

CHAPTER 5

RESTORING COMMUNICATION IN PROBLEMATIC INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS IN THE FAMILY SYSTEM - A PASTORAL STUDY

PRAXIS THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

5.1. INTRODUCTION

In the first chapter of this study it was indicated that family therapy is a relatively recent development in psychotherapy and is even more recent in Bible-centred family therapy (pastoral counselling) and that any addition in terms of a study of family systems and Bible-centred family therapy is a positive addition to the field. Chapter two investigated the basis theoretical perspectives on the family, the various relationships operative within it and what the communication problems in those relationships might be. In Chapter three of this study, incorporating the meta-theoretical study, the aim was to obtain a secular-scientific perspective on communication in the family, the various relationships found in the family system and on the various problematic familial relationships operative within it. A qualitative empirical study was undertaken in Chapter four in order to understand communication in the family and relational problems from an empirical perspective.

The overarching research aim of the study was, as stated in Chapter one, to obtain, develop and put forth Bible-centred counselling guidelines on restoring communication in family systems caught up in problematic interpersonal relationships.

The specific objective of Chapter five of the study amounts then to the following:

To develop practice theory on the function of Biblical counselling in the situation of a family system hampered by problematic interpersonal relationships. This objective flows from the following research question: Is it possible to develop and propose efficient Bible-centred counselling guidelines from a correlation between Scripture, the human sciences and the results of an empirical study on a practice theoretical level and how can it be applied to restore communication in problematic interpersonal relationships in the family system?

With this objective in mind, the praxis theoretical guidelines as described in this Chapter are developed according to the following rationale:

- From the basis-, meta-theoretical and empirical study a correlation of the results is drawn to develop and present a workable praxis in terms of Bible-centred guidelines to address communication in problematic interpersonal relationships.

- The formulation of a praxis theory flows forth from firstly, the solutions that can be proposed by results obtained from studying family systems in general (from the Scriptures and the human sciences) and secondly from data/information that has been revealed during the empirical study.

The praxis- theoretical guidelines developed later on in this chapter proceeds from a therapeutic focus on different aspects of poor communication in the family and familial relationship problems in order to restore communicative and relational functioning among family members.

5.2. THERAPEUTIC FOCUS ON RESTORING COMMUNICATION AS POINT OF DEPARTURE IN DEVELOPING PRAXIS THEORY

5.2.1 The need for restoration of marital relationship as foundation of the family life

Rainey, ed. (2002: 92, 93) asserts that the surpassing goal of any marriage should be the glory of God and states further that everything in the universe exists for the purpose of God and if we understand that the marriage exists for the glory of God then we could also start to understand marriage and that marriages, especially in terms of communication, will also be transformed by this understanding.

Rainey ed. (2002:93) also places marriage secondary to living for and glorifying God and if marriage and a spouse is secondary to living for God and glorifying him the we can love an imperfect spouse on a daily basis by the hope and sustenance He gives to us. A marriage will also have a better chance for survival when the glory of God is paramount in the marriage.

Sollee (1996: 5) states that the marital relationship is the foundation of the family and the family is the foundation of society. The family that was researched in the Empirical study, Chapter 4, paragraph 4.3.1: Table 4.1, suffered from several divorces, which severely influenced family system functioning (Respondent 1, 3, 4 and 5 divorcing twice). If the marriage is strengthened, the family is strengthened (and children are also strengthened) and if the family is strengthened then the community is also strengthened. Doherty (2001:13) further states that although marriage as institution has declined over the past view decades, it can and must be revived and renewed. Doherty (2001:10) also states that a couple has to be intentional or pro-active about their marriage and the problems and issues that they have to face. This is also applies where communication and problems with communication is concerned.

A successful marriage is a skilled-based proposition, if a couple equips itself with the skills to successfully contend with whatever problems / challenges that may arise in the marriage, a relationship will be more adaptable to change and stressors both internal and external (Sollee, 1996 :5).

5.2.2 Important aspects of therapeutic intervention by Christian counsellors in restoration of communication in the marriage

Therapeutic intervention by Christian counsellors in mediating restoration of communication in the marital relationship could include at least the following aspects:

5.2.2.1 The importance of training a pre- / newly married couple in a shared framework

Gschwend-Bosch (2000:96) states that thorough and in-depth premarital counselling is important and that the foundation of the whole marriage is laid with premarital counselling. Enough time should be given to premarital counselling and every aspect of the marriage should be covered during this period (Gschwend-Bosch (2000:96). Pre-marital training creates shared skills, shared understanding and a shared language (shared communication) that there is a way to make the marital relationship work (Sollee, 1996:14). The pre-/ newly married couple creates a shared set of rules or a shared framework for when they communicate with each other and how to handle communication when conflict occurs before they enter into the marriage itself.

Dobson (2006:1) refers to a survey done with couples that have had successful marriages and observes from the study that a newly married couple must **establish and maintain a Christ centred home and that everything rests on this foundation** (emphasis added by Omar Fourie). Dobson (2006:1) also notes that if a newly married couple (and any marriage) is deeply committed to Jesus Christ, they enjoy enormous advantages over the couple with no spiritual dimension.

5.2.2.2 Training married couples in communicating forgiveness

Communicating forgiveness is related to conflict resolution among married couples (Fincham, et al. 2006:418). Forgiveness can help couples deal with existing difficulties and prevent the emergence of future problems.

Many married couples are averse to the idea of communicating forgiveness before the counselling process is underway, because they think it implies forgiving-and-forgetting (forced reconciliation) or accepting, condoning or excusing an offence the partner has committed. It might leave them with feelings of weakness and that they have left the door open to get hurt again. Forgiveness as a construct, though, should be distinguished from accepting, excusing or condoning an offence. The individual communicates or lives forgiveness despite the wrongful nature of the offence and the fact that the offender is not entitled to forgiveness (Fincham *et al.* 2006:416). It is important to add that forgiveness is a transformation that occurs over time (Fincham et al. 2006:421).

Forgiveness, as mentioned, is a construct that is communicated over time and not immediately, whereas a partner might expect forgiveness to be immediate upon hearing the word (Fincham et al. 2006: 421) and may experience anger, confusion or resentment if the matter is raised later and the transgressor believed that he/she was forgiven. The partner should ideally view the statement as promissory, "I am trying to forgive you" or "I am willing to forgive you".

Fincham *et al.* (2006:419) postulate that commitment to a relationship or at least enhancing or highlighting it might promote forgiveness; a transgression might be viewed in a more positive frame and as a result promote forgiveness. Conversely when a partner is

ambivalent or not committed to a relationship and the intent to persist in the relationship is wavering then the communication of forgiveness may be therapeutically more difficult.

5.2.2.3 Training married couples in communicating appreciation

According to Berger and Janoff-Bulman (2006:55) communicating appreciation is vital in the marital relationship. When appreciation is communicated in a relationship partners are more likely to view obligations as something they want to do rather than something they should do (Berger and Janoff-Bulman, 2006:55).

In long-term relationships (including the marital relationship) the absence of appreciation (especially for tedious and obligatory tasks) created loss of relationship satisfaction (Berger and Janoff-Bulman, 2006:55).

5.2.3 Christian counselling's therapeutic focus on restoration of communication when parenting

Batson (1999:1) makes the assertion that children can be lead to Christ by their parents; God made the gospel message simple so that even a child can respond to it. Batson (1999:1) also states that parents should be ready to present (also communicate) the gospel to their children and not be afraid to repeat the message often, Batson (1999:1) continues by stating that parents should use every opportunity to present the gospel to their children as hearts are open to it when they are young.

A child left to go on in sin without restraint will have little appreciation for Jesus Christ who came to die for his sins (Freeman, 2006:2). Christian children must learn that unacceptable conduct brings punishment; it is basic to their understanding of salvation (Freeman, 2006:2). The level of contact and therefore communication levels between parents and their children have changed over successive generations up to modern times. In the nineteenth century contact both physically and socially was not encouraged and intimate conversations steered away from just a generation ago. In more modern times parents have realized how vitally important intimate contact on many levels both physically and socially is for the well being of their children and the health of the family unit especially with the stresses of modern day living in mind.

Voegtlin (2006:1) states that the first order of business in raising Godly children is discipline and that lack of discipline (especially from a father who does not discipline his child) is proof of a lack of love. He goes further to state that consistency is the most important act of discipline (Voegtlin, 2006:2).

