

INTRODUCTION

Note: This is not a course in marriage counseling; it is a course in marriage therapy.

For purposes of orientation, marriage counseling would typically address:

1. Definition and meaning of marriage.
2. Roles and responsibilities.
3. A Biblical portrait of marriage.
4. Children and in-laws.
5. Finances.
6. Vocation & family: making it all happen.
7. Love.
8. Pre-marital counseling.

This course therefore has as its primary focus – the reconstruction phase of a marriage that has encountered troubled waters. There are two exceptions, where one lesson will focus on enrichment as an ongoing therapeutic process and another lesson will take on a very contemporary issue regarding marriage and place it into the correct therapeutic context.

The discipline of this course has at its heart Theology. It is acknowledged that there are many factors of psychopathology; violence and much more that can lead to marital strife – they are not dealt with in this course. Such cannot be dealt with within the confines of an eight-lesson Theology course. It is a multi-disciplinary and complex approach to an intricate problem situation. It is, however, trusted that the Pastor knows when and to whom to refer his clients.

Merriam-Webster defines psychopathology as: “the study of psychological and behavioral dysfunction occurring in mental disorder or in social disorganization.”

NB: Psychopathology, mental illness and associated dysfunctions are not treatable through Pastoral therapy alone.

It should also be understood that none of the lessons are designed to answer questions of “when it is ok to divorce?” These can be dealt with by the Pastor following Theology training at a basic and or intermediate level, and if need be in consultation with cross-disciplinary practitioners.

PRIOR LEARNING ASSUMED TO BE IN PLACE

This is an advanced level course. Marriage therapy is complex and therefore should not be attempted by inexperienced Pastors. We are dealing with two complex persons, in an often less than ideal relationship and or circumstances, persons who may be parents, in their second or third marriages and so forth.

The following prior learning assumptions have therefore been made:

1. A Bachelor level Theology qualification.
2. Competence in Pastoral therapeutic and counseling skills.
3. A sound Theological understanding of what a Biblical portrait of marriage is, and what it is not.
4. A Biblical understanding of Anthropology.
5. A very clear understanding of Phileo, Eros and Agape love and how this is successfully applied to marriage.

STRUCTURE OF THE LESSONS

The lessons are divided into eight lessons as follows:

1. Lesson 1: Marriage under fire.
2. Lesson 2: Wedding vows.
3. Lesson 3: Unfaithfulness.

4. Lesson 4: Communication 101.
5. Lesson 5: Conflict management.
6. Lesson 6: Sexual intimacy.
7. Lesson 7: Marriage enrichment: keeping it all together.
8. Lesson 8: The same-sex marriage debate.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

To assist Pastors in the therapeutic process that will result in the reconstruction and enrichment of marriages.

The primary objective is therefore: To guide the Pastor toward creative competence in Pastoral marriage therapy.

The secondary objectives are: 1) On-going marriage therapeutic enrichment and 2) Viewpoints on the same-sex marriage debate.

REQUIREMENTS

1. Participate in fifteen hours of common teaching time.
2. Complete all assignments.
3. Complete the exam.
- 4.

BENEFITS OF DOING THE COURSE

Marriage therapy is at the best of times complex. Many marriages have deteriorated past the point where it can be repaired with a simple “sermon style” of counseling. This course aims to awaken practical possibilities and exercises that are practical and have proven results.