

INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT WITHIN THE BLENDED FAMILY
A PASTORAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT WITHIN THE BLENDED FAMILY – A PASTORAL STUDY

Blended families are fast becoming the pattern for marriage in a century where divorce is prevalent. This study focussed on the fact that couples are not being adequately prepared through premarital counselling for the problem areas found within the blended family.

The basis theoretical perspective revealed that problems that are typical today within the blended family were shown to be present from the moment that man deviated from God's plan for the ideal marriage, and that many examples of this are found in the Bible.

The meta theoretical perspective showed that there are very specific problems associated with couples who consider marriage for a second time. The research indicated that the conflict manifested itself within four major areas: Parental conflict; discipline of children; maternal negativity; and the crisis of identity found within stepchildren.

The empirical section of this study revealed that the premarital counselling used by couples facing a blended marriage did not adequately prepare them and that of all the couples surveyed, whether they had done premarital counselling or not, all had struggled within the same areas in their marriages. It was found that there were large gaps within the premarital counselling given and that these gaps correlated with the four main conflict issues mentioned earlier. Furthermore, the study showed that the church is not regarded as being the institution that can help blended families in their conflict issues.

Remarital counselling guidelines have been proposed in the form of an acronym 'WISER FAMILIES'. These guidelines address particularly the conflict areas that the research identified, which were not addressed by conventional premarital counselling. Guidelines were also proposed for churches, to assist them in dealing with the problems experienced by blended families, and suggests practical ways to meet their needs, using the implementation of support and focus groups

KEY WORDS

INTERPERSONAL

CONFLICT

BLENDED FAMILY

PASTORAL

OPSOMMING

INTERPERSOONLIKE KONFLIK BINNE DIE HERSAAMGESTELDE GESIN – ‘N PASTORALE STUDIE

Hersaamgestelde gesinne begin die norm te word vir huwelike in ‘n tydvak waar egskeidings aan die orde van die dag is. Hierdie studie is gerig op die veronderstelling dat egpare nie na behore toegerus word deur voorhuwelikse berading vir die probleme wat later ervaar word in hersaamgestelde gesinne nie.

Die basis-teoretiese deel van die studie het getoon dat die probleme wat tipies in die hersaamgestelde gesin teenwoordig is, kenmerkend is van wat gebeur het vandat die mens afgewyk het van God se plan vir die ideale huwelik, waarvan daar heelwat voorbeelde bestaan in die Bybel.

Die meta-teoretiese gedeelte het gewys dat daar baie spesifieke probleme bestaan in gevalle waar egpare ‘n tweede huwelik oorweeg. Die navorsing het aangetoon dat konflik binne vier areas na vore kom: ouerlike konflik, dissipline van kinders, ‘n negatiewe gesindheid by die moeder en die krisis mbt identiteit wat by stiefkinders gevind word.

Die empiriese gedeelte van die studie het daarop gedui dat die voorhuwelikse berading wat die egpare ontvang het wat ‘n hersaamgestelde huwelik beoog het, hulle nie na behore daarvoor voorberei het nie en egpare wat aan die ondersoek deelgeneem het, of hulle berading gehad het of nie, het almal gesukkel met dieselfde terreine in die huwelik en dit is derhalwe bevind dat daar groot leemtes bestaan in die berading wat hulle ontvang het. Hierdie leemtes het ooreengestem met die vier areas van konflik wat vroeër geïdentifiseer is. Dit is verder bevind dat die kerk nie beskou is as die instelling wat hersaamgestelde gesinne na behore kan bystaan in sake soos konflik nie.

Riglyne vir berading aan hersaamgestelde egpare word ook voorgestel in die vorm van ‘n akroniem “WISER FAMILIES”. Hierdie riglyne gee spesifieke aandag aan die konflikareas wat in die navorsing geïdentifiseer is, wat nie normaalweg deur gewone voorhuwelikse berading hanteer word nie. Riglyne word ook gegee aan kerke om hulle te help met die hantering van probleme wat deur hersaamgestelde gesinne ervaar word, en ook praktiese maniere om hersaamgestelde gesinne te ondersteun met die gebruikmaking van ondersteunings- en fokusgroepe word voorgestel.

KERN BEGRIPPE

INTERPERSOONLIK

KONFLIK

HERSAAMGESTELDE GESIN

PASTORAL

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ABBREVIATIONS

Scriptural Abbreviations

Gen.	Genesis
Ex.	Exodus
Lev.	Leviticus
Deut.	Deuteronomy
1 Sam.	1 Samuel
2 Sam.	2 Samuel
Prov.	Proverbs
Ps.	Psalms
Ecc.	Ecclesiastes
Isa.	Isaiah
Mal.	Malachi
Matt.	Matthew
Rom.	Romans
2 Cor.	2 Corinthians
Gal.	Galatians
Eph.	Ephesians
Phil.	Philippians
Tit.	Titus
2 Tim.	2 Timothy

ACRONYMS

Wiser Families
Chapter 6

Woundedness
Intimacy
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Finances
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Identity
Learning to resolve conflict
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CHAPTER 1

INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT WITHIN THE BLENDED FAMILY

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1.1 Introduction

Blended families (a word of American usage and origin used to indicate a remarriage situation) or stepfamilies, are fast becoming the model for marriage in a century where divorce is prevalent. The word *blended* relates to those that have come from widowed or divorced backgrounds and have joined together in a further marriage. Blended or stepfamilies encapsulates a family with one parent or both parents from a previous marriage, into which they bring a child from a previous relationship (De'Ath, 1996:80), the child being biological or adopted.

The focus of this study is on the conflict found within the blended family and how this conflict affects interpersonal relationships within this structure. The interpersonal relationships are found on three levels within this family formation, and they are:

- the relationship between ex spouses who have been previously married, and have children and who are currently involved in other relationships or a further marriage;
- the relationship between step parents and step children and
- the relationship between siblings of different households (e.g. the child of a previous marriage and his/her relationship with children of another marriage within the blended family context).

1.1.1.1 Conflict within Blended families

Conflict manifests itself in various ways within these households:

- Conflict found between previously married spouses over their jurisdiction over the rights of their parenthood regarding their children. Clashes surface frequently within this area.
- Conflict found in the form of incompatibility between the expectations of step parents regarding their step children and the actual behaviour of the step child.
- Conflict found in the form of clashes or quarrels that erupt between step siblings as they seek to mould an identity for themselves within the new family structure. Pino (1996:4) speaks about the "Step wars" which involve angry children, visitation squabbles and custody fights.

1.1.1.2 Pastoral care for blended families

One of the roles of the pastor is the role of bestowing 'spiritual guidance' upon his congregation and in the context of this study it would mean guidance in interpersonal relationships within the areas of remarriage, and the resolution of conflict within these marriages as part of his responsibility as a shepherd to the flock of Jesus Christ. The Webster Dictionary (2006:1) says that the word 'pastoral' really relates to the care of souls as pertaining to the pastor of a church – and care has to be incorporated into the area of 'blended families' as well. Townsend (2000:148) notes that "traditionally, pastoral care has been guided by a metaphor of a shepherd who moves away from the comfort of the familiar and into the unknown to respond to another's distress without guarantee of certain outcomes" but stepfamilies also need shepherds who leave behind the safety of that which might be familiar and meet them in their peculiar circumstances.

Pastoral care has evolved one step further by incorporating not only the 'official' pastor as the caring arm of the church but also qualified lay people. YourDictionary.com not only recognizes a minister or priest as having 'spiritual charge over a group or congregation', but also a layperson as also having 'spiritual charge over a person or group' (2007:1). Therefore it would seem to the researcher that within the current context, Christian counsellors, qualified laypeople and those appointed by the pastorate can give pastoral care to those in need.

The researcher remarried 14 years ago and has experienced firsthand the dynamics of the blended family, and because of this has become aware over the years of the increase of stepfamilies within South African society

1.1.2 Background

The social revolution which started in the 1960s has contributed to a jump in divorce, single parenthood and remarriage that has now made stepfamilies a normative family forum (Goldenberg, 2002:165). According to the Stepfamily Foundation in the United States, 1300 new stepfamilies are forming every day and over 50% of US families are now remarried or re-coupled (Stepfamily Foundation, 2006). In the United Kingdom, in 2001, 10% of all families with dependent children were stepfamilies and 38% of all cohabitating couple families were stepfamilies compared with 8% of married couple families with dependent children (National Statistics, 2006). Australia follows the trend with a representation of 1 in 5 Australian families with dependent children, being stepfamilies (Stepfamilies in Australia, 2006). In South Africa, the Central Statistics Services recorded a total of 176 283 divorces in the white community in the nine years between January 1980 and December 1989, with divorces increasing from 9 860 in 1979 to 18 637 in 1989 (Prinsloo, 1993:39). This rising divorce rate seems to indicate that South Africa like America will follow the tendency of 70% to 75% leading to remarriage (Prinsloo, 1993:39). This has been verified by the South African Bureau of Statistics which has confirmed that in the year 2002, 31,370 divorces were officially recorded (Statistics South Africa, 2006).

Within the Christian community more and more couples are finding themselves in a second or further marriage. Blended families face unique challenges within the church situation and as Townsend (2003:vii) says: "Divorced and remarried families are different from the traditional families we have come to know and with whom we minister. Their internal and intergenerational processes are different and their needs are different."

Remarriage has become a complex process, in which a group of people from different backgrounds, over a period of time, attempt to unite and form a measure of family cohesion and identity (Goldenberg, 2002:180). And as Goldenberg (2002:182) further points out: "Remarriage is one of the most difficult transitions a family is ever called upon to make".

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

God's ideal for marriage is found in Genesis 2:24 whereby man is to leave his parents and the two are to be united and become one flesh. Morris (2000:102) says that after Eve is created and brought to man, the classic passage in Genesis 2:24 is given to them, establishing the nature of marriage. He adds that "The integrity and permanence of the individual home is of such importance that God made it plain from the beginning that marriage was intended to be permanent until death".

The fall of man was devastating in so many ways but the most detrimental aspect was the separation of man from God and the effect that this had on marriages. In the days of Moses man had so deviated from the original plan for marriage that God saw fit to bring in measures and allowed divorce to take place under special circumstances. An example of this is found in Deuteronomy 24: 1 "If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him . . . He writes a certificate of divorce" (Ryrie Study Bible, 1994). As Retief (2000:87) points out: "The law was not designed to condone divorce. It was to provide a 'fire extinguisher' to fight the fires that were already raging in the community." He goes on to say that divorce was never part of

God's plan and flippant, immoral divorces that take place under the guise of God's holy legislation, are nothing less than a cover for adultery and immorality.

Stahman & Hiebert (1997:139) observe: "In nearly half of all weddings conducted today in the United States, at least one partner has been married before", he goes onto to say that "although more first marriages take place in local religious settings than do remarriages, still a significant number of remarriages take place in the local congregation" (Stahman & Hiebert, 1997:142). Since the divorce rate is now almost 50 percent and every fourth marriage includes at least one partner who has been previously married, Rolfe (1985:110) says that the church can expect to see more second and subsequent marriages within the church body. In South Africa as previously noted these same statistics apply and so therefore the same challenges face the church within Southern Africa.

Pino (1996:4) indicated that some of the unique problems for stepfamilies surface over: step-parent authority, angry step-children; step-sibling relationships; legal rights of step-parents and extended family relationships (for example: step-grandparents). Parents in their attempt to create a happy second marriage, tend to 'bang heads' against the children, as these offspring desperately try to adjust to the new family system. Unfortunately due to the higher divorce rates within the western world, more and more children are expected to integrate into these second or third marriages or stepfamilies. It is estimated that in 8 percent of families one of the adults is bringing up a child from their partner's previous relationship or marriage (Hayman, 2001:16).

Clapp (2000:308) found that the divorce rate for remarriage is 10% higher than that for first marriages and that sadly 25% of second marriages do not last more than five years. Christian (1988:63) goes as far as to say that: "The number-one cause of divorce in remarriage is conflict over the children". Townsend (2000:93) concurs with this and says that the 'children-in-the-middle conflict' are a hallmark of stepfamily living and are an exquisitely painful and robust toxin to most remarried

couple's arguments. The question has to be asked that if parents had been prepared adequately for these issues prior to marriage, would these situations be so rife and would the divorce rate still be so high?