5.2.3.1 Communication when there is conflict between parents and children

Rainey and Rainey (2006b:1) identifies three elements to resolving conflict successfully with a child:

1. It must be communicated to the child that his/her attitude and/or behaviour is hurtful
2. There must be a willingness to communicate forgiveness (the parent must be willing to forgive the child's behaviour, but also willing to ask for forgiveness for what the parent has done). God, the Father, has forgiven us and we must model forgiveness to our children and teach them to show forgiveness to others (Rainey and Rainey, 2006b:1)
3. There must be a movement towards reconciliation, to restore the relationship

In the analysis of an empirical situation involving problematic relationships between parents and children (as described in Chapter 4), Respondents 3 and 4 have exhibited difficulties in handling conflict and expressing themselves adequately in situations. Respondent 3 (eldest sister), resorting to extreme expressive anger (e.g. shouting) and Respondent 4 (middle sister) resorting to conflict avoidance. The result is that both Respondents 3 and 4 are unable to transmit properly their true feelings and desires and to have these feelings/desires satisfied. This analysis affirms the need for therapeutic intervention in equipping families to develop good communication practices and proficiency in conflict resolution.

Rainey and Rainey (2006b:1) emphasized the role of reconciliation in conflict resolution. The parent should even when deep-seated conflict is present, continually work to re-establish a relationship and move toward reconciliation.

According to Rinaldi and Howe (2003:454) the more that destructive strategies for handling conflict in the family are employed the more siblings engage in conflict when communicating amongst themselves, whereas constructive strategies for handling conflict are likely to create warmth (and good communication) between siblings.

It is then of vital importance for parents to employ not only constructive strategies for handling conflict in the marital relationship, but also to employ such strategies when venturing to handle conflict in the parent and child relationship.

5.2.3.2 Handling anger when communicating with children

Rainey and Rainey (2006c:1) state that anger is almost always a response, a result of something else that happened. When a child is angry a parent can help the child understand what angered him and help the child to communicate what he feels and in that way start to work through the issue. Anger must be seen as a warning that something is wrong; unmet expectations, hurt, disappointment – parents must train their children to clearly ascertain the problem and address the issue (Rainey and Rainey, 2006c:2).

All anger that is not identified and addressed will later result in obstinate attitudes, irrational behaviour to punish parents or other authority figures, physical symptoms or, depression (Rainey and Rainey, 2006c:1, 2).

5.2.3.3 Therapeutic focus on practical parenting: Raising sons to become men of God

Rainey, ed. (2002:137) uses a four pillar method to convey his ideas on raising sons to become men of substance, to become men of God. This model of Rainey can indeed be a helpful therapeutic tool, especially in restoring and optimizing communicative relationships between fathers and sons. Rainey, ed. (2002:137) asserts that boys need a vision if they are at all going to become men; it is this vision that he wants to develop by using the four pillars of a man's life. These four pillars are as follows:

- The King Pillar
- The Mentor Pillar
- The Warrior Pillar

- The Friend Pillar

5.2.3.3.1 The king pillar

Rainey, ed. (2002:138) asserts that Jesus was the best example of someone who displayed or revealed the qualities of the various pillars best. Where the king pillar is concerned: Jesus did not live a life of self-service where His subjects had to serve Him. It was just the other way around, Jesus served His fellow man, providing for them in their needs and treating them not as subjects but as friends – He was willing to die for those he loved. This is what boys must be taught from a very early age; that it is good to provide for your loved ones, both in their physical and spiritual needs (Rainey, ed., 2002:138).

This implies instilling certain qualities into the character of boys from a very young age in order to equip them to take responsibility for the physical and spiritual needs of their loved ones. This includes how to properly communicate with parents and siblings. Rainey, ed. (2002:138) lists other characteristics which include:

- Integrity
- Good work ethic
- Understand and appropriately love the opposite sex
- Self-giving
- Unselfishness
- Tenderness

5.2.3.3.2 The warrior pillar

According to Rainey, ed. (2002: 139) the desire to protect is in the heart of every man. It is a spirit of strength, it is the warrior spirit. In the Bible a warrior is described as the man in between, in other words a warrior, nearly always a man, stands in between his family and those he loves and that which threatens them, in order to protect them. (Rainey, ed., 2002:140). Jesus, of course is the great warrior (the Lion of the tribe of Judah); the great man standing between us, whom He loves, and sin and the Devil waiting to destroy us.

Rainey, ed. (2002:140) warns against both untoward aggressiveness and passivity and instructs that boys should be learned the delicate balance between the two, where the true warrior should position/find himself. This is especially vital when the communication of boys with parents and siblings are concerned, where boys should learn that improper aggressiveness and lack of social interaction (passivity) is detrimental both for them and the family.

5.2.3.3.3 The mentor pillar

This particular pillar concerns the wisdom of life; the wisdom of a father conveyed through his modelling, in order to teach his son about life (and more importantly how to live that life) (Rainey, ed. 2002:141) and how to communicate properly with parents and siblings. It is of vital importance for a generation growing up to have the support and leadership from their fathers or older men in order to live successful lives. Do the young men of today know the real meaning of good/proper communication? Do they have moral certainty about what is right and about what is wrong in their daily actions? If children (boys) are left to live their lives as they wish and according to their own devices and

ideas, then they live according to the rules of a godless society, which perpetuates chaos and evil, the master of which is Satan.

Fatherless boys growing up to become men are essentially left adrift through life, they need an adult man with good moral values to mentor them and show them the way to live their lives. This is then an area where older men, not necessarily the father of the needy boy or young man, can fulfil critical role. When such an older more experienced man takes the responsibility of mentoring a young man and if the young man respects and reveres him, then the older man can mentor through patient instruction and in the manner he lives his life, thereby providing a template from which the younger can learn and base his life on.

5.2.3.3.4 The friend pillar

This pillar is about being sensitive, sensitive to your own feelings and needs and also to be sensitive to others and their needs and feelings. According to Rainey, ed. (2002:141) this pillar is the most difficult to build in men because opening up and communicating how they feel, creates vulnerability and circumstances to be hurt by someone especially by those they care for the most.

But Rainey, ed. (2002:141) asserts that **a wise man is willing to be vulnerable and authentic in the presence of loved ones and true friends** (emphasis added by Omar Fourie). To create this sensitivity and connectedness to himself and to loved ones and to create a willingness to communicate openly takes time to foster and should be shaped in the live of a boy from the very beginning.

Living a sensitive life is more difficult and does leave one open to hurt, but a more connected and sensitive life is one that is more authentic, more real.

5.2.4 Christian counselling's therapeutic focus on restoring communication: members in their particular roles towards other members of the family and in their individuality

5.2.4.1 Understanding the communicative dynamics involved in the husband / father role and conduct in the family

As stated in Chapter 2, paragraph 4.1, a husband should not rule over his wife in a despotic, hard fashion. A husband must take responsibility for decisions made for or on behalf of the family, whether the decision was made in a democratic fashion or a unilateral decision was made by the husband, responsibility always remains with the husband. Husbands must stay devoted to their wives. Relationships succeed through hard work and commitment; marriages breakup too often because of a lack of commitment to the marriage. Good communication forms part of this hard work and commitment in marital and other relationships.

A husband should be the worship leader for his marriage (worship being a type of communication with God, saying that the worshipper is submitting to God). Worship here includes reading the scriptures and prayer. He should also take the lead in insuring that he and his wife regularly attends church. A husband as spiritual leader of his marriage starts

right at the beginning of the marriage and is regarded by Rainey, ed. (2002:103) as an automatic function of being a husband. **Another aspect of taking on a spiritual role in the marriage is a responsibility and willingness to ensure the spiritual well being of his wife** (emphasis added by Omar Fourie). As an intercessor he can make appeal before God for his wife in the same manner that Jesus Christ intercedes as High Priest for His church. (Rainey, ed. 2002:103)

What Christian fathers should do is raise their children according to what the Bible teaches and the way God expects his children to live. They should set the example when it comes to Christian living; they should properly model how to communicate with family, friends and strangers and they should go to church and praise and worship. Christian fathers must love their wives in a godly manner and serve their community by being responsible, law-abiding citizens, and in so doing becoming examples and stalwarts in the community, this will serve as an example to their children in how to live their lives properly.

These aspects of being a Christian husband/father is very difficult to maintain and in fact impossible if the Christian father is not guided and instructed by the Holy Spirit resident in him. When a Christian husband/father is guided by the Spirit he is able to be the husband for his wife and the father for his children that he wants to be and that God expects from him. He can then bring his children to God in a manner that is acceptable to God and that can on a consistent basis bring his children under the impression that there is a living God that longs for a personal relationship with them and that requires obedience to Him. From this realization and instruction in Biblical principles the child also becomes more obedient and pliable to further instruction from the parents in becoming a responsible adult.

