

Training Day Outline

Growing Love in Christian Marriage (GLCM)

This training might be offered at the conference or district level to develop a team of presenters to train others -- or to local pastors, and church leaders, and mentor couples who will use this resource with their congregations. Participants may be couples or individuals, clergy and/or lay and should include (but not be limited to) persons known to be knowledgeable about marriage education and enrichment, such as licensed professionals with marriage education specialties.

Preparation:

Order copies of the GLCM Pastor's Manual and Couple's Edition for each participant.
Assign presenters/facilitators for different parts of the training.
Read indicated sections of GLCM materials to prepare for presentations.
Take newsprint and pens, paper and pencils or pens for participants.

8:30 a.m. Registration

9:00 a.m. Worship: Spirituality, Marriage, Families

Suggestions: *United Methodist Hymnal*, pp. 408, 642-647, 695
I Corinthians 13, Romans 12:2, Ephesians 5:12, Philippians 1:9-11
Antiphonal reading, *GLCM Couple's Edition*, p. 4
The Prayer of St. Francis, *United Methodist Hymnal*, p. 481

9:15 – 10:00 a.m. Introductions, Getting Acquainted , Orientation

Immediately after worship, use a group process to find out who is present and what experiences they already have had with marriage ministries. Invite each participant to say his or her name, role (pastor, lay leader, etc.), location and/or church, and reasons for concern about marriage preparation and marriage ministries. List the reasons on newsprint.

Ask what experience and training participants may have had.

Do they use *GLCM*, premarital inventories, mentor couples, groups?

Building on information shared above, invite discussion with the following questions, interjecting the suggested points as appropriate:

Why should the church be concerned about marriages?

Marriage is a holy estate, ordained by God (wedding liturgy).

Social Principles, Paragraph 161.

Recent census reports less than 1/4th USA households are two-parent families.

Ask how many participants have been impacted by divorce.

What are the effects of family breakdown on individuals, community, society?

(increased school failure, delinquency, poverty, anger, relationship difficulties)

Why has there been such an increase in divorce and family breakdown?

Industrial Revolution brought less focus on home, more on outside activity.
No-fault divorce.
Media influence (personal fulfillment not portrayed in marriage).
Cohabitation.

What are the benefits of healthy marriages?

GLCM Pastor's Manual, page 7 "What Marriage Can Be"

How can the church help?

Affirm marriage and family as a context for personal growth.
Empower individuals to be healthier and more effective family members.
Provide skills training for communication and conflict management.
Stand in when families break down, help heal divisions and dysfunction.
GLCM Pastor's Manual, p. 8.

Summarize: Share the following information or develop your own summary:

Faith communities are natural settings for marriage- and family-strengthening initiatives because such communities inherently value commitment, integrity, fidelity, respect, and boundaries. Many consider marriage a private matter, but in fact healthy families are basic to a healthy society and can also increase the health and wholeness of its members. We don't want to imply that everyone should marry nor that there is something wrong with those who do not, but we need to present marriage as a positive option (better health, greater longevity, more wealth, more satisfactory sex) with realistic expectations (times of struggle part of the growth process), helping couples who choose marriage to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to form and sustain a lasting healthy union. Being judgmental, telling cohabiting couples, "You ought to marry," may just cause defensiveness, but positive encouragement ("Have you thought about marriage?") may be effective. Likewise we might share with those considering divorce the results of a recent study which showed that of unhappy couples who stayed in their marriages, two-thirds described themselves as happy five years later. "Dry spells" and hard times are part of the normal course of married life. It is especially important for parents to provide a healthy two-parent family for their children. We do not mean to judge single parents, many of whom do a heroic job; but let's face it, if an unborn child had a choice, wouldn't he/she choose happily-married parents?

Because the church is intergenerational, it can impact individuals and families at every life stage. Children, youth, and young adults benefit from relationship and decision-making education. Ministries to singles must address the needs of different types of singles. Some need relationship education and decision-making; others need extended family support; all need self-awareness and spiritual formation. Couples are most easily amenable to coaching and relationship education when they are establishing patterns of relationship, through at least the first two years after the wedding; however, other life events, both predictable (childbirth, parenting teens, elder care) and unpredictable (job loss, illness), also offer opportunities for ministry and growth.