In the 1980s' Lawrence Ganong and Marilyn Coleman conducted a study to determine the amount of preparation undertaken by couples entering a further marriage, and although conducted 25 years ago these results are still valid. From the results of this study, Ganong & Coleman (1989:28) suggested that additional areas that needed to incorporate education for a remarriage included disagreements over stepchildren, relationships with former spouses, difficulties in merging two different households and blurred boundaries. They researched the methods used by couples to prepare for these issues and found that it appeared firstly that couples seldom sought the assistance of family professionals (Ganong & Coleman, 1989:31) and secondly that the primary way individuals prepared themselves for remarriage was by living together (Ganong & Coleman, 1989:30). These individuals used mainly the advice of friends as being the most helpful resource for remarriage (Ganong, & Coleman, 1989:30). Counselling and support groups were regarded as a 'less helpful' resource. The findings seem to indicate that couples generally seem to be mainly unprepared for the problems of the blended family. In the 21st century, it would appear that the same pattern continues as many couples opt for living together rather than seeking professional or pastoral advice in preparation for remarriage.

It appears that there is a need for the church to provide guidance within these areas. Evidence also seems to indicate that there seems to be very little in the way of remarriage counselling aids, particularly in the areas of integrating children from a previous marriage or relationship into a remarriage situation and as Prokopchak (2003:147) shows: "The subject of children was the most frequently discussed topic in our surveys with remarried couples." The unanticipated adjustments for these children and the parents who were remarrying provoked the most conflict for these

couples. Townsend (2000:viii) agrees "Stepfamilies live in a wilderness where there are no familiar tools in an uncultivated land".

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTION

In response to the abovementioned, the following question has arisen:

DUE TO THE POTENTIAL OF CONFLICT, HOW CAN COUPLES ENTERING A BLENDED MARRIAGE BE ADEQUATELY PREPARED FOR REMARRIAGE THROUGH THE USE OF PASTORAL COUNSELLING?

The research will deal with the following issues:

1. What perspective does Scripture give, regarding conflict within blended families?
2. How do the social sciences approach conflict in blended marriages?
3. What would an empirical study reveal concerning blended marriages and conflict?
4. What guidelines can be proposed to assist in the pastoral counselling of blended marriages?

1.4 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1.4.1 Aims

The aim of this research is:

TO SHOW THAT PARTICIPANTS OF A BLENDED MARRIAGE ARE BEING INADEQUATELY PREPARED FOR POTENTIAL CONFLICT IN REMARRIAGE AND TO PROPOSE GUIDELINES USING BIBLICALLY BASED PRINCIPLES.

1.4.2 Objectives

The following objectives of this research are:

- The first objective is taken from the Basis Theoretical perspective to gain an understanding of Biblical Principles regarding the issues at hand particularly in the areas of:

Parental conflict

Disciplining of children

Maternal negativity

The crisis of identity in children

- The second objective is to look at the secular sciences through a Meta theoretical Perspective, especially in the arenas of psychology and sociology, to gain an understanding of the research done especially within the areas of:

Parental conflict

Disciplining of children

Maternal negativity

The crisis of identity in children

- The third objective is to conduct empirical research using qualitative means to gain an understanding of the issue of blended families.

- The fourth objective is to formulate counselling guidelines that will be derived from the findings of the basis, meta and empirical study parts of this research, to form a practice theory that could be used in the counselling of participants within a blended family situation, and would include those already married as well as those preparing for marriage.

1.5 CENTRAL THEORETICAL ARGUMENT

COUPLES CAN BE ADEQUATELY PREPARED FOR REMARRIAGE THROUGH THE USE OF PASTORAL COUNSELLING

1.6 METHODOLOGY

- The methodology will utilize R. Zerfass' model, created in 1974, (Heitink, 1999:113) which consists of a Basis theory, Meta theory and Practice Theory.
- To reach the first objective, a Basis theoretical study of the general principles using the historical grammatical method of exegesis will be applied particularly to Genesis 2: 20-25, Deuteronomy 24:1-4, Matthew 19: 3-11, Ephesians 5:21-33, examining the Biblical basis for marriage, and the book of Proverbs in the areas of wisdom and relationships. Literature to do with pastoral care and counselling will also be considered from both South Africa and abroad.
- To reach the second objective, meta theoretical research will be conducted within the social sciences and psychology, through the use of articles, books, journals, internet contributions and conference papers. Research based literature will be used mainly to identify some of the causes of interpersonal conflict.
- To reach the third objective an empirical study will be conducted with 8 couples/parents using qualitative investigation, in the form of questionnaires and interviews to ascertain whether premarital counselling was given to the couple and to determine which areas within the marriage and the blended family have caused the most conflict.
- To reach the final objective the researcher will formulate guidelines for pastoral counselling, drawn from a synthesis of the basis and meta theoretical perspectives and the empirical research findings.

1.7 PROVISIONAL CHAPTERS

- Chapter 1** Introduction.
- Chapter 2** Basic Theoretical Perspectives on Interpersonal Conflict within the Blended Family.
- Chapter 3** Meta Theoretical Perspectives on Interpersonal Conflict within the Blended Family.
- Chapter 4** Meta Theoretical Perspectives gleaned from Empirical research on Interpersonal Conflict within the Blended Family.
- Chapter 5** Conclusions regarding Interpersonal Conflict within the Blended Family.
- Chapter 6** Proposed guidelines based on scriptural principles for remarital counselling for blended families.

CHAPTER 2

BASIC THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT WITHIN THE BLENDED FAMILY

2.1 OBJECTIVES AND INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER 2

The objectives of this chapter are:

1. To gain a Biblical understanding of marriage, divorce and remarriage and the conflict experienced in these blended families.
2. To draw on Christian literature to ascertain how Christian counselling today deals with the above-mentioned issues.

In today's world, wherever psychology or counselling operates, the therapist or counsellor will be faced at some point with the challenge of dealing with a blended family, and the peculiar problems this unit brings with it. Strident atheist psychologists, such as Albert Ellis, have been known to say that religion causes illness (cf. McMinn, 2003:4) and that Christian counselling is of no value whatsoever, so it is vitally important that Christian counsellors with the knowledge gleaned from practical theology can speak to the needs of *blended* families if they are to make an impact in the 21st century.

This chapter's focus will be on the basis theoretical perspective proposed in the model created by Zerfass in 1974 (Heyns & Pieterse, 1991:39). In utilising Zerfass' model, the issues at hand will be addressed from a holistic approach. This model is multi-faceted and consists of probing the issues from a basic theoretical perspective, a meta theoretical perspective and a practical theoretical perspective. Klosterman & Zerfass regarded practical theology as a 'theory of Action' and thus created this model in answer to the statement, "Something must be done!" (cf. Heitink, 1999:113). Praxis can only be understood through the use of various instruments, such as are used in the social sciences. This model utilises the knowledge gained from theology, the social sciences as well as empirical research

– therefore it meets with the criteria required to equip Christian counsellors with practical Biblical guidelines for dealing with the *blended* family.

In trying to understand and define basis theory we can use the words of Venter (1995:198) who said that to him the basis theory gives a detailed, systematic description from Scripture regarding the purpose and content of the research topic.

2.2 STEP FAMILIES (BLENDED FAMILIES)

For the sake of the research within chapter 2, the focus will be on couples, for example: (1) Abraham and Sarah (Gen.21:8-10), who have been previously married or single, who have children from one or both previous marriages, (2) families who have more than one wife involved in a marriage, for example Elkanah, Hannah and Peninnah (1 Sam. 1:1-7) and (3) discipline problems within blended families, for example David and his sons (2 Sam. 13).

2.3 BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES OF MARRIAGE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

To gain an understanding of the function and model of marriage as it can be applied to the marriages of today, it is imperative to examine the first marriage that God ordained and what His purposes were for such a marriage.

2.3.1 The first marriage

The creation story of ancient Judaism is central to Christian marriage theology and the foundation of the entire Western legal and theological edifice of marriage (Thatcher, 2001:16). This first marriage, set in the garden and designed by God, signifies to the whole of mankind the holy and ideal state of marriage. It would appear that (1) it was a holy state, because it was ordained by God himself, and (2) ideal, because it was created in an environment of perfection. This marriage bond consists of two people who give themselves to each other under the umbrella of God's love and approval. In Gen 2:22 God brings the woman to the man - He gives the man his wife and in this bond of togetherness, the two become

one by committing themselves unconditionally to each other (Waltke 2001:89). Gen. 2:24 says “. . . a man will leave his father and mother and be united, and they will become one flesh”. The observation that Waltke (2001:90) makes is that every marriage is divinely ordained and that marital bonds have priority over parental bonds. Marriage is to be permanent. The author of Genesis felt strongly regarding the fact that this relationship was sealed as one, and not to be divided, as recorded in Gen 2:24 “Therefore a man leaves his father and mother and embraces his wife. They become one flesh” (TM, 2003:39). Once they were one flesh, they were not to separate.

2.3.2 The purposes of marriage

Within these verses are found the marvellous provisions for marital companionship and love, for sexual union and conception, for embryonic growth and childbirth, and for development from childhood into adulthood – these are all evidences of God’s power and wisdom, and as Paul remarked in Eph. 5:31 “This is a great mystery” (Morris, 2000:103).

Helberg (1988:31) says that marriage serves the great purpose of God’s creation. Man is to fill the earth and to subdue it; and the outcome should be that God can be glorified; rule his creation as King; and man can live with Him in joy. As he is the image of God so he should consciously sing the praises of God, contrary to the rest of creation.

It is from these verses in Genesis that Stott (1999:319) says that Biblical theology has identified three main purposes for which God ordained marriage after he had created both male and female. These three areas incorporate the basic structure of marriage as God intended it to be, namely procreation, support and being ‘one flesh’.

2.3.2.1 Procreation

The first of these is found in Genesis 1:28 when God said “Be fruitful and increase in number” which infers that procreation of children has normally headed the list,

together with their upbringing within the love and discipline of the family. Turner (2000:29) adds: "in their procreation, they will replicate their own creation, becoming once again one flesh" – a completion of the union of the two, becoming one.

2.3.2.2 Support

Secondly, God said: "It is not good for man to be alone", which infers that marriage was intended for mutual society - to provide the help and comfort that one should have of the other (Stott, 1999:319-320). According to the Life Application Bible (LAB, 1991:2138) "A wise Christ-honouring husband will not take advantage of his leadership role and a wise Christ honouring wife will not try to undermine her husband's leading". It would appear that either approach from the negative aspect causes disunity and friction in marriage. Helberg (1988:31) noted that "man was created and is the first amongst equals. He has to accept the responsibility and act accordingly . . . with an attitude of service and not in order to rule. He does this out of love for his wife. The husband and wife form an unbreakable unity".

2.3.2.3 One Flesh

Thirdly, marriage is intended to be that reciprocal commitment of self-giving love which finds its natural expression in sexual union or becoming 'one flesh' (Stott., 1999:320). God designed marriage, according to MacArthur (2006:1) to be a situation where the couple could have joy – pure joy and part of that was the thrill of having a sexual physical relationship. It was part of God's design to create the wonder and beauty of this 'two becoming one flesh. And it is within this union that man and woman are to operate, create a family, and to support and provide physical love for each other. As Morris (2000:99) rightly says: In his wisdom God ordained that the home, built on mutual love and respect of husband and wife, should be the basic human unit of authority and instruction and the model thereafter for humanity to follow. When the couple live in union with each other then, as Elliot has observed 'the qualities of both the honourable human father and divine parent – generosity, mercy, hospitality, loyalty, friendship – were those qualities to be emulated by the family as a whole" (cf Neyrey, 1993:229).