Rainey, ed. (2002:105) states that a husband is by God's design a priest for his family; an intercessor, a communicator between his family and God. A man as husband and father must lead his family into God's presence for worship, to remind them of their relationship to God and act as an intercessor on his family's behalf. He should take the lead in insuring that his family makes regular church attendance a part of their lives. A man, as priest of his family, should also take the leadership – and set the example – of reading and studying the scriptures, taking care that his wife and children and he study the scriptures together and each individual on his own in his personal study time. Coming together for church attendance and coming together for home study will also improve communication between the family members. A man should bear and communicate the word of God, from God to his family (Rainey, ed. 2002:105).

The marks of a father as prophet in the family are:

- He hears from God: In order to communicate that message of truth accurately to his family
- He establishes the law of God in the home (by communicating it to the family)
- He proclaims (communicates) God's truth. A father should lead his family in Bible study and teach them from the Scriptures

- He confronts sin in the family. He should realize what they are and confront the sins of his family. The only manner in which this can be done is through open and clear communication with his family.

As leader of the family the man should be the provider and protector, he should set God's rules in the home and ensure that they are followed (Rainey, ed. 2002:109,110). A marriage and family needs a leader to steer them in the right direction and away from danger. Neither a marriage nor a family can survive without competent and capable leadership. A husband and a father should fulfil this role to the best of his ability and with the guidance of God's word and the Holy Spirit.

Nortjé (2006:10) states that men are surprisingly vulnerable despite their physical strength and sometimes uncouth behaviour and that they have a deep-seated need for approval, support, reassurance and praise. Man is programmed according to Nortjé (2006:10), to handle every threat that might endanger him or his family in a physical proactive manner. Men tend to be egocentric and tend to think of themselves as more important than other people are to him. His self-esteem is often formed by the way he compares himself to others and how he competes with them (Nortjé, 2006:11).

5.2.4.2 Communicative dynamics involved in the Wife / Mother's conduct and role in the family

De Vaux (1997:29) states that in Biblical times the unmarried woman was under authority of her father, the married woman was under the authority of her husband. According (Nortjé, 2006:11) women are focused more on others and the needs of others, outside of them, than on themselves. Because a wife is focused on her husband she is unconsciously searching for the approval of her husband. When he approves of her behaviour it (in her mind) strengthens their bond, but when there is continuous criticising it damages her self-esteem and she senses emotional separation from her husband (Nortjé, 2006:12). Because of this a wife can easily become dependant on her husband for love, acceptance and approval (Nortjé, 2006:11). The balance between being subject to a husband in accepting his leadership on the one side and the distorted communicative pattern of being silenced and cropping up feelings and not expressing feelings in a positive way on the other side lies in a life lived in reconciliation with Christ. When the wife has reconciled with Christ and her life is lived in harmony with Christ as the example, her husband can only be viewed by her with the love of Christ even in times when communication patterns are fraught with difficulty.

Of the respondents analysed in Chapter 4 only the marriage of Respondent 3 seem to have exhibited a tendency to heed the command of this verse. It is an open question how the research family's functioning would have been affected if the marriage of Respondent 3 did not end with the death of his spouse. Could, for instance, the marriages of the other siblings have been kept intact for longer had the siblings had the long term modelling of the marriage of the eldest brother (Respondent 3)?

The biblical role for woman in the family

As stated in Chapter 2, paragraph 4.2 of this study, a woman has a specific role to fulfil and specific blessings that God wants to channel through her to the family (Christenson,

1970:44). The Bible and Christian scholars ascribe great importance to submission of wives to their husbands and view a man as the head and authority over his wife, submission is not an attitude of servitude but is God's order for the family. In chapter 2, paragraph 4.2, submission is further described as something that should not be viewed as a negative statement when considering communication between wives and husbands.

The Biblical role for woman in the family can be divided into different areas. A woman is a wife to her husband and if the couple decided to have children she would be a mother. There are of course many roles which woman fulfil not only in her family but also in society and other areas. What has changed is the way society defines these roles and how, in the interest of this study, they are played-out in the family. Societies' view of the role of the woman in the family has changed dramatically. Society and the Bible and what it says stands in many ways dramatically opposite to each other.

5.2.4.3 Communicative dynamics involved in Children's role and conduct in the family

According to Costella (2006:1) the word of God is not silent concerning the conduct of children and their role in the family, church and society. As stated in Chapter 2, paragraph 6.2 of this study, Costella (2006:1) asserts that God commands young people to be leaders and lead by example. Lackey (2004:9) points out that modern scholarship, including Christian scholarship recognises the individuality of the child, not only in his personality, but also in his particular needs, problems and temptation to sin.

God desires to have a close intimate relationship with young Christians today, a relationship that can only occur if they obey the scriptures, (Costella (2006:1).

Costella (2006:3) gives us, according to 1 Timothy 4:12, six areas in which children or young Christians can be examples to believers and non-believers:

- In word
- In conversations (content)
- In charity (love and concern)
- In spirit
- In faith
- In purity

According to Skynner (1993:1) it is never too late to have a happy childhood, which means that unhappy experiences and memories can be turned into positive ones – profound change is possible at any time of life (cf. Chapter 4, Respondent 3). Respondent 3 moved from a position of confusion about her feelings and life events and the way it was handled by the respondent to an awareness of these and an effort, through counselling, to change. Skynner (1993:1) further asserts that no matter the cause of mental illness or unhappiness, people do not have to remain at the point reached in childhood, but can change it later on in life.

5.2.4.3.1 Children must be disciplined and obedient

Dobson (2002:239) describes discipline when he states that boys need structure, supervision and they have a need to be civilized. Barna (2003:69) states that children must be

motivated to have a thirst for the righteousness of God; to always want to do what is right in God's eyes (to be obedient), because they want to honour and please God. As stated in Chapter 2, paragraph 6.1, of this study God's desire or divine order for the lives of children is encompassed in the single command of Biblical obedience to parents in everything Christenson (1970:55). Discipline and therefore obedience is absolutely essential to the well-being of a child and a child will feel deep discontent if he is not obedient.

Obedience is not negotiable: the Bible does not provide an avenue for the child to rebel. A child must stay obedient in all cases, even if parents make the occasional mistakes. An occasional mistake by parents cannot provide a reason for a child to be rebellious. Obedience, obviously, does not go as far as sin and the child should seek prayerful assistance from God if obedience to parents might lead to a sinful act.

However, the long term co-dependency behaviour created/exhibited by Respondent 1, Chapter 4, paragraph 4.3.3.1, towards her children is not what the Bible intends when commanding obedience. This is not to say that the children of respondent 1 were never obedient and respondent 1 never received obedience. However, communication was poor in this family and not clear and concise and severely hampered the function of obedience. This has further implications since obedience has the communicative function of clearing the mind and heart of child to be open to the guidance of the parent, therefore opening up the way for a child to learn how to live a good life.

5.2.4.3.2 Children must be truthful, faithful and modest

Truthfulness, faith and modesty are concepts regarded as the cardinal virtues of youth and regarded as the foundation of Christianity (1 Cor. 13:13). The communicative value of this particular attitude is beneficial in restoring and maintaining good relationships.

Truth opens the way for clear and concise communication. Faith opens the way for trust and subsequently a willingness from the child to speak truthfully and openly about the child's inner life. Modesty brings about reverence and respect for a child's parents and a circumspect manner when communicating with parents: less vocalization and more silence and listening – which can bring about obedience as the listening child can receive good advice/instruction and act upon it.

5.2.4.4 Communicative dynamics involved in being an individual in the corporal life of a family system

The family unit has as its elemental parts the individual. It is then understandable that any counselling model would have to look at counselling the individual within the family unit.

According to Peterson (1996:1) past pain in relationships can be ameliorated by changing that which does not promote health and happiness.

Everyone interprets the world from their own histories, what they think about what has happened to them in the past and how what has happened to them relates to what is currently happening to them. Everyone acts out of a certain background or frame of reference, which could prevent an individual from accurately interpreting current events. This

may prevent an individual from dealing with a situation properly or relating/communicating to someone in a positive, potentially fulfilling way.

In order to aid in answering the overarching research question of this study: How families, with problematic interpersonal familial relationships can be counselled from a Biblical perspective with the primary objective of restoring communication in the family system? the therapeutic perspectives of different approaches in Biblical / Christian Counselling on counselling the family system as a resource guide to counsellors will now be presented.

5.2.5 Different approaches in Christian Counselling to understanding therapeutic intervention in distorted marriage and familial relationships

5.2.5.1 What is Biblical / Christian counselling and its unique contribution to therapeutic intervention?

Different approaches in Christian counselling may answer this question from different angles. Taking note of the wide spectrum of answers provided by different approaches to counselling, will provide the therapist with a multi-faceted perspective on intervention into the lives of family members with problematic relationships hampered by distorted communication.

