 10:43; 13:38; 26:18; Eph 1:7; Col 1:14; 1Jn1:9; 2:12, etc. It is important to observe that in none of these texts does forgiveness refer to remission of penalties but to remission of sin. Also, in none of them is forgiveness presented as the equivalent of reconciliation, or as the restoration of fellowship between individuals. It is rather an

action directed to the removal or annulment of some obstacles or barriers to reconciliation. In agreement to that are the sayings of Jesus recorded in Mt 28:32, Lk 23:34, Ac 7:60 as well as His pronouncement of forgiveness towards the paralytic (Mk 2:5) and the woman in the city (Lk 7:47ff). They received a word of absolution which made reconciliation possible (*cf.* Taylor, 1946:3 13).

Nevertheless, as a broad and rich concept, forgiveness is taught in the Scripture as portraying different meanings, depending on the context and the message the writers intended to convey at a certain moment. Sometimes forgiveness is connected with atonement (Nu 14:33f; Eze 14:10; *cf.* Lev 17:11), but the sacrifices have value only because God himself has given the blood as the means of making atonement. Forgiveness proceeds from the heart of God, it is a free gift to humankind and is possible only because of His grace. God is a gracious and forgiving God but also a just and holy God who will not let sin go unpunished, nor tolerate evil and impurity (*cf.* Quanbeck, 1962:315; Morris, 1982a:435). One reads about that in the instructive passage of Exodus 24:6f, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty". The assurance that God's people had that their sins could be forgiven, rested ultimately on their Covenant relationship to God. And the main instrument for

achieving forgiveness was the sacrifice. However, the sacrifice is not the purchase of forgiveness but the claim of God's promise of mercy. And the sacrificial meal expresses the restoration of fellowship between God and man (*cf.* Quanbeck, 1962:316).

In the New Testament the theme of forgiveness is central. John the Baptist brought a new element into the religious situation of the day. He preached a baptism of repentance "for the remission of sins" (Mk 1:4) and indicated the way to the One who would come with a new Baptism. Jesus made it clear that God's promised plan of redemption was fulfilled in Him: the heart of His work was the forgiveness of mankind (Mk 10:45; Lk 4:18-21). He forgave sins (Mk 2:5), and his followers proclaimed that He was the Saviour of the world who had come to bring about repentance and forgiveness (Ac 5:31). Forgiveness is then very related to the death of Christ on the cross (Mk 10:45; Heb 9:22; 1Pe 2:24): as the Lamb of God He takes away the sins of the world (Jn1:29) (*cf.* Quanbeck, 1962:317; Cartledge, 1990:306).

On the other hand, Morris (1982a:435-6) points out that forgiveness is not always linked with the cross of Christ but rather with His person. But one should keep in mind that the person of Christ can not be separated from His work. Forgiveness through Him means forgiveness arising from all that He is and all that He does. Thus one may say that forgiveness rests on the atoning work of Christ on behalf of mankind.

While forgiveness remains a gift of the sheer grace of God, it also implies some conditions on man's side. In order to receive forgiveness, man needs to believe in the sacrifice of Jesus on His behalf, repent of his sin, confess it, and develop within himself a forgiving spirit. Repentance is a very important element in the process of forgiveness. But repentance is not merely sadness because of the wrongdoings, but a deep sorrow that will thrust a person into action – a change of heart and mind and a desire to seek peace with others as well (see Heidelberg Catechism, question and answer 89). When John the Baptist preached on repentance, he gave it a strong ethical content with his insistence on fruits worthy of repentance, his exhortations to honesty and generosity, and his counsel that soldiers eschew robbery and extortion (Lk 3:10-14). The prophets spoke constantly on the necessity for genuine repentance and amendment of life (Hos 6:6). Their insistence on repentance is not so much concerned with sorrow and contrition as with amendment of life, restitution, and righteousness (Joel 2:13). Jesus on His teachings stresses the necessity of a forgiving spirit and insists that repentance go beyond sorrow for sin and issue in a radical reorientation of personality (*cf.* Quanbeck, 1962:316-7). When expounding the ethics of the New Covenant, He teaches that forgiveness is a duty of the Christian and no limit can be set to it (Lk 17:4). It does not matter how serious and how often the wrong is repeated. To Him an unforgiving spirit is the most heinous of sins (Mt 18:21f) (*cf.* Morro, 1982:341).

Repentance becomes a "quasi" condition for divine forgiveness as taught in the Lord's prayer (Mt 5:23), and the parable of the unmerciful debtor (Mt 18) (*cf.* McDonagh, 1993a:214). In his comments on this subject, Morro (1982:342) states that forgiveness must be preceded by repentance and that the person must show a fixed intention not to repeat the offence. The prophets and writers of the Old Testament emphasised that ritual alone was not sufficient for forgiveness. God is eager to pardon (Ex 34:6-7; Ps 86:5; Isa1:18-19), but expects repentance (2Ch 7:14; Isa 1:16-17; Hos.14:1-2; Joel 2:13) and a willingness to change one's behaviour (*cf.* Cartledge, 1990:306). Ethically, too, repentance is required for receiving forgiveness of God. God is holy and righteous (Hab 1:13) and the moral violations and transgressions of His Law are an insult to Him. So, for Him to forgive without requiring repentance would be like condoning sin or being indifferent to it. It also would mean that He did not deal with man as a responsible moral being (*cf.* Monsma, 1976:599).

Another aspect to be noticed is that forgiveness is also linked with faith (Ac 10:43; Jas. 5:15). Jesus stressed that repentance comes along with faith (Mk 1:4ff; Lk 24:47). Thus faith and repentance become the means whereby one appropriates the grace of God (*cf.* Morris, 1982a:436). As Cartledge (1990:306) puts it, "forgiveness is received when one accepts God's judgement through confession of sins (Jas 5:16; 1Jn 1:9), repentance (Ac 2:38; 8:22; 20:21; Heb 6:11), and faith (Ac 15:9; Ro 3:22-26; Gal 2:16)".

However very important and truthful this teaching may be, it does not represent the totality of the teaching on forgiveness and reconciliation in the Scripture, says Domeris (1986:48). Sometimes forgiveness precedes repentance. The apostle Paul in Romans 5, for example, teaches that the death of Jesus Christ brings about the justification of humankind, and in 2 Corinthians 5 he speaks of the reconciliation being effected in Christ. In both examples forgiveness (justification) or reconciliation is an act accomplished by God through Jesus' death. God, the offended party, takes the initiative and reaches out to man – the offender - and offers him forgiveness so that he could repent and come back to God in humbleness. This pattern of forgiveness before repentance and confession of sins remains an integral part of the biblical message and specially the teachings of Paul (*cf.* Domeris, 1986:48). Yet it is also clear, from what was already said before, that repentance as a condition of forgiveness of sin is well supported Scripturally. Faced with such a diversity of thought on this question, how should one understand it?

In the words of Monsma (1976:599), the conclusion may be drawn that the forgiveness of sins is an act of the love and grace of God accomplished in Christ, it precedes faith, and is accepted only by faith. It is sometimes translated as reconciliation in the Bible but the main emphasis is on the removal of the barriers to reconciliation (*cf.* Taylor, 1946:15). Forgiveness also requires repentance on the side of man, and a presence of a forgiving spirit in relation to the offences of others. This serves to show that the human being is not passive in the process of forgiveness and reconciliation but an active and

responsible person, and God addresses him as such. (More about forgiveness will be said later.)

3.3 REQUIREMENTS FOR RECONCILIATION

For reconciliation to take place either in the divine or human level, certain requirements need to be met.

3.3.1 Repentance/Recognition of Sins

Repentance of sins and recognition of wrong doings are indispensable elements in reconciliation. "In practice no reconciliation, no forgiveness are possible without repentance. The Biblical teaching on reconciliation and forgiveness makes it quite clear that nobody can be forgiven and reconciled with God unless he or she repents of their sins" (Domeris, 1986:48). This matter has been discussed above in 3.2.4.

Repentance as taught in the Scripture is not a mere feeling of remorse about wrong deeds but a real sorrow, or brokenness of heart due to sin (*cf.* The Heidelberg Catechism question & answer 89). The term used in the Old Testament "*shūbh*" means "turn around, or return" and is used to express the action of man turning away from sin and returning to God. In the NT "*metanoia*" - repentance - refers basically to a change of mind. Repentance consists, therefore, of a radical transformation of thought, attitude, and direction. It is true that there are occasions when a person may feel very sad about the sins

committed but this sadness leads rather to death than to life as in the case of Judas (Mt 27:3-5) and Esau (Heb 12:17) (*cf.* Murray, 1979:140). Judas was really sad. He even went back to the authorities to return the money he got for Jesus' betrayal. But he remained unrepentant and did not ask Jesus for forgiveness. This kind of sadness is called remorse. Then there is another kind of sadness, caused by God, which will lead a person to recognition of guilt and repentance of sins (2Co 7:10). However, it is difficult to distinguish between remorse and repentance. One could say that the first leads to despair and death. No change takes place. The latter will lead to a complete turn in one's heart, to forgiveness and finally to reconciliation. A classical example of this is the story of the Prodigal son in Luke 15. Far away from the father's house and deeply in trouble, he recognised what he had done, turned around and went back to the father, seeking forgiveness.

When dealing with interpersonal relationships, recognition of sins and repentance are equally pre-requisites to reconciliation. If someone intends to seek reconciliation with another person or with the spouse, the first step is to realise one's own sin (*cf.* Lotter, 1987:38). Whether one is considered guilty or less guilty in the breach of the relationship, one needs to look deep into his/her heart and admit the guilt, the guilt of unfaithfulness, of anger, bitterness, resentment, abuse, harsh words, carelessness, failure to love, etc. One needs to become conscious of the wrongdoings and utter the same words David did in Psalm 51:3, "I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me". The offences done against each other do definitely cause

damage and hurts but the real pain is in God's heart (*cf.* Wyrzten, 1991:158). Therefore, God is constantly calling His people to acknowledgement of guilt and repentance. In fact, the book of Jeremiah is a plea to reconciliation. God calls, "return, faithless Israel,... I will frown on you no longer... I will not be angry forever. Only acknowledge your guilt – you have rebelled against the Lord your God... return faithless people... for I am your husband" (3:12-14). In this plea for reconciliation, recognition of sins and repentance are both included. A repentant heart opens the way to the rebirth of a relationship. But in many cases, especially in marital relationships, repentance must be mutual, for almost always the failure has involved both parties (*cf.* Chapman, 1996a:18-19).

According to the emphasis laid in both Old and New Testaments, repentance consists of a total abandonment of sin and a return to God and His service. Thus, once a person has recognised how wrong he or she has been, has repented from the terrible sinful acts, he/she is ready to confess them and receive forgiveness, both from God and from other people, and finally find reconciliation. For as Chapman (1996a:19) says, "There can be no reconciliation without repentance".

3.3.2 Confession and Forgiveness

It is not enough to recognise sins and repent them. A true and open confession and forgiveness are also required in the process of reconciliation. Naturally, repentance, confession and forgiveness are inter-related and it becomes difficult to deal with them separately. The

teaching of the Scripture stresses the need for confession. One learns about that in 1Jn 1:9: "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins...". Also, when Paul was teaching in Ephesus, "many of those who believed (in Jesus Christ) came and openly confessed their evil deeds" (Ac 19:18). This implies the need for confession. The Prodigal son's story serves as an example as well. Upon recognition and repentance of his sins he turned to the father and confessed his guilt.

Evil is centred at the core of the human heart (Mk 7:21ff) and true confession honestly faces the internal root of sin. It faces the intrinsic deception and evil deep in the human personality, and begins to listen to God's internal witness. And if one keeps listening, He will disclose to one the cure for genuine guilt. True confession accepts responsibility for the wrongdoings and does not try to manipulate the other person or to escape the due punishment (*cf.* Lotter, 1987:57). Confession will lead to forgiveness and forgiveness cures man's heart condition, restores relationships, clears conscience, and gives willingness for one to forgive others and praise God again. Only a true confession will turn a person away from resistance to the Holy Spirit and cause him/her to become more pliable in His hands, submissive to His desire to create the character of Christ in him/her (*cf.* Wyrzten, 1991:160-164).

Forgiveness is part of a mutual relationship; the other part is the repentance of the offender. The effect of forgiveness is to restore to its former state the relationship that was once broke by sin. Such

restoration requires the co-operation of both parties. There must be a granting and an acceptance of forgiveness (*cf.* Morro, 1982:341).

In marriage it is crucial for the sinning partner to make a full confession to God and seek His forgiveness first. As Adams (1981:58) says, "Christians need to confess sins to their heavenly Father and receive His fatherly forgiveness. In the same way, they must confess to any others that they have wronged and seek their forgiveness". It is only when a person is forgiven and reconciled with God that he/she is able to make a true confession of his/her sins, ask the other party to forgive him/her, and also extend forgiveness to the other person. Lotter (1987:54ff) expresses his agreement to this statement saying that "being forgiven a person is free – free to forgive".

The spiritual counterpart to confession is forgiveness: first for the offender by the offended. But forgiveness is not complete until the sinner forgives him or herself, a sign of a practical belief that Jesus did enough on the cross (Stevens, 1989:132). The concept of "forgiving yourself" has become quite an issue nowadays. There are many people living in turmoil because they simply cannot forgive themselves. The common saying among many people seeking counselling is: "I just can't forgive myself". This is a real issue and a very important one specially when dealing with reconciliation. Although one does not find any direct verse in the Bible dealing with the matter of self-forgiveness, the answer to this problem is there. Jones (1992:3-5), expounding on this matter, says that the problem

often lies with a misdiagnosis or misunderstanding of the real problem and the way to address it. He states that the person who says, "I just can't forgive myself" may:

- a) be unwilling to acknowledge the depth of his depravity;
- b) be venting his regrets for failing to achieve a certain cherished desire;
- c) be trying to establish his own standards of righteousness;
- d) have ascended to the throne of judgement and declare himself to be his own judge; or
- e) simply be expressing an inability or unwillingness to grasp and receive God's forgiveness.

The last seems to be the most common explanation behind the "self-forgiveness" talk. When a person says he can't forgive himself, the problem may be that he really doubts that God has forgiven him. Or his conscience isn't quiet because he has underestimated the heinousness of sin. Hence, he is not driven to seek God's grace for his sins but instead chews over his mistakes. He may have failed to see the holiness and the wrath of God against his sins. Perhaps he has not yet gripped the width and depth of God's forgiving grace and power. Or he may never truly have entered into God's forgiveness through repentance and faith. Perhaps he is not responding properly to the obstacles that hinder assurance and tempt one to doubt, such as Satan, human accusers, etc. Finally, maybe he has failed to grow in the grace of putting off the particular sin and putting on righteous replacements (*cf.* Jones, 1992:4,5). In all these cases the remedy is

to properly understand, believe and live out the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The only way to undercut all these errors and to remove the risk of mistreating the problem of self-forgiveness is to grasp God's forgiveness in Christ.

Confession is so important for the restoration of a relationship that nothing should remain unveiled. One needs to confess his/her faults, weaknesses, and predisposition to err. A confession of both words and deeds, for offences ranging from adultery to domestic financial mismanagement, needs to be voiced if one intends to have the relationship healed. Failure to confess and failure to forgive both lead to doubting the goodness of God and creates a bitter spirit (*cf.* Stevens, 1989:134).

In order to forgive one needs to remember that God firstly and completely forgives him (*cf.* Mt 18:32ff). In Ephesians 4:32 one reads, "be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you". Here is another aspect of forgiveness, which has already been mentioned above, i.e. forgiveness is an unlimited command. A believer is to forgive all the time and as many times it is necessary (Mt 18:22). He is also to forgive even when the offender is not asking forgiveness. The example to follow is given by Jesus on the cross (Lk 23:34) (*cf.* Chapman, 1996a:52).

Forgiveness also means forgetting. When one forgives, he needs to let go of the hurts forever in the same way God forgives the sinner

and remembers his sins no more (Jer 31:34; Heb 8:12). Smedes (1996:179-184) is of a different opinion and says that forgiveness means to remember. His point is that forgiveness cannot remove scars nor erase the wrong from one's memory. He would be right if one were to look at forgiveness only from the world's point of view. But the model for the believer is Jesus Christ and His forgiveness is complete. He treats the sinner as if he had never sinned before. He does not call up man's sins nor thinks about them again. One could say that forgiveness precedes forgetting and the more one forgives, the more one forgets. Forgiveness, says Stevens (1989:137), "is not the inability to call up a recorded fact from the deep memory of our minds. Rather it is the wilful decision not to keep calling it up for the purposes of reminder, as a weapon, or as an instrument to put another down". Forgiveness is then a choice of a person, a conscientious act of his will. A person who wishes to be reconciled needs to forgive from the heart, forget the past and fix the eyes on the goal. Paul says, "Forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal..." (Php 3:13,14). Reconciliation becomes the goal for an estranged couple or for any other person whose relationship is ruptured. Expounding on the possibility of reconciliation of a separated couple Chapman (1996a:41) advises:

We waste our time and energy when we ponder what might have been: "if I had..." or "If he/she had..." We must simply admit failure to God, our spouses, and ourselves. Accept God's forgiveness, forgive yourself,

and trust that your spouse will do the same. Beyond that, you cannot deal with the past. You must concentrate on the future, for it is in your hands to shape.

3.3.3 Obedience

As one reads the Bible, one will see that it is full of commands. These commands are given for the good of mankind and not merely to have a hold on a person's life. God, who made man, knows precisely what will make him happy and fruitful in life. All His commands are given with a purpose and it is up to a person to choose to obey them or not. When they are obeyed, joy, harmony, peace, success and happiness will be present in one's life (Ge 26:4-5; Dt 28:13; Jer 35:15; Jn 15:10-17; Eph 6:1-3; Heb 13:17; 1Pe 4:17-19). But when people choose to disobey them the results will be chaos, misery, pain, unhappiness, violence and death (Jos 5:6; 2 Ki 18:11-12; Jer 32:23; 35:12ff). It is not difficult to see the truth of this statement. All that is needed is to look at the world around.

Thus, obedience has much to do with reconciliation. It was through the disobedience of one man that the separation and a state of enmity between God and mankind came about. But it was also through the obedience of One man that reconciliation was accomplished for all (Ro 5:19) (*cf.* Packer, 1979:1134). It is through disobedience that relationships are broken and destroyed every day, but it is also through obedience that hearts can be healed and they can be restored.

The Apostle Paul in his writings presents reconciliation as a command. The expression "be reconciled" in 2Co 5:20, though in the passive voice, implies action and remains an imperative. The imperative mood expects those commanded to make an active response. Reconciliation is a *fait accompli* but before it becomes a reality in a person's life it requires some response from his/her side. According to Garland (1999:229-230), this response requires the following elements:

1. Reconciliation obliges us to come to terms with the alienation and our responsibility for it.
2. The key phrase in the call to be reconciled is "to God". Humans may attempt to reconcile with one another, but if they are not also reconciled to God there will be no real reconciliation. Reconciliation obliges us to reorder our lives around God.
3. Reconciliation requires that we abandon all worldly criteria for evaluating others. We must look at others from God's vantage point.
4. Those who are reconciled to God, are reconciling.

On the human level, reconciliation is discussed mainly in two passages, Matthew 5:24 and 1 Corinthians 7:11ff (*cf.* Van Houten, 1998:4). In Mathew 5:23-24 Jesus says, "If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave the gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift". These

sayings are parallel to Lk 12:58 where one is commanded to try hard to reconcile with his adversary on the way to court. The core teaching of Mathew is clear – no sacrifice is acceptable to God without repentance and reconciliation (*cf.* Brown, 1978:173). Another aspect to be noticed is that the believer must seek reconciliation whether he is the offender or the offended party. No matter what the circumstances, or how much the other person or persons have hurt him/her, he/she is still to take the initiative and work hard to achieve reconciliation. He/she is even commanded to make every effort to bring the wrongdoer to repentance and salvation (Mt 18:15-17) (*cf.* Morro, 1982:341). The believer is therefore “obliged according to the Word of God, to seek reconciliation” (Adams, 1982:55).

In a situation where a person has been burned by abuse, disregard for feelings, a pattern of unfaithfulness, humiliation, degradation, etc., separation and even divorce might have taken place, then forgiveness and reconciliation may not appear as something to look for (*cf.* Haney, 1996:19ff). These commands of the Lord may sound harsh and unreasonable. Some people might even try to justify themselves by saying that these commands do not apply to them in their situation. Emotional feelings towards the spouse might have gone altogether, in fact hatred is what remains instead, and a person might even have fallen in love with someone else. “But we cannot yield to our emotions. To follow one’s emotions is the surest road to loneliness and ruin. More than half of those who marry new lovers will eventually divorce again” (Chapman, 1996a:26).

The other text to be examined is 1 Corinthians 7:10ff where Paul discusses the question of divorce. He strongly forbids it, but he also is not unaware it could happen. Therefore he states that should divorce happen, despite all the instructions of the Lord, the command is again to reconcile, or remain single (*cf.* Barrett, 1971:162). "A wife must not separate from her husband, but if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife." The teaching of this passage is addressed to all believers. In fact, when Paul gave these instructions he envisaged the spouses to be both Christians (*cf.* Morris, 1971:108). Should their hearts be so hard that divorce becomes inevitable, they are left with only two choices: remain unmarried, otherwise be reconciled to the spouse. The primary reason why Paul gives this advice to Christians spouses is because of the indissolubility of the marriage bond. Should they remarry someone else they would be breaking the seventh command (*cf.* Torrence & Torrance, 1968:145). A secondary reason is that, by remaining unmarried, the possibility of reconciliation is not ruled out. Thus, the possibility of remarriage may only be contemplated after the death of a former spouse. Marriage to an unbeliever is also not a ground for divorce or remarriage to another person (vv. 12-16) (*cf.* Grosheide, 1954b:163; Brown, 1978:172-173).

This teaching of the Scripture is not very well embraced by many believers nowadays. One only needs to take notice of the number of divorced and remarried believers all around to confirm it. Nevertheless, if a believer wishes to find peace with God, he/she must obey His commands. He/she must seek reconciliation even

though the divorce might have gone through. Reconciliation is the will of God for marriage partners, and the believer should never think of it as an impossibility. For, according to the teachings above, believers who have divorced are compelled to reconcile (*cf.* Lotter, 1987:70-71).

Because marriage is a permanent covenant between two people, instituted by God, divorcees are commanded to remain unmarried. Remaining unmarried will also give the person a better chance to fulfil the command to reconcile. Thus, a believer should never start dating after separation or soon after divorce. By doing so he/she is disobedient and breaks God's commands (*cf.* Talley, 1991:60ff).

Faced with God's commands a believer has a choice – to obey or to disobey them. It might sound easy and clear-cut, but it is not. The road to reconciliation might be a long one, not easy, and sometimes dreaded. One might have developed feelings towards somebody else and argue that he or she has a right to happiness again. The problem with this argument is that happiness is not found in following emotions, but in obedience, in doing what is right before the Lord. Chapman (1996a:27,72,103) stresses this truth very well when he says:

Happiness is a unique commodity. It is never found by the person shopping for it... Righteousness, not happiness, leads to man's greatest good. If happiness is found by doing what is wrong, that happiness will be

momentary indeed. The pleasures of sin are always short-lived... the Christian must never encourage his/her spouse to leave in pursuit of happiness. Instead, he must encourage righteousness.

Reconciliation demands a choice, a choice to obey God's commands at all costs. It is true that "there is no reconciliation when one side is willing to put the past behind them and the other side merely takes advantages of it" (Garland, 1999:293). It takes both parties to acknowledge the wrong and be willing to work on it. Thus, a spiritual renewal on the part of one or the other or both is the most effective remedy to marriage restoration. Someone has to say, "I will obey God. I will do what He tells me to do in His Word" (*cf.* Talley, 1991:138). But the great joy in obedience is that a person does not work alone. The Holy Spirit is at work all the time with the obedient believer, counselling, comforting, guiding, or interceding.

The hardest thing to get across to a formerly married single is that reconciliation is not an option for the Christian but an order. Obedience to God's Words will make it possible even though it may take a long time. Therefore, "reconciliation is definitely the road less travelled by, but it too will make all the difference" (Chapman, 1996a:105). Reconciliation is possible when a person has the reconciling Christ living within him/her through the Holy Spirit. A harmony that might have been gone for a long time may be achieved through obedience and total surrender to God's Word.

3.3.4 Living in Christ

In the reconciliation process, another very important aspect for it to take place horizontally (i.e. between spouses and others) is the relationship of the individual with the Lord Jesus Christ. A person must stand in a real relationship with Him. Jesus must be everything for him/her. Nothing else in this world would matter that much for him/her than to please Christ. No matter the circumstances, the believer must be able to say as Paul said, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Php 1:21). Obviously, for a person to come to this stage in his/her life where he/she is able to utter such words, he/she must already be forgiven and reconciled with the Lord, he/she must be in a relationship, in unity with Him.

This mystical union with Christ must become a reality in the lives of those involved in the process of reconciliation. Only then it will be indeed possible. John uses the allegory (*mashal* in Hebrew language) of the vine (Jn 15:1-17) in order to convey this concept of unity in Christ (cf. Brown, 1970:668). As the branches united in the vine receive sustenance, life, and fruit-bearing capacity, thus also, in a far higher degree, the believers find their unity, life, and fertility in Christ. This unity is moral, mystical, and spiritual (cf. Hendriksen, 1976:297). This implies a total dependence of the believer in Christ. The theme of the *mashal* in this pericope is the indwelling, "Remain in me as I remain in you" (v. 4). This is not a mere comparison

between two actions, rather one cannot exist without the other. Remaining in Jesus and having Jesus remain in the disciple are parts of the whole – one personal relationship: if the disciples remain in Jesus through faith, He remains in them, through love and fruitfulness (*cf.* Brown, 1970:678).

To live or to "remain" in Christ has a deeper significance than simply to continue to believe in him, although it includes that; it connotes continuing to live in association or in union with him. This includes faith in Him (vv 1-6), obedience to His words i.e. keeping Jesus' commands as He kept His Father's commands (v 7), and remaining in His love (v 9). To remain in Jesus' love means to rejoice in its reality, to depend on its support, to do nothing to grieve it, but on the contrary, to engage in that which delights the Lover (*cf.* Beasley-Murray, 1987:273). This life of unity with Christ is a committed life and implies growth. Tasker (1977:175) says that "when the believer relies completely and continuously upon his Saviour and is obedient to His commands, then the life of Jesus inevitably flows into his life, so that he can truly say with Paul, 'I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me' (Gal 2:20)". It is only then that he/she is able to bear fruit. The results of this divine indwelling are a) the prayers of the believers are effective for in fact they are Christ's prayers (v 7) and, b) the love of Jesus is reflected in the believer's love for all around him/her (v 12).

When the believer is in this relationship of unity with Christ,

he/she is able to reconcile with others. This is the profound impact that the indwelling of Christ has on one's life. Reconciliation is indeed possible for all people in conflict, even for those couples whose marriages have been broken a long time ago. Because for a person living in Christ it will not be difficult for him/her to forgive his/her debtors when he/she is constantly impressed by the forgiving love of Christ towards him/her as debtor. It will not cause him/her sorrow to be the least if it is clear in his/her mind that the holy God who has in full the right on his side, became in Christ the least to save sinners like him/her. And it will also not be difficult for the believer in Christ to love his/her "enemies" if he/she is every day amazed that God demonstrated His own love for us when Christ died for us at a time when we were God's enemies (Ro 5:8-10). The person living in Christ will reflect Christ in everything he/she does, and one of the greatest acts of Christ was to bring people back into reconciliation with Himself and with the Father.