The marriage union is one of the closest, most intimate unions of all human relationships. It is within this union that two people begin to think, act and feel as one and in doing so are able to penetrate each other's lives so that they become one functioning union in all aspects (Adams, 1982:17). Eph. 5:28-31 says that the relationship is to become so close that whatever the man does for his wife, be it good or evil, he also does to himself, because the two have become one flesh or person (Adams, 1982:17).

Adams (1982:17) goes as far as to say that God's revealed goal for husband and wife is to become one *in all areas of their relationship*, which incorporates the intellectual, emotional and physical arenas. The researcher believes that another aspect should also be added and that is the area of spiritual intimacy.

2.3.3 Definitions of Marriage

According to Blenkinsopp (2006:58) the traditional definitions of marriage presuppose a stable arrangement, legally and often religiously sanctioned, by which two persons of different sex agree to cohabit for the purpose of procreation, sexual communion, mutual support and economic cooperation. He goes on to add that "more than one form of marriage is attested to and that polygamous unions occurred throughout most of the Biblical period. Malina, found that in these Biblical times people tended to perceive role and status of clans and families as ordained by God, and the awareness was that in everything, e.g. one's family etc. the person responsible was God, so therefore 'make the most of the life in which God has placed you to lead' (cf. Neyrey, 1993:75).

As the focus is on the ideal laid down by God we look at three further definitions of marriage:

- Stott (1999: 323) takes his definition from the principles of Genesis 2: "Marriage is an exclusive heterosexual covenant between one man and one woman, ordained and sealed by God, preceded by a public leaving of

parents, consummated in sexual union, issuing in a permanent mutually supportive partnership, and normally crowned by the gift of children.”

- Codrington (1997:2) adds his definition of marriage as being “the institution that provides stability for a clan and a nation. It is a place of nurture for children and a place of love and peace for members of a community”.
- Wright (1999:12) extends the definition to include other aspects: “Marriage is a call to servanthood; a call to friendship; a call to suffering. Marriage is a refining process. It is an opportunity to be refined by God into the person he wants us to be.”
- Mack (1999:6) concludes with “Marriage is a total commitment and a total sharing of the total person with another person until death”

2.3.4 Marriage in the Old Testament after the fall

Marriage had been created for man’s best interests and his betterment. From that point in time when Eve reached out and took the fruit (Gen. 3:6), man has had to deal with the effects of that decision. It would appear that Adam and Eve had no idea of the consequences of their actions and in particular the ravages that sin would have upon the marriage relationship. The original characteristics of marriage that were present before the fall seemed to disintegrate after the fall, as observed in some of the following, for example:

- In the different roles that men and women fulfilled in relation to each other. Piper (1991:35) says that the differential roles are not based on cultural norms but on the permanent facts of creation, and that these roles were corrupted by the fall. In 2.3.6.2 we can see how the fall disrupted one of the aspects of the role order stipulated by God.
- The original plan for marriage of one wife and one husband was replaced by polygamy as discussed in 2.5.1. King Solomon was instructed to listen to God in this regard but chose to have many wives, contrary to God’s will for him (1 Kings:11).
- Peace and tranquillity within marriage was replaced by conflict and jealousy as observed in the story of the first family (Gen. 4), and as discussed in 2.6.

In the post fall days, many families were divided against each other as seen in the story of Absalom and David (2 Sam. 14-18).

- The sexual sanctity of the marriage bed became abused and adultery became rampant, for example, as detailed in the story of David and Bathsheba (1 Sam. 11). Even the relationship of Abraham and Hagar could be regarded as adultery (in God's eyes) even though it was condoned by the laws of the land at that time (cf 2.5.2).

2.3.5 The consequences of sin

Man and woman had fallen short of God's ideal for them by listening to the serpent in the Garden of Eden and subsequently reaped the consequences of their action from that day on. It would seem that these consequences affected firstly themselves but then it would appear that the consequences blossomed out to affect humanity from that point onward.

2.3.5.1 The first consequence – shame

The first consequence of this act of disobedience was that the man and the woman were suddenly aware of their nakedness before God. Morris (2000, 115) says that the serpent had promised them wisdom and the knowledge of gods, whereas instead they became dreadfully aware of what they had done and a most awful sense of shame enveloped them. As Berkhof (2000: 226) adds: 'there was first of all a consciousness of pollution and then a consciousness of guilt, hence the attempt to cover the nakedness'.

2.3.5.2 The second consequence – separation

A second immediate consequence was the separation of God from man as found in Gen. 3:8. They no longer enjoyed the fellowship of God and tried desperately to hide themselves from him (Morris, 2000:16). The Greek word *pânîym* is derived from the Hebrew word meaning 'the face' of God which was no longer available to them - as translated into the English as being 'God's presence' (Strongs, 2006). This led to further consequences mentioned by Berkhof (2000:226) as being a loss

of communion with God through His Holy Spirit, which resulted in a spiritual separation from the Father, hence the attempt to hide themselves.

2.3.5.3 The third consequence - dishonesty

A third consequence reveals to us that dishonesty and selfishness had crept in when both Adam and Eve attempted to put the blame on each other in Gen. 3:12-13. As Turner (2000:32) observes, "we see now how the former 'one flesh' (Gen. 2:24) has disintegrated into two naked people". The response to God's interrogation reveals that man and woman who were one flesh under God now operate completely separately from each other. Man and woman were now conscious that they were different from each other and no longer ideally 'one flesh'. They were in spiritual darkness and out of sync with God and already at loggerheads with each other.

2.3.6 The consequences of sin in marriage relationships

As a result of man's disobedience to God, a curse was put on the serpent, the woman and the man. This curse (or promise) is also known as the '*Protoevangelium*', because of its incorporation of the earliest statements of the gospel of salvation (Dillard & Longman, 1995:55). Gen. 3:15 says: "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head and you will strike his heel". This passage seems to involve an early anticipation of the Messiah and his deliverance of His people from the evil reign of Satan. The curse is also made up of a number of sub-phases, for example, the curse on the animal kingdom; the curse on the serpent; the curse on the woman; the curse on Adam and his descendants and the curse on the very elements of the ground itself (Morris, 2000:118). For the purposes of this study the focus will be predominantly on the curse placed on the serpent, the woman and the man. The focus of this study is to understand how the 'fall' of man and the entrance of sin through the evil one affected the marriage relationship and brought about the division of that which God had stipulated no man should separate.

2.3.6.1 The serpent

The Amplified Bible (AV, 1987) says in Genesis 3:15 regarding the serpent that God “will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring: He will bruise and tread your head underfoot, and you will lie in wait and bruise His heel”. Peterson (2003:40) in turn translates this passage as “I’m declaring war between you and the woman, between your offspring and hers. He’ll wound your head, you’ll wound his heel”. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, this is a foretelling of the gospel of salvation of Jesus Christ and His victory over Satan. Whereas everyone had lived in peace in the Garden of Eden, in future there would always be conflict between those of God and the evil one. It is inferred here that Satan would always be an enemy of the woman. In Hebrew, the word ‘Satan’ and in Greek the word ‘satanas’, means basically ‘adversary’ (NBD, 2001:1064) which calls to mind the position that Satan has with man and God, and the division he sought to create between man, woman and God. It is observed that this division continues today in the form of broken marriages.

2.3.6.2 The woman

It would seem that the curse focuses on three major elements as consequences for the woman:

- The woman would now experience pain in childbearing. As Morris (2000:123) indicates, in Gen 3:20, it had been appointed for her to be the “mother of all living” but now her children to all generations would suffer under the curse – their very entry into this world would always be marked by unique suffering, which would continue as a perpetual reminder of the dreadful effects of sin. Within this context physical pain is what is alluded to and the woman’s toil in childbearing is akin to the painful toil of man (vs 17).
- “Her desire would be for her husband” seems to indicate that her desire would be to dominate as seen in the chiasmic structure of the phrase which pairs the terms ‘desire’ and ‘rule over’ (Waltke, 2001:94). This very same emphasis is found in Gen 4:7. Ryrie (1994:8) intimates that ‘Your desire’ may mean that the women would be deeply attracted to her husband or this

could mean that her desire would be to rule over him. The same word is used again in Eph. 5:23 in this sense of ruling when it mentions *he will rule over you*.

- “That he would rule over her” implies total dominance over the woman. Before the fall, woman was created equal to man – “a help meet for him” Gen. 2:18 (KJV, 1970) – but now ironically man will dominate her. Morris (2000:123) adds “such a harsh rule went beyond what God had intended for his creation”. As Waltke (2001:94) shows, male leadership not male dominance had been assumed in the ideal, pre-fall situation...

In an ideal state man was to cherish and love his wife – considering her to be one flesh with himself yet the fall tainted perfection and within a marriage situation we can already see the potential for conflict.

2.3.6.3 The man

Life for Adam according to the curse was going to be a source of painful toil (Gen. 3:17). We have already seen that one of the punishments of sin was separation from God in the spiritual sense but Berkhof (2003:259-260) sees a further two consequences that came through the curse that man inflicted upon himself, and that was:

- The sufferings of life, which manifests through weaknesses and diseases and mental afflictions, which could often rob him of the joys of life (Berkhof, 2003:259) and destroy his mental equilibrium.
- Another aspect of the curse upon Adam was that now he (as well as the woman) would face physical death (Berkhof, 2003:260) which was evidenced through the words as Peterson (2003:41) translates it in “The Message”: “Until you return to that ground yourself, dead and buried; you started out as dirt, you’ll end up dirt.” Man’s state had changed noticeably from the perfect creation, spiritually and physically, that God had fashioned in the Garden of Eden. Waltke (2001:95) says “Physical death renders all

activity vain but delivers mortals from eternal consignment to the curse and opens the way to eternal salvation that outlasts the grave.”

2.3.7 God's Mitigating Grace

Throughout the book of Genesis and into the era of the New Testament, sin took control of the earth but because of God's wondrous grace He has not let man totally destroy himself but mitigated many an act of rebellion in mankind. Waltke (2001:191) provides some of the examples of God's mitigating grace as found throughout the book of Genesis in the following table:

	Adam	Cain	Noah	Babel
Rule	Eat of all the trees except the tree of good and evil	Common grace: right and wrong assumed in conscience (Gen. 4:7)	Common grace: right and wrong assumed in conscience	To spread out and fill the earth
Rebellion	Choosing to eat of the forbidden tree; an illicit reach for autonomy	Tokenism and fratricide	Every imagination of the heart only evil continually	Refusal to obey; relying on their unity and self-determination for security (symbolized in the tower)
Judgement	Spiritual death; loss of relationship with God and one another; cast out of the garden	Cast off the land to become a nomad and a wanderer	Flood; earth destroyed	Confusion of language; beginning of tyrannical nations
Mitigation	The promise of a seed that will bring salvation and conquer the Serpent	A mark upon Cain that protects him and allows him to live out his years	Noah and creation in the ark as the hope of God and humanity	The call of Abraham – one nation that will bring salvation to all the families

Evidence shows that man and woman have wandered from God's original plan for marriage but despite this God will reveal his compassion and love, particularly to those who are His people. As Townsend (2003:12) says “it is the community of faith that learns to speak of God who acts persuasively upon the wreckage [of life] to bring from it whatever good is possible”.

Stringent protection of the marital bond is indeed what is found when the relevant laws regarding marriage are examined in Deuteronomy (Blenkinsopp, 2006:62). The death penalty was imposed upon those who committed adultery (Deut. 22:22), which once again underlies the seriousness with which God viewed the marriage union (cf also Malachi 2:16). Certainly marriage was the norm, and for a woman to have to remain unmarried was considered a disgrace as found in Isa 4:1.

Although practices varied at different periods in Israel's history, monogamy was generally found to be more common than polygamy (Emmerson, 1991:383). It would appear however, that from a Biblical perspective the monogamous model of marriage found within Gen. 2 is what God has instituted before the fall of man but the researcher surmises that God has allowed the establishment of blended families due to death and divorce as an allowable alternative since the fall. (cf. Deuteronomy 24: 1-4) because of His mitigating grace for His people.