The biblical reason for solving problems, as far as Crabb (1977:21) is concerned, must be that the client wants to enter into a deeper relationship with God, to please Him more effectively through worship and service. Reinecke (2001:148) describes Biblical counselling as the application of counselling techniques within a religious context and/or the addition of religious elements to proper and well constructed counselling models.

The Apostle Paul set forth in Romans 15:14, goodness and knowledge as the qualifications a good counsellor requires and, according to Adams (1970:59-60), any Christian may engage in counselling if he possesses such attributes.

As stated in Chapter 1, paragraph 3.1., of this study, Schoeman (2004:79) states that it is important to recognize the role secular psychology has to play in Christian Counselling (Pastoral Theology). Schoeman (2004:79) also states that Psychology has developed a number of diagnostic tools that the pastoral counsellor can use.

Woodbridge *et al.* (1998) in Reinecke (2001:148) states that Biblical counselling is unique because it has:

- A theological base and is not restricted to scientific knowledge for its understanding of people.
- Unique goals of which spiritual growth is essential.
- Unique resources, for instance the Bible and prayer.
- Utilizes unique methods, as the counsellor is but a vehicle in a process where the work of the Holy Spirit is vital.

The common factor in these different approaches to defining Biblical counselling, seems to be that the state of relationship with God forms an important base in understanding people and the state of their relationships with other people.

5.2.5.2 A multifaceted look at the goal of Biblical / Christian counselling and its implications for restoring interpersonal communication

The goal for Christian counselling, according to Crabb (1977:22), is maturity; only the maturing client is moving closer to the purpose of his life which is to worship and service. **Biblical counselling will adopt as its major goal the spiritual and psychological maturity of the client** (emphasis added by Omar Fourie).

Patton (1993:188) makes the important statement that one of the tasks of a pastoral counsellor is to search for and focus on the central message of the Bible about the family. A significant part of what a pastoral counsellor offers the troubled family is his care, interest in, and his sense of accountability for each member of the family (Patton, 1993:205). Reinecke (2001:148) views this task as basically what pastoral therapy and Biblical counselling is; a ministry of a shepherd toward his flock.

The pastor (pastoral counsellor), by definition, cares for worn, weary and discouraged people; he sees to it that they find rest (Adams, 1970:67). The pastor/counsellor must take up the ministry to counsel the man in misery (Adams, 1970:67).

According to Crabb (1977:15, 16) there are three kinds of Christian counselling. Every Christian is called to a ministry of encouraging and helping - encouraging each other to love one another, carry each other's burdens and pray for each other. This kind of counselling, according to Crabb (1977:16) is available to every Christian and is the first kind of Christian counselling. The Christian family will also be in a position to encourage each other, carry each other's burdens and love each other. Crabb (1977:16) identifies the second kind of Christian counselling as the teaching of Biblical principles, which is available to Pastors, the elders and leaders of the church. The third kind of counselling is a specialized ministry of counselling, where deeper exploration of problems takes place. The Christian counsellor can, because of his specialized ministry of counselling, deeper explore the problems a family may be facing and therapeutically intervene/facilitate.

As stated Crabb (1977:22) identifies as a major counselling goal the spiritual and psychological maturity in the Christian. The biblical counsellor assists the Christian to maturity in order to reach his ultimate purpose in life, namely, worship and service to God. Christian counselling is concerned with whether or not the client is responding (according to Scripture) to whatever circumstances he is facing/experiencing. The same goals will be applicable to the counselling of the Christian family, in order to gain maturity, worship God and respond to life's crises according to scripture and not worldly standards for living.

Collins (1988:39), more specifically points to the various reasons people come to Christian counsellors, such as marriage tensions, crises, depression, interpersonal conflicts, confusion and other problems encountered during the course of life. Egan (2002:4) adds to these reasons that people come for help because they have troubles, doubts, difficul-

ties, frustrations or concerns. Collins (1988:39) describes counselling further by including helping clients recognize hidden harmful attitudes, teaching them interpersonal skills, new behaviours and so forth. A family may need therapeutic help in the same areas, such as communication difficulties, marriage problems, interpersonal conflicts, recognizing harmful attitudes, learning new behaviours and so forth. Such counselling can, if guided by the Holy Spirit, free a counselee and a family from persistent problems, stumbling blocks, past memories or present attitudes that prevent the counselee/family from growing towards maturity.

Collins (1988:39, 40) puts forward a list of Christian counselling goals that can also be applied to the family in general:

- Self-understanding – Helping individual members of a family and the family as a whole to understand themselves is a first step to healing
- Restoration of Communication – Many families are unable or unwilling to communicate and it therefore reduces the quality and rich blessedness of life in communion with each other
- Learning and Behaviour Change – Most, if not all, behaviour is learnt. Counselling means teaching families to unlearn ineffective behaviour and re-learn effective behaviour
- Self-actualization – Helping a counselee and the family as a whole achieving their optimal potential in Christ
- Support – Families can benefit from support, encouragement and temporarily being helped to carry their burdens (help by the counsellor and help from other members in the family system)
- Spiritual Wholeness – The Christian counsellor is a spiritual advisor who can guide spiritual growth, who can help families deal with spiritual struggles and help them find meaningful beliefs and values

Tan (2003:1) adds to the above by stating that one of the focus areas of family therapy should be the improvement of the quality of relating among family members by finding ways for the family to find fulfilment, closeness and cohesiveness, to interact as one instead of living as separate individuals.

5.2.5.3 The Goal of Biblical / Christian counselling: Listening and its implications for restoring interpersonal communication

According to Boyd (2003:345) the most important act of a pastoral counsellor is to listen carefully to clients and also states that even though a listener spends time being silent, it does not mean that the listener is passive (Boyd, 2003:352).

Boyd (2003:347) further states that to listen is to focus on what one chooses to hear, even if that choice is highly conditioned, automatic and an act of will and that because choosing is automatic a person (pastoral counsellor) is continuously filtering out an almost infinite number of possible distractions. Because listening is an act of will a person (pastoral counsellor) can be more conscious about it by choosing to do so (Boyd, 2003: 347).

This study cannot agree with Boyd (2003:348) who requires the counselling professional to abandon his role as scientific expert in favour of a co-participant role in the evolution of new meaning. Co-construction of meaning needs to take place with the leading and leadership of the pastoral counsellor. However, this study does concur with Boyd (2003:347) that the will to listen refers to a conscious decision on the part of the pastoral counsellor to value the reality of the client above all else.

Boyd (2003:347) makes the important statement that the helping relationship cannot continue without a partnership with the counselee, a collaborative involvement which can co-create new meanings.

5.2.5.4 Diverse perspectives from different Biblical / Christian counselling models as possible resource for the therapist

It will have to be examined by further studies whether and to what extent these models (theories) correlate with the teachings of the Bible. These counselling models are also relevant for the successful development of guidelines for a family systems praxis model for the Bible-centred counsellor, but did not fall within the ambit of this study.

5.2.5.4.1 Nouthetic counselling: Adams

According to Reinecke (2001:157) Adams' (1976) nouthetic - from the Greek *noutheteo*, which is translated in the Scriptures as cautioning /admonishing - counselling model views confrontation in counselling as inseparable from pastoral authority. The Bible is used as the handbook for counselling and the Holy Spirit is the true counsellor.

The counselee's problem is sin and sin therefore also hampers the counselee's ability to communicate well. The counselee should restructure and change his life on every terrain (Adams, 1976 in Reinecke, 2001:157) including the communicative sphere of his life - with the direction of the Bible and the counselling of the Holy Spirit.

5.2.5.4.2 Collins' counselling model

Collins (1988) views discipleship-counselling as at the heart of giving help to people. With Jesus Christ as the example, the counsellor helps the counselee. The purpose of this type of counselling is to make disciples of those to whom help (counselling) is given and to help the counsees become disciple makers themselves (Reinecke, 2001:157).

Collins (1988:22) does not agree with Adams (1972) and other writers such as William Kirk Kilpatrick (1983) that does not give psychology any chance to help Christian counsellors in their task. Collins (1988:23) states his acceptance of psychology succinctly as resource tool for helping the Christian counsellors in their task: "Let us accept the fact that psychology can be of great help to the Christian Counsellor", but he emphasizes that the psychologists that help the Christian counsellors should remain loyal and committed to the inspiration and authority of the Bible: both as standard against which all psychological theory must be measured and also the fact that the Bible is the written word of God with which all valid forms of counselling must agree (Collins 1988:23). When considering the foregoing as a means of approaching the practice of repairing communicative problems in problematic relationships a vast storehouse of information that the field of Psychology provides becomes available to the Christian counsellor.