3.3.5 Restitution

Restitution is another very important aspect in the process of reconciliation. In fact, one cannot speak about reconciliation without referring to justice and responsibility. One could say that restoration (restitution) is the last step in the process of reconciliation. Livingstone (1990:436) defines restitution as "the act of 'commutative justice' by which an injury done to the goods or person of another is

repaired". The concept of justice is further commented on by Van Houten (1998:17) when he draws a distinction between legal justice and biblical justice. In the first instance, emphasises is placed on vengeance rather than on reconciliation, because the victim is not always satisfied with the outcome. In the biblical concept of justice both the victim and the offender are healed, thus resulting in reconciliation. Restitution and reconciliation are integrally linked (*cf.* Williams, 1992:38), but it must be pointed out that the latter is not a requirement for the former because otherwise reconciliation would be the result of human works and not an act of God's initiative and grace (*cf.* van Houten, 1998:5).

Restitution is related to or intertwined with repentance, confession, forgiveness and sacrifice and is indispensable in the process of reconciliation. The concept of restitution/restoration is expressed in the Bible in the form of a command and it implies compassion (*cf.* Lev 25). In this text the people of God are to show mercy and generosity towards the needy, especially the poor and oppressed as expressed in the Year of Jubilee (*cf.* Helberg, 1990:64). The idea behind restitution is compensation, i.e. putting back what was lost. The story of Zaccheus is a classic example of what is needed for reconciliation to take place. After being confronted with Jesus, an inner change occurred in him which was reflected in his lifestyle (Lk 19:1-9). When he received forgiveness and was reconciled with the Lord, he repented from his wrongdoing and showed readiness to seek reconciliation, in a concrete and painful way, with those he had exploited. That shows that reconciliation is costly, it requires a

sacrifice. Three important characteristics of restitution are brought forward by this account, according to Williams (1992:37):

- Sacrifice - he gives to the poor which will cause him substantial loss of assets - a painful experience;
- Four-fold refund - acknowledgement of guilt and responsibility; and
- Change of lifestyle - there is a future-directed promise of a just behaviour.

While restitution is an important aspect in the process of reconciliation, certain important truths should be pointed out (*cf.* Lotter, 2000:227):

- Restitution can never repair damage totally;
- The oppressor should be generous (Lk 19: 1-10);
- Restitution is not payback because there is no room for revenge in reconciliation; and
- There must be a mutual agreement between oppressor and victim.

Restitution plays a very important role in the process of horizontal (human) reconciliation, but it will only be meaningful if the offender has truly reconciled with the Lord Jesus Christ. This is applicable to all interpersonal relationships, especially to marriages where there is an imminent rupture, or where it has already been broken. In these instances the forgiven and reconciled spouse will be moved to make

restitution, where possible, thus opening the way for relational reconciliation even when remarriage is not possible anymore.

3.4 CONCLUSION

All the terms above discussed are used in the Scripture to convey the meaning of reconciliation. The thought that is initiated in the Old Testament is fulfilled in the New Testament. Reconciliation comes from God's initiative, for He is the driving force behind the redemption of humankind. It is a fact accomplished by God through Christ's death, and Christ alone is the means of reconciliation. Reconciliation is costly, it requires a price and Christ paid that price by giving Himself as a sacrifice on behalf of all men. By doing that He cancelled the enmity that existed between men and God and brought them together into a state of peace. Although reconciliation is already fully accomplished, for it to become a reality in a person's life he/she needs to recognise her/his sins, turn away from them, and embrace this gift by faith. That means that he/she needs to be active and not passive in this process. God Himself makes him active, giving him the right and the power to reconcile himself to Himself. As an active person, he/she receives reconciliation and is commanded to reconcile with God and with her/his fellowmen (Ro 5:9ff; 2Co 5:20).

In order for a person to be reconciled with God and others, some requirements need to be met. Sins need to be recognised, repented from, and an open and true confession for the wrongdoing voiced. Furthermore, forgiveness must be mutually received and granted

unlimitedly. Forgiveness opens the way to reconciliation. When reconciled with God and in a relationship with Christ, a person is then moved to seek reconciliation with others, not only verbally, but also in a concrete way, i.e. repairing damages caused and restituting when possible. The command to reconcile is extended to all the believers and obedience to it gives birth to a new relationship.

CHAPTER 4

EVALUATION OF EMPIRICAL STUDY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of the information obtained by two questionnaires randomly distributed among ministers, counsellors, and divorcees, with the purpose of collecting information necessary for strengthening the validity of this thesis. The first questionnaire was handed out to ministers of different Christian denominations with the purpose of gaining information about their ministry of reconciliation among divorcees and couples with marital problems. It also had the purpose of collecting information about how biblical education or preparation for marriage in their congregation was realised. This information will help in the formulation of pastoral guidelines for the reconciliation process further on in this thesis, which has as its main purpose the restoration of broken marriages and the prevention of divorce among Christians.

The second questionnaire was handed out to divorcees, male and female alike, members of various Christian churches. It aimed to obtain information about divorce from the divorcee's perspective and experiences, and to determine the impact, and/or the need for biblical counselling among them at the present time. It also aimed to gather

information about how their education/preparation for marriage and family life was done.

4.2 EVALUATION OF QUESTIONNAIRE ONE

Questionnaire one (see Appendix A) was handed out to 200 pastors of different denominations: Reformed, Dutch Reformed, Methodist, Anglican, and Pentecostal, which were answered by only fifteen of them. This questionnaire contained two sections: A and B, the first section was an enquiry about pre-marital counselling done by each pastor, and the necessity thereof. The second was about the approach to counselling divorcees, or troubled couples with regard to reconciliation.

The information gathered from the questionnaires is the following:

Pre-marital counselling is done by all the participating pastors (100%), but still in a very limited way. Only two (13%) of them use a little longer time (2 months) for preparing the couple for marriage, with the majority (60%) doing it only 3 or 4 times, and others only once or twice to discuss the practical arrangements for the wedding ceremony. Only in 40% of the congregations is pre-marital counselling a pre-requisite, with 60% of them being the choice either of the pastor or of the prospective couple.

The most addressed topics in these counselling sessions are the following:

- Personality issues and communication;
- Conflict resolution;
- Sex as a gift of God;
- Finances;
- Family and friends;
- Spiritual and the couple's growth;
- The marriage service;
- Family planning and children parenting; and
- Spouses' responsibility.

It is important to understand that of the above-mentioned topics only three or four are dealt with by each pastor, depending on time and the number of sessions they have. A few other issues are also addressed less frequently, such as: leisure activities, commitment to God and marriage, love, unity, sensitivity, etc.

The opinion of 80% of them is that pre-marital counselling should be requested from all the people who are preparing to get married. And all of them (100%) are of the opinion that the churches could and should be more involved in preparing their members for marriage and family life. According to them there are many unnecessary divorces today that could have been prevented should the couple have been better informed about marriage. This education/preparation, according to majority of them (70%), should begin as early as with pre-primary school children or with teenagers. 75% of these pastors reckon the young people of the churches are not as prepared for the enormous responsibility of marriage and life commitment, as they should be. The

main reasons for this deficiency in their preparation are due to: 1) a poor role-models in the homes; 2) a distorted and crooked example of society; 3) a poor concept of commitment; 4) a very wrong concept of what marriage really is, due to the influence of "Love Stories" and "Soaps" which have become a source of great influence in the lives of many people today. Therefore, a very strong worldly concept of love and marriage becomes the norm. Biblical principles are left aside.

It is also the opinion of all (100%) that what is being done at the moment with regard to Christian preparation/education for marriage is insufficient. There is much more that can be done and churches should lay hands on all possible means to reach out to the people with the message of the Bible regarding all the aspects of their lives. A biblical training/education for marriage is indispensable today and more members of the congregations should be involved in this ministry of counselling, but in a structured way, taking family time into consideration. 86% of the participating pastors suggest that, besides the pastor, a counsellor and/or a team of well trained mature believers would definitely be useful in addressing this most urgent matter in churches today. When people are well informed about what God's purpose for marriage is, what He expects from the individual in the marriage, when they understand their roles as designed by the Lord, and they are committed to Him and His Word there will definitely be a slowing down in the divorce rate among Christians.

In the second section of the questionnaire which addresses the ministry of counselling divorcees with the aim to bring about reconciliation (remarriage of the divorcees), belief and practice are

divergent. Divorce (and subsequent marriage) as a present and sad reality among Christians tends to increase with the pace of the day despite the radical teaching of the Scripture in this regard. According to their experience, the pastors could gather that the main reasons for divorce among Christians in South Africa today are:

- A life far away from God and His Word
- Secularism
- Distrust and unfaithfulness
- Lack of forgiveness where there is unfaithfulness or other offences
- Misconception and unrealistic expectations about marriage, sex, and love (as portrayed in fairy-tales, films, TV, etc). There is an illusion of “happy ever after” when the wedding has taken place, which does not exist. Love has been equalled to sex and many times used as a power for manipulation. This cheapens the meaning of love into a feeling only, rather than a commitment involving the whole person (will and emotions). Physical attraction has become the most important thing in the relationship and when it does not satisfy a person anymore, he/she simply gets a divorce and finds somebody else
- Lack of involvement of parents in this aspect of their children upbringing. Parents do not talk about sex, love, and the demands and responsibility of marriage with their children
- Alcoholism
- Insufficient skills in handling conflict, and domestic violence
- Poor morals presented in/by virtually all forms of entertainment

- Lack of communication and listening skills
- Lack of commitment
- Financial matters

Thousands of couples are suffering due to one or several of these problems and many others have divorced as a result of it. This research has revealed that an uninvolved attitude with regard to troubled marriages is strong among pastors, as 50% of them say that they will not willingly reach out and offer their counsel to the people in need unless their help is requested. They argue that it is not their business and that they will not interfere in other people's lives. This thought is much more predominant among pastors of the Reformed group as compared to those of other denominations. The counselling usually takes place only a few times and a high 73% of the pastors will refer the couple to a psychologist or psychiatrist.

With regard to reconciliation of the couple, i.e. remarrying each other, the majority of the participants has a divided opinion about it, and only a few would counsel the couple to reconcile (to remarry each other). Those who are of this opinion quoted Malachi 2, 2Co 5:11-21 and 1Co 7 to support their argument. On the other hand, 53% of them will not encourage divorcees to reconcile/remarry their previous spouses. Most of them did not support their answers with the Scripture and provided only a few comments saying that: a) in such cases where people are total incompatible divorce is better. b) Or where it is clear that manipulation or unfaithfulness led to the divorce (in this case Mt 5:31,32; 19:1-9; Php. 2:1ff and Col 3:12ff were quoted). c) Or that a

person reconciled to God does not necessary need to reconcile with the spouse (one pastor used 1Co 7 to support his argument, although its teaching is the opposite). d) That reconciliation is Biblical as far as forgiveness is concerned, but remarriage may not be desired.

Despite the decisive teaching of the Scripture on this matter (Mt 5; 19; Mk 10:10-12; Lk 16:18; 1Co 7:10-11; Ro 7:20), a high 73% of the pastors would counsel a Christian person to divorce his/her spouse depending on circumstances. And the same 73% have no objection to a Christian divorcee remarrying somebody else and would definitely marry them. They would counsel the couple to divorce when:

- There is unfaithfulness and present jealousy (some have quoted Mt 5 and 19 as a biblical support)
- Drinking problems
- One of the spouses is an unbeliever and does not want to repent and convert (1Co 7 is used by this person to support his argument)
- It is clear that reconciliation is not possible anymore due to too many hurts
- Someone behaves like a psychopath and does not recognise guilt and does not ask forgiveness (6th command is used as a support here)
- There would be danger of losing a life
- Abuse (sexual, emotional, or physical) of spouse and children
- The spouse is "brain damaged"

- The spouse is permanently institutionalised in a psychiatric hospital
- It is used as a shock tactic so that the couple would stop manipulating one another and would try to work at their relationship
- The couple's personalities are totally incompatible
- There is an unforgiving attitude.

For most of the above mentioned arguments no biblical base is found and some of the pastors argue that, although they know that most of the divorces that have taken place are contrary to the Scripture, they console themselves with the fact that God forgives all sins. Those pastors (73%) who would encourage Christian divorcees to remarry someone else could not provide Scripture to support their argument. And they do recognise that, according to the Scripture, the believer may only remarry someone else after the death of the spouse. Nevertheless, they take this approach and justify their views by reasoning that:

- a) If the divorce has already taken place and the Lord has already forgiven them, why would not He bring two believers into a new marriage again?
- b) God forgives divorce, when He forgives He makes a person free, and He has already forgiven us
- c) What right does anyone have to deny a person a happy relationship with another person?
- d) It is better for the divorcee to marry than to burn with passion

- e) God wishes His children to be happy
- f) When the divorce has taken place as a result of unfaithfulness and cruel behaviour, remarriage is allowed (in this case someone quoted Mt 5:21,22,32; and 19).

The other few (25%) pastors would not counsel a Christian to get a divorce, nor would they encourage anyone to remarry someone else as they reckon that it would be totally contrary to the teaching of the Scripture, therefore unethical.

Although all the pastors, except one, are involved in counselling divorcees, none of them have or follow a specific biblically based program for this ministry. Two of them use a secular program, though, called "Prepare/Enrich" (version 2000) provided by Family Life Centre.

This research has shown that there is a need for the churches to be more involved in the lives of the suffering people. Divorcees have great and urgent needs that churches should attend to. From the pastor's point of view they may be summarised as:

- Need for guidance and emotional, spiritual and sometimes material support
- Need to overcome the feeling of rejection and failure
- Need to recognise that his/her behaviour has had an influence on the breaking of the marriage and he/she needs to repent of those sins and seek forgiveness and reconciliation

- Need of forgiveness, friendship and acceptance from church, families and society without a judgmental spirit
- Need to cope with loneliness
- Need to realise that they are not outcasts and that they work at recovering their self-image
- Need to be loved, accepted and treated with respect
- Need to belong and someone who can listen and understand without giving cheap advice.

Faced with serious problems of this nature, among others, the majority of the pastors (67%) believes that churches ought to strengthen their ministry of counselling by either training a team of mature and committed believers to assist in this ministry (67%), or by having a believing Christian counsellor (40%). A support group for divorcees should also be organised, especially in big churches and in the cities as it provides an efficient ministry. Only a small minority still believes that this is a task only for pastors (13%). Of those who think there is no need for expanding the ministry of counselling in their churches, two already have a team in action and a support group. One has a church of elderly members; another one thinks that the pastor is the best qualified person to attend to this kind of ministry in the church.

According to these pastors, churches can meet many of the divorcee's needs by:

- a) Putting into practice the command of helping to carry each others burdens (Gal 6:2);

- b) Not judging them, reaching out to them in love, and accepting them with understanding about their reality;
- c) Helping them to recognise that they have value in Christ;
- d) Offering a ministry of hope: of forgiveness, grace and love;
- e) Giving the divorcees opportunities to use their gifts for edification, and opportunities to witness about their personal experiences of God's forgiveness and grace (e.g. outreach programs, pastoral counselling, etc);
- f) Creating support groups;
- g) Offering post-divorce counselling; and
- h) Providing moral and financial support where needed.

It is the opinion of the participants that there is much more that churches can do that would slow down the divorce rate among Christians such as:

- a) Preach more messages emphasising commitment to God and marriage vows;
- b) Lay emphasis on Christian values, healthy marriage and family life in the sermons and other activities of the church;
- c) Lead people to develop a real bond with the body of Christ;
- d) Intensive pre-marital counselling. Impart knowledge i.e. educate/prepare Christians for what marriage is all about, lead them to the biblical principles for marriage, then they will be responsible in choosing a marriage partner;

- e) Frequent and thorough contact of the officeholders of the church with married people where open and confidential discussions can take place;
- f) Help people to develop communication skills before marriage;
- g) Emphasise the need for rebirth. Only a borne again person will fear the Lord and will embrace His teaching.

4.3 EVALUATION OF QUESTIONNAIRE TWO

This questionnaire (see appendix B) was handed out to fifty divorcees and answered by twenty-one of them: fourteen females and seven males from various Christian church denominations. Nine of them are English speaking and twelve Afrikaans speaking. As with the previous questionnaire, this one also is divided into two sections. The first section gathers information about pre-marital counselling these divorcees underwent, and the second brings to the fore their opinion on pre- and post-divorce Christian counselling and the need thereof, taking into consideration their personal experience.

All the participants in this research see themselves as Christians; 76% consider themselves as active members of their congregation, and 86% of them acknowledge the whole Bible as a rule of faith and practice for their lives.

Of this group of people only 33% received pre-marital counsel by their pastor, and it was done once to three times only. A few topics were

discussed with those who received counselling, such as: Partnership with the spouse, Christ in your marriage, trust, husband's and wife's obligations in the marriage. The others dealt only with the marriage ceremony as such. Of the few who received pre-marital counselling, 50% believe it was insufficient as it was too short and there was not really time to learn anything.

There is total agreement (100%) among them that a Christian education or preparation for marriage is a great necessity today because Christians need to receive a realistic, healthy, and solid foundation for their marriages that neither society nor any other community can provide. In fact, the models and values provided by many families, communities and society are distorted and against God's design for the family. The answers to a successful marriage and family life are found in the Bible. Therefore guidance is indispensable. Their opinion (100%) is that, because the church is God's instrument by means of which eternal truths can be conveyed in this world, she must lay hands on all possible means, e.g. seminars, courses, Christian literature, videos, counselling, etc, in order to inform and prepare Christians as best as possible for their lives. A solid biblical education/preparation of Christians will have an impact on their lives and marriages, consequently reducing the chances of divorce.

A variety of topics and only a very few texts are suggested as a necessity in the process of preparation, such as:

- Dating

- Pre-marital sex (with its devastating results)
- The meaning of marriage (as a permanent covenant)
- The purpose of marriage (what God expects from married people)
- Husband and wife relationship
- Roles and responsibilities within marriage (as designed by the Lord)
- Sexual adjustment and possible problems
- How to place God in one's marriage
- Parenting
- Mutual trust, loyalty and honesty
- Tolerance
- Respect
- Communication skills
- Financial administration
- Conflict resolution
- How to handle change in each other
- Personal relationship with the Lord
- Real Christian love and love that will last (despite all the odds)
- God's plan for the family
- Texts such as: Ephesians 5:21-6:4; 1Co 7:1-16; 1Pe 3:1-12; Ge 2.

The list above reveals that there is so much that needs to be done by the Church of Christ in this very important task to prepare couples for their marriage. Such preparation should begin early in life. Only a few sessions before the wedding takes place are really insufficient. This task of preparation is really too much for one person only (the pastor). The church needs to be mobilised towards this ministry of counselling.

The second part of the questionnaire which deals with divorce and counselling reveals that only 43% of the divorcees sought marriage counselling either by a pastor (67%) or a psychologist (89%) before getting divorced. 67% of them said the counselling they received was not based on the Scripture, but was still of some value for them. Several reasons were given by those who did not seek counselling, namely:

- a) divorce was best for all of us;
- b) my partner did not want to go for counselling;
- c) we had nothing in common so why bother;
- d) I did not want to because the damage was irreparable;
- e) there was no opportunity;
- f) counselling would not help anymore, etc.

The reasons for these people to get a divorce may be summarised as follows:

- a) infidelity (adultery),
- a) failure in solving problems,
- b) alcoholism,
- c) lack of communication,
- d) irreconcilable differences,
- e) incompatibility (emotionally and intellectually, and others),
- f) negative influence of in-laws,
- g) not having or serving God together,
- h) unrealistic expectations of the marriage,
- i) no Scriptural foundation for marriage,
- j) low self-image, and
- k) financial problems.

The most frequent reasons are adultery, incompatibility, and interference of parents-in-law.

Only a low 33% of these divorcees tried to reconcile with the spouse and sought counselling in order to help with the process of reconciliation or in order to cope with the divorce. Of this minority, a low 43% of them went to a pastor or counsellor for help, against 100% who went to a psychologist, especially because they felt that the counselling they were receiving was not helpful. A few of them believe pastors are not the right people to help with marital problems, as they are not really trained for it.

Should there be a chance for reconciliation (remarrying the spouse), 14% of them would consider reconciliation, 14% are not sure, and 71% would not. The main reasons given for these decisions are that the other person has not changed, the parents-in-law are still living and controlling, and it is not possible anymore because the other partner has already married somebody else. Others say they don't believe it is God's will, or, one thinks of reconciliation when one has not found somebody else to love and feel lonely, or still, the partner never repented and asked forgiveness, there is no meaning in reconciliation, and the spouse has no trust or respect for him/her anymore. For these reasons no Scriptural references were provided to support their views. Those who would consider reconciliation think this is the right way to go and did mention Matthew 19 to support their views.

Despite the fact that only a few sought counselling after divorce, all (100%) would recommend it to a person in need and 81% thinks it is a necessity for divorcees. During the time of trouble and after divorce a person is so hurt, rejected, broken and has no sense of direction so that guidance becomes a necessity. One needs help in order to cope with the traumatic experiences of divorce. The scars are so deep and one needs somebody to assist in the process of forgiveness and healing. Depression sets in and a person becomes helpless. At other times despair takes over. One also needs guidance on how to take care of the children, the finances, and life itself on one's own. Christian counselling will help one to recognise in which ways he/she has wronged the other person and children, and will help a person to make it right in all ways possible. It will help the person to find forgiveness, peace and acceptance of the situation. It will definitely help one to gain perspective of life, which is so needed. And it will also help a person to come closer to God.

From the divorcees' point of view, the greatest needs they face after divorce are:

- To be loved and accepted by the families, church, and community at large without being judged
- Moral and spiritual support especially when times get more difficult
- Friends. Someone with whom one can talk about one's pain without needing to pay. Usually when one gets a divorce one's friends disappear, psychologists or other counsellors will ask

money that one does not have, and sometimes pastors are not available.

- To make contact with other people, especially other divorcees, who understand their situation
- To be able to handle one's sexual needs as a single person
- To work through the stigma of divorce, and make peace with oneself
- To belong somewhere and feel secure
- To be financially independent
- How to be a single parent and make a living in this world
- A personal relationship with God

For them post-divorce counselling should include the following topics:

- A person's relationship with the Lord Jesus
- Forgiveness and releasing of the other person
- Problem solving at present and in the future
- Understanding, loving and accepting oneself
- Hurt, bitterness, guilt and confusion – how to work it through?
- How to handle loneliness
- Biblical guidelines for living in this broken world
- Tolerance
- Reconciliation in all aspects
- How Jesus forgives and what He expects from the Christian
- Acceptance of the circumstances
- How to take care of oneself and one's dependants
- How to develop a positive attitude about being single

- The roll of parents-in-law
- How to make a living after divorce
- How to help one's children in the process of divorce and after.

They also believe that the task of preparing someone for marriage, or counselling couples in trouble, or divorcees should not be confined to the pastor of the church only, but should also involve other people of the congregation, such as a counsellor, a counselling team, teachers, Sunday school teachers, a restored divorcee, etc. Nevertheless, what should be taken into consideration in using the people of the church are spiritual maturity, special personal gifts and confidentiality.

4.4 CONCLUSION

From these two questionnaires it is clear that there is a great need to expand the ministry of counselling in the churches today. Christians are generally not well informed and prepared, according to biblical principles, for marriage and family life. This opinion comes from all the divorcees involved in this research and the majority of the pastors. Those who believe the people are well prepared are under-estimating the negative power of media and society over Christians. Churches can and should make use of all means, and all its people in order to bring children up according to biblical principles, guide those who do not have a chance to get it from homes due to a poor role model. Also, strengthen those whose parents are indifferent or are absent all the time due to work pressure, and encourage everyone to commit themselves totally to God and His Word. More emphasis should be

laid on the necessity of being borne again. Often people take it for granted that they grew up in the church and do not realise that they need to make a commitment with God, take His Word seriously, and have a personal relationship with the living Jesus.

The church also has the ministry of healing, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Broken marriages lead to broken hearts, a bitter spirit, anger, resentment, hatred, and enmity with God. The church needs to reach out to her people and minister to them, not only by preaching, but also by counselling, guiding, supporting, and building them up. Christians need to be led to the recognition of their sins, to repentance, confession, to receive and offer forgiveness, and finally to be reconciled and to reconcile. Reconciliation with God (for all have sinned), with families and with one another needs to be emphasised as a command of the Lord. Scripture teaching on marriage, divorce and reconciliation should be taken more seriously. Pastors should preach on them more often, more challenging, and more convincingly. Although many Christians divorce and remarry so often and so easily nowadays, many of them could have been prevented should they have been guided more closely according to the teachings of the Word. One person alone – the pastor - is not enough to attend to this enormous task today. He needs help from the congregation. If he has not realised it yet he needs to take a good look at the reality of life today and start moving. It is based on this necessity that some guidelines for counselling will be proposed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS OF THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL STUDIES

This chapter presents and summarises the results obtained in previous chapters. From the theoretical study done in earlier chapters (chapters 2, 3, and 4), some conclusions and insights regarding reconciliation as a whole could be drawn. These will be briefly discussed and used as the foundation for the formulation of the guidelines for both pre-marital counselling and counselling divorcees on reconciliation, which form the contents of chapter 6.

Chapters 2 and 3 brought forward the Biblical view of marriage, divorce and reconciliation. Chapter 4 dealt with the empirical research and presented the findings thereof.

In chapter 2 the issue of marriage and divorce was discussed in the light of the Scripture. It revealed primarily that marriage stems from the order of creation and is a life-long covenant of love (in all its forms) which cannot be broken by people at will (see §2.2.3). Secondly, it became clear that marriage was instituted by God with the noble purpose of mutual help, procreation, protection against adultery, companionship and pleasure (see §2.3). Thirdly, when establishing marriage God gave the spouses specific roles and responsibilities

towards one another, which, when fulfilled and obeyed, provide the key for a successful and happy marriage (see §2.4 - 2.5). Regarding the matter of divorce, the theoretical research also indicated that divorce is above all a disruption of God's plan for mankind, and therefore condemned in the Scriptures. Secondly, because it is a negation of His plan and will, and because of the tremendous pain and sorrow divorce causes to everyone involved, God hates it (see §2.7.2.1). Thirdly, despite controversial opinions on the issue of divorce, the Scripture teaches that the believer is forbidden to divorce his spouse, except in two instances: fornication (*porneia*) and desertion. Nevertheless, the idea that should be retained is that even in cases of divorce as a result of unfaithfulness, the Lord encourages the believer to forgive and seek reconciliation. Fourthly, a further teaching of the Scripture is that when divorce among believers has occurred, only two options may be considered: to reconcile with former the spouse, or to remain single. Finally, remarriage for the believer is only permissible after the death of the former spouse, otherwise it would be ethically wrong because it would constitute the breaking of the seventh commandment (see §2.7.2.2). These Biblical teachings seem hard but they were not given to restrict people from life, on the contrary, they were given in order to protect people from sin, from pain and sorrow and to provide successful and happy marriages and the wellbeing of the whole family.

Based on these fundamental biblical principles and emphasised by the results of the empirical research as evaluated in chapter 4, the conclusion was drawn that a biblical preparation for marriage is an imperative. The reason for that is, as stated by the participants in the

research, that Christians are generally not well informed and prepared for marriage and family life according to biblical principles. It is their belief that there are many unnecessary divorces today that could have been prevented should the couple have been better informed about marriage (see §4.4). This opinion comes from all the divorcees involved in this research and the majority of the pastors. Those who believe that people are well prepared are under-estimating the negative power of the media and society over Christians. With these findings in mind a pre-marital counselling program was compiled. This will be discussed broadly in the first part of chapter 6. The first four topics addressed in this program (§6.2.1 - §6.2.4) are based upon the insights acquired in chapter 2, while the following 6 topics (§6.2.5 - §6.2.10) are important issues brought to the fore by the respondents of Questionnaire 2, section A, mainly question 21 (see Appendix B).