2.4 BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES ON DIVORCE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Having examined the influences that led to the fall of man and consequently the destabilization of the perfect marriage, it is appropriate to examine some of the references made to divorce within the family context in the Old Testament as it is the institution of divorce that has contributed towards the formation of many blended families.

The word for *divorce* that appears in Deut. 24, and occurs in the phrase '*bill of rights*' means to "cut off" and infers that the concept of divorce has in it the idea of the severing of the covenantal relationship that previously existed (Adams, 1982:32).

God's view on the separation of marriage and subsequent divorce needs to be examined so therefore some of the first incidents recorded in the Old Testament regarding divorce will be explored. These verses reflect God's view on this departure from His intended model for marriage. The two passages within the Old

Testament that will be considered more closely are found in Deuteronomy 24: 1-4, and Malachi 2: 13-16.

The term 'Pentateuch' also known as the Book of the Law, refers to the first five books of the Old Testament of which the book of Deuteronomy is the final book. These five books narrate a time span from creation until the death of Moses on Mount Nebo just before the Israelites' conquest of the Promised Land. Within Deuteronomy, the Lord formalizes His covenant with Israel, originally initialized at Sinai, and according to Hill and Walton (2000:53,135) provides for the people a broader perspective and understanding for application to their day to day lives.

2.4.1 Deuteronomy 24: 1-4

The following verses have been selected as an apt example of the expectations that God had of a divorce contract and a subsequent remarriage.

They read as follows:

"If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, and if, after she leaves his house she becomes the wife of another man and her second husband dislikes her and writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it her and sends her from his house, or if he dies, then her first husband, who divorced her, is not allowed to marry her again after she has been defiled. That would be detestable in the eyes of the Lord" (RSB, 1994).

It appears that the practice of divorce was very prevalent amongst the Israelites at this early stage in history, and was probably something learnt from their stay in Egypt. Overall this practice seems to have been tolerated by Moses (cf Matt. 19:8) (Jamieson, Fausset & Brown, 2006). According to Miller (1990:164) the law indicated that divorce was possible in ancient Israel and revealed some of its procedures but it did not really indicate what sort of moral judgement was made about divorce in general.

Ryrie (1994:294) observes that this passage cannot be construed as commanding divorce, only as regulating an existing practice. The object of these verses is not to sanction or recommend divorce but as Stott (1999:327) says it was to forbid a man to remarry his former spouse after the spouse has remarried someone else. It was a regulation that seemed to be applied to an existing practice within the Semitic traditions (NBC, 1990:222) as was confirmed by Jesus in Matt. 5:3. Miller (1990:164) indicates that it is not altogether clear what lies behind this prohibition, but says that it is most likely that the potential remarriage was seen as allowing the possibility for a kind of adultery, in that it infers that the woman would have sexual relations with her second husband and then with the first. He observes that although the second marriage would be legal, it would end up being a violation of the first marriage relationship when the two were remarried. He suggests that perhaps the remarriage was seen as a type of incest (Miller, 1990:164).

The grounds for divorce were that he found 'some indecent in her' (Amplified, 2004). Stott (1999, 326) maintains this cannot refer to adultery as this was punishable by death in those days (as found in Deut. 22:20 & Lev. 20:10), which Ryrie (1994:294) concurs with, as he believes that something 'indecent' most probably meant some *repulsive* or *indecent exposure* rather than adultery. The Hebrew words '*erwat dābār*' literally means 'nakedness of a thing' which could be interpreted in various ways (NBD, 2001:735) and as Blenkinsopp (2006:64) observes, has given rise to a great deal of discussion because it was vague, ill-defined and non-restrictive. These words led to an ongoing debate between two Rabbinic schools in the first century, with Rabbi Shammai maintaining that 'something indecent' was referring to a sexual offence, and Rabbi Hillel, in turn, maintaining that 'something indecent' referred to that which 'could become displeasing' to her first husband (Stott, 1999:327), which could denote something as trivial as 'spoiling the food'.

This passage leaves no illusion to the fact that remarriage was a practice at this time and would seem to imply that once the woman received her 'certificate of

divorce' she was free to remarry. It would appear according to Stott (1999:328) that all the cultures around this period of time, practised remarriage. Usually the divorced woman had her dowry money returned to her and was then able to remarry without financially crippling herself.

It would seem that this directive was also made to protect the woman from being ill-treated within this situation. Retief (2000:80) observes the following:

- the woman could only be divorced due to sexual immorality;
- the divorce had to be formalised in writing, so that the woman had a legally recognised document, and could be free to marry again; and
- the document prevented the wife from returning to the first husband – which in turn pointed to the seriousness of divorce, and removed the frivolous treatment of wives within this covenant.

As a summary of this passage, we observe that God does not *command* divorce, but *allows* it. He stipulates that there are certain conditions for divorce and that the woman is protected from just being cast aside on a 'whim' (as appeared to be the practice of neighbouring tribes) (cf Andersen *et al*, 1998:47). The wife could not be divorced again and remarry her previous husband and as Retief (2000:82) points out: "that for a husband to take back his former wife who had married someone else was to engage in that which undermined the institution of marriage and displaced God".

An observation is made, that this law did not seem to apply to David in 1 Sam. 18:20-27, 25:44, 2 Sam. 3:13-16, who was married to Michal, who was then given to another man and then finally taken back by David, mainly because David had never divorced her (De Vaux, 1968:35). Adams (1982:65) adds to this by saying that the reason that this act was not regarded an "abomination" and that Michal was not defiled, was because Michal had been taken away by Saul and David had not divorced for an inadequate, unbiblical reason. David also took it upon himself to marry six wives, namely Michal (1 Sam. 18:27), Ahinoam (1 Sam. 25: 43),

Abigail (1 Sam. 25:42), Maacah (2 Sam.3:3), Haggith (2 Sam. 3:4), Abital (2 Sam. 3:4), Eglah (2 Sam. 3:5) and Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11:27) and as Crossley (2002:260) observes, "even though polygamy was not allowed to David . . . this tolerance of polygamy could not prevent the evils to which, from its very nature, it gives rise". Therefore it would seem that there are serious consequences to stepping out of God's will.

2.4.2 Malachi 2:13-16

God looks upon marriage as a covenant between Himself and man. In the 2nd chapter of Malachi are found the words that give us insight into how seriously God considered marriage and divorce.

Verses 13 – 16 say:

"Another thing you do: You flood the Lord's altar with tears.

You weep and wail because he no longer pays attention to your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands.

You ask "Why?"

It is because the Lord is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant.

Has not the Lord made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his.

And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring.

So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth.

"I hate divorce," says the Lord God of Israel. "and I hate a man's covering himself with violence as well as with his garment," says the Lord Almighty.

(NIV, 1985)

It is stated quite clearly here, that God was displeased with his people because of the practice of unfaithfulness of husbands in relation to their wives. Not only had the marriage been dissolved but the covenant between God and the married couple had been nullified. Some of the very purposes for which marriage had been

created had been made a mockery of, for example, husbands no longer supported the 'wives of their youth' and the unity of 'one flesh' had been torn asunder through infidelity. According to Alexander *et al.* (1986:459) 'God requires faithfulness from his people; faithfulness to himself and faithfulness in human relationships'. In these days of the prophet Malachi, people had turned their backs on God, and were living in Godless behaviour. Men were now marrying pagan women and divorce had become commonplace and seemed to be practiced exclusively by men. Part of God's plan for marriage was to raise 'Godly offspring' and this had been cast aside because of the custom of marrying heathen women (LAB, 1999:1631).

This section ends with God's condemnation of divorce – especially for the wrong motives. God's vehement opposition to divorce is not found anywhere else in the Old Testament and Malachi's warning leaves his listeners in no doubt as to what God felt about their practices (NBC, 1990:808). The observation, also, is that, these divorces and marriages were often based on abuse and violence, so much so in fact that Malachi made special reference to it in verse 16.

It is noted that as the Old Testament comes to a close, marriage has deviated from the original ideal laid out by God in the Book of Genesis.

2.5 BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES ON BLENDED MARRIAGES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

2.5.1 Polygamy

When examples of blended marriages within the Old Testament context are examined, it would seem to appear that many of the patriarchs practised polygamy and that blended families were in fact a common occurrence. The first recorded incident within the pages of Genesis is in chapter 4 which states in verse 19 "Lamach married two women, one named Adah and the other Zillah". Guthrie *et al.* (NBC, 1990:86) observes the fact that Lamach took two wives seemingly exemplifies the ungodliness of the Cainite culture present in those days. Marshall

et al (2001:732) counters this by commenting that in those days marriage was the state in which men and women could live together in sexual relationship with the approval of their social group. He adds that this definition is crucial to understanding that in the Old Testament, polygamy is not sexually immoral, since it constitutes a recognized marital state. Waltke (2001: 339) concurs with this observation and says that polygamy was practised by many godly men in the Old Testament, David being an example of one of these.

Even though polygamy is not recognised as 'adultery' or 'sexual immorality' it is contrary to God's original plan for marriage as God gave Adam 'one' wife, thus revealing God's original intent. The escalation of sin is now extended to the marital relationship as polygamy is the rejection of God's marital plan as found in Gen. 2:24 (Waltke, 2001:100). Orr (2006:2) agrees and says that in Deut. 17:17 kings were warned against it as being contrary to God's plan although it was not definitely and formally forbidden amongst the Jews until circa 1000 A.D.

2.5.1.1 The reasons for the creation of polygamy

When one takes an overview of the Old Testament, there would seem to be very few marriages that consisted of spouses where one man was married to one woman.

The Life Application Bible (LAB, 1991:433) notes that although many of the Old Testament leaders had more than one wife, this was not the original intention for marriage and that it came about because of two reasons

- Firstly, it was definitely devised in an attempt to produce more offspring to help in the man's work and to assure the continuation of the paternal line. In those days, in the Middle East, children were considered a symbol of status and wealth. As discussed earlier, one of the purposes for marriage was the whole area of procreation, but man took this into his own hands by deciding for himself how many children he should have.

- Secondly, within this society many young men were killed in battles between neighbouring tribes, so this ensured that the women would be supported financially by their sons and relatives.

According to Orr (2006:2) polygamy amongst the Hebrews seems to have been confined to polygyny (a plurality of wives), and the chief causes were:

- A desire for numerous offspring (“May his tribe increase”)
- The barrenness of the first wife as found in Abrahams case (Gen. 16)
- The advantages offered by marital alliances
- The custom of making wives from those captured or taken in war (as seen in Ps 45:9)
- Slavery, which as it existed in those days in the Orient almost implied it (Orr, 2006).

2.5.1.2 The consequences of polygamy

Polygamy was also the cause of many serious family problems as evidenced in the pages of the Old Testament. Examples of these are situations that arose between different wives as in the instance of Hannah and Peninnah in 1 Sam. 1:6-8. Other examples of the consequences of polygamy are found in the family line of King David (2 Sam. 11-24) and the ongoing conflict between various siblings and parents (as discussed in 2.5.1.3 and 2.6.3).

2.5.1.3 Biblical examples of polygamy

(1) King David The book of 2 Sam. 11 – 24 gives a vivid account of the adultery committed between Bathsheba and David, the subsequent deaths of both Bathsheba’s husband and child, and the second marriage of David and Bathsheba. Clearly, many appalling circumstances materialised due to David’s disobedience of God’s plan for him and the interpersonal conflict between rivalry siblings. Miller (2002:260) says “there could be no unity in David’s family, none of that delightful feeling of oneness, which gives such a charm to the family home” Marshall *et al.* (2001:733) observes that monogamy is implicit in the story of Adam

and Eve and that it would seem that God left it to man to discover by experience that God's original intention of one man and one woman was the proper relationship for marriage.

Miller (2002:260) observes that in our present-day culture, the widespread practices of temporary cohabitation and easy divorce not only damage the stability of society, but also bring difficult problems in the church. He mentions that often new converts have complex relationships such as previous spouses and children from different partners and this indeed requires immense wisdom from church leadership.