5.2.5.4.3 Crabb's counselling model

Crabb (1978) in Reinecke (2001:158) does not regard confrontation as effective enough for counselling, comforting (*paramutheo*) is also necessary. In practice this means carrying each other's burdens, which include both reassuring and cautioning / admonishing.

Crabb (1987:55) believes in the Bible as sufficient/good enough and that when a psychological problem is revealed it would be revealed as a spiritual problem. Crabb (1987:58) qualifies this statement by stating that when the Christian counsellor limits him to ask only the questions that the Bible specifically answers, the results may often be a non-thinking and one-dimensional understanding of life and its problems "that fails to drive us to increased dependency in the Lord". If a Christian counsellor can react to questions posed about communication (which is often a complex and multi-faceted construct) in an intelligent non-simplistic way, this may go a long way in uncovering the real reasons for poor communication in interpersonal relationships and also assist in discovering/suggesting explanations for poor communicative abilities.

5.2.5.4.4 Narrative therapy

Müller (2000) in Reinecke (2001:158) sees life as a journey and that every person has a story of that journey (life story). The counsellor does not know anything about the counsellee's life, to whom the life story is related. Only when experiences of life events are organized, can they be used for counselling purposes. With this method people are helped to view their problems as something outside of them and in so doing the problem becomes a separate entity and they talk about it as something external.

Narrative therapy was an aid to Respondent 3 (eldest sister), Chapter 4, in understanding her role in the family by communicating her life story and objectively viewing it through her eyes and the eyes of her counsellor (Respondent 3 did not react positively to previous counselling attempts by pastoral counsellors/therapists using counselling techniques which contained elements of the Nouthetic Counselling Model).

This added objectivity of a person to his problems might assist the counsellee in formulating different strategies to address problems – including communication problems.

5.2.5.4.5 Healing through memory: Smith

Smith's (2000) *TheoPhostic* counselling ministry as described in Reinecke (2001:158) focuses on the origins of people's memories *TheoPhostic* means 'Light of God' which shines through Jesus Christ in a dark world of sin and broken people and works in that world to create change.

According to this model emotional pain, through memories, is constantly triggered because the origins of that pain which is (essentially) a lie, has not yet been taken care of or healed, that is to say, "the present situation of a counsellee triggers painful emotions from the past. Memory is the container of the lie which produces pain. Part of the information is false, but the memory is true" (Smith, 2000, quoted in Reinecke, 2001:158).

Smith (2000) in Reinecke (2001:158) describes the lies that are taken into the memory as, amongst others: feelings of fear, rejection, embarrassment, hopelessness, powerlessness

and feelings of confusion. Through counselling help that basically consists of prayer, the counselee is helped to be freed from the lies of his past.

When the basis – the lies that have been inculcated in the past – is corrected then this corrected base can be a new source of correct perceptions of the present; this coupled with good (learnt) communication techniques can help the counselee to communicate better.

A combination of these models will be utilized in describing praxis - theoretical guidelines for Christian counselling's therapeutic intervention in restoring communication in problematic interpersonal relationships in the family system (emphasis added by Omar Fourie).

5.3. PRAXIS-THEORETICAL GUIDELINES FOR RESTORING COMMUNICATION IN PROBLEMATIC INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS IN THE FAMILY SYSTEM

The purpose of this part of the chapter is to give guidelines for restoring communication in problematic interpersonal relationships in the family system on a praxis-theoretical level. As stated in Chapter 2, paragraph 3.2 of this study, Skynner (1993:1) states that healthy families are characterised by high levels of humour, fun and enjoyment. This is because they have a positive attitude and are warm, friendly, concerned, kind and supportive toward each other. Skynner (1993:1) goes further by stating that healthy families are committed, intimate and involved and are faithful over long periods of time, but they can also function successfully when they are separate from each other, independent and on their own (cf. Chapter 2, paragraph 3.2.).

According to Tan (2003:1) one of the focus areas of family therapy should be the improvement of the quality of relating among family members by finding ways for the family to find fulfilment, closeness and cohesiveness, to interact as one instead of living as separate individuals. One of the ways in which to achieve these objectives is restoring communication in the family system. Good interpersonal relationships depend on consistent development, application of skills and *communicating effectively* (Collins, 2000:232) (emphasis added by Omar Fourie).

Goddard (2006:1) identifies six characteristics of highly effective families:

1. Commitment: All family members are committed to each other and show or communicate that commitment
2. Expressing (communicating) appreciation: Appreciation is a deep-seated human need (strong families express gratitude and appreciation)
3. Spend time together: Strong families do things together and do them often
4. Spiritual development: A spiritually mature or developing family can have mutual purpose, direction and perspective
5. Deal effectively with conflict, stress, crisis and problems (and also successfully communicate through them)
6. Strong families have rhythm: They have routines, rituals and traditions that give meaning and structure to family life

These characteristics - as identified by Goddard - confirms yet again that communication is a keyword in a healthy family system.

As stated in Chapter 2 (paragraph 3.2), destructive patterns in communicative practices in the family, like gossip, neglect, physical abuse, emotional abuse, unrealistic expectations, marginalizing one member as the “black sheep” in the family and are fatal to any hopes of healthy family relationships.

Therefore – with the mind on an alternative for these destructive patterns - the following praxis-theoretical guidelines centring on Biblical indicators can be identified in aiding Christian counsellors/therapists for structuring pastoral renewal of family life around the axis of restored and open communication patterns and channels:

5.3.1 Creating a renewed sense for Familism

Yoo (2007:62) asserts a family-centred way of life, which he identifies as Familism, in which the family supports its members by sharing resources and its members try to cooperate with each other to achieve their common goals. In Familism the family is considered more important than its individual members and the individual is not identified separately, but identified with the family itself. He further states that Familism regards the family as the most important unit in society (Yoo, 2007:62). A renewed sense of familism and its potential to promote open communication channels should be at the heart of the theoretical guidelines developed for renewal of communication patterns in the family system.

A renewed sense of Familism, a sense of one-for-all and all-for-one was an element lacking and earnestly required in the family system of the Respondents of Chapter 4, which is needed to create cohesiveness, shared goals and history and positively influence communication between the respondents.

5.3.2 Promoting restoration of open communication patterns

Communication techniques or patterns between family members are developed over a long period of time and a lot of these techniques or patterns may be negative or unsatisfactory (All the respondents of the research family, Chapter 4, exhibited negative or unsatisfactory relational techniques which was acquired over a long period of time). As stated in Chapter 2 (paragraph 3.1) family members do not always communicate on the same level; they don't always have the same levels of communication proficiency, which increases the possibility for problematic communication between family members and may cause conflict. According to Jolly (2009:1) these communication patterns can be changed or augmented in the areas where it is most needed.

Healthy families talk to each other in an open, plain and direct fashion; they give and get accurate information in interaction with each other (Skynner, 1993:2). This potential openness in the family system should be utilized as an important building block in changing and enhancing communication patterns that initially could have caused members of the family to be isolated from each other.

5.3.3 Ministering reconciliation with God and forgiveness in restoring open communication patterns

As stated in Chapter 2, paragraph 3.1, Immink (2005:122) refers to the statement of van der Meiden who views communication as the most fundamental human fact, **but also as one of the most fundamental religious facts** (emphasis added by Omar Fourie). Communication is an essential

part of human life without which human existence is unthinkable. Human life is unbearable without restored relationships and open communication on the horizontal as well as the vertical level. It implies the human desire for communal life and a longing to join together that which is singular and apart. God's salvation is actualized in interpersonal communication: central aspects of practicing faith, for instance love, justice, mercy and so forth has everything to do with interpersonal relationships. It is of vital importance for any family member, whether husband/father, wife/mother or children to, in the end, reconcile with God, through Jesus Christ for any hope for good clear (restored) communication patterns. Forgiveness from God, through the works of Christ, brings the only mode through which real progression in the problem(s) of communication can be shown.

The Christian family today should be a symbol to the secular world, the centre in society where peace and love is reflected: 'Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do' - (Colossians 3: 12, 13) (Chapter 2 of this study, paragraph 3).