In chapter 3 the Scriptural position on reconciliation was discussed. The findings obtained during the study of this subject indicate several important truths regarding the condition of mankind. The first point to be observed is that man (i.e. human beings) in his rebelliousness and disobedience sinned against God, thus becoming His enemy. Because of this state of enmity and man's inability to regain his friendship with God, a reconciler was needed in order to restore that good relationship that once existed (see §3.1). Thus the second truth regarding this matter is that the thought about reconciliation was initiated in the Old Testament soon after the Fall and is fulfilled in the New Testament. It comes from God's initiative, for He is the driving force behind the redemption of humankind, and is accomplished by God through Christ's death, for Christ alone is the means of

reconciliation (see §3.2.1.6). A third aspect is that reconciliation is costly. It required a price and Christ paid that price by giving Himself as a sacrifice on behalf of all men. By doing that He took away the enmity that existed between men and God and brought them together into a state of peace (see §3.2.1.3). Nevertheless, reconciliation, though fully accomplished by Christ, for it to become a reality in a person's life he/she needs to recognise her/his sins, turn away from them, and embrace this gift by faith. This reveals that people are not passive in the process of reconciliation but are rather active agents. As an active person the believer receives reconciliation and is thus commanded to reconcile with God and with her/his fellowmen (Ro 5:9ff; 2Co 5:20) (see §3.2.1.5 and 3.2.1.6).

Furthermore, it became clear from this study that in order for a person to be reconciled with God and others some requirements need to be met (see §3.3). Sins need to be recognised, repented of, and an open and true confession for the wrongdoing voiced. What is important to be emphasised here is that forgiveness must be mutually received and granted unlimitedly. When that is done the way to reconciliation is open (see §3.3.2). When reconciled with God and in a personal relationship with Christ, a person is then moved to seek reconciliation with others. This happens not only verbally, but also in a concrete way, for example, by repairing damages caused against others and restituting in whatever way possible (see §3.3.5). Then, after being reconciled with the Lord, every believer is commanded to seek reconciliation with others. These commands, when obeyed, give birth to new relationships. The conclusions drawn from chapter 3 are of great importance because they are based upon these insights that the

practical application brings forward in chapter 6 (see §6.3) where guidelines for counselling divorcees on reconciliation are given.

It is based on the fact that divorce creates a breach between people, often a real enmity between the spouses as well as among families involved, and also between divorcees and God, that the program in chapter 6 is formulated. Each suggested topic to be addressed in the appointments as well as the self-study for the counselees is carefully selected according to the most urgent needs of divorcees, with the view to lead them into reconciliation firstly with God and then with one another (see Schematic Presentation of Counselling Program §6.3). This proposed guidelines program will be discussed in full in the next chapter.

With regard to the results of the empirical study of chapter 4, a little was already mentioned above when discussing the formulation of the pre-marital counselling program. Nevertheless, several other practical issues of everyday life regarding marriage and divorce were brought forward and need to be mentioned because of their value regarding the practical aspects of reconciliation and the ministry of counselling.

Chapter 4 comprises two different questionnaires which were distributed to pastors and divorcees of different Church denominations. The responses obtained from these questionnaires revealed that there is a great need to expand the ministry of counselling in the churches today. There is so much to be done, not only in the sense of preparation of Christians for marriage and life thereafter, but also in helping to bring healing for the many who suffer

as the result of a broken marriage (see §4.2. and 4.3). Looking from this angle one can see that Churches have a twofold ministry in this regard: one of preparation, thus helping to create well founded homes (according to God's principles) which then would withstand the storms of life and remain strong; and a curative ministry which would aim at the ill and broken marriages with the healing balm that is found only in Christ and in the relationship with Him. Many are the means suggested for bringing about and enhancing the ministry of counselling in the Churches (§4.3). Such means can and should be used by Churches and all their people in order to bring children up according to the biblical principles, and guide those who do not have a chance to get it from homes due to a poor role model, also strengthening those whose parents are indifferent or are absent all the time due to work pressure, and encourage everyone to commit themselves totally to God and His Word. The respondents also brought to the fore the need for pastors to preach messages which would lay more emphasis on the necessity of being born again. It is taken for granted by many people that because they were born and grew up in the church, they are saved. Therefore many do not realise that they need to make a personal commitment to God, take His Word seriously, and have a personal relationship with the living Jesus (see §4.4).

Based on both theoretical and empirical research, results it becomes evident that the Church does have a role to play in this world with regard to the ministry of counselling. First a preventative/preparatory ministry, secondly a ministry of healing, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Broken marriages lead to broken hearts, bitter spirit,

anger, resentment, hatred, and enmity with God. Thus one can conclude that the church needs to reach out to her people and minister to them, not only by preaching, but also by counselling, guiding, supporting, and building them up. Christians need to be lead to the recognition of their sins, to repentance, confession, to receive and offer forgiveness, and finally to be reconciled and to reconcile. Reconciliation with God (for all have sinned), with families and with one another needs to be emphasised as a command of the Lord. Scripture teaching on marriage, divorce and reconciliation should be taken more seriously, and be more often addressed. Pastors should preach about them more often, be more challenging and more convincing. Although many Christians divorce and remarry so often and so easily nowadays, many of these break-ups could have been prevented should they have been guided more closely according to the teachings of the Word, and with more care expressed by the body of Christ. For such a vast ministry one person – the pastor alone - is insufficient to attend to this enormous task today. He needs help from the congregation, especially from those who feel called for this ministry.

For the compilation of the two suggested programs in chapter 6, the theoretical aspect and the empirical aspect are equally important. They blend and overlap the theory and the practical aspect of daily life. They raise questions and point out solutions in the same line. And both of them aim to bring about reconciliation and promote a new life, not only for the future but for today - here and now. Counselling ministry is only one of the many means of addressing the present needs of the Church, as mentioned above, but for the purpose of this

study this is the most relevant means and will be discussed in full in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 6

RECONCILIATION PROCESS – POSSIBLE GUIDELINES FOR COUNSELLING

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Reconciliation is a process that takes time and requires specific guidelines to achieve specific results. In this chapter two possible programs or guidelines for the ministry of counselling of the churches which will aid the process of reconciliation are suggested. The formulation of these two proposed programs is based upon the results obtained in chapters 2, 3 and 4 which will often be referred to throughout chapter 6. The first is a program for pre-marital counselling aiming to prepare people for marriage. According to the opinion of all the people involved in the research, when young people and others are well prepared for marriage according to God's principles, their marriage has a much greater chance to succeed (see §4.2 and §4.3). This program is included in this chapter because reconciliation begins long before the marriage takes place. Many courting and engaged couples are already in need of reconciliation, they have quite a few struggles which need to be addressed before the marriage takes place, but many times, due to lack of guidance, they think when they marry these things will sort itself out. Many others are in need of the reconciling Lord in their lives. They never had an experience or an

encounter with Him and it will be detrimental for their marriage. In order to be a reconciling spouse, a person needs to be reconciled with the Lord first, as discussed in chapter 3 (see §3.3.3 and §3.4). In marriage every Christian needs to be a reconciling person daily.

The second is a program for counselling people to reconcile with God first and then with the spouse. This program may be used to help people in ill marriages, and separated people and divorcees. The reason for aiming at reconciliation with God in the first place is that only a reconciled person is able to seek reconciliation with others (*cf.* §3.3.3). Reconciliation of the spouses is directed firstly at friendship level, and only then, when possible, at re-marriage.

It is the belief of the author that when these two kinds of counselling are properly applied with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, struggling Christians will be transformed, marriages will work, estranged spouses will be reconciled, and their marriages will be restored and renewed.

6.2 GUIDELINES FOR PRE-MARITAL COUNSELLING

Most Christian people enter in marriage without really knowing what it is all about. Many do not receive any education i.e. any preparation for this most important step in their lives except for the distorted concepts, ideas, and examples they get from television, magazines, movies, and society (*cf.* §4.2). Christian children and youths do not receive Christian education to marriage and family-life as they should and that

has contributed for the collapse of so many marriages today. Many are the reasons for this gap in their life education: with the demands of the social and economic present life, many parents hardly see their children because they have no time. One can call them "the absentee parents". The little time they spend at home they are either busy trying to catch up with things that should have already been done, or they are too preoccupied with work problems, or they are very tired and stressed and cannot even think about such things. Other parents think that modern children receive all kinds of information, which are available to them everywhere, so it is not necessary for them to spend time on matters that the children already know. Another reason is the so-called "sex taboo" especially in certain cultures, where parents do not talk about feelings, romance, sex, and related topics with their children. They believe this is a private matter and the children will sort it out by themselves as they did in the past, or they will learn from role models around (*cf.* §4.2.). In a society where a large proportion of the marriages have failed (*cf.* Plekker, 1980:9), or are failing, where the roles and responsibility of the spouses are not so clear anymore, where many parents don't know themselves how to manage their own marriages, one cannot count on them for guidance. Therefore, a very serious question is raised: who will guide the children? Who will prepare them for this most important aspect of their lives?

As revealed in the research done in chapter 4 (*cf.* §4.2 and 4.3), all respondents, pastors and divorcees strongly believe that this responsibility today falls on the Church, for, who is as qualified to convey God's principles and give spiritual and moral guidance as she

is? The Church, therefore, needs to take more serious action in addressing these matters to her people.

Certainly, preparation for marriage and related matters is a process and should start early in the life of every person. But when it has not happened due to reasons as mentioned before, other approaches should be taken. Pre-marital counselling is suggested in this study (see §4.2 and 4.3) as an indispensable means to address this most urgent need among people planning to get married. The following outline is a very elementary form of pre-marital counselling suitable for pastors, counsellors, or any other person involved in the preparation of people for marriage. It is based on the most basic Christian principles for marriage. Different sources have been used in the formulation of this programme (see Bibliography). No person, and especially no member of the church, should get married without at least a basic knowledge of God's principles regarding marriage. Pre-marital counselling is aimed at and should be seen not only as a preventative measure, but also a means which may provide rich and fulfilling marriages. By educating (preparing) her people according to God's Word and will, the Church will fight divorce, save many marriages, and lead others to live the greatness of marriage as designed by the Lord.

Modus operandi:

This program should be used for a minimum period of five months before marriage. In this way, the people in preparation would have time to read all the recommended material, do all the requested

assignments, have time to digest all the teaching, and even have time to change their minds should they come to realise that their marriage should not take place for one reason or another. It would also provide time to lead a person to an encounter with Christ, should the counsellor notice that the counsellee is not a Christian. Otherwise sound advice could be given. The minimum of two weeks between sessions is the suggested time. However, it may take longer than this depending on the needs and progress of the group or couples in counselling. Thus, pastors should often advertise beforehand when pre-marital counselling is going to be offered. Every courting person should attend all the sessions of this program. However, a person who is not dating or has no steady courtship will also benefit greatly. The counsellor should always keep in mind that only a person who has accepted Christ as his/her personal saviour would embrace biblical principles for his/her life (*cf.* §3.3.4).

The program should not be shortened but used in full, as it is so basic. It may and should, however, be changed with the purpose of adding other topics of similar importance like dating, parenting, respect, sexual adjustment and possible problems, God's views on divorce, among others, as suggested by respondents of questionnaire 2 (see Appendix B, Section A). Recommended assignments and reading material should be completed by every person before the wedding takes place and the pastor/counsellor should have a good knowledge of each subject and should speak about it openly and faithfully in accordance with the Scripture. "*Further reading*" material is intended for those who wish to broaden their knowledge of the topic under discussion.

Under every heading/topic only the main points to be emphasised in each counselling session will be mentioned, plus related biblical texts and recommended assignments for the counselees. The counsellor will need to expand on the topics himself. On each suggested topic, as well as in the second chapter of this thesis, he/she will be able to gain enough information about each subject. It should not be difficult for any person to make use of this program, as it is not complicated. All the counsellor needs to do is to watch and read the material beforehand.

6.2.1 The Meaning of Marriage (cf. §2.2)

If there is one thing that many Christians do not know at all it is the meaning of marriage as designed by the Lord God. This topic was discussed in chapter 2 (§2.2). As a starting point this subject should be well presented, for no marriage will be a success if people entering into it do not know what it means. The following points should be made very clear:

- Marriage is God's institution and it is a very good thing.
- Marriage is a union of love and fidelity. Love, in all three forms, is a very important ingredient in marriage. Love is not a feeling but an act of the will, which expresses itself in action. You choose to love, or to fall in love with someone, and you choose to stop loving or fall out of love any time you so wish.

- a) *Agape love* – the noblest form of love. It is unselfish and based on sincere appreciation and high regard for someone (cf. §2.2.3.1.ii.a)
- b) *Philia love* – refers to the close tie of friendship (cf. §2.2.3.1.ii.b).
- c) *Romantic/erotic love* – refers to the sexual attraction between men and women, i.e. passion (cf. §2.2.3.1.ii.c):

Fidelity or troth is what keeps the marriage together, not love.

- Marriage is a permanent covenant and nobody has the right to destroy it (cf. §2.2.4).
- For a marriage to take place, a man needs to leave his family and cleave to his wife.
 - a) *Leave* – means to depart, to loosen in all senses: physically, emotionally, and financially.
 - b) *Cleave* – to join, to keep together. If one is not able to leave, one is not able to cleave.
- Marriage is the norm but nobody has to marry, it is a choice of the individual. God did not create people to marry, but He created individuals with the primary goal of loving and enjoying His fellowship forever (whether single or married).

Biblical references:

Genesis 2:21-24; Proverbs 2:17; Matthew 19:5,6; Romans 7:2-3; 1 Corinthians 7:39; and 1 Corinthians 13.

Assignments:

1. Read chapter 1 in *Intended for pleasure* – E. & G. Wheat.
2. Read chapters 1-8 in *Single, married, separated and life after divorce* – M. Munroe.
3. Read chapters 1, 3, 6, and 7 in *Love without shame* – D. Wyrzten.
4. Watch videotape sessions 1 and 2 in *A biblical portrait of marriage* – B. Wilkinson. Do the daily devotionals and answer the questions suitable for single or engaged people in the Bible Study section in the workbook for each day of the week.
5. Use a notebook and make a record of all the main points discussed in the sessions and learned during the week(s), with their biblical references. You might need it later.

Further reading:

This material may be used by both counsellors and counselees in order to enrich their knowledge on the subject. However, it remains a choice of the individual to acquire and read it.

- i) *Together Forever* – A.K. Carroll – chapters 3 and 7.
- ii) *Christian Living in the Home* – J.E. Adams – chapter 4.
- iii) *The Ten Commandments* – P.J. De Bruyn –chapter 9 section 9.3.1.
- iv) Read §2.2.

6.2.2 The Purpose of Marriage (cf. §2 3)

When God designed marriage He had some specific purpose with it, something quite different from the overemphasis laid upon it today, i.e., that marriage is for your own pleasure and exclusive happiness alone. Marriage was not based on feelings and attraction and it had a more social and far-reaching purpose. This concept was well developed in §2.3. According to the Scripture, God's intention with marriage is that the couple would:

- Help each other – in fulfilling the tasks God had intended for them in this world
- Be His stewards – conquering, exploring, and taking care of what God had created
- Bear children and raise them according to God's principles – when couples by their own selfish desire decide not to have children, they break God's commandments and bring disruption in the marriage
- Avoid immorality – marriage provides the solution for people's uncontrolled desires
- Provide companionship – not in the sense of exclusive, self-centred you-me relationship, but in being good friends as they live, work together, and build up relationships, for God created human beings to be a social entity.

Biblical references:

Genesis 1:28; 2:18; 9:7; 1 Corinthians 7:2,7,9; 1 Timothy 5:14; Malachi 2:14.

Assignments:

1. Read *Marriage: The mystery of Christ and the Church* – D. Engelsma.
2. Read chapter 2 in *Love without shame* – D. Wyrzten.
3. Continue recording all the main points discussed in the sessions and learned during the week(s), with their biblical references. You might need it later.

Further reading:

- i. Read §2.3.
- ii. *The Ten Commandments* – P.J. de Bruyn - chapter 9 section 9.3.2.

6.2.3 The Role of the Spouses (cf. §2.4)

In the Scriptures one finds very clear-cut roles for husbands and wives. They were designed for the wellbeing of the families and for the order of the marriages. Although different, they are equally important for the success of the marriages. A couple who observe these roles as designed by the Lord are bound to

have happy homes. In §2.4 one is able to learn about the roles of each spouse in a detailed way. Many modern people do not accept these roles as they find them outdated, and try to follow their own course in life. By doing so they change God's design for marriage and bring chaos into their homes. They struggle about their place in the home for they do not know precisely what is expected of them. This insecurity causes stress, conflicts, and so many fights that the marriage eventually collapses (cf. Wilkinson, *A Biblical Portrait of Marriage* (videotape series)).

- The role of the husband is to be *the head of the home* – that means that he has the responsibility and the authority to lead the home, to call the marriage into obedience, to make decisions regarding physical, emotional, and spiritual welfare of the family. Every person in a headship position has some important duties to fulfil. According to the Scripture, the husband as the head of his wife and family is the:
 - a) *Protector* – from outside interference in his marriage and other dangers.
 - b) *Provider* – he ought to provide for his wife and family in all their needs: morally, spiritually, and financially i.e. food, shelter, clothing, etc.
 - c) *Priest* – help his wife grow spiritually and take the initiative for bringing spiritual wellbeing for the family.

- d) *Prophet* - he should interpret the Word of God and lead his wife and children to Christ.
 - e) *King* – the highest authority in the home. As such he is to rule, following the example of Christ.
 - f) *Physician* – help his wife to heal her wounds so that she will become a better person.
- The role of the wife is to be a *helper* – that means she ought to help her husband to accomplish the mission God gave him, making it easier and possible for him to fulfil his duties as head which are so heavy. She ought to help him to multiply, to conquer the world and rule over it. This is not a lower position and is equally important and necessary for any marriage to function well. One spouse is not able to fulfil what God expects from him/her in marriage without the other's co-operation.

Biblical references:

- a) *Regarding the husband's role* - 1 Corinthians 11:3; Galatians 3:28 Ephesians 5:22-33; Colossians 2:8,10; 3:19; 1 Timothy 3:4,5,12; 5:8; Hebrews 13:7,17.
- b) *Regarding the wife's role* – Genesis 1:28; 2:18; Proverbs 31:16,24-31; 1 Timothy 5:14.

Assignments:

1. Read *Marriage: The mystery of Christ and the Church* – D. Engelsma.
2. Read *Fascinating Womanhood* – H. Andelin – chapters 7-11.
3. Watch videotape sessions 3 and 5 in *A biblical portrait of marriage* – B. Wilkinson. Do the daily devotionals and answer the questions suitable for single or engaged people in the Bible Study section in the workbook for each day of the week.
4. Continue recording all the main points discussed in the sessions and learned during the week(s), with their biblical references. You might need it later.

Further reading:

- i. *The Ten Commandments* – P.J. de Bruyn – chapter 9 section 9.3.3.
- ii. Read chapter 2 of this thesis (A biblical view of marriage and divorce).

6.2.4 The Responsibilities of the Spouses (cf. §2.5)

Every person thinking of marriage should pay close attention to this subject. God has given some specific responsibilities to

married people that do not apply to those who are single. Responsibilities of the spouses in marriage differ from their roles. Roles are appointed positions to each of the spouses whether they live it out or not. It is theirs and nobody can take it away from them. Responsibilities are commands, therefore they require action, obedience, effort, commitment, etc. in order to be fulfilled. This subject was expounded in §2.5.

- The responsibility of the wife is *to submit to her husband*. That means she is commanded by the Lord to obey her husband and organise her life under him. Her career, her activities, her plans must be organised in consultation with him and it should never jeopardise the wellbeing of the family, or be done in a way that would hinder him to fulfil his tasks as commanded by the Lord. The wife's submission is unto the Lord. No husband has the power to force her to submit. It is her choice. But when she rebels and refuses to submit, she shows disregard for God's word and will for her life in marriage.
- The main responsibility of the husband is *to love his wife* – In order to fulfil this command the husband needs to love his wife as he loves himself and in the same way Christ loves him (His Church). In his headship position he has the responsibility to initiate love, to create an atmosphere for it to grow, to express it in action by fulfilling his duties towards wife and family, and to communicate this love in ways that his wife will

understand, not the way he thinks he should. He is supposed to love his wife in such a way that it would motivate her and make it possible for her to joyfully be submissive to him. In order to fulfil such a great command, the husband needs to carefully study the life, examples, and words of the Master. The husband is also commanded to dwell (live) with his wife, i.e. physically, in mutual dependence with his wife and in harmony with her.

- **Mutual responsibilities of the spouses:**

- a) *Mutual love* – as believers they should love one another out of reverence to God. They ought to love each other in the same way Christ loves them and teaches them to do in His teachings.

- b) *Mutual submission* – husbands and wives are commanded to submit to one another in marriage. That means they cannot be independent of each other and in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities they should always take each other into consideration. Mutual love and mutual submission is possible only when the couple has Christ as the Lord of their lives.

Biblical references:

- a) *Regarding the responsibility of the wife* – Ephesians 5:22-24 Colossians 3:18; Titus 2:5; 1 Peter 3:1,5,6.

- b) *Regarding the responsibility of the husband* – Ephesians 5:25-33; Colossians 3:19; 1 Peter 3:7.
- c) *Regarding mutual submission* – Ephesians 5:18-21; 1 Corinthians 11:11; Philippians 2:3-4; 1 Peter 3:8.

Assignments:

1. Read *Marriage: The mystery of Christ and the Church* – D. Engelsma.
2. Read *Marriage Spirituality* – P. Stevens. – chapter 10.
3. Watch videotape sessions 4 and 6 in *A biblical portrait of marriage* – B. Wilkinson. Do the daily devotionals and answer the questions suitable for single or engaged people in the Bible Study section in the workbook for each day of the week.
4. Write a small essay answering the following question: What do you find the most difficult in fulfilling your role or your duties? Explain please.
5. Continue recording all the main points discussed in the sessions and learned during the week(s), with their biblical references.

Further reading:

- i. *The Ten Commandments* – P.J. de Bruyn – chapter 7 section 7.3.4.1.

- ii. Chapter 2 of this thesis (*A biblical view of marriage and divorce*).
- iii. *Submission is for husbands, too* – M.R. Littleton.

6.2.5 The In-Laws (cf. §4.3)

One of the greatest sources of conflict in the marriage and marriage breakdown is the parents-in-law. There is a tendency in parents to manipulate and control their children in such a way that it becomes difficult for them to establish and keep their marriages. This specific problem was strongly indicated, based on experiences, by divorced respondents as reflected in Questionnaire 2 (cf. Appendix B). The Bible does not give specific commands on how the couple should relate to their in-laws, but registers good examples of this kind of relationship which can be used as guidelines for the Christian family today. It gives clear commandment on how children should treat their parents. It is very important that people clearly understand how their relationship with parents and in-laws should be before getting married.

- Children are commanded to respect and honour their parents. However, honouring does not mean that you will allow them take control of your life, especially after marriage.
- A single girl is under the authority of her father, but after marriage she is transferred to the authority of her husband.

- People should not get married against their parents' will. If the parents are sensible and God-fearing people, they can see things that you cannot see and their advice would prevent many sorrows and even a divorce. If they are unreasonable, you should resolve the problems in love, thus honouring them. By obeying your parents you obey God and find happiness.
- Honour your parents and your future parents-in-law by loving and respecting them, by being kind to them, by communicating with them, and by listening to sound advice, while obeying God's command to "leave and cleave" to your spouse.
- Don't allow your parents and your in-laws to interfere, rule, and ruin your marriage, no matter how much you love them. After marriage your first loyalty lies with your spouse.

Biblical references:

Genesis 2:24; 26:34-35; Exodus 4:18; 18; 20:12; Hebrews 12:9.

Assignments:

1. Watch videotape session 7 in *A biblical portrait of marriage* – B. Wilkinson together with your parents and then discuss it with them. Do the daily devotionals and answer the

questions suitable for single or engaged people in the Bible Study section in the workbook for each day of the week.

2. Continue recording all the main points discussed in the sessions and learned during the week(s), with their biblical references. You might need it later.
3. How is your relationship with your future parents-in-law? If there is any conflict between you, make a point of working it out as soon as possible.

Further reading:

- i. Intended for pleasure – E. & G. Wheat – chapter 2.

6.2.6 Money Matters (cf. §4.2. and §4.3)

In a home where both spouses are working people, finance administration can become an issue. In fact, many marriages have broken down caused by a poor approach to money (cf. Wilkinson, 8.6-8.12). It is sometimes an over-spender who does not think of the consequences of this behaviour, or a greedy spouse who is not prepared to share the money, or an attitude of "mine and yours" within marriage that simply does not work. Financial matters also featured prominently in the breakdown of marriages as recorded in the questionnaire. This fact is reflected in responses by both pastors and divorcees (cf. §4.2 and §4.3). When people marry, they need to discuss and learn how to administrate their money together.

- Money problems start in the heart – love of money, greed, covetousness, lack of trust.
- When you marry, the concept of "mine-yours" regarding money or other possessions, you must change "mine" into "ours". Everything you have, everything you earn, even yourselves belong to you both. If you cannot trust someone with your possessions, you cannot trust him/her with your life.
- Bring your earnings and plan together how you are going to use it.
- Learn to trust the Lord for provision.
- Stewardship in the home.

Biblical references:

Luke 12:13-31; I Timothy 6:6-10, 17-19; Hebrews 13:5,6.

Assignments:

1. Watch videotape session 8 in *A biblical portrait of marriage* – B. Wilkinson. Do the daily devotionals and answer the questions suitable for single or engaged people in the Bible Study section in the workbook for each day of the week.
2. Continue recording all the main points discussed in the sessions and learned during the week(s), with their biblical references.

Further reading:

- i. *You can beat Money Squeeze* – G. & M. Fooshee.

6.2.7 Sex and Romance in the Marriage (cf. §2.2.3.2 and §4.2)

It is difficult to think that two people who love each other would have problems with sex and romance in their marriage. The truth is that sex has caused many tears, despair, and severe conflicts in many marriages. Many are the causes of it: misconception about love and sex, wrong expectations about sex due to wrong input specially from love stories, lack of information about sexuality and romance, pre-marital or extra-marital experiences, lack of knowledge about God's purpose with sex, etc. These aspects were revealed in the empirical research as a prominent source of marital conflicts and divorce (cf. §4.3). Before getting married, one should learn as much as one can about sex and romance as designed by the Lord and about the basics of sexuality, i.e. how it functions. Sexuality, love, and romance have a prominent place in marriage as shown by results reported in chapter 2, §2.2.3.2. It will prevent conflict and will help you to find the greatness of sexual intimacy.

- Sex was God's idea, it is a very good thing, it was meant for pleasure, and it is to be satisfied within marriage.

- Sex outside the marriage is sinful. So be aware of the pitfalls.
- Sex is very powerful. It may bring you the most profound pleasure and joy, but it can also control you and become a source of your destruction.
- Romance is very important for sexual fulfilment.
- The art of lovemaking in the marriage is a process and progresses as the couple discovers how to please each other.
- Sexual relationships will be satisfying when your aim is to satisfy your spouse.
- The spouses owe each other the pleasures of sex.
- You can overcome sexual problems and lack of love feelings and build your marriage into a great marriage.

Biblical references:

Genesis 2:23-24; 18:12; Proverbs 5:18; I Corinthians 7:2-5; I Thessalonians 4:3-8; Hebrews 13:4,5.

Assignments:

1. Read *Together Forever* – A.K. Carroll – chapter 8.
2. Read *Love without Shame* – D. Wirtzen – chapters 4-8.
3. *Intended for Pleasure* – E. & G. Wheat – chapters 3-9.
4. Watch videotape sessions 9 and 10 in *A biblical portrait of marriage* – B. Wilkinson. Do the daily devotionals and

answer the questions suitable for single or engaged people in the Bible Study section in the workbook for each day of the week.

5. Continue recording all the main points discussed in the sessions and learned during the week(s), with their biblical references.

Further reading:

- i. *The Act of Marriage* – T. & B. LaHaye.
- ii. *Marriage Spirituality* – Paul Stevens – chapters 7-9.

6.2.8 Handling the Conflicts (cf. §4.2 and §4.3).

Married life is not a fairy tale. There is no such thing as "living happy ever after". When a person enters marriage, it is a new life style, a new person you have to share with everything every day, a new environment, etc. This phase of transition and adjustment is hard for every person. Many conflicts arise during that time and if they are not dealt with thoroughly, they will carry on for the rest of one's married life. The inability of handling conflict was identified in the research (cf. §4.2 and §4.3) as a major current cause of marriage breakdown. Life is full of surprises and challenges that both spouses will need to face together. They will have to learn how to overcome and master them soon. One should not leave it for later, nor allow it to accumulate, thinking that it will pass eventually, for it won't.