(2) Abraham. The father of the nation Israel, Abraham, took for himself another wife (Gen. 25:1) in addition to Sarah and Hagar. Even though this family was not *blended* in the same sense as the focus of this research, many of the same problems faced by today's blended families would have been experienced by this patriarchal family. As is stated in Genesis there was already antagonism between Hagar and Sarah, and no doubt this new addition did not make the situation any easier. It would appear that there was often interpersonal conflict present between wives as found in Gen. 16: 1 – 8.

Polygamy often leads to trouble within the marriage context as well as resulting in sinful behaviour (Marshall *et al.* 2001:733) as found in the marriages of Abraham, David, Solomon and Jacob.

2.5.2 The Code of Hammurabi

Hammurabi was an Amorite ruler in the first dynasty of Babylon and is most widely known today for his collection of laws. One of these collections was uncovered from the ancient Near East with 250 laws being preserved (Hill & Walton, 2000:149). This collection was known as "The Code of Hammurabi" and regulated in clear and definite strokes the organization of society (Home, 2007:1). It was according to this code (from about 1700 B.C.) (Marshall *et al.* 2001:733), that the husband may not take a second wife unless the first is barren (De Vaux, 1968:24),

and he loses this right if the wife herself gives him a slave as concubine. As translated by L.W. King (2007:1) the code reads as follows “:

146. “If a man take a wife and she give this man a maid-servant as wife and she bear him children, and then this maid assume equality with the wife: because she has borne him children her master shall not sell her for money, but he may keep her as a slave, reckoning her among the maid servants.”

This code allowed Abraham to have intercourse with his wife Sarah’s maidservant, and Jacob with Rachel’s maidservant for the sole purpose of producing an heir. Due to the fact that this was a recognised practice, the maid would not be regarded as a second wife. In Israel, under the Judges and the monarchy, these restrictions fell away as seen in the story of Gideon, who had many wives and at least one concubine. Bigamy became recognized as a legal fact by Deut. 21:15-17 (De Vaux, 1968:25). The researcher observes that even though these maids and concubines were not regarded as wives, similar conflicts would arise in these situations as in a blended family.

2.5.3 The Levirate Marriage

This marriage custom is derived from the Latin word “husband’s brother”. (NBD,2001:735). The levirate marriage is referred to in Hebrew, as *yibbum*, (JHO, 2007:1).and is based on a law of Deut. 25:5-10 which states that when a brother died, and left no child, his brother was expected to marry the widow, and the children that she bore, would then be counted as those of the first husband (NBD,2001:735). In actual fact it was the first born of this new marriage that was regarded by law as the son of the deceased. Family ties were considered an important aspect of Israeli culture and this custom assumed that this was the most effective way to continue the family line (LAB, 1991:313).

The brother-in-law could, however, decline this obligation, by making a declaration before the town elders but it was not held in favourable light and viewed as dishonourable (De Vaux, 1968:37). When the levir (*yavam*) does not wish to marry

the childless widow (*yevamah*) the ceremony of *halizah* (Heb. Lit. removing the shoe) must take place. This ceremony releases the woman from the levirate tie and she is free to marry someone else (JHO, 2007:1).

Maclennan suggests that the existence of levirate marriages was due to polyandry: the practice of a woman having more than one husband, (CW, 1993:1177) amongst the primitive Hebrews (cf. Schechter & Jacobs, 2007:1), but this is somewhat opposed to Hebraic conditions, as this would be against the interests of the surviving brother to allow the estate to go out of his possession again (Schechter & Jacobs, 2007:1). Schechter & Jacobs (2007:1) also make the observation that there is no evidence of polyandry amongst the Hebrews.

2.5.3.1 Old Testament examples of Levirate Marriages

Two examples of these laws occur in the Old Testament; both of them fulfil the law only in part. Firstly, In Gen. 38, Judah's son Er died whilst he was married to Tamar, and so Tamar was given to Er's brother Onan. Judah the father was following the principle of a Levirate marriage, but in this particular case Onan refused to have a child with her because his own children would then not have the primary inheritance (NBD, 2001:735).

Secondly, the story of Ruth tells us that Ruth did not marry a brother-in-law as she had none but still married a family member. The intentions were those of a levirate marriage, for it was made to perpetuate the name of the dead (Ruth 4: 5, 10) and the child born was considered to be the son of the deceased as found in Ruth 4:6 (De Vaux, 1968:38).

Some of the purposes for the implementation of Levirate marriages are given as follows:

1. Some sources regarded it as a means of perpetuating ancestral worship, although others see it as an indication of a patriarchal society, but these are surmises only, not based on evidence (De Vaux, 1968: 38).

2. It would seem that the intent was to prevent the widow marrying outside the household or clan, to ensure descendants of the deceased, as well as his decent burial and peaceful post-mortem existence, and of course, to provide pre-mortem security for the widow (Blenkinsopp, 2006:64).
3. The essential purpose, as discussed earlier, was to perpetuate male descent, the 'name', the 'house', and therefore the child, was considered the child of the deceased – showing the importance of blood ties (De Vaux, 1968:38).

2.5.4 Monogamy versus Polygamy

It would seem that within the Old Testament the vast number of marriages featured were blended in one way or another, although De Vaux (1968:25) does maintain that the most common form of marriage in Israel during the Old Testament days was monogamy, which did of course, include the practices of using slaves and others as concubines.

2.6 BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES ON CONFLICT WITHIN THE BLENDED FAMILY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Particular areas of conflict within the blended families need to be examined to understand the dynamics that surfaced with the Patriarchal times and the relationship between conflict in these situations and conflict within the present day scenario.

Several accounts of *blended* families in the Old Testament deal with the relationships between the various members of these families, and the conflict that arose in these circumstances. The presence of several wives did not make for peace in the home as a barren wife would be despised by her companions, even if the latter was a slave, the barren wife could be jealous of one of the children and a husband's preference of one of his wives could exacerbate this rivalry (De Vaux, 1968:25).

All such accounts are found in the stories of:

- Abram, Sarai and Hagar (Gen. 21:8-10),
- Hannah and Peninnah (1 Sam. 1-8), and
- King David and his children (2 Sam. 13:1-38).

2.6.1 Sarai and Hagar

As mentioned in 2.4.3.1 above, the Code of Hammurapi, allowed Abraham to have intercourse with his wife Sarai's maidservant as initiated by Sarai, (in Gen. 16) in an attempt to produce offspring for herself and Abram. Waltke (2001:252) adds that before the 'Code' came into effect, the chief wife could sell the surrogate mother and keep the infant for herself but the Code of Hammurapi now forbade this practice. Another aspect of this code which made this a recognised practice, was the fact that the maid would not be regarded as a second wife (Marshall *et al.* 2001:733).

Conflict arises almost immediately after Hagar falls pregnant. No matter how worthy and unselfish the motives of Abram and Sarai were, this plan had gone beyond what God's creative purpose for monogamous marriage was (Morris, 2000:328). The carnal nature will always come to the fore in the form of pride and selfishness and it was this act of disdain from Hagar's side that evoked a terrible, jealous response in Sarai, who took it upon herself to punish Hagar. It is interesting to observe that, the very nature of Hagar's son Ishmael (in verse 12) would be that of 'a wild man, and that his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him' (AKJV,1970). Conflict had become a heritage for Ishmael and his descendants and this was confirmed in Gen. 25 which states "And they lived in hostility toward all their brothers" (RSB,1994).

In Gen. 21, we observe jealousy between the rival sons and mothers as Ishmael sees his hopes for an inheritance from Abraham shattered (Ryrie, 1994:35). Again in Gen. 25, Abraham takes more wives who bear more children but who are never included in the inheritance of their father because it would seem that all of these

family structures other than Sarah and Isaac were contrary to God's perfect will for Abraham's life.

2.6.2 Hannah and Peninnah

Once again we observe the detrimental aspects of polygamy within the family system. Elkanah took it upon himself to have two wives and severe friction arose between these two wives because Peninnah was able to bear children and Hannah was barren (1 Sam. 1-8). It would appear that an air of disrespect surfaced from the wife with children against the one without. Elkanah tried to ease the friction and disappointment by treating Hannah as his favourite spouse but this in turn evoked a terrible jealousy from Peninnah. This was not an unusual case in these days as a law had to be passed eventually to prevent children of the favourite wife receiving more than their fair share of an inheritance. This is found in Deut. 21:15-17. De Vaux (1968:25) says that The presence of several wives did not make for peace in the home and it would seem that this attitude left its mark on the language, which call the wives of one man 'rivals' (1 Sam. 1:6). Within this situation we see favouritism having a negative effect upon the relationship of the two wives, and not necessarily because of the barrenness of the one.

2.6.3 Absalom and Amnon

One of the most renowned narratives in the Old Testament regarding conflict within a blended family, is the story of Tamar, Amnon and Absalom (2 Sam. 13). These were three of King David's children from different wives. Amnon's mother was Ahinoam, and Tamar and Absalom were the children of Maacah (cf 2.4.3). Conflict arose firstly, because of the rape of Tamar by her step brother Amnon, and secondly, because of the murder of Amnon by Absalom, Tamar's blood brother. The situation was dealt with inadequately by David (as the father), who did not discipline Amnon as he should have according to Jewish Law in Lev. 20:17. This may have been because Amnon was David's first born son and would have been expected to inherit the throne (Ryrie, 1994:471). Due to the lack of discipline from David the father, the whole family becomes fragmented and son turns against father (2 Sam. 14).

The very problems that are typical today within the *blended* situation were shown to be present from the moment that man deviated from God's plan for the ideal marriage within the Old Testament pages.

2.7 BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES AND ATTITUDES REGARDING MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

It is not the purpose of this study to argue the Biblical reasons for divorce and subsequent remarriage within Scriptural boundaries. The purpose is to draw attention to the fact that divorce was allowed and that because of this, blended families became the natural outcome. The researcher will look at some of the allowances for divorce and some of the attitudes that should be present in marriage, be they first or second marriages. Various issues and aspects of marriage are discussed and these include unfaithfulness, permanence, dissolution, love, honour as well as the attitudes within a husband and wife's marriage that bring an analogy to marriage being the living symbol of Christ's relationship to the church (LAB,1991:9).

For the purpose of this study, the focus will be:

- on the Book of Matthew (19:3-11) and what Jesus Christ has to say regarding the purposes for marriage. When the Pharisees questioned Jesus about divorce, Jesus spoke to them first about marriage. God holds the permanence of the marriage bond in highest regard because it is the essential unit of His plan for the family and society (SCB, 2001) and this is what Jesus focused upon, and
- on the attitudes to be found in marriage, focusing on the teachings of Paul found in Ephesians 5, particularly aimed at husbands and wives.

2.7.1 What Jesus Christ said

Jesus dealt with the question of marriage in many ways but the researcher will focus mainly on the book of Matthew and the answers that Jesus presented in reply to the questions posed by the Pharisees and religious leaders of the day.

2.7.1.1 Matthew 19: 3-11

Jesus focuses on various aspects of marriage, particularly on the area of permanence. In Matthew chapter 19, Jesus reiterates the model of marriage as put forward in the Book of Genesis, particularly focussing on the permanence of this relationship. "Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate" (RSB, 1994). In this excerpt Jesus is stated as reacting in amazement, at whether or not the Pharisees had read Gen. 1 & 2 and refers them to the fact that human sexuality was a divine creation and that human marriage was a divine ordinance (Stott, 1999:330) and that from that point onward the two are regarded as one entity, never to be parted. Henry (2006:1) wrote that "Eve was a rib out of Adam's side, so that he could not put her away, but he must put away a piece of himself and contradict the manifest indications of her creation".

This teaching was later confirmed by Paul in Rom. Chapter 7 when Paul instructs the Romans on the principles of sanctification: ". . . by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive". The implications again are that according to the law of God (made in the beginning of time), marriage is of an enduring nature and should follow the guidelines given in Genesis. Underlying the passage is the invocation that the permanence of marriage is the ideal.