5.3.4 Creating a renewed sense for the Christian way of handling communication during conflict

The following factors should be present if conflict is to be addressed properly (Allen, 2002:1):

- **Preparation:** It is important to prepare if a conflict meeting is going to be held. Preparation ensures that every aspect of the problem is addressed and the facts are discussed and not one another.
- **Time allowance:** allowing for enough time to be spent on discussing the matter at hand.
- **Inclusiveness:** Everyone should be given a chance to have their say and communicate what they feel and think.
- **Diplomacy:** Diplomacy should be present to wisely manage the conflict situation at hand for the benefit of all involved.
- **Factual Data:** If wrong information is circulated during conflict resolution, then feelings such as trust will give way to suspicion and doubt.
- **Participation:** Good communication cannot occur if the family members do not participate.
- **Civility and Courtesy:** It is of vital importance that each family member is treated with the necessary civility and respect in order for members to not feel excluded or dominated during the process of resolving the conflict.
- **Multiple-meetings:** If required schedule multiple-meetings to ensure that the entire matter is resolved.
- **Professional help:** If there is a communications break-down the family should seek professional help.

As stated in Chapter 2 (paragraph 3.3), conflict in the family is not abnormal and will occur as in any other normal family, but in Christian families conflict should be handled differently. The goal of conflict should be to solve the problem and re-establish harmony (Dunlap, 2006:1). Harmony/peace should be present - most of the time - in the Christian family. When there is conflict in the Christian family it must be handled by the individual

members in that family and the family as a unit in a positive manner and it should be resolved in a way that should glorify God. Conflict must not escalate to the extent that those involved sin and the glory of the Lord leaves the family. This is especially of import to the counsellor as the therapeutic focus of the counsellor on conflict may have an impact on the rest of the counselling process: the counsellor must assure that something positive is taken away from the conflict situation.

God requires family members to love each other; this is surely the first place to begin. Family members should love each other with the love of the Lord. If they are Holy Spirit filled children of God then they will have the ability when conflict arises to face the family member with love, in other words to view him from first to last with the love of the Lord.

5.3.5 Stressing the importance of identifying problem thinking and managing problem behaviour with the eye on renewal of thought and behaviour patterns

Identifying problem thinking involves making the individual family member aware of his wrong basic assumptions about communication and subsequent wrong behaviour (approach to communicating) in his effort to gain significance and security. McGee (2003:7) states that our desire to be loved and accepted originates from a deep need, a need that frequently governs behaviour and is the primary source of emotional pain (and the source of the way that an individual communicates that need and expresses emotional pain) – this is the often unrecognized need for self worth. The individual should be made aware of the fact that God is the only source that could possibly satisfy all his deep seated needs (e.g. for self-worth) (McGee, 2003:11); this is the Biblical route to significance and security. If the individual's thinking was unbiblical about how to communicate properly then he should be brought into awareness about what the Bible has to say about the way he should live and accordingly try to change his thinking to more Biblically correct thoughts. Crabb (1977:153) rightly warns that to assume that the individual is ready to hear what the Bible has to say about the way he thinks about communicating and the wrong things he says and does when communicating, can lead to doubt (a feeling that the Bible cannot really help) or a premature jettisoning of the relationship between the counsellor and individual.

In order for thinking to change the counsellor should:

1. Attempt to discover where the incorrect assumptions of the family member had been learnt. In other words some searching around in the past circumstances of the family member and family system by the counsellor is necessary:
2. encourage the family member to express his emotions surrounding his wrongful assumptions, his wrong beliefs and his incorrect ways of communicating. When the counsellor picks up on how the family member feels and reflects this back to the family member, the family member will feel that he is understood and he might also be willing to consider that what he believes might be incorrect or inaccurate:
3. support the family member and family system as a whole as he /it attempts to change. The family member might feel threatened as he leaves the shores of per-

ceived, but worldly sources of security (McGee, 2003: ix) and significance and the security-holding 'island' to the promise land of a Christ filled life:

4. Encourage the member of the family to fill his mind constantly with his new-found Biblical truths, actively (consciously) discarding the wrongful assumptions about communication and what brought significance and security (Crabb, 1977:154).

Family members as individuals assume that certain behaviours are going to create significance and security in their lives, Crabb (1977: 120, 124 and 125) labels these as basic assumptions. Crabb (1977:151) calls these behaviours basic goal oriented behaviour (to attain significance and security). When problem feelings have been identified the wrong problem (goal) oriented behaviour should be apparent, this is important when addressing communicational difficulties in the family system. After the problem behaviours have been identified the basic assumptions about what the family member believes will create significance and security in his life can be approximated. This may also be a cause for the betterment of communication and healed perceptions about communication with others.

5.3.6 Promoting the establishment of cohesive communicative patterns in Family Therapy

As stated in Chapter 3 (paragraph 4), effective communication is not just about talking, but includes listening, non-verbal expressions and silence (Jolly, 2009:1). Family therapy is a form of therapy that involves all the members of a nuclear or extended family (Frey, 2006:1). Frey (2006:2) goes further by stating that in family therapy the therapist seeks to analyze the process of family interaction and communication as a whole. Family therapy uses family systems theory to evaluate family members in terms of their position or role within the family in its entirety.

God does not want broken families. God wants families to avoid a family break-up at all costs (cf. Malachi 2:16). It is true that keeping the family together may be difficult, but if families want to stay together in today's world parents will have to start loving and valuing each other and their children with renewed earnestness.

From a Biblical perspective the times we live in are described as the last days (Heb 1:2; Joel 2: 28 - 32 and repeated in Acts 2:17-21) and God wants to remind us that those who will be left standing are the few and they will only remain standing by holding steadfast to the moral teachings of the Bible and a real relationship with the living God.

Characteristics of healthy family relationships that should be promoted by the counsellor in family therapy and guidance to families with problematic relationships in the light of the above mentioned need for a real relationship with God:

- Orientation (atmosphere in the family): Family orientation / atmosphere is influenced by a belief that helping each other is important, acknowledging family members' needs for reassurance and support and viewing mistakes as human (when mistakes are made, especially by children / adolescents (Peterson, 1996:2). Family members can change the erring individual's behaviour through communi-

cating warmth and love as opposed to severe punishment and control (Peterson, 1996:2). In the Christian context this cohesive communicative patterns flows from a restored relationship with God.

- **Boundaries:** In healthy families the roles and responsibilities of parents and adults are clear and separate from the roles and responsibilities of the children (Peterson, 1996:3). Boundaries also refer to the interaction of the nuclear family with the extended family and larger community. A cohesive sense of family and where it stands within the larger family and extended community must be balanced with accepting and allowing influences and helpful resources from the extended family and community (Peterson, 1996:3).
- **Power and Intimacy:** According to Peterson (1996:4) people are able to relate more intimately when they feel they have equal power. Shared power through, for instance, joint decision making, promotes understanding (Peterson, 1996:4) and equal opportunities to communicate viewpoints, desires, hopes and fears.
- **Honesty and freedom of expression:** Members of a family should be free to express themselves autonomously (including different opinions and perceptions). When honesty and freedom of expression is around with its various interactions, it supports individuality. Love and caring is not withdrawn if family members think differently about certain matters. When these freedoms are present each member of the family and the family as a whole is in a position to enjoy an atmosphere of honesty when relating to each other (Peterson, 1996:5).
- **Warmth, Joy and Humour:** Humour plays an important role in family bonding, it is an aspect of mental health and it is an important energizing resource.

5.3.7 Teaching the role of faith in the Trinity in restoring problematic interpersonal relationships in the family

5.3.7.1 God the Father

God the Father as head of the Trinity is also God the Father and so also the perfect example of the role the husband should, through faith, assume as head of the household. God is the provider to the world and so should the man in the household assume the responsibility of provider for his family. God judges the world and metes out punishment and so the husband must punish his children if they err to keep them on the path of righteousness.

5.3.7.2 Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ is the centre-point of the entire Christian faith and the fulfilment of the plans of God for the age of mankind. He is also the centre-point of each and every Christian's life and should also be at the centre of every Christian family's life. It is ultimately through faith in Christ and the partaking in the atoning redemption brought by Him that distorted communication in relationships can be restored.

If a family dedicates itself to following Christ through the study and obeying of the scriptures and hearing and obeying the direction given by the Holy Spirit, then a family doing

this cannot but succeed in communicating effectively and succeeding in other aspects of life.

5.3.7.3 The Holy Spirit

Living in modern times means that situations and challenges are faced on a daily basis that would have been difficult to imagine a hundred years ago and hence not something that needed any thought in terms of making moral decisions on. Today questions like abortion (Cain, 1999:3-6) and the rights of homosexuals (Cain, 1999:86-92) have gained prominence in terms of it being advocated by lobbying groups and laws around these questions being challenged in court and new laws promulgated in Government surrounding these issues. The Holy Spirit provides guidance on these matters on a continuous basis and on the way day-to-day living should be handled. The Holy Spirit has been sent as comforter and as guide, but the Holy Spirit whispers and does not shout.

The Holy Spirit can be a guide to the family in how to communicate with each other with love and acceptance. The Holy Spirit is a comforter to the family, to parents coping with troublesome children, to young adults coping with social pressure.