One needs to solve them if one wishes to succeed in marriage. Some important points to remember when dealing with conflicts are:

- Learn to communicate with each other in truth, honesty, and openness. Express your feelings, your thoughts, your desires, and your opinion in a gentle, respectable and clear way.
- Learn to listen to your spouse. That means that you should pay attention to what he/she is telling you and not to start imagining things and jumping to conclusions.
- Watch your tongue. Listen and think before talking. Wrong and harsh words said to each other may destroy yourselves and your marriage.
- Learn and practice the art of repentance, confession, and forgiveness. You should always be ready to recognise your mistakes, to apologise, and to grant forgiveness. Seek reconciliation even if you think that you are right.
- Control your temper and work at changes in your personality as soon as you notice that something in your life is affecting your marriage.
- Don't avoid conflict with the "silent treatment". Deal with the problems, otherwise they will overpower you.

Biblical references:

Proverbs 15:23; 18:13; 25:28; 29:11,22,30; Matthew 4:31,32; 5:23,24; 18:15-17; Ephesians 4:15-16; James 1:19; 3:2-10.

Assignments:

1. Read *Together Forever* – A.K. Carroll – chapter 6.
2. Read *Communication: Key to your Marriage* – H.N. Wright – chapters 3-10.
3. *Christian Living in the Home* – J.E. Adams - chapter 3.
4. Watch videotape session 11 in *A biblical portrait of marriage* – B. Wilkinson. Do the daily devotionals and answer the questions suitable for single or engaged people in the Bible Study section in the workbook for each day of the week.
5. Continue recording all the main points discussed in the sessions and learned during the week(s), with their biblical references.

Further reading:

- i. *Opposites Attract* – T. LaHaye.
- ii. *Marriage Spirituality* – P. Stevens – chapters 2,9.

6.2.9 Loyalty (cf. §2.2.3.1)

Loyalty means faithfulness, truthfulness. Loyalty may be reflected in actions, but it really is an issue of the heart. When people get married they make promises, make vows, and a permanent covenant of love and faithfulness is established. The marriage vows read "...I in the presence of God ... promise to love and cherish you, comfort you, honour and serve you, in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health, and be faithful to you as long as we both shall live" (cf. The book of common prayer, 1849). Now how you are going to keep these vows depends on how you guard your heart. Faithfulness is an expression of one's commitment to the marriage vows and to God and His Word.

The success of one's marriage will depend on how serious a person takes these vows. It is loyalty that keeps the marriage together, not love. Loyalty is broadly discussed in chapter 2 (cf. §2.2.3.1) under the title "Troth". Infidelity has been identified as one of the main causes of divorce in the empirical research (cf. §4.2 and §4.3). The Scripture speaks of the drastic consequences of lack of loyalty and encourages Christians to pray and guard their hearts.

- Loyalty starts in the heart – a thought, a look, a compliment, a touch, a hug - all of it can either encourage or break loyalty.

- Broken loyalty reveals itself mostly in adultery, whether in action (sexual act) or in thoughts.
- Loyalty is an essential element in marriage i.e. no marriage can survive, or exist when one of the spouses is constantly unfaithful.
- You can prevent unfaithfulness by guarding your heart.
- Faithfulness to your spouse does not depend on his/her attitude but on your relationship and loyalty to God. You can honour your vows even when your spouse does not. Your commitment to Christ is what will determine your behaviour.

Biblical references:

1 Samuel 16:7; Psalm 101:3; Proverbs 23:7; Malachi 2:13-14; Matthew 5:27-28; Philippians 4:6-7.

Assignments:

1. Read *Together Forever* – A.K. Carroll – chapter 6.
2. Read *The snare* – L. Mowday.
3. Watch videotape session 12 in *A biblical portrait of marriage* – B. Wilkinson. Do the daily devotionals and answer the questions suitable for single or engaged people in the Bible Study section in the workbook for each day of the week.

4. Continue recording all the main points discussed in the sessions and learned during the week(s), with their biblical references.
5. Write a small essay answering the two following questions:
 - a) You are on a business trip with a colleague of the opposite sex. After long hours of flight you are both tired. Your colleague leans on your shoulder to rest. What would you do?
 - b) You are on a honeymoon trip and suffer a car accident and your spouse becomes totally paralysed from the neck down. Would you continue loving and being faithful to him/her for the rest of your life? (justify your answers).

Further reading:

- i. *Victory over Temptation* – B. Wilkinson – chapters 21-30.

6.2.10 Spirituality in Marriage (cf. §4.3)

A Christ centred home is bound to be a happy and blessed home. The truth is that the success of any marriage will depend on how important Jesus is for oneself and for the marriage and on where one places Him. It was generally confirmed by respondents of Questionnaire 2 (cf. Appendix B) that for a marriage to succeed the couple needs to place Christ in the centre of their lives and their marriage. Christians should

start married life by developing their spiritual lives together. They should set aside special time for family devotions every day. Such a time should not be only a few minutes of reading a few verses of the Bible and saying a quick prayer. In times of such a rush and high demands from both spouses, it can easily happen that devotion time together becomes shorter and shorter until it slips out of their lives completely. The time for daily devotions is called "Family service" which means that it should include the reading of the Scripture, discussions, worship, prayers, and sharing with each other their spiritual experiences of the day, etc. Each one should have an opportunity to pray. Prayer is very important in the couple's growth, for it is the means of communicating with the Father about their lives. A family who prays together stays together.

- Start with the family service right at the beginning of your marriage. If you don't know where to begin, buy good books on Spiritual growth in the family. There is much material on this matter available today.
- Learn to pray together for any matter in your lives: your inner problems, your work, holidays, social lives, friendships, children, etc. etc. The hours you spend together in prayer will strengthen your spirits and protect you from the attacks of the devil.
- Learn to speak about the Lord and His Word with each other and with your children at any time. Make Him part

of your daily lives. Honour Him in the home, alone or with guests.

- It is the responsibility of the husband to take the initiative in calling the family for the "service".
- Parents are commanded to instruct their children in the ways of the Lord.

Biblical references:

Deuteronomy 6:5-9; 11:16-21; Joshua 1:8; Proverbs 2; 22:6; Ecclesiastes 4:12; Ephesians 1:16-23; Colossians 3:16.

Assignments:

1. Read *The Secrets of the Vine* – B. Wilkinson.
2. Read *Making Family Devotions a Priority* – R. Rinker.
3. Read *Victory over Temptation* – B. Wilkinson – chapters 1-10.

Further reading:

- i. *Family Life controlled by the Holy Spirit* – T. & B. LaHaye.
- ii. *Growing in Wisdom and Faith* – E. George.

6.3 GUIDELINES FOR COUNSELLING ON RECONCILIATION

This tentative program is focussed on struggling marriages, and separated or finally divorced couples. It may be used to counsel any person in any of these three groups with the aim to bring about reconciliation. Reconciliation as addressed in this chapter means first of all restoration of the person's fellowship with God. Secondly, it aims to bring the spouses to relate to each other in a civilised way, then move a step further into a friendship level, and finally, to bring about the restoration of the marriage. The whole chapter development is based upon the findings of previous chapters and specific paragraphs will be mentioned where applicable.

The topics addressed in this program deal firstly with the most urgent matters in the life of the person. It is aimed at helping the person to gain perspective of the present situation in his/her life, to deal with very important aspects that become barriers to reconciliation in all its forms, and to find forgiveness and restoration in Christ. Then it focuses on the process of reconciliation itself. It aims at leading a person to see reconciliation from God's point of view. It also presents some steps that should be taken in order to pursue reconciliation and obtain it and, finally, how to live in the freedom reconciliation provides. This program does not aim to make use of psychological or secular approaches to reconciliation, for much has been written in this field already, and some literature will be mentioned when suitable. The approach here will be from the biblical perspective, therefore this

program is recommended to be used in counselling Christians (although non-believers may also benefit by it), for only a believer will accept God's principles as brought forward in the Bible.

Modus Operandi

The personal pronoun "you" will be used as these guidelines are meant to be a type of interaction, a talk, between the counsellor and the counsellee. The term "counsellor" will be used to refer to a pastor, reverend, or any lay person involved in the ministry of counselling, i.e. any person making use of this program with the purpose of counselling, helping someone in need.

This program comprises ten counselling topics to be discussed during each appointment, which may occur weekly or every second week, or any convenient period of time, depending on the urgency of the matter and/or the progress pace of the counsellee. Under each topic 5 self-help tasks are assigned for five days of the week or over a longer period of time, depending on personal circumstances, which counsellees should be strongly advised to complete (see Table below). Each task includes a biblically-based questionnaire, an assignment for spiritual and personal growth, and suggested material for further reading indicated in Appendix C. Counsellors are advised, as a rule, to make the completion of the questionnaires compulsory because it will provide the necessary spiritual insights and support needed in the process of reconciliation. The completion of the questionnaires is not expected to exceed 30 minutes. However, should a person sometimes find it difficult to comply with this

requirement due to personal circumstances, one would expect that at least time would be set apart for reading the main biblical texts and for praying. The intention with the growth assignments is to provide support in the absence of the counsellor, to build up spiritual and emotional strength, and also to help a person to better understand his/her own situation, all of which are indispensable in this healing process. Therefore, counselees should make a definite effort to complete the tasks carefully. Material for further reading on the topic of each day is indicated in Appendix C. It has the purpose of acquainting counselees with sound literature that will be beneficial for upliftment.

It is important to keep in mind that this is a flexible program which can and should be adjusted according to the needs and circumstances of the counselees. Nevertheless, it was formulated, based upon the theoretical-biblical and empirical research results reported in chapters 2, 3, and 4, which should be of great help in leading a person to reconciliation. The following Table provides an overview of the proposed program.

SCHEMATIC PRESENTATION OF COUNSELLING

PROGRAM

Weekday/ Unit → Topics ↓	1	2	3	4	5
§ 6.3.1 Take a good look at the situation	You are responsible	Crying out for help	God wants to help you and heal you	Healing the broken heart	The doctor is in
§ 6.3.2 Deal with your feelings	Anger	Bitterness and Hate	Rejection	Guilt and depression	Loneliness
§ 6.3.3 Who is God - how do you see him?	God is faithful	God is love	God is Merciful and Forgiving	God is Holy	God is just
§ 6.3.4 Recognise and repent from your sins	Repentance is a command	What is repentance	You have sinned regarding your mamage	You have sinned regarding your divorce	Repentance produces change
§ 6.3.5 Confession and forgiveness	Confess and be free	Confession brings healing	Why do I have to forgive my "ex"	If you haven't forgiven - make sure you do	Forgiveness breakthrough - a choice
§ 6.3.6 Seek reconciliation	The ultimate separation and reconciliation	Why should I even think of reconciliation	Being receptive to reconciliation	Initiating reconciliation	Restitution in the process of reconciliation
§ 6.3.7 Choose to obey	Commit your self to obedience	Obedience requires faith	Total surrender	The Holy Spirit and obedience	Obedience brings happiness
§ 6.3.8 Work at change in your life	Change your thought pattern	Change your old habits	Develop communication skills	Learn to love	Learn to be a friend
§ 6.3.9 Stay pure	What about dating?	Learn to take control of your sex life	Close the door to lust	Guidelines to purity	Living in punty
§ 6.3.10 Move on growing closer to God	When return is possible	Develop your spiritual life	Find fulfilment in life	Find joy in your singleness	Delight in the Lord

6.3.1 Take a Good Look at the Situation (cf. §4.3)

A person involved in separation or divorce goes through many difficult experiences, such as leaving the children behind, finding a new place to stay, establishing independence, etc., but it seems that the most difficult thing a person will do is face reality. In the face of such a tough experience like divorce people usually have the tendency to live in a fantasy world. Some will avoid thinking it is happening to them, others will be living in a false hope that the spouse will soon return, still others live in the illusion that separation and divorce will bring peace. It is true that one might find temporary peace, especially in certain situations, but unless one makes some major adjustments, he/she will continue to experience significant conflict. This also reflects the experiences of respondent divorcees (see §4.3).

The role of the counsellor in this first encounter is:

- to help the person to face the reality of what has happened emotionally and spiritually. To see things for what they are, to face the pain, to seek help in taking a course of action in order to find the road to healing.
- to listen to and evaluate the situation of the person and lead him/her to a commitment towards recovery.
- to have the counsellee sign a written agreement, as this will help him/her to take the matter of counselling seriously.

The counsellee should:

- commit him/herself to keep to the appointments;
- read the recommended material; and
- do the required assignments for the period agreed upon, which could be daily, weekly, or for longer periods of time.

UNIT/DAY 1

You Are Responsible

Before you start reading and doing your assignments, take time to pray and ask God to guide you to the truth and to help you in all your needs.

Circumstances or other people are no more responsible for your attitude and actions than a mirror is for the way you look. You are responsible for them. If you are a Christian, the other person can never wrong you so much to justify your becoming cruel, spiteful, and unfriendly. All these circumstances reveal is the real you – the kind of person you really are inside. If you wish things were different or your spouse would change, remember change starts with you. Focus on what you can do, and forget what you cannot do. You cannot change anybody in this world, least of all your spouse. **Read Philippians 4:6-7.**

The apostle's admonition applies even in your situation.

- a) What should you do in the face of circumstances you cannot change? (v. 6).
-

b) What is the comforting promise you have in verse 7?

Develop emotional stability based on your reality. Learn not to depend emotionally on somebody else. Stand on your own two feet by beginning to set your personal, emotional, spiritual, and physical priorities.

Growth Assignment:

- Read Psalm 23 and write down 8 ways in which the Lord as your shepherd promises to assist when you're going through debilitating pain:

a) _____	e) _____
b) _____	f) _____
c) _____	g) _____
d) _____	h) _____

- Read chapter 1 – What is misbelief? And chapter 9 – Misbelief in fear of change. In *Telling yourself the truth* – by W. Backus & M. Chapian.
- Read chapter 3 – Self-development during separation. In *Hope for the separated* – by Gary Chapman.

- Pray that God will help you and carry you during this time.

UNIT/DAY 2

Crying Out For Help

Pray for God's guidance.

When people go through traumatic experiences like divorce, they often lose track of God. But man was made by God and will not find rest until he finds God. If you look to a spouse or to someone else to give you a sense of worth and to bring you happiness, you are looking in the wrong direction. Peace of mind, inner security, confidence in the outcome of life, and a sense of joy about living do not come from a marriage or from a spouse, but from an intimate relationship with God. Many individuals during the time of trouble, separation, or divorce become very angry with God – angry because He allowed the pain, the loneliness, and the frustration that come from a broken relationship. Others will turn to God for help and for a deeper relationship with Him. Whatever your position, you are in need of help. **Read Psalm 77:1-15 and 142.** These two Psalms are expressions of one individual who was going through a major crisis. But out of the midst of that pain he turns to God and remembers more pleasant days when he knew His blessings.

- a) What is David asking God to do?
-

What is his state of mind?

b) What conclusions does David reach about God (v.13-15)?

c) How does your situation compare with that of David?

Growth Assignment:

- Read chapter 11 – Our relationships with others – In *Telling yourself the truth*– by W. Backus & M. Chapien. Write down how you can change wrong ways of thinking.

-
-
- How would it help you?
-
-
-

- Read also Psalm 121. Where do you find the help you are looking for?

- Thank the Lord for His availability.

UNIT/DAY 3

God Wants To Help You And Heal You

Pray for understanding and experiencing God's compassion and strength.

Sometimes pain, confusion, and despair take over your mind and heart. You may feel there is no one who will understand or help you out of that misery. You may not find anybody to listen to you or encourage you because of many reasons. Sometimes they might say they don't want to get involved, or they may not have the time, or they may be tired of listening to the same story. You may feel alone, helpless, and hopeless. So, **read Isaiah 40:28-31**. In this book Isaiah describes how the people of Israel rebelled against God, how they suffered because of it, and how God showed His compassion toward them and restored His people. He wants to help you too.

- a) How can God restore you? (vv. 29, 31).

b) What do you need to do to receive God's comfort and restoration? (v.31).

Read the whole chapter. What comfort do you receive from God in these verses?

Growth assignment:

- Read Isaiah 57:15-21. What does God want to do for you?

- To receive God's comfort and restoration, you need to begin to turn away from your sins. Are there areas in your life that need addressing? What is the result of not dealing with these issues? (vv. 20, 21).

- Pray that God will help you deal with the issues that hinder you to receive His help.

UNIT/DAY 4
Healing The Broken Heart

Pray for understanding and receiving the healing grace of God.

You may be feeling all kinds of pain right now. Your heart may have been wounded throughout the years and your heart may have been broken so many times for many reasons. The only way to get rid of this pain, the only way to be healed, is by drinking the right medicine. The only One who can help you and bring you peace, new strength, and mend your heart again is the Lord. All you need to do is go to Him in faith and accept what He has to offer you. **Read Isaiah 61:1-3.** In this section the prophet was predicting the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Later on, in the gospel of Luke, Jesus applied these words to Himself, fulfilling this prophecy (Lk 4:18).

a) What is the source of healing found in these verses?

b) According to the above verses, why did Jesus come to earth?

c) What part of His work would apply to your present feelings and situation?

Growth Assignment:

- Read Isaiah 53, 65, and 66. Write down a) Why and how can the Lord heal you?

b) What does He expect from you in order to give you all He has promised?

- Pray that the Lord will help you to open your heart to receive what He did to bring you healing.

UNIT/DAY 5

The Doctor Is In

The key to have God's presence in your life and to experience His healing touch is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Thus, it is very important to understand how to have such a relationship and how to develop it. This is the most important step you can take to begin your personal healing. **Read John 14:6, and 1:12.**

a) Who brings a person (you) to a relationship with God?

b) What do you need to do in order to have a relationship with God?

- c) What do you need to do in order to develop a relationship with the Lord? (**John 14:15-18; 15:1-14**)

- d) Read **Revelation 3:20**. Have you ever opened the door (of your heart) and invited Jesus to come in (experienced conversion)? If you have, this is the time for you to stop and re-commit yourself to Him in total surrender and praise Him. If you have not, it is the time for you to think about your life and make up your mind. Would you like to invite Him in right now (see Bybel in Praktyk, 1993:1999)?

- e) Write down your prayer of commitment or re-commitment.

Growth Assignment:

- The gospel of **John** will give you a good picture of who Jesus is and how He can impact on your life. Please start reading it one chapter per day.
- Read **chapter 2** – Forever different. In *Victory over the darkness* - by N.T. Anderson.
- Pray for the development of a deeper relationship with the Lord.

6.3.2 Deal with your Feelings (cf. §3.2.4 and §4.3)

This would be the second appointment counsellor and counsellee would have. It is, however, important to keep in mind that an emergency might arise depending on the situation. The counsellor should be open and flexible with regard to crisis situations.

The Counsellor should:

- Review and discuss the assignments of previous week(s).
- Help to clarify doubts and lead the person to the heart of the matter.
- Pray with the person(s), expressing sincerity and faith in the living God, otherwise it will be a mere uttering of words and the counsellee(s) will feel it.

In this session the counsellor must be prepared to listen carefully to all the things the counsellee has to say. One of the real and great needs of the divorcee is to have someone with whom he/she can talk openly. There is a great emotional turmoil in the divorcee's life. When conflicts in the marriage are so many that it ends in separation or divorce, the people involved end up very angry, bitter, pugnacious, hateful, and often determined to hurt their marriage partner. The trauma of divorce creates such a strong emotional upheaval that one or both partners experience alienation. As a result they feel helpless, hopeless, meaningless, depressed, lonely, etc. These feelings were clearly expressed by divorcees in their responses to Questionnaire 2 (see Appendix B) (cf. §4.3).

The counsellor has the task:

- To help people to handle their emotions in a biblical way.
- To listen carefully, identify the root problem, and guide them through that storm having the Word of the Lord as a compass.
- To be Scripturally well prepared in order to be able to lead the counsellees onto the right path. There is also very good Christian literature available that a counsellor should definitely have. It would help in his/her ministry. Such books, among many, are *Victory over the darkness* by N.T. Anderson, *Victory over temptation* by B.H. Wilkinson, *Hope for the separated* by G. Chapien, *Telling yourself the truth* by W. Backus and M. Chapien, etc. The counsellor should also be acquainted with all the material suggested for growth assignments.

UNIT/DAY 1

Anger

Anger is one the very intense feelings most people coming out of a divorce will have. They are angry because things did not go their own way, or the way they expected it to happen, or for many other reasons whether justified or not. Anger develops because of rejection, missed/lost ideals or suppressed sadness. Anger resides behind closed doors of most homes and it has become a problem in many of them. Anger destroys the quality of one's personal life, marriage, and health. Sometimes one may say that his anger is justified, such as in the case of injustice, prejudice, abuse, betrayal, etc. Still, the

focus of the teaching of the Scripture is on how we deal with it. Despite one's best intentions, it is very easy to lose control of one's anger when dealing with the conflicts surrounding divorce. When this happens, you can damage yourself and those around you. Take a look at the consequences:

Read Proverbs 29:22.

- a) What is the effect of your anger?

- b) List another consequence of your anger. What effect could this "strife" have on your life? (**Proverbs 30:33**).

- c) **Proverbs 16:32 and 29:11.** Describe the comparisons found in these verses.

The Bible gives also good suggestions on how to bring your anger under control and ways to defuse explosive situations. Which of these suggestions might be helpful to you this week?

Read Proverbs 15:1.

- a) What is the suggested antidote to anger?

b) **Read James 1:19-20.** What advice do you receive from this text?

c) **Read Ecclesiastes 7:9.** Write down some ideas on how you might avoid quickly reacting in anger.

Growth Assignment:

- Read **chapter 14** – Anger. In *Victory over Temptation* - by B.H. Wilkinson, and *answer the questions* at the end of the chapter.

UNIT/DAY 2

Bitterness And Hate

Bitterness is nothing more than repressed anger. It is anger held in so long that it becomes a fixed way of thinking. Every time you remember the hurt, the pain, the anger displays itself as though it has just happened. Anger about all the things that have happened in the past when not dealt with will develop into bitterness, and the result is that you become filled with the malignancy of hate. Hate and bitterness go hand in hand and both are related to anger. You cannot have one without the other. If you have harboured anger to the point of bitterness and hate, you need help, and you need to do something

about it as soon as possible, for it is a very strong destructive power in one's life. The Word of the Lord is instructive in how to deal with it.

Read Ephesians 4:31-5:1.

a) Who has control over bitterness?

b) What are you supposed to do with bitterness?

c) List the positive behaviour or attitude that the text above suggests in place of the negative. Write out the way you see yourself putting this Scripture into action in your life. Describe specific situations and describe how you picture yourself actually doing what the Scriptures suggest.

d) What are God's commands in **Hebrews 12:14-15**?

Growth Assignment:

- Read **chapter 9** - What about my bitterness? - In *Hope for the separated* - by G. Chapman. *Answer all the questions* at the end of the chapter.

- Read **chapter 7** – How to handle anger (before it handles you). In *Communication: Key to your marriage* --by N.H. Wright.
- Ask the Lord to help you to get rid of all bitterness that might have stayed hidden deeply in your heart.

UNIT/DAY 3

Rejection

There are many different reasons for feelings of rejection. Some people suffer rejection because they were not wanted even from the moment of conception, others because the parents wanted a child of the other sex. Rejection may have come because of the family you were born into or because the way you were reared. Rejection may come due to criticism and/or humiliation by friends, teachers, colleagues, when a friend you trusted turns his/her back on you, when you are betrayed by your spouse, or are left by him/her. Most people may feel at one or another time a little rejected, but the person who comes out of a divorce is plagued with the excruciating pain of rejection. The Lord understands what betrayal is like. He comforts His people and compares them to a wife who has been rejected by her husband. **Read Isaiah 54:4-6.**

- a) What are the comforting promises you receive from this text?

b) Concerning shame, humiliation, and rejection, Jesus knew it all. He willingly endured mockery on the cross for you. **Read Isaiah 50:6, 61:7.** What does God offer you in return?

c) Read **Isaiah 53:3.** According to this text, who despised and rejected Jesus?

d) **Read Mathew 27:45-51.** What was Jesus' ultimate rejection? What was God's eternal purpose with it (**Ephesians 1:3-6** in *New King James Version*)?

e) According to the verses above and **Luke 15:7,** what is the remedy for rejection?

f) Jesus is the ultimate example of how one should meet rejection. Look at His attitude in **1 Peter 2:21 and Luke 23:34.** What should you do when feeling rejection?

Growth Assignment:

- *God's Remedy for Rejection* – by Derek Prince.
- Ask the Lord to help you to accept what He has done for you.

UNIT/DAY 4

Guilt And Depression

After separation or divorce some people become so depressed that they cannot function. Depression has many causes and is triggered by a number of provocations. In the case of a divorced person it comes from the sense of guilt, repressed anger, a feeling of injustice, and from the experience of loss. You may feel guilty for the things you did, refused to do, or said to your spouse, children or family members. You may feel terribly angry because things did not happen the way you wished, or because of the many hurts piled up throughout the years. Or you may feel that everything and all the loss is so unfair and you are a failure. Well, the Bible speaks about this kind of depression in a very clear way. Read **Psalms 32, 38, and 51**.

- a) How depressed was David? What caused him to feel that way?

b) Describe how similar your condition (your feelings) is to his.

c) How did David find relief from his depression? Describe (or list) what you can do in order to be free from this depression.

d) **Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-5.** Where do you get comfort when you feel depressed?

Growth Assignment:

- Read **chapter 4** – Misbelief in depression – In *Telling yourself the truth* – by W. Backus & M. Chapan.
- Read Luke 12:22-31.
- Pray that God the Holy Spirit will comfort you and that you will choose to be obedient to Him.

UNIT/DAY 5

Loneliness

Loneliness is a real thing in the life of a separated or divorced person. The void left by your spouse is real, a painful reminder of the depth of the marriage relationship. Of course, loneliness is not limited to the separated or the divorced. Many married couples living in the same house are isolated emotionally. Nevertheless, loneliness for the divorced person seems to be more acute.

While the loneliness may feel unbearable at times, it can be something that draws a person closer to God, to His presence in one's life. And when He is living within you, you can find permanent healing from the pain of loneliness.

Many people, when separated, look for a new relationship in order to eliminate loneliness. While it may help for a short time, it only delays your healing and may actually add to your pain and lead you to disobedience to God. The Bible offers some suggestions for other ways to overcome your loneliness.

a) Read James 4:8. What is your responsibility?

b) What does God do?

c) Read Psalm 147:3, 6, 11. What happens when you draw nearer to God?

d) Read Ephesians 3:16-20. Is Christ dwelling in your heart?

e) If not, could his absence be contributing to your loneliness? (verse 19).

f) Another way to overcome loneliness is to begin to reach out and help others who are hurting. Read Isaiah 58:7-11. What is your role? (v. 7, 9, 10).

g) What is the effect? (v. 8, 9, 10, 11)

Growth Assignment:

- Read **chapter 8** – How will I handle the loneliness? – In *Hope for the separated* - by G. Chapman.
- Read **chapter 3** – Self-development during separation – In *Hope for the separated* - Answer questions in number 3.
- Pray that Jesus will fill the void in your heart.

6.3.3 Who is God – How do You See Him? (cf. §3.2.1 to §3.2.4)

The Counsellor should:

- Review and discuss previous assignments. If the counsellee is still struggling with one of the feelings mentioned above, which might still be unresolved, more time should be spent in dealing with it. The matter of feelings is very important and one should not proceed until they are thoroughly dealt with.