The next question (vs. 7) is a reaction to the above remark and it would seem as observed by Hendriksen (1989:716) that once again the Pharisees are more interested in the concession made in Deut. 24 than in the institution made in Gen. 1:27, and 2:24. As mentioned earlier in 2.5.1.1, there were two schools of thought regarding the legitimate allowances for divorce. One was Shammai, who limited divorce to the unchastity of the wife, whilst Hillel allowed it to be anything that displeased the husband (NBC, 1999:840). Yet another school of thought that also

entertained support was that of Rabbi Akiba who maintained that the husband was allowed to divorce if 'he found another fairer than she' based on the verse in Deut 24 "and it shall be that she finds no favour in his eyes" (Retief, 2000:83). In summary, as Retief (2000:84) sees it:

- Shammai allowed no divorce except for unfaithfulness;
- Hillel permitted divorce for trivial reasons and
- Akiba allowed the husband to divorce for no reason whatsoever.

Rather than being caught up with either school of thought, Jesus focussed on the purposes of God that stated that man and woman should be one flesh, and as Ryrie (1994:1493) sums it up "the oneness of kinship or fellowship with the body as the medium, causing marriage to be the deepest physical and spiritual unity".

2.7.1.2 Jesus Christ's definition of marriage

Retief (2000:84-85) identifies Jesus' definition (in Matt. 19) for a Godly marriage under four headings

- Leave Verse 5. Marriage involves 'leaving' and 'cleaving'. Loyalty to your marriage partner should be the supreme allegiance of your life on earth and supersedes loyalty to children and family of origin.
- Be United Verse 5. The commitment between husband and wife should 'be like glue'. Unity means being completely intimate physically, mentally, intellectually and spiritually as was God's intention from the beginning. Again the whole aspect of support is entwined within these intimacies.
- Becoming one flesh Verses 5 & 6. Jesus echoes the teaching of Genesis by stating that man and woman were made to be one flesh. They will operate as a 'whole', not fragmented or divided and as Retief (2000:85) observes this union presupposes a relationship which cements and expresses a oneness which operates on a far wider level than the physical, covering the joint lives of a man and his wife.
- Joined by God Verse 6. As discussed in 2.6.1.1, this union is ordained by God and therefore implies that marriage is the will of God, and is not to be

taken lightly, as by Hillel and Akiba. Retief (2000, 86) argues that he believes that not all marriages are joined by God. There are some marriages that lie outside God's will as for example, polygamy, bigamy, incestuous and child marriages. But for those married before God, as Christians, particularly, these unions are never to be separated or to be put asunder. This is God's ideal.

Matthew 19 gives the researcher insight into how sin has impacted upon our present day world and where blended marriages need to incorporate the original ideals of marriage as a vehicle in dealing with the conflict evidenced in these marriages.

2.7.2 What Paul wrote

A New Testament model for marriage is found in Eph.5:22-33, where Paul focuses on relationships between husbands and wives, as well as drawing an analogy of Christ and the Church, using Gen 2:24 as the applicable text, to prefigure the nuptial union between the Heavenly Bridegroom and His bride the Church, which is one with Him, found in verse 31 (NBC, 1990:1121).

2.7.2.1 The social setting in Paul's day

In the New Testament times women were equal in standing to that of a servant or a gentile. It would seem that the provision laid down by Deuteronomy 24 had been abused and virtually any offence was a cause for divorce. In the Greek society, women were simply used as chattels and used to raise children but the divorce rate was much lower than within the Jewish system and there was not even a legal procedure for it (MacArthur, 1993:273). Apparently, because of the low status of the women, the use of concubines and prostitution was rampant and it is from this Greek term for prostitution (*porneia*) and unchastity that the word pornography has emerged (MacArthur, 1993:273).

In the New Testament Roman society, women vied for equality with men, and feminism became the norm for socialite women. Roles changed and women

began to take the initiative and ruled over men, and also instigated divorce proceedings (MacArthur, 1993:273). It was within this social context that Paul brought his message of Ephesians 5.

2.7.2.2 Ephesians 5:22-33

Within this passage the following elements surface regarding the attitudes for husbands and wives.

1. Wives, submit to your husbands (verse 22)

The word 'submit' comes from the Greek word '*hupotassō*' which was originally a military term meaning to arrange or rank under (MacArthur, 1993:279). The wife's motivation for this submission is her relationship with the Lord. All aspects of her life are included in this submission and should be in keeping with her walk and her life lived to the Lord (Snodgrass, 1996:294).

Piper (2003:216) adds that she should be disposed to yield to her husband's authority and should be inclined to his leadership. He qualifies this by explaining the reason he says a *disposition* to yield and an *inclination* to follow is that no submission of one human being to another is absolute, as in the case of a husband expecting a wife to follow him into sin. This particular element is used as an analogy in comparing the husband's relationship with his wife as that between Christ and the church. Unfortunately this principle has been used abusively against women and debated often throughout the ages and yet the New Testament emphasized the dignity of womanhood.

Vitaly important to the concept of 'submission' or 'being subject to' is the element of respect that is emphasized in verse 33 and discussed in point 3 as well as 2.10.

Ryrie (1994:1818) concurs by saying that wives are to submit to the leadership of their husbands in the home (vs 22, 24), they are to respect their husbands (vs 33), they are to love their husbands (Tit. 2:4) and live with them until death (Rom. 7:2-3). Peter confirmed this teaching in 1 Peter: 3 1-5 by giving examples of submission within the Old Testament context.

2. Husbands, love your wives (vs.25, 33)

As observed by the Life Application Bible (1991:2140) Paul devotes twice as much time to instructing men on how to love their wives, than instructing wives how to submit to their husbands, with which MacArthur (1993:276) agrees, saying that wives have traditionally borne the brunt of Eph. 5:22-33, but that in actual fact the greater part of the passage deals with the husband's attitude toward and responsibility for his wife. This was not a subject that was frequently spoken about in ancient times and according to Snodgrass (1996:296) husbands had relatively few obligations to their wives other than for provision for them, and were free to do exactly what they liked which was contrary to the exhortation given in these verses by Paul for the church.

Verse 25 encourages husbands to put wives first, to give them consideration and look after them in the way Christ gives and shows His love for His church. It is using the same principle as Lev.19:18 "Love your neighbour as yourself" but utilising it in the capacity of loving their wives (Snodgrass 1996:297). This love implies a self-sacrificial aspect, and as Foulkes (1991:164) observes, this love "has its standard and model, the love of Christ for his church. It means not only the practical concern for welfare of the other, but a continual readiness to subordinate one's own pleasure and advantage for the benefit of the other – it implies patience and kindness, humility and courtesy, trust and support". He goes on to say that this love means that one is eager to understand what the needs and interests are of the other (as Christ is of us – researcher's note) and then do everything to supply those needs (Foulkes,1991:164).

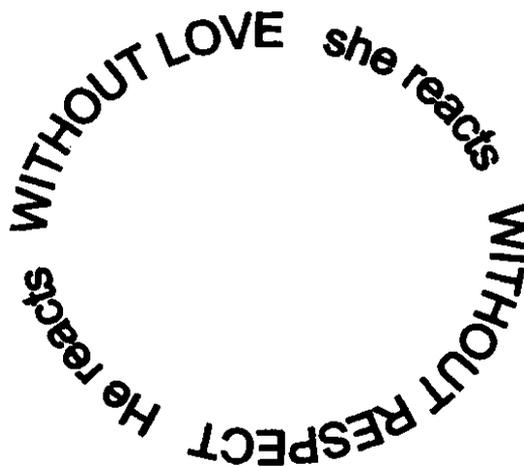
John Piper (2003:209) says: "husbands should devote the same energy and time and creativity to making their wives happy that they devote naturally to make themselves happy. The result will be that in doing this, they will make themselves happy. For he who loves his wife loves himself. Since the wife is one flesh with her husband, the same applies to her love for him".

3. Wives, respect your husbands (vs. 33).

Eggerichs (2005:324) writes that “a wife who is inwardly free submits by respecting her husband, which Peter clearly states in 1 Peter:3:2, and by implication, a husband who is inwardly free submits by loving his wife – that is, he lives with her in an understanding way and honours her as an equal”. God gave this insight to Paul in Eph. 5:33. This respect incorporates that discussed in point 1 and echoes that which says that the wives that walk closely with the Lord will want to treat their husbands with respect and loving submission.

Dr. Eggerichs in his book *Love and Respect* (2005) focuses on the teachings of Ephesians 5 to examine the attitudes of love for the wife, and respect for the husband as discussed earlier in 2.7.2.2. He deals with the aspect of the husband giving love to his wife (unconditionally) and the wife in response giving respect to her husband (unconditionally). Within the marriage context, when conflict is present, the husband and wife go into a “Crazy Cycle” (Eggerichs, 2005:7) syndrome. What this means is that when the wife feels unloved or threatened she reacts without respect, and without respect from her, the husband reacts without love and so the circle continues to go around and around (2005:7) and spirals out of control. It was vitally important to God to instil in man and woman within the marriage context the position of respect in their dealings with each other. A major breakdown in marriage is caused by the lack of respect between players within the marriage or remarriage situation.

The Crazy Cycle (Eggerichs, 2005:5):



When a husband feels secure in his wife's love and respected by her, he is then able to give her the love she needs, and she in turn finds no difficulty in giving him the respect he deserves.

MacArthur (1993:277) sums these verses up as follows: "The structural function of the family, requires both authority and submission, but in all interpersonal relationships there is only mutual submission". Submission is a general spiritual attitude that is to be true of every believer in all relationships. These attitudes are also to be incorporated within the blended family as guidelines for obedience to God within the marriage.

2.7.2.3 To summarize

Out of this passage definite spiritual attitudes are to be observed within the marriage relationship. Both the husband and the wife should have a spiritual walk with God to be able to implement the ideal attitudes. The husband is to love his wife with a love akin to the same sacrificial love that Christ has for the church and this love is all giving and will elicit respect from his wife. The wife is to have an attitude of loving submission to the leadership role of her husband and by doing this will bring him the respect he deserves.

2.8 CURRENT CHRISTIAN COUNSELLING APPROACHES ON CONFLICT WITHIN THE BLENDED FAMILY

Whilst polygamy and 'levirate marriages' are frowned upon within the western culture in the 21st century, blended families are becoming more and more the 'norm' within society. Pastors, church leaders and church members as a whole know that step-families are numerous but as Andersen *et al* (1998:143) comments "they don't say it out a loud". He goes on to add that "any congregation that seeks to be inclusive of stepfamilies should acknowledge their existence regularly and openly".

In order to prepare for or help repair the pain that so often can be associated with these families, the congregation can offer a number of resources in the form firstly, of educational ministries which emphasize the importance of mediation, conflict resolution and problem solving skills which can be formulated especially for these families (Anderson, 1998:144). Secondly, pastoral support groups should be designed for families as a demonstration of care from the church families (Andersen, 1998:144). Counselling is another option in dealing with the conflict found within these families.

The question is asked, "How does counselling deal with these unique problems that arise in marriage and remarriage situations?" The researcher believes that the focus in this area should be on the outlook and techniques utilised in dealing with conflict that arises in a marital or remarriage situation. Blended families are a relatively new phenomenon and the research needs to examine whether or not therapy has actually addressed the issues at hand.

Christian counselling has over the years adopted various approaches in dealing with the subject of conflict within a marriage situation. The researcher will explore five counselling approaches used by some Christian psychologists of the present day. These approaches are only some of the many approaches and techniques available but have elicited great success in the area of conflict. They will also be explored to evaluate their pertinence to remarriage counselling.

2.8.1 Nouthetic Approach

In the 1970s, in response to the dearth of non-Biblical counselling and the inroads that psychology was making in the modern world, Jay Adams published two books: *Competent to Counsel* (1976) and *The Christian Counselor's Manual* (1974) as a reminder to Christian counsellors and pastors of God's sovereign power through His word the Scriptures. Nouthetic counselling is based on the premise that God's Word is sufficient for all problems faced by mankind. The word Nouthetic comes from the Greek word 'nouthesia' which implies Scriptural direction (Veerman, 2001:1).