The Holy Spirit's role would then appear to be two-fold. Namely that of comforter and that of being a guide for us in our every day lives. These two aspects of the work of the Holy Spirit will now be looked into more broadly.

5.3.7.3.1 The Comforting Holy Spirit

One of the unfortunate but factual truths about family life is that it is often accompanied by pain. This is due to humanity's sinful nature, this nature compels mankind to sin and also at various times actively pursue the misery of others, which causes untold hurt and pain to victims. The Holy Spirit can be a comfort for the pain suffered by the family. He is not only able to dress the wounds of hurt caused by others, but also the take care of the pain caused by death, loneliness and so forth.

The Holy Spirit is intimately involved in our lives. According to Louis Berkhof (1958: 468): "Regeneration consists in the implanting of the principle of the new spiritual life in man, in a radical change of the governing disposition of the soul, which, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, gives birth to a life that moves in a Godward direction. In principle this change affects the whole man..." The Holy Spirit wants to be the family's helper and teacher (McGee, 2003: 286) and guide us through the pain we might be suffering. He cares and wants the family to lead happy fulfilled lives.

5.3.7.3.2 The Guiding Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is a shining light in the dark times families find themselves in. He is there to guide the family in all truth (John 16:13) when facing difficult decisions, but as McGee (2003: 282) states the Holy Spirit also convicts of sin and shows his children that their thoughts and actions are contrary to their nature in Christ. When the family is in doubt He illuminates the Scriptures and the knowledge of God (1 Cor.2:11-13); - He sends friends or even strangers to talk to the family. His guidance is there if the family only took the time to stand still and "listen". Standing still here means quieting down inside, the act of stopping and "listening" to the Spirit speaking, it also means searching for peaceful, quiet

surroundings where the voice of the Spirit can more easily be heard. The family must take time away of its busy day-to-day life to spend time with God on a regular basis.

5.3.8 Emphasizing steadfastness in prayer (The open communication channel with God)

According to DeMuth (2006:94) prayer is the most important thing parents can do. Prayer is an incredibly powerful tool in the hands of a Christian. When a prayer is launched in faith according to the will of God, nothing can stand in the way of its fulfilment. Thus making the Christian a powerful part in the revealing and planting of the Kingdom of God on earth, this is so because a prayer, once fulfilled, manifests and spreads the Kingdom of God in the area where the prayer was aimed.

Prayer is also a helping tool in time of need, be it everyday needs or needs arising out of crises. Prayer can also be used as an intercessory tool between prayers and Jesus Christ who acts on our behalf for us (as High Priest) before God. This carries particular significance for parents where parents can act as intercessors (communicators) on behalf of their children, as a continuation of the priestly role that Christ fulfils.

The family is actually dependent on prayer more than it often realizes. This is because the family is so exposed to the attacks of Satan. Satan will always be against God and His creation and this especially includes the family as this is the area where, if the family as system fails, will adversely affect our society the most. So many families struggle from day-to-day, struggling to live life to the full, because they simply do not pray or pray enough.

5.3.9 Encouraging constant study of the Scriptures as communication channel to be constantly aware of God's will for our lives

If a family physically comes together at a time most appropriate to them to study the Scriptures several things tend to happen:

- The family receives guidance for their everyday lives
- They can receive guidance for a particular problem they may have
- Hearts ready for a deepening relationship between family members and God

According to DeMuth (2006:109) Scripture is the framework of a home: "We need to live, breathe, memorize, and practice the Word of God." Studying the Bible with the guidance of the Holy Spirit will reveal passages especially meant for the family, which has a tremendously edifying effect on the family and creates peace. By edifying it is meant that the family will be holier, act holier and steer the correct course thought life. By peace is meant that the chaos that can so easily reign in a family will reduce, the natural (God created) order will return: husbands loving their wives, wives loving their husbands, children obeying their parents and so on.

5.3.10 Equipping to wear the armour of God as daily safeguard against lapsing into distorted, doubting, distrustful, insensitive communication patterns

"Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the whiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against pow-

ers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph. 6:11-12).

Every family member should know the armour of God and attempt to constantly wear it.

The armour of God is as follows:

- The breastplate of righteousness;
- The sandals of preparedness to spread the gospel of peace;
- The shield of faith to receive all the burning arrows of those who are wicked;
- The helmet of salvation;
- The Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God.

Wearing these particular armour parts will assist restoration of communication patterns as it will equip the wearer to walk confidently in the often laden with difficulty arena of communicating adequately with family, friends and in other social interactions. The Christian wearing the armour of God is protected against attack, but is also equipped to be pro-active -thus, as an example, when insensitive things are said the Christian wearing the armour does not have to feel hurt and react because of that hurt in a negative way, but instead pro-actively reacting in a positive manner.

All of the above must be accompanied with the subsistence and worship.

God requires of parents to remain together. God does not want broken families; He wants families to avoid a family break-up at all costs. Although it is difficult to keep a family together, God does not want divorce (Matt. 19:9) and just as divorce was given unto Moses to appease the Israelites (Deut. 24:1, repeated in Matt. 19: 7), so it is also the case today. If families want to stay together in today’s world parents will have to start loving and valuing each other and their children with renewed earnestness. As stated earlier (Chapter 5, paragraph 3.6) the times we live in are those of the end and those who will be left standing are the view – and they will only remain standing by holding steadfast to the moral teachings of the Bible and a real relationship with the living God.

5.4. CONCLUSIONS FROM CHAPTER 5

In this chapter the therapeutic focus discussed in Section 2 functioned as departure point and background in developing the praxis- theoretical guidelines in Section 3.

The need for restoration of marital relationship as foundation of the family and the therapeutic intervention by Christian counsellors in mediating restoration of communication in the marital relationship was indicated as an important point of departure:

- The surpassing goal of any marriage should be the glory of God
- The marital relationship is the foundation of the family and the family is the foundation of society

- Forgiveness can help couples deal with existing difficulties and prevent the emergence of future problems: forgiveness is also a construct that is communicated over time and not immediately
- Communicating appreciation is vital in the marital relationship

The Christian counsellor's therapeutic focus on restoration of communication when parenting was defined:

- Parents should be ready to present the gospel to their children and not be afraid to repeat the message often
- The first order of business in raising Godly children is discipline and that lack of discipline is proof of a lack of love
- Parents should even with deep-seated conflict continually work to re-establish a relationship and move toward reconciliation with their child(-dren)
- Anger must be seen as a warning that something is wrong: unmet expectations, hurt, disappointment – parents must train their children to clearly ascertain the problem and address the issue
- Boys must be taught from a very early age that it is good to provide for your loved ones, both in their physical and spiritual needs

The discussion regarding the Christian counsellor's therapeutic focus on restoring communication amongst members of the family in their individual roles amounted to the following:

- A wise man (and son) is willing to be vulnerable and authentic in the presence of loved ones and true friends
- A husband must take responsibility for decisions made for or on behalf of the family, whether the decision was made in a democratic fashion or a unilateral decision was made by the husband, responsibility always remains with the husband
- The Christian father must be guided and instructed by the Holy Spirit resident in him: in order to fulfil God's desires of what a husband/father should be
- A man as husband and father must lead his family into God's presence for worship, to remind them of their relationship to God and act as an intercessor on his family's behalf

- Modern scholarship, including Christian scholarship recognizes the individuality of the child, not only in his personality, but also in his particular needs, problems and temptation to sin.