In this session the purpose is to evaluate the counsellee's perception of Who God is. Often divorcees become angry at God, at other times very disappointed because they think God has forgotten them, or did not care enough to interfere and stop the pain, the suffering, the divorce, etc. etc. They pray and get no answers (or better, no answers that they wish to receive), they hold on to certain promises but still they do not become a reality for them, then they lose faith in God and distance themselves more and more from God. Of course, God did not cause the problems, or the divorce to happen, nor did He remain aloof somewhere. But a wrong perception of Who God is will have an impact on one's faith, and will determine the way one approaches Him. Faith in God only fails when people have a faulty understanding of Him. If one has a wrong idea or little knowledge about God and His Word, one will have

little faith. A broad discussion about the character of God is given in §3.2.1 to §3.2.4.

The counsellor should:

- Explore all the concepts mentioned below, before he/she hands out the tasks for the following week(s). They are very important in the process of reconciliation, for in order to reconcile with God and with one another, a person needs to have a clear understanding of Who He is.

UNIT/DAY 1

God Is Faithful

When your marriage fails, you may think that you cannot trust anybody, especially if your spouse has committed adultery. So much suffering and pain have occurred, you have asked God to change the situation, to put a stop to it, still your marriage ended and your life is not what it should be. You may ask yourself: May I trust God with my life? Won't God trick me too? Are these promises in the Bible for me today? The Bible speaks of the character of God, which will help answer your questions.

- a) God is immutable, that is, He does not change or go back on His word. **Read Hebrews 13:8, Numbers 23:8, and Malachi 3:6.** What do you learn about God in these verses? Can you trust Him? Why?

b) **Read 2 Corinthians 10:13 and 12 Thessalonians 3:3.** What does God promise you?

c) Can you trust Him? Why?

Growth Assignment:

- Read **chapter 6** – The power of positive believing – In *Victory over the darkness* - by N. T. Anderson.
- Pray that God will help you believe His Word.

UNIT/DAY 2

God Is Love

God's character is to love. All He has done and is still doing show His loving nature. His love is eternal and unconditional. He loves you no matter what you do or fail to do. He will always love and accept you even when you are not aware of it. God's love for you is the great

eternal constant in the midst of all the inconsistencies of your daily walk.

a) **Read Romans 5:6-9 and 1 John 4:8,9.** How did God prove His love for you?

b) **Read Romans 8:35-39.** What can come between you and God?

c) **Read Jeremiah 31:3 and Ephesians 3:17-19.** How long does God's love for you last and how is it measured?

d) **Read John 15:9,10.** What do you need to experience this love constantly?

Growth Assignment:

- Read 1 John 4:7-21.

UNIT/DAY 3
God Is Merciful And Forgiving

It is also important for you to understand the aspect of mercy in the character of God. His mercy is expressed through His forgiveness. He looks at us full of sins and He decides to forgive all of them. Forgiveness is an act of pure grace on God's part. He knows that all our sins are due to our disobedience, lack of faith, and rebellion against Him. Nevertheless, because He is merciful, God approaches us and extends His forgiveness to everyone who believes in Him.

Read Ephesians 2:1-7.

- a) What did God do for you when you were spiritually dead (separated from Jesus)? (v. 4).

- b) **Read Psalms 78:38 and 103:8-13.** How does God deal with those who have sinned against Him?

- c) How great is His mercy towards you? (v. 11).

- d) **Read Isaiah 43:25 and Micah 7:18-19.** What does God do with your sins (those you have committed long ago or those you have just committed regarding your marriage breakdown)?

Growth assignment

Read chapters 1-8 – In *All of grace* - by C.H. Spurgeon.

- Pray that the Lord will help you to understand and accept His mercy and be forgiven.

UNIT/DAY 4

God Is Holy

God is a Holy God, that means that He is totally different and separated from all uncleanness. He is infinitely greater and more powerful than anything in the world He has made. He is full of glory and no sin can exist in His presence. He cannot endure evil or impurity or sins of any kind. He is a zealous God and will not tolerate any violation of His law. But holiness is necessary for harmonious human life. Therefore you need the holiness of God in your life. You cannot live without God, and as a sinner you cannot approach Him. The only way to enter into the presence of God is by removing the barriers between

you and Him, i.e. the sins. God in His great love provided a solution for this problem by offering Jesus Christ to die in your place. By accepting what He has done, you can be restored and your holiness renewed. God's holiness in you will bring healing for your soul, and will empower you to come back to Him and live in His presence.

- a) **Read Leviticus 11:44-45 and 20:7-8.** How does God reveal Himself? And what does He require from you as part of His people?

- b) **Read 1 Peter 1:13-21.** Knowing that you have committed so many sins, how can you enter into the presence of the Holy God?

- c) God commands His children to be Holy (see Lev.11:44), according to **1 Thessalonians 4:1-8, Revelation 22:11, Ephesians 4:22,24.** Describe how you can become holy.

Growth Assignment:

- Read **chapters 1-4** – *In Victory over temptation* - by B.H. Wilkinson.
- Pray that the Lord will help you to understand His holiness, and to obey His command regarding holiness.

UNIT/DAY 5

God Is Just

Besides being loving, forgiving, and merciful, God is also just and true. It is important that you understand this concept. It means that, because of His righteousness and truth, God cannot and will not let sin go unpunished. Your sins mean disobedience and rebellion against Him and deserve, even demand, just punishment. For God to accept and forgive you, and bring you back into a relationship with Him, the penalty for your sins needs to be paid first.

- a) **Read Genesis 2:16-17, Jeremiah 31:30, and Romans 6:23.** What is the penalty required by God for your sins?
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- b) **Read Exodus 21:28-30, Leviticus 4:2ff, 16:3-10,15, and Numbers 25:1-13.** In the past, how did the people pay for the penalty for their sins?
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c) **Read Romans 3:21-26, Galatians 3:13, 1 Peter 1:18-19, and Revelation 5:9.** How is the penalty for your sins paid?

d) What is required of you?

e) Have you accepted Christ and His sacrifice on your behalf?

Growth Assignment:

- Read **chapters 3-9** – In *All of grace* – by C.H. Spurgeon.
- Pray that the Holy Spirit will help you to believe and accept what Christ did for you.

6.3.4 Recognize and Repent from Your Sins (regarding marriage, children, families, and divorce) (cf. §3.3.1)

The Counsellor should:

- Review and discuss previous assignments. If the counsellor has any doubt about any topic studied during previous week(s), stop and go through it together again until there is understanding and acceptance by him/her. The matter of knowledge of God's character is crucial for reconciliation. In order to go back to God in confidence, one needs to know Who He really is.
- Bring the counsellor to the realisation that he/she is guilty of many sins regarding the breakdown of the marriage. It is also to lead the person to true repentance, not merely sorrow. The first step towards reconciliation with God and others is the recognition of one's guilt (see §3.3.1).
- Present this subject to the counsellor in a biblical way and lead him/her to look his/her condition squarely in the face.

UNIT/DAY 1

Repentance Is A Command

It is very important that you recognise and repent from your wrong doings before the Lord can forgive you. Repentance of one's sins is taught in the Bible as a pre-requisite for forgiveness and reconciliation.

- a) **Read 2 Chronicles 7:14 and Acts 3:19-20.** What is the condition for receiving forgiveness?

- b) **Read also Acts 2:38.** What are the results of repentance?

- c) **Read Jeremiah 18:10, Ezekiel 18:30-32 and Luke 13:3.** What are the consequences of not obeying this command to repent?

Growth Assignment:

- Read chapters 15-16 – In *All of grace* – by C.H. Spurgeon.
- Pray that the Lord will move your heart towards recognition of your sins and to repentance.

UNIT/DAY 2
What Is Repentance

In order to repent of your sins, you need to understand what repentance is. Repentance in the Scripture is taught as a real sorrow and brokenness of heart due to sin. This profound sadness towards the sins produces a change of mind, attitude,

and direction in one's life and will lead a person to repentance (see §3.3.1).

- a) **Read 2 Corinthians 7:10.** Describe the difference between repentance and remorse.

- b) **Read Psalm 31:9-10 and Mark 14:72.** How does a repentant person feel towards his/her sins?

- c) How do you feel about your sins right now?

Growth Assignment:

- Read Psalm 38. Describe the condition of the person who recognises his/her sins.

- Where did repentance lead David?

- Pray that the Spirit of the Lord will lead you to recognition of all your wrongdoings.

UNIT/DAY 3

You Have Sinned Regarding Your Marriage

In order to reconcile with God and others you need to recognise your sins in the marriage. You have sinned against God and your spouse. Maybe you are thinking that you have always been a good spouse and that you have done all you could in your marriage. It is important to look at what the Bible teaches regarding marriage and the spouses' role in it.

- a) **Read Genesis 2:15-18, Ephesians 5:22-33, Colossians 3:18,19, Titus 2:2 and 1 Peter 3:1-12.**

Write down your role and all your duties as a husband (if you are a man), or as a wife (if you are a woman) as taught by the Lord.

- b) Look at your list. Have you fulfilled these commands of the Lord regarding your role and duties as a spouse every day? Write down in your own words how you have failed to obey the teaching of the Scripture.
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- c) Now look at what you have written. When you fail to fulfil the commands of the Lord regarding marriage, you not only sin against your spouse but also against Him. These sins give rise to God's anger and separate you from Him. In order to regain your relationship with Him and your spouse, you need to recognise that you have sinned and must repent. Certainly it is the Holy Spirit who convinces a person of his sins. Pray for Him to convince you of them. Take some time in prayer and then **write down a prayer of repentance.**
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Growth Assignment:

- Read **chapter 2, 3, 5 and 7** – *In Together forever* – by A.K. Carroll.
- Watch **video tapes 3-6** – Series named *The Biblical portrait of marriage* – by B.H. Wilkinson. Answer the questions on the book.

UNIT/DAY 4

You Have Sinned Regarding Your Divorce

Your sins regarding the divorce also violate your relationship with God. At this point you may think you are the innocent

party. You may argue that you did not want the divorce, that the other was unfaithful to you, or that you had no choice for circumstances were of such a nature that you had to leave, or even still that it was God's will for you to get a divorce. The purpose of this study today is not to condemn you, rather, it is to help you to recognise your share of wrong doings, bring it before the Lord in true repentance and confession, and walk free. The Bible has also very clear teachings about divorce and it is important that you look at them. It will help you to gain clarity about your situation.

- a) **Read Malachi 2:13-16 and Matthew 19:4-6.** How does God feel about divorce? And why does He feel that way about it?

- b) **Read Matthew 5:32, 19:3-9, Mark 10:11-12, 1 Corinthians 7:10-15** and answer the following questions: 1) Why was divorce allowed?

- 2) What kind of sin does a person commit by divorcing someone?

- 3) What are the only two exceptions a believer is allowed to divorce without breaking God's commands? Does your divorce fall within these exceptions?

4) What caused your divorce?

5) Despite the fact that these two exceptions for divorce exist, it is not a command but merely a permission, and the Christian should not initiate any divorce (1Co 7:12,13). In fact, the Lord expects something quite different from every believer, **read Matthew 18:21-22**. What does the Lord expect you to do when your spouse has sinned against you?

6) Should a Christian get a divorce for some or another reason, what does God command and expect her/him to do? (1Co 7:10-11).

c) Your divorce may have occurred as a result of one of the two exceptions mentioned above, therefore you think you have not sinned against God with regard to divorce. You may think you are the innocent one. Remember, there are no innocent people in this world (Ro 3:23). If you think you had the right to divorce, what about your anger, your hate, the words you have said to your spouse, the spitefulness, selfishness, pride, hard heart,

vengeance, lack of love and forgiveness, etc. All of these are sins and they separate you from God and from one another. You need to recognise your wrong doings and repent from them in order to receive forgiveness and be restored into a relationship with God and with other people. By doing that, you will find the joy and peace that you so much desire. Write down a list of things you think contributed to the break-down of your marriage, then pray for the Lord to work out true repentance in your heart.

Growth Assignment:

- Read I John 2:1-11.
- Read **chapter 13** – In *Together forever* - by A.K Carroll.

UNIT/DAY 5

Repentance Produces Change

By now you have noticed that recognition of sins and repentance are a serious business. True repentance will not only cause sadness in the heart of the person but will also lead

to a total change in the life of the person, and finally it will bring a life of freedom and peace.

- a) **Read Luke 15:11-24.** This parable speaks of a total change that led to forgiveness and finally to reconciliation. What happened to the young man when he was in the gutter after he had lived so carelessly? (v. 17).

- b) What decision did he take? (v. 18).

- c) What made forgiveness and reconciliation possible?

- d) **Read Luke 3:1-14.** This text gives practical examples of change produced by true repentance. How do they apply to you?

- e) Are you prepared to look deep inside yourself, recognise your sins, and turn away from them?

Growth Assignment:

- Read Jeremiah 3:12-14.
- Read **chapters 4-5** (Be filled now) – In *The Calvary road* - by R. Hession.

6.3.5 Confession and Forgiveness (cf. §3.3.2)

The counsellor should:

- Review and discuss previous assignments. It is possible that the counsellee will have doubts and difficulties regarding the previous lessons. For a person to recognise and repent of wrong doings when he/she thinks that he/she is the one sinned against, is not easy. There are also others who might be placing all the blame on themselves. In either case the help of the counsellor might be required.
- Having led the counsellee into recognition of sins and repentance, the counsellor should lead him/her to confession and forgiveness. That means that the counsellee should not only confess to the Lord that he/she has sinned against Him, but should also ask Him and the other people for forgiveness. Without these two ingredients there is no reconciliation either with God or with other people (see §3.2.4 and §3.3.2). The counsellor should present these two concepts very clearly and then

encourage the person to take hold of the blessings and joy of forgiveness.

UNIT/DAY 1

Confess And Be Free

For you to experience peace, a true and open confession is necessary. Confession makes repentance a practical and visible reality and opens the way to forgiveness. And forgiveness cures man's heart condition, restores relationships, clears conscience, and gives willingness for one to forgive others and praise God again. Forgiveness includes not only the letting go of past offences but also the asking for pardon.

- a) **Read Psalm 51.** What was David's appeal in verses 1-2?

- b) What was his attitude in **verses 3-4**?

- c) Who is the real offended party when you sin against your spouse or other people?

- d) True confession faces the internal root of evil in one's heart and leads the person to accept justice and punishment. **Verses 4-6.** Explain in your own words David's confession.

e) When you sin against God and others, how do you get the assurance that your sins are forgiven? (vv.7, 14, 16-17 cf. Hebrews 10:8-10 and 1 John 1:9-2:2). What is required of you in order to receive God's forgiveness?

f) What are the results of forgiveness? (vv. 8, 12-13, 15).

When you are truly sorry for your sins and with a humble heart you come to God asking Him for forgiveness, He forgives you and you become free, free to live and free to serve Him and to extend forgiveness to others. Do you wish to be free now? Speak to the One who can set you free.

Growth Assignment:

- Read **chapter 11** – In *Love without shame* – by D. Wyrzten.
- Read **chapter 5** – In *Hope for the separated* – by G. Chapman.

UNIT/DAY 2

Confession Brings Healing

True guilt steals our physical health and spiritual spontaneity. Many illnesses are caused because of unsolved matters and unforgiveness. True confession and the acceptance of God's forgiveness cure this heart condition bringing relief, peace and joy, and healing for the body as well. It also heals many relationships and restores many marriages.

- a) **Read Psalm 38:1-10.** What kind of present day illness do you think David had because of his sins?

- b) How did He find healing for this condition? (**Psalm 32, cf. 30:2-3**).

- c) What is the state of heart of a forgiven person? (**v.1,2, cf. 30:1, 4-5 and 51:15**).

- d) **Read James 5:16.** This is actually an imperative i.e. a command. What is the teaching of this verse on confession?

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- e) Confession and forgiveness definitely bring healing for the body and the soul. Read the following passages: **Psalm 41:4, 103:3, 147:3, Jeremiah 33:5-6**. What do they teach about the relationship between sin, forgiveness and healing?
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Growth Assignment:

- Read **chapter 7** – In *Competent to counsel* – by J.E. Adams.
- Read **chapter 9** – In *Marriage spirituality* – by P.Stevens.

UNIT/DAY 3

Why do I have to Forgive my “ex”?

You may be so angry or hurt by what you spouse has done that you might not feel like forgiving him or her. But forgiveness is not a feeling, it is something God commands and expects from every believer.

- a) **Read Ephesians 4:31-32**. What do you need to get rid of?
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b) What is the replacement? And who is your role model?

c) **Read Colossians 3:12-14.** What is again the command here? (v.14).

d) Why and how are you to forgive others?

e) **Read 2 Corinthians 2:5-11.** Write down another reason why you should forgive your ex-spouse. (v. 11).

Would not you consider going to your spouse and ask him/her for forgiveness? The Lord will help you to do that if you wish to obey Him.

Growth Assignment:

- Read **chapters 1-2** – In *Healing for damaged emotions* – by D.A. Seamands.

UNIT/DAY 4

If You Haven't Forgiven – Make Sure You Do

When you don't forgive you need to live with the consequences of your unforgiveness. Unforgiveness leads to bitterness and can not only affect your health (as discussed before in. §UNIT/DAY 2) but it definitely affects your relationship with God.

- a) **Read Matthew 6:14-15.** What effect can unforgiveness have in your life?

- b) **Read Psalm 66:18 and Mark 11:25-26.** How can unforgiveness affect your prayers?

- c) Our sins create an effect in our lives. **Read Colossians 2:13 and Romans 6:23.** What did God do for us?

- d) By which way did we earn His forgiveness?

Knowing all these things about the effects of unforgiveness and the greatness of God in order to heal us and bring us back into the right relationship with Him again, would you like to forgive all those who hurt you?

Growth Assignment:

- Read **chapter 5** – In *Set free through inner healing* – by B. Tapscot
- Pray that the Lord will help you to receive His forgiveness, obtain all the assurance you need that you are forgiven, and extend forgiveness to those who sinned against you

UNIT/DAY 5

Forgiveness Breakthrough – A Choice

Letting go of our “right” to restitution or revenge is one key step in reaching the point of forgiveness. It allows us to move our attention from the past to what lies ahead of us. It is also a conscious choice you make.

- a) **Read Philipians 3:13-14.** What is Paul’s attitude to the past?

- b) What is his focus and goal now?

c) **Read Isaiah 43:25.** What does God do once he has forgiven us?

Forgiveness is a gift from God through faith but also a decision of your mind. You need to decide to obey God's commands regarding repentance, confession, and forgiveness. You have seen that it is possible to forgive when you are forgiven. Would you not bow before the Lord in humiliation and surrender yourself totally to Him and receive the grace of forgiveness?

Growth Assignment:

- 1 John 1:9.
- Read **chapter 11** – In *Victory over the darkness*— by N.T Anderson.
- Praise God for setting you free.

6.3.6 Seek Reconciliation (cf. §3.2.4 and §3.3.3)

The counsellor should:

- Review and discuss previous assignments. By now the counsellee should be free and more open to think of reconciliation with his/her spouse.

- Present this subject in such a way that the person will have no doubt about it as the perfect will of the Lord for his/her life.
- Emphasise the fact that reconciliation is first of all the turning of a bad relationship into friendship and only then into a re-marriage with the previous spouse (where possible).
- Lead the person into practical procedures towards obtaining reconciliation. Books such as *Hope for the separated* by G. Chapman and *Reconcilable differences* by J. Talley are very helpful here as they have good guidelines for leading a person into reconciliation.

UNIT/DAY 1

The Ultimate Separation And Reconciliation

The first thing you need to remember when dealing with reconciliation is that your sins separated you from God, but Jesus with His great love and compassion brought you back to God and paid the price for peace between God and you. Therefore, He can lead you to reconciliation again first to the One you have offended mostly – God, and then your spouse and others around.

- a) **Read Isaiah 59:2.** What is your condition when in sin?

b) **Read Romans 5:8-11.** Who is behind reconciliation?

c) Do we deserve it?

d) What is the effect of what Jesus did?

Have you been reconciled with God through Jesus Christ? If you have, you are a new person free to live the full and rich life God has planned for you. If you haven't, God is calling you and is waiting for you to come to Him. Would you like to consider it right now?

Growth Assignment:

- Read 2 Corinthians 5:14-20.

UNIT/DAY 2

Why Should I Even Think Of Reconciliation

Reconciliation is a difficult concept to consider because often one is afraid of being hurt again by the same person. But, even

though when you have been hurt deeply by other people, the Lord wants you to reconcile damaged relationships, including your marriage. In fact, He commands and expects you to make all the effort to reconcile with those who have hurt you in any way.

- a) **Read Matthew 18:1-17.** What is the Lord's teaching with regard to broken relationships in this text?

- b) What is the first step you are to take? (v. 15).

- c) What comes next? (v. 16, 17).

- d) **Read Matthew 5:23-25.** What should you do before you come to worship the Lord?

- e) Why do you think you should take the initiative to reconcile in such a case too?

- f) **Read I Corinthians 7:10-11.** What are the Lord's commands for the Christian who may come to separate or divorce his/her spouse?

Growth Assignment:

- Read **chapter 2** – In *Reconcilable differences* – by J. Talley.

UNIT/DAY 3

Being Receptive To Reconciliation

The first goal of reconciliation is the restoration of previous relationships. Reconciliation is necessary for every believer and you cannot function until you reconcile with your spouse. That means that you need to strive to regain friendship with him/her by giving and receiving friendship. There are cases in which reconciliation takes place only by you becoming a friend to your spouse because he/she has married somebody else, so nothing further is possible. Nevertheless it is required and expected of you as a forgiven believer. At other times, a further step to reconciliation is possible and you should make all effort to achieve it. There is a possibility your spouse may return and desire reconciliation. If that happens, how should you respond?

- a) **Read Luke 15:11-24.** What was the father's reaction when he saw his rebellious and guilty son returning home? (v. 20).

b) What was the son's attitude? (v. 21).

c) The son had hoped to be taken in as a servant.
What actually happened? (vv. 23-24).

This story of reconciliation teaches that you should always be ready to extend forgiveness and receive the repentant sinner, no matter how serious his offences were. Remember, forgiveness brings freedom and change.

Growth Assignment:

- Read **chapters 5 and 9** – In *Reconcilable differences*— by J. Talley.
- Read **chapter 10** – In *Hope for the separated* - by G. Chapman.

UNIT/DAY 4

Initiating Reconciliation

It is important for us to remain open to efforts of reconciliation by the other person. We also need to be responsive to God when He leads us to initiate reconciliation. He teaches that you are to take the initiative in seeking reconciliation whether you are the guiltier or less guilty party in the breaking up of your marriage. So, when you feel tempted to ask, "Why me?" rather ask "Why not me?" Remember, you have been forgiven, and if you have forgiven your spouse, now you are ready to go a step further in the process of reconciliation.

The entire book of Hosea is a picture of God's love for the nation of Israel and his desire to reconcile with the people of Israel, despite the fact that they had been unfaithful to him by worshipping other gods. God asked Hosea, a prophet, to give an earthly example of this kind of love.

a) **Read Hosea 3:1-3.** Who initiated the reconciliation?

b) What did Hosea do?

c) What life style was his wife leading at that time?

- d) **Read again Matthew 5:23-24.** Who is supposed to initiate reconciliation?
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Growth Assignment:

- Read the whole book of Hosea and write down how reconciliation is applied.
- Read **chapter 10** – In *Reconcilable differences* – by J. Talley.

UNIT/DAY 5

Restitution In The Process Of Reconciliation

Restitution is a very important element in the process of reconciliation. It happens during the times of hardship and the breaking up of the marriage that one causes much harm to the spouse. This includes not only emotional and spiritual harm, but in many cases moral, physical and financial harm as well. It is very important that you strive to retribute all that you can and that you strive to do justice at all costs. Restitution is not a paying back for what was wrongly done but a response to being reconciled to God. It is a visible sign that you are forgiven and that you are ready to do for others what Jesus did for you.

- a) **Read Luke 19:1-10.** How did Zacchaeus receive Jesus? (v.6).

b) When feasting with Jesus, what did he decide to do? (v. 8).

c) What motivated this man to do restitution? (v. 9).

This story teaches that, when Zaccheus felt worthy of being in Jesus' company, when he felt His love and acceptance, he was thrust to make amendments. Jesus confirms this fact by saying that this man was now saved. He had made it known before God and the others that he had caused great harm in the past. Restitution is a costly thing in the process of reconciliation. As a forgiven, free, reconciled and new person in Christ, you are to strive for justice. That means that you need to make amendments even when it might mean that you will need to share what you have, it might be that you will lose a lot, but that is what is required of you by the Lord (see § 3.5). What is your decision right now?

Growth Assignment:

- Read Leviticus 25.

- Read also Exodus 21:28-36. What is the principle taught in this text?

6.3.7 Choose to Obey (cf. §3.3.3)

The counsellor should:

- Review and discuss previous assignments. It is possible that some people will still be resistant with regard to reconciliation.
- Impress upon counsellees that all the marvellous promises of freedom, peace, joy, abundant life, etc., will only become a reality in the life of the Christians upon obedience. It is when they decide to obey God's commands regarding all the aspects of life that they take hold of the rich blessings that the Lord has prepared for everyone who believes. It is not enough to know all the nice verses, to know all the promises even by heart, to read about all the right topics, etc.; a person needs to make up his mind and take the step of faith into obedience (see §3.3.3). Obedience is not easy because it requires true faith, total surrender, commitment and dependence upon the Holy Spirit. But obedience brings the person closer to the heart of God. It will lead a person to know Who God really is and to know what is His perfect will for every believer. His will is the best for every person, even when it is totally the opposite of what you desire.

- Challenge the counsellor to put into practice what he/she has, learned guiding him/her to tackle one thing at a time and see how God is faithful in His Word.

UNIT/DAY 1

Commit Yourself To Obedience

Obedience is an act of the will. It is only you who can decide to obey God's Word or not. It is only you who can decide to pursue reconciliation with your spouse. Nobody, not even God, will force you to do that. But when you commit yourself to obedience you will see the results in your life and in the lives of others as well. Commitment to God's Word is the key for a successful life. It is true that for reconciliation to take place, both parties need to acknowledge the wrong and be willing to work at it, but a spiritual renewal on the part of one or both is the most effective remedy to restore marriage. One has to say, "I will obey God's Words, no matter what". Such a commitment to obedience already removes great barriers and brings you under God's protection.

- a) **Read Psalm 37:5,6.** What is the promise in these verses?

- b) What is the condition for receiving them?

c) **Read Deuteronomy 28:1-2,13-14.** As you can see, all God's promises are real and true for you today, but you have to be obedient to God. God gives you the choice either to obey or not to obey. Write down what your reward is for obeying the Lord.

d) **Read Joshua 1:7-9.** What kind of life will you have if you decide to live in obedience? Is it better than the one you are living now?

e) Who promises to be with you when things are tough?

f) Would you dare to trust Him?

Growth Assignment:

- Read **chapter 8** – In *Marriage spirituality*– by P. Stevens.

UNIT/DAY 2

Obedience Requires Faith

The choice to return to your spouse and pursue reconciliation is a step of faith. It is not a blind faith but a faith based upon the counsel of the Lord. You cannot see anything resolved, no emotional love returning, or anything you desire. So you need to take the first steps purely by faith, not by sight. It is in situations like these that one's faith is tested and increased. That is why you need to know your God. You cannot trust a God you don't know.

Many people fail to obey God because they don't believe Him. One of the hardest things one can encounter when counselling Christians is unbelief. There is always a "but". Some will say that such commands are too hard, others will say that it is not relevant for today, others will chose to remain in their sinfulness, trying to comfort themselves by saying that God understands because "we are just sinful people". Such sayings reveal lack of faith in the faithful and unfailing God and they definitely become a barrier to obedience.

- a) **Read Hebrews 11:4-10, 17-29.** Look at the lives of the people mentioned in these verses. What motivated them to obey God?
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- b) Were they forced to act the way they did?

c) What assurance did they have that things would turn out for the best?

d) What was their reward for obeying God?

e) What is necessary for you to come close to God and please Him? (v. 6).

Growth Assignment:

- Read **chapters 8-12** – In *All of Grace* – C.H. Spurgeon.
- Read **James 1 and 2**. Describe how the promises are made real and how faith operate.