Adams was particularly scathing of psychology, the methods used by psychotherapists and the usage of psychological techniques by Christian counsellors instead of utilizing the principles and precepts laid down by Scripture. He calls psychology sarcastically the 'Expert Knowledge' approach and says that this approach is based squarely upon the presupposition that man is not responsible for what he does (Adams, 1973:76) which is fundamentally a non-Christian assumption. Adams says that "the Bible is the inerrant source and truth from God concerning life and godliness, and God provided in the Bible all that one needs for life and godliness. These presuppositions underlay "all else" (cf. Lotter, 2001:322). (cf Veerman, 2001:2). Biblical (nouthetic) counsellors believe that the humanism that fuels the mental health industry today is directly contrary to the biblical principles God gives us in the Bible (OAIM, 2007:2).

One of the fundamental Biblical principles used by nouthetic counsellors is found in 2 Tim. 3:16-17.

The New International version (1985) translates these verses as follows:

16. All Scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,
17. so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

The Amplified Bible (AV, 1987) translates this verse as follows:

16. Every Scripture is God-Breathed (*given by His inspiration*) and profitable for instruction, for reproof and conviction of sin, for correction of error *and* discipline in obedience, [and] for training in righteousness (*in Holy living, in conformity to God's will in thought, purpose and action*).
17. So that the man of God may be complete and proficient, well fitted and thoroughly equipped for every good work

Nouthetic counselling (according to Adams, 1973:14-17) states:

- That the counsellor must be a man of faith and hope and must be convinced that the Bible is true and be ready and able to direct others to its promises with assurance and conviction.

- That there is a need for divine authority and that the Bible is the only source for such authority.
- That Biblical counselling is directive. The Greek word *nouthesia* implies scriptural direction, according to Adams, which means that in order to do biblical counselling the Christian counsellor must confront others.

The National Association of Nouthetic Counselors (NANC, 2006:2) in America, says that the Biblical counsellor stresses those requirements clearly stated in Scripture and that his role as a Biblical counsellor consists of:

- Showing the counsellee that in order to be relieved of his problems biblically, the counsellee's motives, thinking and behaviour must conform to the concepts and standards of the Scriptures.
- Pointing out clearly the requirements of the Scriptures as applied to everyday life and practice.
- Helping the counsellee change his life-style, habits and conduct, as motives, thinking and behaviour to that which God has instructed in the Scriptures.

The Institute for Nouthetic Studies (2007:1) stipulates that nouthetic counselling embraces three ideas and those are: 1. *Confrontation*, 2. *Concern* and 3. *Change*. Within the marital conflict area, the Bible is used to challenge, and confront couples to re-look at their stand before God and to change their behaviour according to the principles laid down by Scripture. Adams maintains that sin is the cause of all problems and says that the Bible will enlighten the recurring themes of sin. These various lists of sins provide clear cut data for discovering common sinful practices (Adams, 1973:126) and will enable counsellors to understand the patterns of behaviour surfacing in everyday life.

Adams believes that Scripture is the only source to be used for healing by Christian counsellors and can only be used with Christians and not non-believers.

2.8.1.1 Criticism of this approach

Criticism of this approach has come from many Christian quarters as many counsellors feel that this particular approach tends towards fundamentalism and legalism. This approach does not allow for familial influence and genetic predisposition to certain psychological and mental problems which can be a major contributor towards behaviour. Nor does this counselling focus on the good found within man, only the bad. Buchanan (1985:153-154) says that the client is reduced to a sinful heap, the confrontation can be so hurtful and damaging that the final state may be worse than the first! He has also observed that there is a danger of the problem becoming more important than the person and that problem-solving can so easily become a substitute for the love which frees and changes. Louw, (1998: 30) indicated four other areas which he was most concerned about in nouthetic counselling, namely:

- Conversion cannot be employed as therapeutic method.
- Soteriology and the doctrine of creation are separate.
- A dualism is created between matter and spirit, and
- Scripture cannot be applied to all human problems.

2.8.2 Behavioural Approach

Norman H. Wright, a well-known Christian counsellor, identifies in his book *Marriage Counselling* (1999) one specific approach that he, himself uses in the field of marital conflict and this is the Short Term Behavioural Approach. As a Christian counsellor, he has adapted this model from psychology and uses it within a Christian context. The emphasis within this approach is placed on behaviour, thoughts and feelings. The clients are encouraged to change their behaviour regardless of their thought and feelings and certain challenges are presented to them in this regard. Wright (1999:122) mentions that the first step within this approach is to discover three facts within the relationship

1. Existing strengths and positive responses
2. Positive behaviours the couple would like to have increased
3. Areas of agreement between the couple

In a way Wright is in agreement with Crabb (2.9.6), only observing the problem from a different perspective. By emphasising the positive it provides a firm foundation upon which they can build their relationship, and at the same time it develops a more realistic perspective (Wright, 1999:122).

2.8.2.1 The brief solution-focused counselling approach

An extension of the above approach is the brief, solution-focused counselling approach. This approach is one of the latest therapies used to help individuals and couples (Wright, 1999:122). It is regarded as a simple, positive and effective method in helping couples to get their marriages back on track. It asks the question: "What maintains the problem?" instead of the traditional emphasis of "What is the cause of the problem?" Wright (1999, 119) maintains that the one goal for counsellors to work towards, is to teach counsellees to respect each other's feelings, going back to the instruction in Eph. 5:22-33 which entreats husbands and wives to submit to each other as well as respect and love one another, as discussed in 2.7.2.2.

The emphasis of this approach is to discover what the couple wants rather than what they *don't* want. They need to discover what works and work on that area. At the centre of this approach are carefully worded questions, for example: What is your goal in coming to see me? (Wright, 1999:124). Goals are descriptions of what we want to achieve in counselling, they must be well defined and specific. In 1 Thess. 5:14 the word encouragement is used to mean to console, comfort and cheer up particularly for those who are feeling dejected and downhearted. Another aspect of encouragement to challenge a person to move forward in their spiritual life and gives the message of God acknowledging potential in the person (Wright, 1999:45).

Within a remarriage setting, there are often negatives brought in from the previous relationship. Many problems that surface in these marriages are fuelled by disappointments from the past that follow through in unspoken expectations for the

future. In incorporating behavioural therapy the therapist must look at the goals for this present marriage and disappointments of the past.

Collins in his book *Christian Counselling* (1995:417) advocates the importance of setting goals both for counsellee as well as counsellor because of the fact that the counsellor will not approach the marriage counselling with complete neutrality. He asks the following four questions regarding goals:

- How does each partner experience the relationship?
- What does each yearn for?
- What can be done?
- What is each willing to do now?

All these questions take on a slightly different focus when viewed from a remarriage perspective. For example question 1 states 'how does each partner experience the relationship?' which, when tackled from a blended marriage perspective, says: "Is this different from my last relationship?" and question 2 "What does each yearn for?" translates into, "Am I still getting what I want from this marriage compared to the last?"

One of the features that appealed to Wright within the behavioural approach was the critical role that the counsellor plays as an encourager – the counsellor is very much active within the process, not passive (Wright, 1999:132). This brings in the Scriptural principle of, "Therefore encourage one another, and build up one another, just as you also are doing" (1 Thess. 5:11).

Lee (2000:122) endorses the behavioural change in marital conflict: "While we cannot change our own or each other's basic personalities, we can change our habits and behaviour. Indeed," she says "marriage requires us to so in order that our strides match." She adds: "We can change ourselves, we cannot change each other". Larry Crabb (1998:9) sums up the behavioural approach as such: "If how we are behaving is the root problem," he says, "then it follows that the solution to

difficulties like marital conflict is simple: Find out what you are doing wrong, then choose to do it right. Do something different; stop living un-biblically and start living biblically”.

Within the remarriage situation many people have been wounded by the past and find that they are often immobilised in certain areas because of deep emotional hurt from previous marriages. It would seem that counsellors would have to help counselees deal with these problems as well as past anger and guilt whilst implementing good Biblical behavioural principles.

2.8.3 Cognitive Approach

Another approach that is mentioned in marriage counselling is the Cognitive Approach. Wright (1999:185), one of the proponents of this particular approach, as well as the approach mentioned in 2.9.2. indicates that because a person's thinking process or self talk can both determine and influence his emotional and behavioural responses, an emphasis upon the couple's thought life or their cognitive process goes hand in hand and is an extension of the behavioural approach in marital counselling.

Cognitive therapy basically declares that what we convince ourselves about what is occurring creates our feelings and our behavioural patterns. Our negative self talk have sometimes been used for so long that our thoughts and subsequent actions become automatic. The scriptures back up this view. The most obvious scripture that supports cognitive counselling is found in Prov. 23:7 “For as he thinketh in his heart, so he is” (KJV, 1970), which in turn is confirmed by Rom. 8:5 “For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit” (KJV, 1970).

The steps that are presented to the couple evolve in a four-step process according to Wright (1999:186-189)

- They are presented with the basic rationale, which states it is that which we tell ourselves that create our feelings.

- They are taught to become observers of their thoughts, feelings and behaviours. The awareness of inner thoughts, coupled with the word of God, helps us become aware of our thoughts. Heb 4:12 says that the Word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword, and well able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart;
- By observing themselves, the couple now begin to give statements contrary to the negative thought. When a person becomes a Christian he is given new life through a new birth (John 5);
- This step involves the permanency of the new change and calls upon the sufficiency of God's Word.

Under the umbrella of cognitive therapy falls 'Misbelief Therapy' which originated from William Backus and Marie Chapien in the 1980s. Backus (1991:21) observed that the 'notions, perceptions, judgments and opinions reflected in our inner mind can have a direct effect on our feelings and behaviour'. He goes on to say that "what we tell ourselves may be the most significant present cause of our worries and anxieties". Backus & Chapien (1980:10) said that "It is the truth that sets man free. Jesus Christ is the living Truth. When we inject the truth into our every thoughts, taking a therapeutic broom and sweeping away the lies and misbeliefs which have enslaved us, we find our lives radically changed for the happier better". They have three basic principles which are implemented during therapy:

- (a) Locate your misbeliefs
- (b) Remove them
- (c) Replace misbeliefs with truth

Positive self-talk is implemented through questioning his negativity and using the truth of the Scriptures. An example of this could be as follows, courtesy of Backus (1980:14):

INSTEAD OF	HE SAID
I'm a failure and no good	The marriage failed, but I am deeply loved by God. Therefore I am important
I'm so lonely and miserable	I'm alone, but not lonely
I'm separated from my family and there's no joy anymore for me	I'm separated from my family and that hurts. I can function even though I am hurt

Larry Crabb (1998:25) concludes with: 'let me state that we do not need to *feel* secure or significant in order to function as we should. I may not *feel* worthy or accepted, but I am still responsible to *believe* what God has said. His Word assures me that in Christ I am both secure in his love and significant in his plan.

The researcher noted that all of these above points are also valid when considering blended marriages. It is vitally important that partners view themselves through the eyes of God. Many participants, the husband, wife and children can come into a new family dynamic with a very deficient view of themselves because of past woundedness. Validation should come from God's perspective and not that of a past partner or parent. The counsellor can be instrumental in revealing God's healing in this direction.

Whether the therapy be cognitive or behavioural, from a Christian worldview it is imperative to minister into marital conflict alongside the Word of God. In today's world there are numerous techniques and therapies that are continually surfacing but from the Biblical perspective unless they are based on the truth of Scripture they are normally viewed with suspicion. Psychology is used by many a Christian counsellor but normally adapted to bring in a spiritual viewpoint.

2.8.4 Narrative approach

The narrative approach was developed in the secular world by social constructionists Michael White and David Epston who became known for their use of narrative in therapy (Corey, 2004:431). Narrative therapy has to do with addressing the stories by which people live their lives. These particular stories contain meaning for the individuals, based on his or her interpretation of life events and experiences, and the meanings can influence the mode in which the counsellee operates and the consequences of decisions made (CTA, 2006:1). Narrative therapy assumes that each personal story is ideological and the reality it represents is also ideological. These stories have been formed and created within the context of family structures and have been affected by much of life that is inconsistent, discrepant, incoherent, disharmonious, muddled and irrational (Boje,

2005:1). It appears that Christian counsellors have in turn utilised this therapy in their own counselling rooms to access the stories of woundedness and impaired thinking and to replace them with God's truth.