It was indicated that diverse models in Biblical / Christian Counselling should be utilized as a perspective-rich resource guide for counsellor's therapeutic focus on restoring Communication in the family system:

- The biblical reason for solving problems, as several Christian counselling models point out, must be that the client wants to enter into a deeper relationship with God, to please Him
- One of the most profound goals for Christian counselling is maturity: only the maturing client is moving closer to the purpose of his life which is worship and service
- One of the most fundamental tasks of a pastoral counsellor is to search for and focus on the central message of the Bible about the family

The main indicators in the praxis-theoretical guidelines that were developed for restoring communication in problematic interpersonal relationships in the family system can be summarized as follows:

- Healthy families are committed, intimate and involved and are faithful over long periods of time, but they can also function successfully when they are separate from each other, independent and on their own

Creating a renewed sense for Familism

- In Familism the family is considered more important than its individual members and the individual is not identified separately, but identified with the family itself

Promoting restoration of open communication patterns

- Communication techniques or patterns between family members are developed over a long period of time and a lot of these techniques or patterns may be negative or unsatisfactory: these communication patterns can be changed or augmented in the areas where it is most needed

Ministering reconciliation with God and forgiveness in restoring open communication patterns

- Communication is an essential part of human life without which human existence is unthinkable

- God's salvation is actualized in interpersonal communication: central aspects of practicing faith, for instance love, justice, mercy and so forth has everything to do with interpersonal relationships
- It is of vital importance for any family member, whether husband/father, wife/mother or children to, in the end, reconcile with God, through Jesus Christ for any hope for good clear (restored) communication patterns

Creating a renewed sense for the Christian way of handling communication during conflict

- When there is conflict in the Christian family it must be handled by the individual members in that family in a positive manner and it should be resolved in a way that should glorify God
- Conflict must not escalate to the extent that those involved sin and the glory of the Lord leaves the family

Stressing the importance of identifying problem thinking and managing problem behaviour with the eye on renewal of thought and behaviour patterns

- Identifying problem thinking involves making the individual family member aware of his wrong basic assumptions about communication and subsequent wrong behaviour (approach to communicating) in his effort to gain significance and security
- If the individual's thinking was unbiblical about how to communicate properly then he should be brought into awareness about what the Bible has to say about the way he should live and accordingly try to change his thinking to more Biblically correct thoughts
- Family members as individuals assume that certain behaviours are going to create significance and security in their lives: these behaviours are basic goal oriented behaviour (to attain significance and security)

Characteristics of healthy family relationships that should be promoted by the counsellor in family therapy and guidance to families with problematic relationships in the light of the above mentioned need for a real relationship with God:

- Orientation (atmosphere in the family)
- Boundaries
- Power and Intimacy: people are able to relate more intimately when they feel they have equal power. Shared power through, for instance, joint decision making,

promotes understanding and equal opportunities to communicate viewpoints, desires, hopes and fears

- Honesty and freedom of expression
- Warmth, Joy and Humour

Teaching the role of faith in the Trinity in restoring problematic interpersonal relationships in the family

God the Father

- God the Father as head of the Trinity is also God the Father and so also the perfect example of the role the husband should, through faith, assume as head of the household
- God is the provider to the world and so should the man in the household assume the responsibility of provider for his family
- God judges the world and metes out punishment and so the husband must punish his children if they err to keep them on the path of righteousness

Jesus Christ

- Jesus Christ is the centre-point of the entire Christian faith and the fulfilment of the plans of God for the age of mankind
- He should also be the centre-point of each and every Christian's life and also be at the centre of every Christian family's life
- It is ultimately through faith in Christ and the partaking in the atoning redemption brought by Him that distorted communication in relationships can be restored

The Holy Spirit

- The Holy Spirit can be a guide to the family in how to communicate with each other with love and acceptance

The Comforting Holy Spirit

- The Holy Spirit can be a comfort for the pain suffered by the family
- The Holy Spirit is intimately involved in our lives
- The Holy Spirit wants to be the family's helper and teacher

The Guiding Holy Spirit

- The Holy Spirit is a shining light in the dark times families can find themselves in
- The Holy Spirit is there to guide the family in all truth
- The Holy Spirit also convicts of sin and shows his children that their thoughts and actions are contrary to their nature in Christ
- The Holy Spirit illuminates the Scriptures and the knowledge of God when the family is in doubt

Emphasizing steadfastness in prayer (The open communication channel with God)

- Prayer is an incredibly powerful tool in the hands of a Christian
- When a prayer is launched in faith according to the will of God, nothing can stand in the way of its fulfilment
- The family is actually dependent on prayer more than it often realises

Encouraging constant study of the Scriptures as communication channel to be constantly aware of God's will for our lives

- The family receives guidance for their everyday lives
- They can receive guidance for a particular problem they may have
- Studying the Scriptures will create hearts ready for a deepening relationship between family members and God
- Studying the Bible with the guidance of the Holy Spirit will reveal passages especially meant for the family, which has a tremendously edifying effect on the family and creates peace

Equipping to wear the armour of God as daily safeguard against lapsing into distorted, doubting, distrustful, insensitive communication patterns

- Every family member should know the armour of God and attempt to constantly wear it
- If families want to stay together in today's world parents will have to start loving and valuing.

5.5. FINAL CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

The areas that the researcher intended to investigate in this study centred on communication in problematic interpersonal family relationships and the way in which communication problems in a particular family system may contribute to the potential problems that the family as a unit may have to cope with. The researcher worked with the hypothesis that problematic communication in interfamilial relationships may severely impede the family system in functioning as an allied unit against the pressures of life. If family communication patterns were healthy or at least functional, the hypothesis was that all other problems that a family might face could be handled more easily by a family as an allied unit.

This study has shown that problematic communication in interfamilial relationships does impede the family system from functioning effectively, but it is a question recommended for further study to what extent the problems a family may come across can be handled more easily by a family as an allied unit.

Interpersonal relationships in the family system is often complex and communication is only one element present in those relationships which can have a detrimental effect on good family relationships if communication is strained. The overarching research aim of the study was to obtain, develop and put forth Bible-centred praxis-theoretical guidelines on restoring communication in family systems caught up in problematic interpersonal relationships. This was ultimately put forth in Chapter 5 of this study.

The overarching research question of this study was: How can families, with problematic interpersonal familial relationships, be counselled from a Biblical perspective with the primary objective of restoring communication in the family system? This research question was answered in this study by proposing counselling guidelines from a Biblical perspective in order to restore communication in the family system, although further research may place emphasis on the counselling relationship/dialogue between the counsellor and counsee and the content of this dialogue.

The specific objectives of the study was to research what the Bible teaches about the family system and communication in problematic interpersonal relationships by consulting interpretive resources, and studying the relevant Biblical/Christian literature and to research the material on family systems theories and communication in problematic interpersonal relationships from the human sciences. This was done and given report of in the Basis-theoretical study of Chapter 2 and the Meta-theoretical report of Chapter 3. It will have to be examined by further studies whether and to what extent such theories correlate with the teachings of the Bible, as this is also relevant for the successful development of guidelines for a family systems praxis model for the Bible-centred counsellor, but did not fall within the ambit of this study.

A further objective of the study was to conduct an empirical study on a family system with dysfunctional elements in the communicative relationships between family members as an area of focus. This was duly conducted as part of the empirical study of Chapter 4.

Was it possible to develop and propose efficient Bible-centred counselling guidelines from a study of Scripture, the human sciences and the results of an empirical study on a practice theoretical level and how was it applied to restore communication in problematic interpersonal relationships in the family system? It is clear from the results of Chapter 5 that in order to restore communication in problematic interpersonal relationships clear Bible-centred counselling guidelines can be proposed with the help of the human sciences and the results of an empirical study on a practice theoretical level, however as stated a clear correlation between the Scriptures and human sciences may be further researched and expanded upon.

With regard to the development of effective Bible-centred counselling guidelines for restoring communication in problematic interpersonal relationships, the following problem areas in the family system was concentrated on:

The first problem area involves the major communicative patterns evident in a particular family system: A focus on communication or a lack of, or inadequate, communication between family members was done in this study in attempting to propose restorative measures for clear communication channels in the family system;

In a second problem area research was focused specifically on destructive patterns in communicative practices: Insecurities, self-centredness, gossiping and hypercritical attitudes;

In a third problem area the lack of proper communication as major contributing factor to conflict in interpersonal relationships, was addressed: A therapeutic focus on conflict between family members as a contributing factor in problematic communication and problematic interpersonal relationships was done in attempting to restore unifying factors in the family system;

A fourth problem area involved communication in the marriage relationship: A therapeutic focus on the disturbance of the God-given pattern for communication in the marital relationship was conducted in this study; this focus was needed in attempting to show how communication can be restored in the marriage and the place of the marriage at the heart of the family system;

A fifth problem area involved wrong notions of communication between parents and children in the family system: A therapeutic focus was needed on communication in the interpersonal relationships between parents and children in attempting to train parents and children towards a balance between love and righteousness in this particular relationship – further studies may be conducted to examine the potential stressors and strains in the relationship between parents and children, beyond the narrow focus on interpersonal parent-child communication patterns and difficulties.

The conclusion of this study is that families with problematic interpersonal familial relationships can be effectively counselled from a Biblical perspective with the aid of material and contextualization from the human sciences with the primary objective of restoring communication in the family system.

Recommended areas for further research:

- To what extent can the problems a family come across be handled more easily by a family as an allied unit?

- Further research may emphasize the counselling relationship/dialogue between the counsellor and counselee and the content of that dialogue
- It will have to be researched by further studies whether and to what extent theories from the human sciences regarding the essence of restoring communicative patterns correlate with the teachings and perspective of the Bible
- The potential stressors and strains in the relationship between parents and children, beyond the focus on interpersonal parent-child communication patterns and difficulties may be further examined.