UNIT/DAY 3

Total Surrender

Obedience has much to do with surrender. It is only when you surrender all of yourself to God that you become willing to do what He asks from you. Total surrender means that you hold nothing back from God. All that you have, all that you are,

including your will, you offer Him and mean it. You let Him take control and do what He wishes. Remember His will is the best for you. It might be that it is totally against what is in your heart, but it is the best, that you can rest assured.

A life of total surrender is difficult because it is a life of the impossible for most people in the world. However, it is possible because it is a life under the guidance, the power, and the grace of God.

When you surrender yourself to God He will fill you, and will bless you in ways you never experienced before. If you say, "Lord, here I am, any and everything for You. I accept Your demands, I am Yours, and all that I have too. Absolute surrender is what yields You, by divine grace. You are the number One in my life". When you do that in prayer, God will accept you and will teach you what it means.

- a) **Read Luke 22:42-44.** Jesus is the example of absolute surrender to The Father. Describe Jesus' feelings and situation during that time.

- b) Was it easy for Him to submit to His Father's will?

- c) **Read John 5:30, 6:38.** What was Jesus' main desire and purpose?

d) **Read 1 Kings 20:1-4.** This text is also another example of total surrender. What did Ben-hadad demand from the king of Israel?

e) How did the king of Israel respond to the requests of Ben-hadad?

God requires that from you in order to cover you with His blessings. Are you willing to surrender yourself totally to Him who is able to bring you to glory?

Growth Assignment:

- Read **chapter 6** – In *Victory over temptation* – by B.H. Wilkinson.
- Pray that the Holy Spirit will empower you to surrender it all to Jesus.

UNIT/DAY 4

The Holy Spirit And Obedience

There are literally hundreds of commands in Scripture that God will use to greatly enhance our lives as we respond in

obedience. But as it was discussed before obedience, is not easy because it demands faith and surrender – two things very difficult for many people. Nevertheless, when you are really a Christian you are not left to depend on your own power when it comes to obedience. The Lord Jesus is with you. The Holy Spirit is at work and is at your disposal to help you to obey. All you need is to go to Him.

a) **Read Philippians 2:13.** Who gives you the will and the power to obey?

b) **Read Philippians 4:13.** When you have the Holy Spirit within you, are you able to obey?

c) What else are you able to do?

d) **Read John 14:16-17.** What did Jesus promise? Who is with the believer always?

e) **Read Romans 8:26-28.** What does the Holy Spirit do for the believer today?

f) Would you ask Him to assist you?

Growth Assignment:

- Read **John chapters 14-16**. Take notice of Jesus' promises and the work of the Holy Spirit.
- Pray that the Holy Spirit will fill you daily.

UNIT/DAY 5

Obedience Brings Happiness

Obedience to God's commands will lead you to a happy and blessed life. You cannot and you will not find happiness in disobedience, even when you try to justify yourself by saying that you love someone else so much and it feels so right for you, that you deserve some happiness and God wishes that for you, too, that this person is now a Christian, that God has forgiven you so you are free, etc. If your attitude and thoughts are not in agreement with the Word of the Lord, it is wrong and you will not be happy or blessed if you pursue what is in your heart. What makes a father's heart happy is an obedient child. A happy father is always ready to give all and bless his child. Happiness and blessings come through obedience.

- a) **Read Genesis 22:1-18**. What did God ask from Abraham?

- b) Was it easy for him to obey?

c) What was Abraham's reward for obeying the Lord?

d) **Read Genesis 26:4-5.** What did God promise Isaac?

e) Why did God promise to bless Isaac so much?

f) Did He fulfil His promises?

g) **Read John 13:17.** Now that you know the commands of the Lord Jesus, what would you receive by obeying them?

Do you want to be happy and blessed? Choose to obey the Lord every day of your life.

Growth Assignment:

- Read **chapter 15** – In *Fascinating womanhood* – by H. Andelin.

6.3.8 Work at Change in Your Life (cf. §3.3.4 and §3.3.5)

The counsellor should:

- Review and discuss previous assignments. For reconciliation to take place one needs to work at change. You do not want to get back together to the old sick marriage. You want to restore your marriage and transform it into a marriage God wants, full of blessings and harmony. For that to happen, you need to work hard towards changing a lot of things in your life: your thoughts, your old habits, your approaches, etc. You need to learn other skills which you may have lost along the way or may never have learned before. If you think that the fault lies with your spouse, remember change starts with you and not with the other person. If you wish to have a different spouse, a different marriage altogether, you need to work hard at changing yourself. Restitution, when possible, is a concrete demonstration of a changed person (see §3.3.5). It is a hard work but it is worth the effort. A changed person paves the way for reconciliation.
- Help counsellees to identify areas in need of change in their lives and also guide them how to find God's help for transforming their lives.

UNIT/DAY 1

Change Your Thought Pattern

When working towards reconciliation, in all aspects the first thing you need to change is your way of thinking. The source of most problems is the mind. So many wrong concepts have developed in your mind throughout the years, so many false beliefs and unreasonable expectations have you placed there inside and they need to be replaced for you to succeed at all in your life. You need to renew your mind, and the only way of doing that is by replacing the world's view by God's views. God's principles are very different and people might think you are out of your mind when you start pursuing them. But if you are a Christian, you are supposed to be different from the rest of the world.

- a) **Read Romans 12:1-2.** What is the call in these verses?

- b) What should your approach be towards the views of this world i.e. the views of most people living without Christ or in disobedience to Him?

- c) Where and how should change begin?

d) What is the result of renewing your mind?

e) Identify and list some ways of thinking you need to change, and how you are going to do that practically.

f) Read also 2Co 10:5 and Phl 4:8.

Growth Assignment:

- Read **chapter 9** – *In Victory over the darkness* – by N.T. Anderson.
- Read *Spirit controlled Temperament* – by T. LaHaye.

UNIT/DAY 2

Change Your Old Habits

Another aspect of your life that needs change is your habits. Bad habits or habits that harm others need to be abandoned and replaced with what is good and uplifting for you and for others. Usually, when people change their thought patterns, their habits also change automatically. At other times it is a struggle and you need to commit yourself to change daily. A

change of attitudes in your life opens up the way to reconciliation, as it is a concrete and tangible way in which you show the other person that you are serious about what you are saying.

- a) **Read Ephesians 4:21-32.** When you have Christ you are a new person. What are you supposed to do with your old self?

- b) Describe 'the old nature'.

- c) Again, where does change begin? (v. 23).

- d) What does it mean 'to put on the new self'?

- e) From verses 25-32 there is a list of things and old habits a new person needs to replace. Which of those do you need to get rid of?

- f) In which way can you replace them?

Growth Assignment:

- Read **chapter 8** – In *Finding the freedom of self-control* – by W. Backus.
- Read **chapter 12**– In *Together forever* – by A. K. Carroll.

UNIT/DAY 3

Develop Communication Skills

Communication is very important for any relationship to start and to develop. One of the greatest problems in marriage breakdown is lack of communication. Communication is not the mere act of uttering words. It includes speaking with words, body language, and listening. In fact listening is the most important. You need to listen with your heart, not only with your ears, and only then to speak.

- a) **Read James 1:19.** What is James' advice in this verse?

- b) **Read Proverbs 18:13.** What is the result of not listening?

- c) **Read Proverbs 15:23.** What aspect of communication is mentioned in this verse?

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- d) **Read Ephesians 4:25.** What is a very important element in communication?
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Growth Assignment:

- Read **chapter 6** – In *Together forever* – by A.K. Carroll.
- Read **chapter 10** – In *Communication: key to your marriage* – by H.N.Wright.

UNIT/DAY 4

Learn To Love

Love is one of the most misunderstood concepts by Christians today. Society has defined love as something that happens to you, not something over which you have control. Love as an emotion, a warm, bubbly, positive feeling one has for a member of the opposite sex as taught by the media. Especially television and movies set the norm for most people, including Christians. You either have it or you don't. If you don't there is nothing you can do about it. You must simply move away and hope that you may find it with someone else someday. That concept of love has been one of the greatest contributors to divorce today. It makes marriage hopeless and divorce inevitable if one does not have that certain emotion.

Love is not only an emotion, it is also an act of will. You choose whom and how to love and you choose whom and when not to love. The Bible teaches love as a command for every one who professes to be a believer. If you are a believer you ought to love whether you feel like it or not, whether the other person deserves it or not. When thinking of reconciliation you need to practice that kind of love. You need to obey this command of Jesus if you wish to have a marriage lasting for ever. The great thing about the love Jesus teaches is that, when you obey Him, despite all the circumstances the feeling comes back.

a) **Read John 13:34-35, 15:9-17.** How should you love your ex spouse?

b) How is this love manifested or expressed?

c) **Read Matthew 5:44-48.** How should you treat those who hurt you?

d) Do you feel like loving them?

e) Does this command include your spouse?

- f) **Read Titus 2:4-5, Ephesians 5:25-31.** What is the Lord's command for the spouses?
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If you haven't practised love as Christ taught, now is the time for you to begin. Without this kind of love you will never be reconciled or have a marriage at all.

Growth Assignment:

- Read **Romans 12: 9-21** and **2 Corinthians 13**. Describe in which practical ways you can love your spouse and others who have hurt you.
- Read **chapter 5** – *In Hope for the separated* - by G. Chapman.

UNIT/DAY 5

Learn To Be A Friend

After separation and divorce, an excruciating loneliness arises and your old circle of friends is usually not there for you anymore. You need to develop good friendships. In fact, you need to learn how to be a friend. It happens many times that, when people get married, they build their lives totally around the spouse. When he/she is not there anymore they have

nobody. Good friends are needed in our lives. You need to go out and search for them.

As a Christian you should also think of places where you could meet the right people. If you go to a pub, you'll get a pub kind of friend. If you go to a singles group with the intention of getting a husband or wife, there you have ulterior motives and you might get deeply hurt again. You should approach people not thinking what you can get but what you can give. Be a friend for the sake of the friendship and nothing else. Jesus is the best example of intimate and sound friendships. He had friends of both sexes without any sexual impropriety.

- a) **Read John 15:14-15.** What characterises their friendship?

- b) **Read 1 Timothy 5:1-2.** How should you relate to your friends of different ages and sexes?

- c) **Read Proverbs 27:9-10.** What is the value of good friendships?

- d) **Read Proverbs 17:17.** How should you treat your friends?

- e) **Read 1 Samuel 20.** This is a most beautiful example of pure and sound friendship between two people in the Bible. What characterised their friendship?
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Growth Assignment:

- Read **chapter 9** – In *Reconcilable differences* – by J. Talley.
- Read **chapter 7** – In *Love without shame* – by D. Wirtzen.

6.3.9 Stay Pure (cf. 2.2.3.1)

Another very important aspect that will encourage and enhance the possibility of reconciliation is purity. Purity is not only necessary for reconciliation but for the person's own life and relationship with the Lord. Many adults begin new relationships as soon as possible, thinking the new 'love' will replace the old one or help to ease the pain they go through, even though none of them have a final divorce in their hands. Others do have a divorce but the relationship does always involve sex, and other improprieties. They are following no moral standard, and they and their children will suffer in the end. The rules a Christian ought to live by must be in accordance with those God have set forth.

Purity is well taught in the Scripture as being the will of the Lord for your life and there is always a high price to pay when this teaching is transgressed. Paul says, "For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality" (1Th 4:3).

As one reads through the Bible, one cannot miss the major importance that our sexuality has not only to do with ourselves and others, but also with God Himself. Sexuality is a threshold sin. On one side are guilt, lying, deceit, addiction, and shame, and on the other side are freedom, honesty, transparency, liberty, and a clear conscience. Believers who are in bondage to immorality find, that unless they experience victory in this area, they cannot grow in holiness or serve God with passion or power.

The role of the counsellor is:

- To review and discuss previous assignments.
- To present the subject of purity as a necessity and as an ordinance for the Christian as biblically and as clearly as possible. He/she should also guide the counsellee into practical steps on how to overcome temptations and how to obtain victory over immorality.

UNIT/DAY 1

What About Dating?

The first thing many people want to do after breaking up with a spouse is to start dating again. They think that the solution to a bad relationship is to get into another one as quickly as possible. You may also feel the same way about it right now. However, dating can become a messy thing and lead you to sin. After the breaking up of a relationship you are vulnerable and may start dating any kind of person just for the sake of having someone around. This kind of dating most definitely leads to improper behaviour and a Christian should avoid it at all costs. You should concentrate your energy on rebuilding your life for you need it so badly.

Before you even consider dating, you should ask yourself some pretty serious questions: Are you free to marry? If you are not free to marry you are not free to date.

- a) **Read again Matthew 19:9 and Romans 7:2-3.**

What does the Lord say about marrying someone else after divorce?

- b) According to these verses, when is a Christian free to marry someone else?

- c) Dating is a major obstacle to reconciliation. Imagine your ex spouse decides to come back and finds you in the middle of another relationship. You might prefer the new relationship, but is it God's primary will for you? **Read again 2 Corinthians 7:10-11.**
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- d) What is most important to you, obedience to God or your own desires? You already know what the results are of disobedience. What is your choice?
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Besides these questions, you should also ask yourself practical questions like: a) Am I emotionally free to date? The grieving process after a divorce is often more severe and prolonged than after the death of a mate. Specialists say that it usually takes the minimum of two or three years for a person to recover from divorce trauma. b) What about my children, are they ready for another change and family disruption? c) Am I prepared to be hurt again? d) What about my parents or family, what do they think? e) Am I ready for another divorce? Most of the second marriages will end up in another divorce. f) Am I prepared for the possibility of child abuse? The incidence of child abuse is very high in stepfamilies. g) How important is my church? h) And lastly, how important is God in my life and how important it is to me to obey Him?

Growth Assignment:

- Read **chapter 2** – In *Hope for the separated* – by G. Chapan.
- Read **chapter 7** – In *Victory over temptation* – by B. Wilkinson.

UNIT/DAY 2

Learn To Take Control Of Your Sex Life

One of the greatest problems among people of all kinds is the problem of sexuality. The matter of sex is a problem not only for the single, the separated, or the divorcee, but also even for married people. The problem emerges mostly because of the wrong input you get daily and because of the wrong conception you have about sex. Sex has been treated as a god by many people, or it has been approached as a thing you cannot live without, or as an urge you cannot control, therefore it needs to be satisfied, etc. The Bible speaks of this kind of sex use as sinful. If you are married or separated it is called adultery, or if you are single it is called fornication. As a Christian you ought to control your sex life, otherwise it will control you, and the results will be detrimental not only to yourself, but also to your family and it will definitely disrupt your relationship with God and will make reconciliation an impossibility.

In order to obtain control and victory over your sex life, you need to submit yourself to God's Word. You also need to replace your distorted views on sexuality by correct and sound ones. You need to feed your mind with the truth daily, and you need to avoid all kinds of temptations regarding this matter. You also need to learn how to depend on and live in the power of the Holy Spirit.

a) **Galatians 5:16-25.** What is the desire of sinful nature?

b) What are the acts of sinful nature?

c) If you live by the Spirit i.e. in obedience and under His guidance, how would you deal with your sexual desires? (v. 16).

d) **Read 1 Corinthians 6:13-20.** What is your body meant for?

e) What is the command you receive regarding sexual immorality?

- f) **Read Romans 8:5-14.** What is the impact of a life controlled by its own sinful desires?

- g) How can you control your sexual life?

Growth Assignment:

- Read chapters 1,2,3 and 6 – In *Finding the freedom of self-control* – by W. Backus.

UNIT/DAY 3

Close The Door To Lust

Purity in the life of a person has to do not only with abstinence of sex, dating, petting or other kind of forbidden relationships, but also with lust. Lusts refers to anything that causes sexual arousal or desire, either by what you listen to, like music, or by what you see (magazines, films, photos, beautiful bodies, etc.). The object of lust varies from person to person. For some it may be a lovely girl, for others a handsome man, a child, a relative, pornography, or a member of the same sex. Lust refers both to thought and actions. It usually starts with a look, then it becomes a thought, and then it turns into action. The

results or effects of lust in the person's life or in society as a whole are detrimental. The high price one pays for lust is emotional breakdown, drug use or addiction, child abuse, rape, incest, adultery, fornication, divorce, death, and other sex-related crimes (cf. Heidelberg Catechism, Q and A 108 -109).

Many people struggle with the problem of lust. However, such problems have their answers in Christ, and it is up to you to get rid of it in your life and close the door to it. Surely it requires total surrender to God, obedience and discipline but it is possible to curb lust and live a life of victory and purity before the Lord in this world.

- a) Some people say that lust becomes a sin only when you let your thoughts or desires become actions, otherwise not. **Read Matthew 5:27-30.** According to Jesus, when is lust a sin?

b) Where does it start?

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- c) **Read Proverbs 7.** What are the consequences of lust? (vv. 18,19,26,27).

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- d) How can you overcome such temptations? (vv. 1-5, 24,25).
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e) **Read Genesis 39.** How did Joseph respond to lust and temptation?

f) **Read James 4:7-10.** What do these verses teach about resisting temptation?

Growth Assignment:

- Read **chapter 26** – In *Victory over temptation* – by B. Wilkinson.
- Read **introduction and chapters 1,3,5, and 6** – In *The other side of love* – by M. White.

UNIT/DAY 4

Guidelines To Purity

You have seen that if you wish to live in relationship with God or wish to reconcile with your spouse, you need to live a pure sexual life. You might be entangled in one or another kind of sinful behaviour right now and might think that your situation is unique, you have needs, and God understands that. Or you may think that your situation is so complex that in fact there is no way you can obtain purity. Remember, to live a pure life is a

privilege and a duty of every believer, therefore available to everyone who wishes to live in obedience and harmony with the Lord. All you need to do is to want it more than life itself and to learn how to pursue it.

- a) The first thing you have to do is to break off any forbidden relationship, if you are engaged in one. Any improper relationship is an offence to God, therefore a sin. You cannot grow spiritually, or obtain victory while in sin. Breaking off with anything you like very much is very painful, but with regard to sin it is surely the only way to happiness and peace. Jesus' approach to sin is clear. **Read John 8:11**. What is His command regarding sins in one's life?
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- b) Master your secret thought life. Do not allow lustful thoughts, like fantasising, masturbation, etc. to take control of your life, but rule over them. **Read 2 Corinthians 10:5**. What are you supposed to do with your impure thoughts? What does it mean 'to take captive every thought'?
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- c) Guard your mind and heart. Selecting your entertainment: books, magazines, films, TV programs, music, etc. is the way to go about it. What you bring into your mind is what controls you.

Proverbs 4:23, Matthew 6:21-23, 15:18-20, Luke 6:44-45. What is the relationship between what you see, your heart, and your actions?

d) Select your friendships. Friends are very important in achieving purity and holiness. Good friends will encourage and help you all the way. On the other hand, wrong friends may lead you to total destruction. **Read 1 Corinthians 15:33.** What does Paul say about the power of friends? And how should you deal with bad friendships? (**Proverbs 1:10-19**).

e) Flee from all kinds of temptations. The best way to overcome temptation is to flee from it. If you allow yourself to dwell in the presence of those things that stimulate you to sin, it will become very difficult for you to overcome them. So, don't give it a chance, run away from it, literally. **Read Proverbs 5.** What can you learn from this text with regard to temptations? Read also **1 Corinthians 6:18 and 2Titus 2:22.**

f) Feed in the Word. The Word of the Lord is everything you need to overcome any and every

obstacle in your life. When you meditate upon it you replace all the wrong ideas you have developed throughout the years, you gain insight in how to live a holy life, you enter in the presence of the Lord and He delights in your attitude and when you call He will answer quickly. **Read Psalm 119:9-14 and 1 Timothy 4:16.** How can you live a pure life today when everything and the whole world around you encourage and challenge you to opt for immorality?

Growth Assignment:

- Read **chapters 5,7, and 8** – In *Love without shame* – by D. Wyrzten.
- Read **chapters 23,27, and 28** – In *Victory over temptation* – by B. Wilkinson.

UNIT/DAY 5

Living In Purity

A pure and holy life is a process in the life of everyone. It does not come as a miraculous thing in your life. You need to pursue it every day and it is certainly hard work. A Christian lives in this world like in a battlefield. On the one hand there are the marvellous commands and promises of the Lord you want to follow. On the other hand comes the devil with all his subtle

schemes in the most attractive ways. How can one make one's life holy when one is surrounded by sin?

- a) Recognise that your body is like a battlefield. There is a war going on inside you and you need to know on which side you want to be. That is how Paul saw it. See what he says in **Romans 7:21-25**, **2 Timothy 2:3** and **Colossians 2:8-9**. What kind of war takes place in one's life and how should one handle it?

- b) The good news about this war is that Christ has already won it. So you are not as powerless as many people think and say. God gives you the guarantee of victory. **2 Corinthians 1:8,9,18**. How do you know you will have power to live a holy life?

- c) In overcoming temptation Jesus is the perfect example. **Read Matthew 4:1-11**. How did Jesus overcome those severe temptations?

- d) There will be times in your life when you will be faced with challenging situations and you may not know what to do. **Read James 1:5**. When that happens what should you do?

e) Prayer is a way of talking to God and maintaining a relationship with Him. When you develop a life of prayer you are in touch with God. In that way He becomes a part of your daily life and is, therefore, always at your disposal to protect you from the attacks of the Evil One when you ask for help. **Read Matthew 26:41 and 2 Thessalonians 5:17.** Why do you think the Lord tells you to develop a life of prayer? How beneficial is it for maintaining holiness?

f) No spiritual battle can be won without the mighty power of the Holy Spirit. Life in purity and holiness is a continuous process as long as one lives. The Holy Spirit not only gives you freedom to choose what is right or wrong, but He also guides you, teaches you, prays for you, protects you, etc. All you need is to depend on Him, talk to Him, listen to Him, confess to Him, etc., etc. **Read Romans 8:16,26; 2 Corinthians 2:13; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Galatians 5:22,23; 6:8; Ephesians 1:17; 6:17.** List all the works of the Holy Spirit mentioned in the verses above, which ensure you that you are able to live a holy life.

g) To live a holy life you need to train yourself to be godly. Nobody grows spiritually overnight, or learns all things at once. Holiness requires practice and discipline. **Read 2 Timothy 4:7-8.** What are the benefits of practising holiness?

h) When do you reap the results of godliness?

Growth Assignment:

- Read **chapters 9 and 10** – In *The other side of love* – by M. White.
- Read **chapter 5** – In *Holy habits* – by M. Wilson & S.C. Volkhardt.

6.3.10 Move on Growing Closer to God (cf. §3.3.4)

This is the last session of this program, so a good revision of what has been discussed and learned should be done. Should there be any area of difficulty or unresolved matter, attention should be given to that.

Growing closer to God is a step further for every one. Should there be a possibility of reconciliation i.e. remarriage and the couple is moving towards that, pre-marital counselling is required. As said before, the aim is not only to bring the couple together again but the restoration, the renewal of the marriage, a marriage much different from the previous one, a marriage in which both spouses are conscious of their roles and responsibilities as required from the Lord, a marriage where both are willing to follow the Lord in every way (*cf.* §2.4 and §2.5). Guidance for that is necessary. Some divorcees might not like that idea but the very reason that their marriage failed, in the first place, means that they need this type of counselling. The counsellor may use the program for pre-marital counselling mentioned above (*cf.* §6.2), or he/she may implement it according to the needs of the couple. Nevertheless, some topics are basic for all Christian couples and should not be left aside.

The counsellor's role:

- Should be then to guide divorcees as they celebrate the glorious blessings of re-marriage, as so desired by the Lord. Surely, there is also a possibility that reconciliation at this level is not possible e.g. the other spouse may have married someone else, or the spouse is not ready, or willing to return. In such cases the counsellor should be wise and submissive to the Lord and His Word in how to guide the divorcee into a new life as a single person, specially when re-marriage is not possible.
- Is to lead divorcees to understand and accept single life not as a curse, a shame, or impossibility, but as a gift. He/she should lead

them to understand that a person can be happy and fulfilled without a spouse. It should be emphasised that no man, no woman will ever give a person that. If it is happiness they are looking for, they need to go to the source of it all – The Lord Jesus Christ.

- Is to guide them into a happy future, challenging them to discover their potential and to change their focus towards a new life.

In cases where the other spouse is not ready or willing to reconcile, the divorcee should be encouraged to remain pure and open for that reconciliation as long as it takes. It might take many years, but the Lord who is faithful will honour those who honour Him. Many people discover, too late, that they could have reconciled, thus obeying the Lord, had they not been so hasty in marrying someone else. Divorcees are to be reminded that reconciliation is possible when a person has the reconciling Christ living in him/her through the Holy Spirit.

UNIT/DAY 1

When Return Is Possible

When you and your spouse are willing to return to each other, it is a very good thing, but it is not the final step in the reconciliation process, it is a beginning of another phase. Your purpose is surely to re-marry but before that happens both of you have a lot to do. First of all you need to go for pre-marital counselling. Maybe you think this is a joke, for you have been

married for many years and this would be silly or unnecessary. However, this is something you need very much. Your marriage failed, and you do not want it to be the same as it had been before. You need guidance, so commit yourselves to it and work hard. Secondly, you need to develop a personal relationship with the Lord and a spiritual relationship with each other, learning to grow together. With the guidance of your counsellor, explore that as much as you can. Select your material well and learn to listen to the Lord.

When you have finished pre-marital counselling and are growing well, you are ready to celebrate. Yes, it is indeed a celebration, for it is not merely a wedding feast, it is a celebration of forgiveness, of renewal, of life.

- a) **Read Luke 15:7,22-24.** Do you think this applies to you? Describe it in your own words.

- b) After the rebirth of your marriage you need to grow closer to God every day in order to guarantee the success of your new marriage. **Read Hebrews 4:15-16.** Why is this spiritual growth so necessary?

Growth Assignment:

- Read **chapter 10** – In *Hope for the separated* – by G. Chapman.
- Read **chapter 12** – In *Reconcilable differences* – by J. Talley.

UNIT/DAY 2

Develop Your Spiritual Life

Whether you live single or married, you have a future and the way to progress is by developing your spiritual life. Many Christians live their Christian lives by merely visiting a church now and then. Others are faithful churchgoers but it ends when the service is over. Still others participate in some activities of the church but their lives remain empty. This kind of life leads you nowhere. In order to succeed in anything, a person needs to grow spiritually. There are many things you can do to help you in this process: search for a Bible study/fellowship group where you can grow together as a family of Christ; develop a prayer life; develop a daily devotional time; read good Christian literature; be involved in serving others; and meditate in the Word of God.

You can become the spiritual person you want to be, you can grow in faith and achieve that which you thought impossible, but it requires commitment and discipline. In this process you

need to learn to believe the Word of the Lord for you today, and to want to know Him, His character, more than anything else in this life. This process of growth is called 'walk in the Spirit'.

- a) **Read Galatians 5:25 and Colossians 2:6,7.** What does it mean to 'walk in the Spirit' or 'walk in the Lord'?

- b) **Read John 15.** What is the secret of spiritual growth?

- c) What are the results of spiritual growth and how do you see them?

Growth Assignment:

- Read **chapter 5** – In *Victory over the darkness* – by N.T. Anderson.
- Read **chapters 1-6** In *Secrets of the vine* – by B. Wilkinson

UNIT/DAY 3

Find Fulfilment In Life

A fulfilled person is a person who is content, a person who has found a goal and a purpose in life. Married or single, you need to find it in order to make life worth living. To be fulfilled you need to KNOW God. You need to seek Him and desire Him more than anything else in this world. The more you learn about Him, the more you will be able to lean on Him. It is by getting to know God this way that you will find your purpose in life, that you will discover His plans for you, and His plans are the most perfect and good ones. God has placed people in this world with a specific purpose. But many people live their whole lives without finding it, therefore they live frustrated, unhappy, and unfulfilled lives until they die. It is you as an individual, either married or single, who need to pursue it in order to find it. When you find your place in this world, within God's will and live it out, you will become a real content and fulfilled person.