10:00--10:30 a.m. Pastor's Manual Overview

The *GLCM Pastor's Manual* (designed for pastors, counselors, church leaders in

marriage and family ministries, and mentor couples) emphasizes the importance of a comprehensive marriage ministry that includes relationship education for children, youth, and young adults; marriage preparation; marriage enrichment; and ministries with couples in transition and crisis. Turn to the Contents page in the front of the Manual. Point out the following features:

Chapters 1, 2, and 3 contain theological and theoretical material related to marriage and marriage preparation ministries, to be read by all involved with such ministries.

Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7 contain guidelines and suggestions for working with individual couples. This material is primarily for pastors, counselors, and mentor couples.

Chapters 8 and 9 address specific approaches using mentor couples and marriage preparation groups.

Chapter 10 describes comprehensive marriage ministries, recommended reading for all. Appendices (see pages 69-76) include an Engagement Ceremony, materials for mentor couples, planning guides and checklists. See also evaluation form (p. 95)

Resources (pp. 79-92) contains an extensive annotated list of resources in five different categories as noted at the top of page 79. Point out some of the resources, especially those for Couples in Crisis (pp. 91-92) and some with which you are familiar. Note that additional resources are listed at www.marriagelovepower.net (still under construction) and www.smartmarriages.com, both described on p. 81.

10:30 – 10:45 a.m. Break

10:45 – 11:30 a.m. Overview of Couple's Edition

You will need two copies, one for each couple considering marriage (see “Deciding About Marriage” page 6)

Review topics in “Perspectives on Marriage” pages 5-11.

Point out “Engagement Covenant” on page 11

Contents page: Point out four themes:

“Faith as Covenantal Commitment,” pp. 13 –27

“Hope as Vision for Your Journey,” pp. 28-53

“Love as Daily Caring,” pp. 54-76

“Power Through Communication,” pp. 80-95

Note some of the topics under each theme and point out that the materials do not have to be used in any particular order.

Open to pages 30–33 and point out the Explore activities, each in a separate box, which provide opportunities for the couples to process concepts discussed in the text. Many of these Explore exercises could also be used in group settings or in sessions with the pastor or with a mentor couple.

Point out information for couples on pages 97 – 98.

See *GLCM Pastor's Manual* p. 37 for “Introducing the Couple's Edition.”

Questionnaires:

Wedding Information (p. 100). Couple can complete together.

Marriage Lifestyle Questionnaire (pp. 101-104) Individuals complete separately.

Point out instructions in *GLCM Pastor's Manual*, pp. 37-38,40, 43

11:30 a.m. – 12:00 Reflection and Conversation

Invite participants to reflect on the questions under “Get in Touch with your Beliefs about Marriage” page 16 of the *GLCM Pastor’s Manual*. Allow at least 10 minutes for individuals to record their responses and thoughts, then invite them to share. Have someone record on newsprint the questions and needs that surface.

12:00 – 12:45 p.m. Lunch and Conversation

12:45 - 1:30 p.m. Group Formats and Mentor Couples

Ask participants to share any experiences they have had with groups for marriage preparation and/or marriage enrichment.

Summarize *GLCM Pastor’s Manual*, p. 57

Review outline for using *GLCM Couple’s Edition* with groups, pp. 58-59

Possible formats include ten evening sessions, 1½ hours each; two Saturday mornings and afternoons, three Saturday afternoons and evenings. Mentor couples and others can help with leadership.

Point out other group possibilities (*GLCM Pastor’s Manual*, pp. 59-60)

Turn to *GLCM Pastor’s Manual* chapter on mentor couples (Chap. 8, pp. 51-56).

Highlight the topics in this chapter, ask participants about their experiences with mentoring, answer questions.

Note that basic training for mentor couples might include GLCM sessions as outlined on pages 58-59. Advanced training can be designed according to needs and goals of the couples. Provide for continuing professional support.

1:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. Comprehensive Marriage Ministries

See *GLCM Pastor’s Manual*, Chapter 10, pp. 62-68

Briefly highlight, summarize, and review the information in this chapter.

Note concerns about abusive behavior (p. 63), as well as each of the topics, inviting participants to share ideas and/or give examples .

2:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. Wrap-up and Closing

Brainstorm (break into smaller buzz groups if necessary) in response to this question:
What are the challenges for us in marriage ministries?

From these responses and those generated earlier and listed on newsprint, make specific plans for next steps in your conference, district, and/or local church.

Set dates and make assignments for research, training, planning, and whatever else the group decides must happen next.

Closing:

Prayers of gratitude for our families of origin

Prayers for healing in our own families and in families of our churches, communities, and world.