- a) **Read Psalm 27 and Philippians 3:7-11, 4:11-13, 19.** What should be the goal number one in your live?

- b) What will you gain by living like that?

Growth Assignment:

- Read **chapters 7-9**. In *Secrets of the vine* – by B. Wilkinson.

UNIT/DAY 4

Find Joy In Your Singleness

Many people have a problem with singleness. They think of being single as a dreadful thing. In some cultures it becomes so bad that people will ask an older single person what is wrong with him/her because he/she did not get married. The media, especially television programs and movies, over-emphasise being married and present it as the ultimate goal of a person's life. Society and even Christian communities do the same and talk about singles and look at them with pity. This makes it difficult for a single person to accept and enjoy his/her singleness.

Certainly, marriage is the norm in life. Marriage is a good thing, instituted by God with a specific purpose: procreation, providing help, ruling the earth, and preventing sexual sin. Marriage is a gift of God for human beings, but the same is singleness. God has given the gift of being single to many people. Now you need to find your gift. There are many married people who have the gift of being single, but did not accept it, and got married because of outside pressure. On the other

hand, there are others who have the gift of marriage and are not married. Finding your gift and embracing it will bring you happiness. You may argue right now with all your passion that you do not have this gift. Well, have you searched to find out what is the gift God gave you regarding this matter? Only a very few people in the world have accepted this gift with joy, mainly because of the pressure put on singles by society, or because of rebellion against God. If you are living outside God's plan you are sinning.

a) **Read Matthew 19:12, 1 Corinthians 7:25-40.** Is there anything wrong in being single?

b) In difficult times, like today, what would be better - to marry or to remain single?

c) What are the purpose and privileges of being single?

Whether you are unmarried or a divorcee, you should learn how to look at a single life in a different way. It is only by accepting your singleness with gratitude that you will find inner happiness. Inner happiness is a happiness of the Spirit, serenity, tranquillity, and peace of soul, a thing that everyone

so desperately desires. If are you not content in being single you are not to be married.

As a divorcee you should now focus on finding the joy of singleness. At this point you may rebel and argue that you don't have the gift to be single, that you are not meant to be alone and you cannot handle your loneliness. You have strong sexual needs and they are so difficult to handle. It was not your fault because you did not want the divorce and you had the wrong person, but God forgave your mistakes and gave you a second chance. You want to be happy, God wants that for you, and you deserve it, after all, etc. Right now something should be made clear to you. All single people have strong sexual needs, even those gifted for a single life, and it is very difficult for them too, but it is up to you to gain control of your sexuality. The problem of loneliness and happiness is not solved by marriage. There are millions of married people in the world who are lonely and unhappy, that's why many seek divorce. You can testify to that. It might be true that you don't have the gift of singleness, that divorce was not what you wanted, and that you had a wrong spouse, but that was your choice. God did not force you to marry that person. It is true that God forgives divorce and all the other sins and He wants all what is good for you, but forgiveness does not change the character of God, does not wipe away all the consequences of sins, nor does it give you permission to go against His will. Now you have a choice again, either you take your own course in life and be miserable, or you can grow closer to the Lord in

obedience and find happiness. It might not be easy in the beginning but it is possible.

- a) **Read Philippians 4:13.** Can you be happy as a single person?
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Happiness is a choice. So re-focus your mind and discover the joys of being single. Discover your potential and the purpose for you to be in this world. Turn the obstacles into challenges, and the misfortunes into blessings. God is with you always. So glide into the future as a happy single person.

Growth Assignment:

- Read **chapter 15** - In *Fascinating womanhood* – by H. Andelin.
- Read *Your single treasure* – by R. Stedman.

UNIT/DAY 5
Delight In The Lord

Now that you have accepted your singleness you can grow further by finding delight in the Lord. Delight in the Lord is not only for the single, but for everyone. It means that you take joy in being in the presence of the Lord, you look forward to being with Him, you love Him above your children, above the idea of having a spouse, and above yourself. In fact, you love Him and

everything He says in His Word and does, you agree with, accept, and is happy to obey. You look for Him because of Who He is, not because of what He has to give (i.e. some blessings). Nothing in the world matters so much to you than to be with Him and enjoy His company. This is the reason why you were created – to delight in the Him, to enjoy God forever.

- a) **Read Psalm 37:4.** What are the rewards of delighting in the Lord?

- b) Why do you think many Christians don't have their desires fulfilled?

When you delight in the Lord, it also means that you want to sing praises to Him anywhere and everywhere. You will sing to Him for what He has done, for Who He is, for His goodness, and for everything.

- a) **Psalm 57:7-11.** How did David express his feelings towards the Lord?

- b) Where was he ready to express his delight and love for the Lord?

A person who is delighted in the Lord has gratitude in the heart. A profound gratitude for everything for he/she knows, that everything co-operate for the good of those who love Him.

a) **Read I Thessalonians 5:16-18.** Are you joyful and thankful for your singleness?

b) How do you express it?

The future holds great things for you. Choose to delight in the Lord and you will never be in want as you aim for the goal.

Growth Assignment:

- Read *Secrets of the vine* – B.Wilkinson.
- *Understanding Your Potential* – M. Munroe.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS

Marriage is an institution of God, a permanent covenant that is meant to last lifelong. Because God originated it nobody has the right to destroy or to break marriage. According to its definition marriage is a union of love and faithfulness (fidelity, loyalty) (see Chapter 1, §2.2). Love in all its forms (*agape, philia, eros*) is a very important ingredient in marriage, but it is not the most important one, therefore nobody should marry for love only. Fidelity or faithfulness is what keeps the marriage together. When the spouses are committed to the marriage vows, to each other, and to obedience to God's Word and Will, their marriage will last until "death do them part" (see Chapter 2, §2.2.3).

When God designed marriage He had specific purposes in mind. Marriage was not invented primarily for the pleasure of the couple. It was instituted to provide mutual help in fulfilling the tasks, the plans God has for them: to propagate the human race i.e. to bear and raise children, to rule and conquer the world, to prevent immorality, and to provide companionship (see Chapter 2, §2.3).

In His master plan God also pointed out clear roles and responsibilities for each husband and wife. God placed on the man the leadership role. He is the head of the home. As the head of the home he is to lead, following the example of Christ and not according

to his own wishes. In his headship role he is to love his wife, provide for her, protect her, encourage her, and care for all her needs (physical, spiritual and financial). The wife is the helper. This is an equally important role in the home. As a helper she is supposed to manage her home and family responsibly and provide an atmosphere of harmony and warmth. In her position of helper she ought to help her husband in all ways possible so that he will be able to fulfil his leadership role. In that way both of them will be able to achieve that which God has placed before them as a couple (see Chapter 2, §2.4).

The husband's main responsibility is to love his wife. He is commanded by God to do so. He ought to love her as he loves his own body and as Christ loves him. He is also commanded to dwell with her, i.e. live with her in harmony. The wife's responsibility is to submit to her husband. That means that she is supposed to organise her life under him i.e. in agreement with him and in a way that would not disrupt the wellbeing of the home and family. Besides that, both spouses are commanded to love one another and to submit to one another (see Chapter 2, §2.5 - §2.6).

Divorce is the breaking up of the marriage and family. Because it is the violation of God's plan for human beings and shows total disregard for His Word, God hates divorce and all the evils that follow it. Unlike marriage, divorce is man's invention and it entered this world through disobedience, and rebelliousness (hardness of heart) of human beings. Divorce is condemned in Scripture in both Old and New Testaments because it is a disregard for God's perfect will and plan for mankind. Believers are bound by the Scripture not to divorce their

spouses unless fornication or desertion has occurred. By desertion is meant those instances where a non-believer leaves the believer on the grounds of faith. The believer is commanded to forgive and seek reconciliation even in the case of adultery (see Chapter 2, §2.7).

Against the teaching of the Scriptures divorce is a sad reality even among many Christians. In His omniscience God knew that people would disobey Him and divorce one another. Therefore, He provided instructions and commands to determine their lives and wellbeing. Christians, once divorced, are commanded to seek reconciliation with the spouse or otherwise to remain single. Despite a wide spectrum of opinions regarding divorce and remarriage the Scripture is clear: the possibility for the believer to remarry someone else exists only after the death of the spouse. Remarrying another person while the spouse is still alive would amount to adultery (see Chapter, §2.7.2).

These truths, though seemingly tough for many people to accept, need to be given more attention in the Churches and in the homes in order to rectify misconceptions about marriage, divorce and remarriage and save the families. In order to combat the evil of divorce and its dreadful consequences, these teachings need to be proclaimed and the believers need to give heed to God's words.

Reconciliation is a command but also a need. Everyone has sinned and is, therefore, separated from God. In order to find life again a person needs to go back and make peace with the Lord. Christians, though saved by Jesus Christ, sin daily against God and their fellowmen. Therefore, they are commanded to reconcile with both God

and people. When marriages break down people are also broken and their relationships disrupted. They need to go back and make it right if they wish to live again. In order to obtain reconciliation, a person needs to recognise, repent and confess his/her sins, ask and grant forgiveness. Once forgiven and reconciled with the most offended party i.e. God, a person is ready to forgive and seek reconciliation with others. For the believers, reconciliation with the spouse is not an option but a command. When that is not possible, in the sense of remarrying the spouse, the command is that they should live single. Even though it might not be possible for them to remarry, they still must forgive and seek reconciliation with the estranged spouse in the sense of making peace with him/her (Chapter 2, §2.7.2.2). Whether a divorcee reconciles or remains single for life, obedience to God is demanded. In either case it requires a choice which only the individual can make and thereafter he/she must live with the consequences of that choice. Both reconciliation and single life are possible when people are reconciled to God and are willing to obey and glorify Him in their lives. A reconciled divorcee can live a pure, fulfilled, and happy single life, but what is required is that he/she must re-focus the mind towards the One who can fulfil and satisfy him/her completely and forever (see Chapter 3, §3.3).

The Church has a great responsibility to promote reconciliation among her people. As revealed in the research done, there is more the church can and should do in order to improve her ministry of reconciliation today. Besides the pastors and office bearers, counsellors and well-prepared and mature lay people should also be included in promoting and implementing this ministry. In her ministry of

reconciliation the Church should make more use of both preventative and curative means. The first would concentrate on educating, preparing, teaching, and instructing and, the latter on remedying, healing, guiding, comforting, restoring, and building up (Chapter 4).

In order to meet the great needs of the suffering church today, pastors as spiritual guides should be open to make use of all possible means. Therefore, guidelines for counselling were proposed (see Chapter 5). Counselling is just one of the many ways they can use to minister to the Church. Pastors should preach more often about biblical principles for the family, about morals and values and any other topic that would enhance Christian family life. They also should emphasise the need for re-birth and the development of a personal relationship with Christ. Camps or spiritual retreats could be organised for children, youths, or young people with the aim of teaching them the most varied subjects relating to marriage, such as: dating, basic sexuality, romance and love, how to choose a mate, etc. (see §4.2). The same kind of opportunities should be arranged for couples in order to promote marriage enrichment courses, seminars, talks etc. to every one in the congregation. Besides the Bible, believers should be encouraged to read sound Christian literature which would not only provide information about many subjects but also help in the development of their spiritual life. A support group for divorcees or a single's group should be organised especially in large congregations and in the cities with the purpose of providing not only love, warmth, and all kinds of support, but also to encourage them to discover a meaningful life after divorce as a single person.

When the Church fulfils her responsibility, her ministry of reconciliation in this sinful world, there is hope. Children will be brought up in the ways of the Lord, young people and others will be more responsible in choosing their spouses, families will serve the Lord together in the homes, and marriages will be strong. The occurrence of divorce will be stemmed, broken hearts will be mended, marriages will be restored, and new lives will be shaped. This all sounds like an impossibility for many people including Christians, but all of these are the marvellous promises made by a loving and faithful God to all who believe and obey Him. Divorce is certainly an evil that breaks, destroys, and kills marriages and many people, but reconciliation, as provided by Jesus Christ, heals the hearts, mends relationships, gives birth to new marriages and brings life to all. There is hope for the Christian families today.

Closure

God's act of creation has a covenantal character in so far as it is founded on a relationship of responsiveness. The Creator calls and the creation, in its very being (though crippled by sin), is a response to that call. But call and response are not enough to explicate this covenantal character. Much more is needed. The Scriptures are clear that the covenantal character is to be sought in a permanent binding relationship that rests on commitment which entails promises and obligations. Nowhere can these all-encompassing truths be seen more clearly than in God's marriage ordinance. Marriage, as intended by God, reflects the permanent binding relationship between Him and the whole of creation. It is based on a commitment that carries definite

promises and obligations involving both spouses and God. Through sin man has destroyed this perfect ideal of marriage, but through the reconciling power of Christ marriage is restored to its original meaning.

Topics for Further Research

- Christian marriage counselling in the secularised, post-modern world.
- The role of the Church in the reconciliation of divorcees.
- The influence of concepts of love on the stability of marriages in present societies.
- Anger as an inhibiting factor in reconciliation.
- Role-switching of spouses and its impact on marriage breakdown.

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APPENDIX A

1. English documents:

- ***Covering letter***
- ***Questionnaire 1 (handed out to pastors)***

2. Afrikaanse dokumente:

- ***Dekbrief***
- ***Vraelys 1 (vir bedienaars)***

**DEAR PASTOR/ REVEREND/ COUNSELLOR/ BOTHER/
SISTER IN JESUS CHRIST**

Attached is a questionnaire that I would kindly like to ask you to complete. By complying with this request, you will surely be co-responsible for the successful conclusion of a research project I am engaged in.

The research deals with the matter of divorce and reconciliation. The Word of the Lord is instructive and decisive concerning marriage and divorce and encourages and commands believer spouses, after being divorced, to reconcile with one another. In favour of the theoretical argument I hold the conviction that the instructions of the Scripture on marriage, divorce and reconciliation should be incorporated and practised to a much greater extent in any community of Jesus Christ. In my study at the University of Potchefstroom for Christian Higher Education, I am attempting to render possible and practical guidelines for a pre-marital counselling of especially, but not exclusively, young people, and for counselling of divorcees, both aimed at the preservation of marriage and the well-being of the believer and the family. The Scripture, and specially the teachings of Paul on reconciliation, serve as the point of departure for the elaboration of this project.

Please keep the following in mind when you complete this questionnaire:

- This is an anonymous questionnaire and there is no way you could be identified, unless you so wish by filling in your name;
- Therefore, you may be completely frank in stating your opinion;
- Please feel at liberty to offer any comment and criticism;
- Your commitment in completing this questionnaire sincerely may ensure that you contribute to the establishment of a possible guideline that will benefit the body of Christ.

Where applicable, I include a postage prepaid envelope for your convenience.

WILL YOU BE SO KIND AS TO RETURN THE COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE TO ME AS SOON AS POSSIBLE – NO LATER THAN: _____

Thank you so much for your sincere cooperation.

Yours truly

Marilda de Oliveira

PhD student at PU for CHE.

Tel: (018) 294-8147

QUESTIONNAIRE 1

Section A

1. Name (optional):

2. Main occupation:

Pastor

	1
--	---

Reverend

	2
--	---

Counsellor

	3
--	---

Other

	4
--	---

3. Church Denomination:

Reformed

	1
--	---

Dutch Reformed

	2
--	---

Hervormd (Reformed)

	3
--	---

Presbyterian

	4
--	---

Methodist

	5
--	---

Anglican

	6
--	---

Catholic

	7
--	---

Baptist

	8
--	---

One of the Pentecostal Churches

	9
--	---

One of the Charismatic Churches

	10
--	----

Other

	11
--	----

4. How long have you been in this ministry?

- 1-2 years
- 2-4 years
- 4-6 years
- 6-10 years
- 10-15 years
- 15-20 years
- 20-25 years
- 25-30 years
- More than 30 years

	1
	2
	3
	4
	5
	6
	7
	8
	9

5. Do you do pre-marital counselling to the members of your congregation?

- Yes
- No

	1
	2

6. If your answer is "yes" how often do you get together with them?

- Once
- Twice
- four times
- 2-3 months
- 3-6 months
- 6-12 months
- More than a year

	1
	2
	3
	4
	5
	6
	7

7. What are the topics (and texts) dealt with in the counselling sessions? (Could you name them please)

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____

8. Is this type of counselling a pre-requisite in your church or a choice of the couple?

9. a) Do you think that pre-marital counselling should be compulsory for...

- every person preparing to get married
- just a choice of the individual

	1
	2

b) Please explain your answer:

10a) In your opinion, are the members (young and older people) of your congregation well educated/prepared for marriage and family life?

- Yes
- No

	1
	2

b) If your answer is "yes" where do they get this education from?

11a) Do you think the church should be more involved in educating/preparing her members, especially young people, for marriage and family life?

Yes

	1
	2

No

b) Why?

12. If your answer is "yes" **how** should this education/preparation be done?

By means of a course

	1
	2
	3
	4
	5
	6
	7
	8
	9

seminars

Retreats

talks presented by specialised people

good Christian literature

Videos

group discussions

Individual counselling

others (name them please)

13a) In your opinion, when should this education begin?

with the primary school children

with the teenagers

with the young people

with the young people involved in a serious relationship

with engaged couple only

	1
	2
	3
	4
	5

b) why?

14. Who do you think should be involved in biblically educating and preparing the young people and other members for marriage and family life?

Pastors

Christian counsellors

parents

lay people, but well trained believers

others (name them please)

	1
	2
	3
	4
	5

15a) Would you say that if believers were to receive a better biblically based preparation/guidance for marriage and family life, it would help

to prevent divorce among Christians?

Yes

No

	1
	2

b) Why?

16a) In your opinion, is there anything else the Churches could do to prevent or slow down the divorce rate among Christians?

Yes

No

	1
	2

b) Explain please

Section B

1. During the years of your ministry I believe you had much to do with the matters of divorce and family related problems among the members of your congregation. Based on your preparatory

studies and experiences, what would you say is/are the main reason(s) for divorce among Christians in South Africa?

2. a) Do you counsel the families with marital problems in your congregation yourself, or do you refer them to somebody else (e.g. a psychologist, a marriage counsellor, etc.)?

b) Why?

3. a) When knowing about troubled marriages among your congregation members, how do you approach them in order to counsel them, do you....?

willingly reach out and minister to them

wait for them to come to you for help if they so wish

Other ways (name them please)

	1
	2
	3

b) Explain your answer please.

4. a) When counselling a couple, what is usually your approach, do you....?

keep on until there is a solution to the problem

counsel once or twice and then leave the couple to sort their matters out by themselves

make an appointment only when requested by one or either spouses

refer them to somebody else

other

	1
	2
	3
	4
	5

b) Why?

5. How would you classify the success of this counselling in preventing the couple from getting a divorce? (Choose from 1-5, 1 refers to almost no success at all and 5 to 100% success).

1 2 3 4 5

6. a) When counselling, do you encourage divorcees to reconcile (remarry each other) with their previous spouses?

Yes

No

	1
	2

b) Why? (can you please provide some biblical references to support your argument?)

7.a) Have you (in the past) or would you counsel/advise a husband or wife to divorce his/her spouse?

Yes

No

	1
	2

b) why?

8. If your answer of the above question is "yes", in which cases would you advise the couple to get a divorce?

9. Can you provide Scripture sources to support each of your arguments? If so, please mention them.

10. a) Do you think there is a need for improving the ministry of counselling in your congregation?

Yes

No

	1
	2

b) Please explain:

11. a) Does your congregation have a support group for divorcees?

Yes

No

	1
	2

b) Why?

12. If your answer is "yes", what is the purpose (what do you aim to achieve) of this support group?

13. Do you follow a certain program for counselling the divorcees in your church?

Yes

	1
	2

No

14. If your answer is "yes" how long does this program last?

1 month

	1
	2

2-4 months

4-6 months

	3
	4

6-12 months

2 years

	5
	6

More than 2 years

15. a) Do you think the Churches should have for the counselling ministry of the congregation?

a qualified/well prepared team,

	1
	2

a counsellor

Or, this is a task the pastors only should attend to

	3
--	---

b) Please explain your answer:

16. In your opinion and experience, what would you say are the greatest need(s) among Christian divorcees today?

17. What do you think churches could do more in order to meet the divorcees' needs?

GEAGTE DOMINEE/PASTOOR/BERADER/BROER/SUSTER IN JESUS CHRISTUS

Ek versoek u vriendelik om die aangehegte vraelys te voltooi. U samewerking sal bydra tot die suksesvolle afhandeling van 'n navorsingsprojek waarmee ek besig is.

Die navorsing handel oor egskeiding en versoening. Die Woord van die Here lewer insiggewende en deurslaggewende uitspraak aangaande die huwelik en egskeiding. Gelowige egpare word aangemoedig en opdrag gegee om met mekaar te versoen na 'n egskeiding. Ten opsigte van die teoretiese argument, is ek van oortuiging dat die Bybel se opdragte aangaande die huwelik, egskeiding en versoening tot 'n veel groter mate in enige Christelike gemeenskap toegepas moet word. In my studie by die Potchefstroomse Universiteit vir Christelike Hoër Onderwys poog ek om moontlike praktiese riglyne vir sowel voorhuwelikse berading van jongmense, as vir die berading van geskeides, daar te stel. Sulke berading het as oogmerk die behoud van die huwelik en die welsyn van die gelowige en die gesin. Die Skrif, en in besonder die leerstellings van Paulus aangaande versoening, dien as vertrekpunt van hierdie projek.

Hou asseblief die volgende in gedagte wanneer u hierdie vraelys voltooi:

- Hierdie is 'n anonieme vraelys, en u kan op geen manier geïdentifiseer word nie;
- U kan dus heeltemaal openhartig wees wanneer u u opinie lug;
- U is welkom om enige opmerking te maak of kritiek te lewer;
- U samewerking in die eerlike voltooiing van hierdie vraelys kan verseker dat u bydra tot die daarstel van 'n moontlike riglyn wat tot voordeel van die liggaam van Christus kan strek.

Vir u gerief sluit ek, waar van toepassing, 'n gefrankeerde koevert in.

**EK VERSOEK U VRIENDELIK OM DIE VOLTOOIDE VRAELYS SO
GOU MOONTLIK AAN MY TERUG TE BESORG – NIE LATER NIE
AS: _____**

By voorbaat dankie vir u samewerking.

Vriendelik die uwe

Marilda de Oliveira

PhD student by die PU vir CHO, Tel: (018) 294-8147

VRAELYS 1

Afdeling A

1. Naam (opsioneel):

2. Hoofberoep:

Pastoor

	1
	2
	3
	4

Dominee

Berader

Ander

3. Kerklike denominasie:

Gereformeerd

Nederduits Gereformeerd

Hervormd

Presbiteriaans

Metodis

Anglikaans

Katoliek

Baptis

Een van die Pinkster Kerke

Een van die Charismatiese Kerke

Ander

	1
	2
	3
	4
	5
	6
	7
	8
	9
	10
	11

4. Hoe lank is u reeds in hierdie bediening?

1-2 jaar

2-4 jaar

4-6 jaar

6-10 jaar

10-15 jaar

15-20 jaar

20-25 jaar

25-30 jaar

Meer as 30 jaar

	1
	2
	3
	4
	5
	6
	7
	8
	9

5. Doen u voorhuwelikse berading met die lidmate van u gemeente?

Ja

Nee

	1
	2

6. Indien u antwoord "ja" is, hoe dikwels kom u byeen met hulle?

Een maal

Twee maal

Vier maal

2-3 maande

3-6 maande

6-12 maande

Meer as 'n jaar

	1
	2
	3
	4
	5
	6
	7

7. Wat is die onderwerpe (en tekse) wat aangespreek word in die beradingsessies? (Noem hulle asseblief):

1. _____

- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____
- 6. _____

8. Is hierdie tipe van berading 'n voorvereiste in julle kerk of 'n keuse van die paartjie?

9. a) Dink u dat voorhuwelikse berading verpligtend moet wees vir...

elke persoon wat voorberei om te trou
slegs 'n keuse van die individu

	1
	2

b) Verduidelik asseblief u antwoord:

10a) Volgens u mening, is die lidmate (jonk en oud) van u gemeente goed onderrig/voorberei vir die huwelik en gesinslewe?

Ja
Nee

	1
	2

b) Indien u antwoord "ja" is, waar kry hulle hierdie onderrig?

11a) Dink u dat die Kerke meer betrokke behoort te wees by die onderrig/voorbereiding van sy lidmate, veral jongmense, vir die huwelik en gesinslewe?

Ja

Nee

	1
	2

b) Waarom?

12. Indien u antwoord "ja" is, **hoe** behoort hierdie onderrig/voorbereiding gedoen te word?

Deur middel van 'n kursus

Seminare

Kampe

Praatjies aangebied

gespesialiseerde persone

goeie Christelike leesstof

Videos

Groepbesprekings

Individuele berading

Ander (noem hulle asseblief)

deur

	1
	2
	3
	4
	5
	6
	7
	8
	9

13. a) Volgens u mening, wanneer behoort hierdie opleiding te begin?

Met laerskoolkinders

	1
--	---

Met tieners

	2
--	---

Met die jongmense

	3
--	---

Met jongmense betrokke in ernstige
verhoudings

	4
--	---

Slegs met verloofde paartjies

	5
--	---

b) Waarom?

14. Wie, dink u, behoort betrokke te wees by die bybelse opleiding en voorbereiding van jongmense en ander lidmate vir die huwelik en gesinslewe?

Pastore/predikante

	1
--	---

Christelike beraders

	2
--	---

Ouers

	3
--	---

Leke persone, maar goed opgeleide
gelowiges

	4
--	---

Ander (noem hulle asseblief)

	5
--	---

15a) Sou u sê dat indien gelowiges 'n beter Bybelse voorbereiding vir die huwelik en gesinslewe ontvang, dit sou help om egskeiding onder Christene te verhoed?

Ja

Nee

	1
	2

b) Waarom?

16a) Volgens u mening, is daar enigiets anders wat die Kerke kan doen om egskeiding onder Christene te voorkom of om die ekskeidingskoers te verlaag?

Ja

Nee

	1
	2

b) Verduidelik asseblief

Afdeling B

1. Gedurende u jare van bediening, glo ek, het u heelwat te doen gekry met sake rakende egskeiding en familie-verwante probleme onder die lidmate van u gemeente. Gegrand op u voorbereidende

studies en ervaringe, wat sou u sê is die hoofrede(s) vir egskeiding onder Christene in Suid-Afrika?

2. a) Beraad u families, met huweliksprobleme in u gemeente, self, of verwys u hulle na iemand anders (bv. 'n sielkundige, 'n huweliksberader, ens.)?

b) Waarom?

3. a) Wanneer u weet van 'n huwelik met probleme onder u gemeentedelede, hoe benader u hulle om hulle te beraad? U...

reik gewilliglik uit na hulle en bedien hulle

wag vir hulle om na u te kom vir hulp wanneer hulle hulp verlang

Ander (noem hulle asseblief)

	1
	2
	3

b) Verduidelik u antwoord asseblief?

4. a) Wanneer u 'n paartjie beraad, wat is gewoonlik u benadering?
U...

hou aan tot 'n oplossing vir die
probleem gevind is
beraad een of twee maal en laat die
paartjie dan om self 'n oplossing te
vind
maak 'n afspraak slegs as enige een
van die huweliksmaats dit verlang
verwys hulle na iemand anders
ander

	1
	2
	3
	4
	5

b)Waarom? _____

5. Hoe sou u die sukses van hierdie berading klassifiseer om die paartjie te verhoed om te skei? (Kies van 1-5, 1 verwys na amper geen sukses en 5 verwys na 100% sukses).

1 2 3 4 5

6. a) Moedig u tydens berading geskeides aan om te versoen (om weer met mekaar te trou)?

Ja
Nee

	1
	2

- b) Waarom? (Kan u asseblief bybelse verwysings verskaf om u argument te staaf?)

7. a) Het u al in die verlede, of sou u, 'n man of vrou beraad om te skei van sy/haar huweliksmaat?

Ja
Nee

	1
	2

b) Waarom?

8. Indien u antwoord op die vorige vraag "ja" is, onder watter omstandighede sou u 'n paartjie aanraai om van mekaar te skei?

9. Kan u asseblief skriftuurlike (bybelse) bronne voorsien om elk van u argumente te ondersteun? Indien wel, noem hulle asseblief.

10. a) Dink u daar is 'n behoefte aan 'n verbetering van die beradingsbediening in u gemeente?

Ja
Nee

	1
	2

b) Verduidelik asseblief:

11a) Het u gemeente 'n ondersteuningsgroep vir geskeide persone?

Ja

	1
	2

Nee

b) Waarom?

12. Indien u antwoord "ja" is, wat is die doel (wat poog u om te bereik) van hierdie ondersteuningsgroep?

13. Volg u 'n spesifieke program vir die berading van geskeides in u kerk?

Ja

	1
	2

Nee

14. Indien u antwoord "ja" is, hoe lank duur hierdie program?

1 maand

2-4 maande

4-6 maande

6-12 maande

2 jaar

Meer as 2 jaar

	1
	2
	3
	4
	5
	6

15.a) Dink u die Kerke behoort te hê vir die beradingsbediening van die gemeente?

'n gekwalifiseerde/goed opgeleide span,
'n berader
Of , hierdie is 'n taak slegs vir die pastore/predikante

	1
	2
	3

b) Verduidelik u antwoord asseblief:

16. Volgens u mening en ervaring, wat sou u sê is die grootste behoefte(s) onder Christen geskeide persone vandag?

17. Wat dink u kan kerke nog doen om in geskeides se behoeftes te voorsien?

APPENDIX B

1. English Documents:
 - ***Covering letter***
 - ***Questionnaire 2 (handed out to divorcees)***

2. Afrikaanse Dokumente:
 - ***Dekbrief***
 - ***Vraelys 2 (vir geskeides)***

Dear Brother/Sister in Jesus Christ

Attached is a questionnaire that I would kindly like to ask you to complete. By complying with this request, you will surely be co-responsible for the successful conclusion of a research project I am engaged in.

The research deals with the matter of divorce and reconciliation. The Word of the Lord is instructive and decisive concerning marriage and divorce and encourages and commands believer spouses, after being divorced, to reconcile with one another. In favour of the theoretical argument, I hold the conviction that the instructions of the Scripture on marriage, divorce and reconciliation should be incorporated and practised to a much greater extent in any community of Jesus Christ. In my study at the University of Potchefstroom for Christian Higher Education, I am attempting to render possible and practical guidelines for a pre-marital counselling of especially young people, but not exclusively, and for counselling of divorcees, both aimed at the preservation of marriage and the well-being of the believer and the family. The Scripture, and specially the teachings of Paul on reconciliation, serve as the point of departure for the elaboration of this project.

Please keep the following in mind when you complete this questionnaire:

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Yours truly

Marilda de Oliveira

PhD student at PU for CHE. Tel: (018) 294-8147

QUESTIONNAIRE 2

Confidential

Section A

1. Gender

Female

	1
	2

Male

2. Age

Younger than 20

	1
	2
	3
	4
	5
	6
	7

20-25

26-30

31-35

36-40

41-45

Older than 45

3. Do you consider yourself a Christian?

Yes

	1
	2

No

4. Which church denomination are you affiliated to?

5. Do you consider yourself an active member of your Church?

Yes

	1
	2

No

6. How often do you worship there:

Every Sunday

	1
	2
	4
	5
	6

Twice a month

Once a month

Less than once a month

Very seldom

7. Do you acknowledge the whole Bible as a rule of faith and practice for your life?

Yes

	1
	2
	3

Portion of it

No

8. How old were you when you first got married?

9. How long were you married?

1-2 years

2-4 years

4-6 years

6-8 years

8-10 years

10-15 years

15-20 years

20-25 years

25-30 years

More than 30 years

	1
	2
	3
	4
	5
	6
	7
	8
	9
	10

10. a) Did your parents have any objection to your marriage?

Yes

No

	1
	2

b) If your answer is 'yes', please state the reason(s):

11. Did you receive any pre-marital counselling?

Yes

No

	1
	2

12. If your answer is "yes", how many times?

Once

Twice

Three to five times

Three to six months

A year

Other

	1
	2
	3
	4
	5
	6

13. Who counselled you?

Your pastor

A Christian counsellor

Another

	1
	2
	3

14. Were you counselled...

alone

together with your fiancée

or both?

	1
	2
	3

15. Name as many topics or texts you can remember which were dealt with in the counselling sessions:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

16.a) Do you think the counselling you received was ...

sufficient

could have been better

insufficient

	1
	2
	3

b) Please explain:

17.a) Did you read any Christian literature or receive any biblical education (videos, cassettes, seminars, etc.) on marriage and related matters prior to your getting married?

Yes

No

	1
	2

b) If your answer is "yes", name as many as possible please:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

18.a) Do you think a Christian education or preparation for marriage and family life is necessary for Christians today?

Yes

No

	1
	2

b) Why?

19.a) In your opinion, should the Churches be involved in this education?

Yes

No

	1
	2

b) Why?

20.a) In which ways, do you think, should the Churches be involved in this education? (Please mark as many as you find suitable):

By presenting seminars

Offering courses to teenagers and young people

Inviting specialised speakers to talk to teenagers and young people

Showing videos, cassettes, etc.

Suggesting good literature to be acquired and read

Doing pre-marital counselling to seriously courting or engaged people only

Others

b) Please mention them:

21. Which topics and/or texts do you think should be addressed in this education/preparation for marriage and family life?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

22.a) Who do you think should be involved in biblically educating and preparing people for marriage and family life? (Mark all those you think suitable)

pastors

Christian counsellors

lay people (but well trained believers)

parents

others

b) Name them please

23.a) Do you think that a good biblical based preparation for marriage could reduce the chances of divorce?

Yes

No

	1
	2

b) Explain:

Section B

1. How long have you been divorced?

2. a) Did you seek marriage counselling before getting divorced?

Yes

	1
	2

No

b) If your answer is "no", could you please state the reasons why?

3. If your answer is "yes", who counselled you?

Pastor

	1
	2
	3
	4

Christian counsellor

Psychologist

Other(s) (please name them)

4. How long did you go for counselling?

5. Was the counselling based on the Scripture?

Yes

	1
	2

No

6.a) Was this counselling of any worth for you?

Yes

	1
	2

No

b) Please explain:

7.a) Do you think that biblically based counselling could help people to reconcile their differences and prevent divorce?

Yes

	1
	2

No

b) Please explain:

8. In a nutshell, what would you say was/were the main reason(s) for your marriage breakdown?

9.a) Looking back, do you think that there was anything else that maybe you could have done in order to prevent your divorce, and for one reason or another fail to do so?

Yes

	1
	2

No

b) Please explain:

10.a) Did you try to reconcile with your spouse after being divorced?

Yes

	1
	2

No

b) Please explain:

11.a) Did you seek counselling in order to help you with this process of reconciliation or in order to cope with the divorce?

Yes

	1
	2

No

b) If your answer is "no" could you tell the reasons why not?

12. If your answer is "yes" who counselled you?

Pastor

	1
	2
	3
	4

Christian counsellor

Psychologist

other(s) (please name them)

13. How long did you go for counselling?

14. Did you find it helpful?

Yes

	1
	2

No

15. a) Do you think that a Christian should seek reconciliation after the divorce has taken place?

Yes

	1
	2

No

b) Why? (Could you please use the Scripture to support your answer?)

16.a) If you had a chance, would you try to reconcile (get together again) with your spouse today even though it might be a long time since the divorce took place?

Yes
No
Not sure

	1
	2
	3

b) Why?

17.a) Do you think that post-divorce Christian counselling is necessary for divorcees?

Yes
No

	1
	2

b) Why?

18.a) Would you recommend it to a person in need?

Yes

No

	1
	2

b) Why?

19. What do you think should be addressed in the counselling process regarding divorce and/or reconciliation?

20. What do you think are the greatest needs of divorcees today?

GEAGTE BROER/SUSTER IN JESUS CHRISTUS

Ek versoek u vriendelik om die aangehegte vraelys te voltooi. U samewerking sal bydra tot die suksesvolle afhandeling van 'n navorsingsprojek waarmee ek besig is.

Die navorsing handel oor egskeiding en versoening. Die Woord van die Here lewer insiggewende en deurslaggewende uitspraak aangaande die huwelik en egskeiding. Gelowige egpare word aangemoedig en opdrag gegee om met mekaar te versoen na 'n egskeiding. Ten opsigte van die teoretiese argument, is ek van oortuiging dat die Bybel se opdragte aangaande die huwelik, egskeiding en versoening tot 'n veel groter mate in enige Christelike gemeenskap toegepas moet word. In my studie by die Potchefstroomse Universiteit vir Christelike Hoër Onderwys poog ek om moontlike praktiese riglyne vir sowel voorhuwelikse berading van jongmense, as vir die berading van geskeides, daar te stel. Sulke berading het as oogmerk die behoud van die huwelik en die welsyn van die gelowige en die gesin. Die Skrif, en in besonder die leerstellings van Paulus aangaande versoening, dien as vertrekpunt van hierdie projek.

Hou asseblief die volgende in gedagte wanneer u hierdie vraelys voltooi:

- Hierdie is 'n anonieme vraelys, en u kan op geen manier geïdentifiseer word nie;
- U kan dus heeltemaal openhartig wees wanneer u u opinie lug;
- U is welkom om enige opmerking te maak of kritiek te lewer;
- U samewerking in die eerlike voltooiing van hierdie vraelys kan verseker dat u bydra tot die daarstel van 'n moontlike riglyn wat tot voordeel van die liggaam van Christus kan strek.

Vir u gerief sluit ek, waar van toepassing, 'n gefrankeerde koevert in.

**EK VERSOEK U VRIENDELIK OM DIE VOLTOOIDE VRAELYS SO
GOU MOONTLIK AAN MY TERUG TE BESORG – NIE LATER NIE
AS: _____**

By voorbaat dankie vir u samewerking.

Vriendelik die uwe

Marilda de Oliveira

PhD student by die PU vir CHO

Tel: (018) 294-8147

VRAELYS 2

Anoniem/Vertroulik

Afdeling A

1. Geslag

Vroulik

	1
	2

Manlik

2. Ouderdom

Jonger as 20

	1
	2
	3
	4
	5
	6
	7

20-25

26-30

31-35

36-40

41-45

Ouer as 45

3. Beskou u uself as 'n Christen?

Ja

	1
	2

Nee

4. Aan watter kerklike denominasie behoort u?

5. Beskou u uself as 'n aktiewe lid van u kerk?

Ja

	1
	2

Nee

6. Hoe dikwels woon u eredienste by:

Elke Sondag

Twee maal per maand

Een maal per maand

Minder as een maal per maand

Baie selde

	1
	2
	4
	5
	6

7. Erken u die hele Bybel as 'n riglyn vir u geloof en u lewenswyse?

Ja

'n Gedeelte daarvan

Nee

	1
	2
	3

8. Hoe oud was u toe u die eerste maal getroud is?

9. Hoe lank was u getroud?

1-2 jaar

2-4 jaar

4-6 jaar

6-8 jaar

8-10 jaar

10-15 jaar

15-20 jaar

20-25 jaar

25-30 jaar

Meer as 30 jaar

	1
	2
	3
	4
	5
	6
	7
	8
	9
	10

10. a) Het u ouers enige beswaar gehad teen u huwelik?

Ja

	1
	2

Nee

b) Indien u antwoord "ja" is, noem asseblief rede(s):

11. Het u enige voorhuwelikse berading ontvang?

Ja

	1
	2

Nee

12. Indien u antwoord "ja" is, hoeveel maal?

Een maal

	1
	2
	3
	4
	5
	6

Twee maal

Drie tot vyf maal

Drie tot ses maande

'n Jaar

Ander

13. Deur wie is u beraad?

U pastoor / predikant

	1
	2
	3

'n Christelike berader

Ander

14. Is u beraad...

alleen

saam met u verloofde

albei van bogenoemde?

	1
	2
	3

15. Noem soveel onderwerpe of tekse, as wat u kan onthou, wat behandel is tydens die beradingsessies:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

16. a) Dink u die berading wat u ontvang het was ...

voldoende

kon beter gewees het

onvoldoende

	1
	2
	3

b) Verduidelik asseblief:

17. a) Het u enige Christelike lektuur gelees of bybelse opvoeding (videos, kasette, seminare, ens.) ontvang oor die huwelik en verwante onderwerpe voordat u getroud is?

Ja

Nee

	1
	2

b) Indien u antwoord "ja" is, noem soveel as moontlik asseblief:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

18. a) Dink u Christelike opvoeding en voorbereiding vir die huwelik en gesinslewe is noodsaaklik vir Christene vandag?

Ja

Nee

<input type="checkbox"/>	1
<input type="checkbox"/>	2

b) Waarom?

19. a) Behoort die kerke meer betrokke te wees by hierdie opvoeding

Ja

Nee

<input type="checkbox"/>	1
<input type="checkbox"/>	2

b) Waarom?

20. a) Op watter wyses, dink u, behoort die kerke betrokke te wees by hierdie opvoeding? (Merk asseblief soveel as wat u gepas vind):

Deur seminare aan te bied

Deur kursusse vir tieners en jongmense aan te bied

Uitnooi van gespesialiseerde sprekers om te praat met jongmense

Vertoon van video's, kassette, ens.

Die voorstel van goeie leesstof om aan te skaf en te lees

Voorhuwelikse berading slegs aan ernstig verbonde of verloofde jongmense

Ander

b) Noem hulle ("ander" in bogenoemde) asseblief:

21. Watter onderwerpe en/of tekse, dink u, behoort behandel te word in hierdie opvoeding vir die huwelik en gesinslewe?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

22.a) Wie, dink u, behoort betrokke te wees by die bybelse opvoeding en voorbereiding van mense vir die huwelik en gesinslewe? (merk al die gepaste keuses)

Pastore/predikante

Christelike beraders

Gewone lidmate, maar goed opgeleide gelowiges

Ouers

Ander

b) Noem hulle asb.:

23.a) Dink u dat 'n goeie bybelse voorbereiding vir die huwelik die kansen vir egskeiding kan verminder?

Ja

Nee

	1
	2

b) Verduidelik.:

Afdeling B

1. Hoe lank is u reeds geskei?

2. a) Het u gegaan vir huweliksberading voordat u geskei is?

Ja

	1
	2

Nee

b) Indien u antwoord "nee" is, noem die redes waarom nie?

3. Indien u antwoord "ja" is, deur wie is u beraad?

Pastoor/predikant

	1
	2
	3
	4

Christelike berader

Sielkundige

Ander(e) (noem hulle asseblief)

4. Hoe lank het u vir berading gegaan?

5. Was die berading gebaseer op die Skrif?

Ja

	1
	2

Nee

6.a) Was hierdie berading vir u van enige waarde?

Ja
Nee

	1
	2

b) Verduidelik asseblief:

7.a) Dink u dat Bybelse berading mense kan help om hul verskille te versoen en egskeiding kan verhoed?

Ja
Nee

	1
	2

b) Verduidelik asseblief:

8. In 'n neutedop, wat sou u sê was die hoof rede(s) vir die verbrokkeling van u huwelik?

9.a) In nabetragting, dink u daar was enigiets wat u miskien kon gedoen het om u egskeiding te verhoed, maar om die een of ander rede nagelaat het om te doen?

Ja

	1
	2

Nee

b) Verduidelik asseblief:

10.a) Het u probeer om met u huweliksmaat versoen (herenig) te raak na die egskeiding?

Ja

	1
	2

Nee

b) Verduidelik asseblief:

11.a) Het u vir berading gegaan om u te help in hierdie proses van versoening of om u te help om die egskeiding te kan hanteer?

Ja

	1
	2

Nee

b) Indien u antwoord "nee" is, verskaf asseblief redes waarom nie?

12. Indien u antwoord "ja" is, deur wie is u beraad?

Pastoor/predikant

	1
--	---

Christelike berader

	2
--	---

Sielkundige

	3
--	---

Ander(e) (noem hulle asseblief)

	4
--	---

13. Hoe lank het u vir berading gegaan?

14. Het u dit van hulp gevind?

Ja

	1
--	---

Nee

	2
--	---

15. a) Dink u dat 'n Christen versoening/hereniging met sy/haar huweliksmaat moet soek nadat die egskedding plaasgevind het?

Ja

	1
--	---

Nee

	2
--	---

b) Waarom? (Ondersteun asseblief u antwoord vanuit die Skrif)

16. a) Indien u vandag die geleentheid sou kry, sou u probeer om versoen (herenig as man en vrou) te raak met u huweliksmaat, selfs al is dit reeds 'n lang tyd sedert die egskeiding plaasgevind het?

- Ja
- Nee
- Onseker

	1
	2
	3

b) Waarom?

17. a) Dink u na-egskeiding Christelike berading is noodsaaklik vir geskeides?

- Ja
- Nee

	1
	2

b) Waarom?

18. a) Sou u dit aanbeveel vir 'n persoon wat dit benodig?

Ja

Nee

	1
	2

b) Waarom?

19. Wat sou u sê behoort behandel te word in die beradingsproses aangaande egskeiding en/of versoening?

20. Wat dink u is die grootste behoeftes van geskeide persone vandag?

APPENDIX C

The reading material indicated below is for further reading on the topic of each week and each unit. It has the purpose of acquainting counsellors and counselees with sound literature related to relevant themes mentioned in the guidelines for counselling on reconciliation (cf. §6.3)..

TOPIC ONE: Take a Good Look at the Situation (cf. §6.3.1)

WEEKDAY/UNIT 1 - You Are Responsible

- 1) *Divorce is not the answer, a change of heart will save your marriage* – G.S Pransky. Chapters 1-3.

WEEKDAY/UNIT 2 - Crying Out For Help

- 1) *Divorce is not the answer, a change of heart will save your marriage* – G.S. Pransky. Chapters 4-7.

WEEKDAY/UNIT 3 - God Wants To Help You And Heal You

- 1) *Victory over the Darkness* – N. T. Anderson. Chapter 1
- 2) *Divorce is not the answer, a change of heart will save your marriage* – G.S. Pransky. Chapters 8-10.

WEEKDAY/UNIT 4 - Healing The Broken Heart

- 1) *Victory over temptation* – B.H. Wilkinson. Chapter 6 – Absolute Surrender.

- 2) *Victory over darkness* – N.T. Anderson. Chapter 2 – Forever different.

WEEKDAY/UNIT 5 - *The Doctor Is In*

- 1) *The Calvary Road, be filled now* - Roy Hession
- 2) *Hope for the separated* - G.D. Chapman. Chapter 4 – Developing your relationship with God.

TOPIC TWO: Deal With Your Feelings (cf. §6.3.2)

WEEKDAY/UNIT 1 - *Anger*

- 1) *Finding the freedom of self-control* – W. Backus - Chapter 5 - How to control your anger
- 2) Read Colossians 3:8; Proverbs 20:2; 15:18; Ephesians 4:26.
- 3) *Telling yourself the truth* – W. Backus & M. Chapien. Read - Chapter 5. – Misbelief in Anger. –
- 4) *In Communication: Key to your marriage* – H.N. Wright - Chapter 6 – Is anger always a “no-no”?

WEEKDAY/UNIT 2-*Bitterness And Hate*

- 1) *Finding the truth of self-control* –W.Backus - Chapters 1 and 2.
- 2) *How to forgive when it's hard to forget* – Joy Haney - Chapter 4 – The shrine of bitterness.

WEEKDAY/UNIT 3 - *Rejection*

- 1) *Victory over the darkness* – N.T. Anderson - Chapter 12.

- 2) Psalm 68:5,6; 1 Peter 1:2
- 3) *Set free through inner-healing* – B. Tapscott - Chapter 1 – Set free from rejection.

WEEKDAY/UNIT 4 - Guilt And Depression

- 1) *Set free through inner healing* – B. Tapscott - Chapter 4.
- 2) *Healing for damaged emotions* – D. A. Seamands – Chapter 11.
- 3) *The Calvary road, be filled now* – R.Hession – Chapter 5.
- 4) *Competent to counsel* – J.E. Adams - Chapter 7 – Confess your sins.

WEEKDAY/UNIT 5 - Loneliness

- 1) John 14:15-27
- 2) *His image... my image* - J. McDowell.

TOPIC THREE: Who is God – How do You See Him? **(cf. §6.3.3)**

WEEKDAY/UNIT 1 - God Is Faithful

- 1) Hebrews 11:1-6

WEEKDAY/UNIT 2 - God Is Love

- 1) *Love without shame* – D. Wyrzten – Chapter 6.

WEEKDAY/UNIT 3 - God Is Merciful And Forgiving

- 1) *Victory over the darkness* – N.T. Anderson – Chapter 4.

WEEKDAY/UNIT 4 - God Is Holy

- 1) *All of grace* – C.H. Spurgeon – Chapters 9-12.

WEEKDAY/UNIT 5 - God Is Just

- 1) Hebrews 7-10

TOPIC FOUR: Recognise and Repent From Your Sins
(cf. §6.3.4)

WEEKDAY/UNIT 1 - Repentance Is A Command

- 1) Acts 3:19

WEEKDAY/UNIT 2 - What Is Repentance

- 1) Ps 51

WEEKDAY/UNIT 3 - You Have Sinned Regarding Your Marriage

- 1) *Hope for the Separated* – G. D.Chapman – Chapter 6.
- 2) *Married for good: The Lost art of staying happily married* - P. Stevens.
- 3) *Christian living in the Home* – J.A. Adams – Chapters 4, 6 and 7.
- 4) *The art of forgiving when you need to forgive and don't know how* –L.B. Smedes - Chapters 8, 9, 14, and 15.

WEEKDAY/UNIT 4 - You Have Sinned Regarding Your Divorce

- 1) *Marriage Spirituality* – P. Stevens – Chapter 10
- 2) *Christian living in the home* – J.E. Adams – Chapter 9.

- 3) Videos "Biblical Portrait of marriage" – B.H. Wilkinson –
Topics 7-12

WEEKDAY/UNIT 5 - Repentance Produces Change

- 1) Luke 19:1-10

TOPIC FIVE: Confession And Forgiveness (cf. §6.3.5)

WEEKDAY/UNIT 1 - Confess And Be Free

- 1) *All of grace* – C.H. Spurgeon – Chapters 17-20.

WEEKDAY/UNIT 2 - Confession Brings Healing

- 1) *How to forgive when it is hard to forget* – J. Haney.

WEEKDAY/UNIT 3 - Why do I Have to Forgive my "ex"?

- 1) Matthew 6:9-15

WEEKDAY/UNIT 4 - If You Haven't Forgiven – Make Sure You Do

- 1) *Forgive and love again* –J. Nieder and T. Thompson.

TOPIC SIX: Seek Reconciliation (cf. §6.3.6)

WEEKDAY/UNIT 1 - The Ultimate Separation And Reconciliation

- 1) Colossians 1:13-23

WEEKDAY/UNIT 2 - Why Should I Even Think Of Reconciliation

- 1) Read Luke 12:57-59.

WEEKDAY/UNIT 3 - Being Receptive To Reconciliation

1) *Divorce is not the answer, a change of heart will save your marriage* – G.S Pransky – Chapter 11.

WEEKDAY/UNIT 4 - Initiating Reconciliation

1) *Reconcilable differences* - J. Talley - Chapter 7

WEEKDAY/UNIT 5 - Restitution In The Process Of Reconciliation

1) *Together forever* – A.K. Carroll - Afterword: The survivor's Reward

TOPIC SEVEN: Choose to Obey (cf. §6.3.7)

WEEKDAY/UNIT 1 - Commit Yourself To Obedience

1) Read Deuteronomy chapters 28, 29, and 30. Pay attention to the results of obedience and disobedience.

WEEKDAY/UNIT 2 - Obedience Requires Faith

1) Matthew 21:18-22.

WEEKDAY/UNIT 3 - Total Surrender

1) Psalm 37:3-9

WEEKDAY/UNIT 4 - The Holy Spirit And Obedience

1) *The Calvary road* – R. Hession – Chapters 6-8.

WEEKDAY/UNIT 5 - Obedience Brings Happiness

1) Deuteronomy 28:1-14

TOPIC EIGHT: Work at Change in Your Life (cf. §6.3.8)

WEEKDAY/UNIT 1 - Change Your Thought Pattern

- 1) Read Matthew 25:14-30.
- 2) *Telling yourself the truth* – W. Backus & M. Chapian – Chapters 11, 13.

WEEKDAY/UNIT 2 - Change Your Old Habits

- 1) *Untwisting twisted relationships* – W. Backus & C. Backus.
- 2) *Lord, change me* – E. Christenson.
- 3) *Victory over temptation* – B.H. Wilkinson - Chapter 13.

WEEKDAY/UNIT 3 - Develop Communication Skills

- 1) *Marriage spirituality* – P. Stevens – Chapter 2
- 2) *Divorce is not the answer, a change of heart will save your marriage* – G.S Pransky. Chapters 9-11
- 3) *The art of understanding your mate* – C.G. Osborne.
- 4) *Christian living in the home* – J.E Adams - Chapter 3.

WEEKDAY/UNIT 4 - Learn To Love

- 1) *The five love language* - G.D. Chapman.
- 2) *Do yourself a favor ... love your wife* – H. Williams
- 3) *We become wives of happy husbands* – D. Cooper & A.K. Carroll.
- 4) *In Love without shame* – D. Wyrzten - Chapter 6.

WEEKDAY/UNIT 5 - Learn To Be A Friend

- 1) *Victory over temptation* – B. Wilkinson – Chapter 29.

TOPIC NINE: Stay Pure (cf. §6.3.9)

WEEKDAY/UNIT 1 - What About Dating?

- 1) *Victory over temptation* – B. Wilkinson - Chapter 21
- 2) *Eros defiled* – J. White - Chapter 5.

WEEKDAY/UNIT 2 - Learn To Take Control Of Your Sex Life

- 1) *The other side of love* – M. White – Chapter 1.
- 2) *Eros defiled*– J. White - Chapter 4.

WEEKDAY/UNIT 3 - Close The Door To Lust

- 1) Proverbs 6:20-35.
- 2) 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1

WEEKDAY/UNIT 4 - Guidelines To Purity

- 1) *Holy habits* – M. Wilson & S.C. Volkhardt – Chapters 9-10.
- 2) *Finding the freedom of self-control* – W. Backus – Chapter 8.

WEEKDAY/UNIT 5 - Living In Purity

- 1) *Victory over temptation* – B. Wilkinson – Chapter 22.

TOPIC TEN: Move on Growing Closer to God (cf. §6.3.10)

WEEKDAY/UNIT 1 - When Return Is Possible

- 1) *Toward a growing marriage* – G.D. Chapman
- 2) *Marriage spirituality* – P. Stevens
- 3) *Christian living in the home* – J.E. Adams

- 4) *Divorce is not the answer, a change of heart will save your marriage* – G.S. Pransky – Chapters 12-15.
- 5) *The five love language* – G.D. Chapman .

WEEKDAY/UNIT 2 - Develop Your Spiritual Life

- 1) *Life is tough but God is faithful* – S. Walsh
- 2) *Daring to draw near* – J. White.
- 3) *Holy habits* – M. Wilson & S.C. Volkhardt - Chapters 1-8

WEEKDAY/UNIT 3 - Find Fulfilment In Life

- 1) *The prayer of Jabez* - B. Wilkinson

WEEKDAY/UNIT 4 - Find Joy In Your Singleness

- 1) *Happiness is a choice* – F.B. Minirth & P.D. Meier.
- 2) *Fearlessly feminine* – J. Ortland – Chapter 5.

WEEKDAY/UNIT 5 - Delight In The Lord

- 1) *Releasing your Potential* – M. Monroe
- 2) *Growing in Wisdom and Faith* – E. George
- 3) *Joy in Christ's presence* – C. Spurgeon
- 4) *Single, Married, and Life after Divorce* – M.Munroe`
- 5) *Read Heart Hunger* – C. McMEnamin