Townsend (2003: 39) says that "through the action-reflection motion of praxis, the Christian community joins with oppressed people and families to empower transformation of their stories. New meanings, metaphors, symbols and actions emerge that guide the community and invite suffering folk fully into the body of Christ and the hope of the gospel", which literally means that theology has to become a way of life and that the church's theological task is to actively engage stepfamilies and their stories, to join with them in their struggle and to empower them for transformation in the future. If we have not noticed anything different about someone else from ourselves it is because we have not bothered to listen or look at their stories.

Townsend (2003:48-49) provides a framework for such therapy:

- Listen reflectively to stepfamily stories
- Understand and empower a voice for divorced and remarried families' stories
- Point to traditions of redeeming hope found in the body of Christ to enliven transformation of stepfamilies and congregations
- Discover metaphors, symbols and rituals of hope for step families
- Instil a vision for stepfamilies' full inclusion in the life of the church and into a redemptive moral vision of family life, and
- Explore a beginning theology of remarriage and stepfamilies capable of including divorced and remarried families as part of the embodied fullness of creation and incarnation.

Gerkin (1997:111) says that "our lives are structured not within one narrative, one story that shapes who we are or want to be, but many often congruent, but sometimes conflicting stories". Integral to the healing of conflict, as shown in the diagram below, is the work of the pastor who stands between the stories of the

Christian community and its traditions and the facilitating of growth in the individual stories to rectify those inconsistencies that people cling to which impede their growth.



Townsend (2000:69-71) observes that the story of individual sin and forgiveness, including divorce, finds its resolution in the narrative of God's renewing forgiveness which is symbolized by Christ's death and resurrection. All divorce stories contain "overtones" of rage and sorrow that have accompanied tragedy and it is this tragedy that looks towards God's presence in compassionate love with those who suffer. He goes on to add that the church community needs to hear the divorce sorrow, embrace it and let it become part of the congregation's story. He says that the community can only embody God's presence with suffering people by empathic immersion. 'Their' pain must become 'our' pain for the congregational to be able to draw them into their community to begin a journey of healing together.

This then is narrative therapy, Christians drawing alongside, listening and empathizing with the stories shared, and in turn sharing their own stories in the hope of bringing God's grace and forgiveness to wounded lives.

2.8.5 Connecting – A New Approach

Larry Crabb brings in an unusual approach to counselling which can be used with couples in conflict. In his most recent book *Connecting* (2005) he speaks about a complete turn around to the traditional mode of counselling. He states (2005:xvii): "It's about time to go beneath the moralism that assumes the church's job is done when it instructs people in biblical principles and then exhorts them to do right – it's about time to find a better way to help each other when we struggle, than the way of our therapeutic culture, which looks beneath every troublesome emotion or

behaviour pattern to find a psychological disorder that needs repair". Crabb (2005:9) believes that the way God changes us is by revealing himself to us, giving us a taste of what He is like and then pouring his life into us, and a critical element of this process is to place us in a community of people who are enough like him to give us that taste firsthand.

There are three elements that form part of this process of healing and are as follows:

(1) A taste of Christ delighting in us

We find it hard to believe that we are children of the New Covenant, and that as forgiven people we have caught a glimpse of Christ and because of that His Holy Spirit has created a measure of goodness within us, which defines us more than the badness that lies within us (Crabb, 2005:13-15).

(2) A diligent search for what is good

Counselling typically looks at that which is a symptom of the problem; what anger and guilt lie at the root instead of what evidence do we have of God's Spirit being found in the midst of the problem. We need to see the good lying below the bad urges that often come to the fore (Crabb, 2005:15-18).

(3) An engaging exposure of what is bad or painful

Crabb emphasizes that in most cases counsellors put this element first and he is convinced that if we provide others with a delightful taste of Christ that this final element becomes less necessary. He does agree that it is our sin that creates the disconnection between man and God. In his book 'Inside Out' (1999:126) he says: "we must go beyond a legitimate concern with visible sin and explore the ways in which thirsty people who desperately want relationship foolishly violate the command of love". He points out, that out of his great love God has taken it upon himself to reconnect us, first to himself, then to ourselves by pouring his goodness into our hearts which helps us to live lives of integrity. Sometimes he does this by exposing our bad inclinations in order to engage us more convincingly with the Saviour's kindness which leads to repentance (Crabb, 2005:18-21).

The researcher agrees with the challenge that Crabb (2005:70) makes in his core principle regarding connecting: *“Are we so empowered by the gospel that we are disposed to continue believing in another’s miraculously granted goodness, and therefore find delight in the other, no matter what degree of ugliness we encounter?”* Observation is that counselling so often focuses on the ugliness and we tend to forget that the Holy Spirit has brought about a transformation in a believer’s life – Crabb juxtaposes nouthetic counselling with: “When I know that you love me, that you believe in me, that you recognize something terrific in me that you long to see more released, I’m inclined to receive you, to let you pour into my life” (Crabb, 2005:70).

2.9 JESUS CHRIST - ATTITUDES

Norman Wright (1999:31) maintains that in any kind of Christian counselling, being knowledgeable and applying a Biblical approach to counselling is essential. One way to perfect this approach is to study the life of Christ and His relationship to others.

The researcher believes that Christ gives a basis for a counsellor to use when dealing with people in conflict. Using Christ’s objective attitude and unconditional love helps a counsellor to remain unbiased within these situations. The basic characteristics of Christ’s interpersonal relationships were based on the following fourteen qualities (Wright, 1999:31-35).

- Had Compassion “I have compassion on the multitude because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat.” Mark 8:2 and again in Luke 13:34, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings”
- Granted Acceptance Luke 19, John 4 and John 8. Examples include the woman at the well, Zacchaeus and the woman caught in adultery.

- Gave People worth Jesus emphasized the self worth of man by showing them their value in God's eyes. Matt.10:31: "You are worth more than many sparrows".
- Used Discernment Examples of Christ's discernment are seen in the dealings of people's needs and their deep unspoken needs. What ever the reason, for example, that Nicodemus came to Jesus for, Jesus discerned his real need.
- Said the Right Words The words that Jesus used in ministering to people were important. The right words were always given into the situation, be they soft, harsh, encouraging or other wise.
- Emphasised Right Behaviour Jesus always emphasized right behaviour, for example, the woman caught in adultery was told "Go, and sin no more" (John 8:11).
- Sought to have People accept Responsibility Jesus sought to have people accept their responsibility to change from their present condition, for example: In John 5:6 "Do you want to get well?"
- Gave Hope Gave hope from God's perspective "all things are possible with God" (Mark 10:27).
- Gave Encouragement Jesus encouraged as He ministered "Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest." (Matt. 11:28).
- Emphasized peace of mind Jesus emphasized peace of mind in following him "My peace I give you" (John 14:27).
- Gave Inspiration Wright says inspiration goes beyond encouragement, it provides the client with hope and a desire to change which was part of Christ's approach.
- Reshaped People's Thinking "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or about your body, what you will wear . . . Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry?" (Luke 12:22-26). Jesus challenged people to change their thinking.

- Emphasised Teaching The Gospels are full of examples of Jesus and his dealings with people and the lessons he taught them. Teaching is another aspect of counselling.
- Expressed Authority Counselling uses the authority of Jesus. "He taught as one had authority and not as their teachers of the law" (Matt7:28).
- Admonished and Confronted There are many instances when Jesus used confrontation to challenge people and his disciples such as Matt 8:26, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?". See also Matt 18:15 and John 8:3-9.

It would appear that all of these attitudes utilized in the right way would be extremely helpful in dealing with a conflict situation. All of the above mentioned criteria are essential when dealing with couples going through marital conflict, regardless of the approach one will be using. According to Wright (1999:35) all of these attitudes should underlie all Christian therapy within a counselling setting.

Patterson (in Collins, 1995:18) concluded that the most effective counsellor must be "a real human person" who offers "genuine human relationship" to counselees. "It is a relationship characterized not so much by what techniques the therapist uses as by what he is, not so much by what he does as by the way he does it". Collins (1995:19) says "Surely Jesus Christ is the best model we have of an effective 'wonderful counsellor', whose personality, knowledge and skills enabled him effectively to assist those people who needed help". It would seem that basic to Jesus' style of helping was his personality. Whether he was teaching, caring or counselling he demonstrated traits which made him an effective people helper. He was completely honest; deeply compassionate; highly sensitive and spiritually mature. He served his Heavenly Father as well as his fellowman; he preceded his ministry with prayer and meditation and he continually sought to help needy people turn to him so that they could find the ultimate peace (Collins, 1995:19). These are some of the ways that make Christian counselling unique. It would seem that

psychology is at odds with Christianity because of this person Jesus Christ and the example set by him for Christian counselling.

2.10 PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS FROM CHAPTER 2

2.10.1 Marriage in the Old Testament

- The curse confirmed the fact that Satan would always be instrumental in the attempt to turn man from God, and that woman would, in her pain and woundedness, strive against the man who would seek to rule over her. Physical toil and sheer weariness, plus a tendency to dominate, would contribute to the problems that would start to surface within a marriage situation as man succumbed to the evil influences around him. Throughout the book of Genesis and into the era of the New Testament, sin took control of the earth but because of God's wondrous grace He has not let man totally destroy himself but mitigated many an act of rebellion in mankind.
- The evidence at hand suggests that God has compassionate grace and that this grace extends to all of humanity despite their sin. Evidence shows that man and woman have wandered from God's original plan for marriage but despite this God will reveal his compassion and love, particularly to those who are His people.
- Stringent protection of the marital bond is indeed what is found when the relevant laws regarding marriage are examined in Deuteronomy. The death penalty was imposed upon those who committed adultery in Deut. 22:22, which once again underlies the seriousness with which God viewed the marriage union.
- The Biblical perspective says however that the monogamous model of marriage found within Gen. 2 is what was acceptable to God before the fall of man but God has allowed the establishment of blended families due to death and divorce as an allowable alternative since the fall.

2.10.2 Marriage in the New Testament according to Jesus Christ

- Jesus focuses on various aspects of marriage, particularly on the area of permanence. Underlying the passage is the invocation that the permanence of marriage is the ideal. In Matthew 19, Jesus reiterates the model of marriage as put forward in the Book of Genesis.
- Jesus says that human sexuality was a divine creation and that human marriage was a divine ordinance.
- Matthew 19 confirms the three purposes as discussed in 2.3.1.2 as well as the initial purposes given by God in Gen. 2:24 as being the ideal for marriage and gives the researcher insight into how sin has impacted upon our present day world.

2.10.3 Marriage in the New Testament according to Paul

- Eph. 5:21-33 defines attitudes that are to be present between husband and wife. Both the husband and the wife should have a spiritual walk with God to be able to implement the ideal attitudes.
- The husband is to love his wife with a love akin to the sacrificial love that Christ has for the church and this love is all-giving and will elicit respect from his wife.
- The wife is to have an attitude of loving submission to the leadership role of her husband and by doing this will bring him the respect he deserves.

2.10.4 Divorce in the Old Testament

- Marriages were no longer solely monogamous. Polygamy was practised as a regime to enhance family growth.
- The Israelites were marrying Godless people and therefore raising Godless offspring. Men were choosing to leave their wives and children, and the support given by family life, to marry other women, and therefore divorce became commonplace practice.
- Divorce was acceptable – and practised widely especially from the husband's side.

- The reasons for divorce varied and were, more often than not, fickle and without substance.
- Divorce was often accompanied by violence

2.10.5 Blended families in the Old Testament

- Within the Old Testament setting it was found that the practices of polygamy and levirate marriages led the researcher to observe that the majority of marriages featured within the Old Testament pages were blended in one way or another.
- Prominently highlighted were the problems within these systems and the interpersonal conflict that resulted because of the fact that man had strayed away from the marriage ideal found in Gen. 2:24.

2.10.6 Conflict within Blended families of the Old Testament

- It would appear that conflict takes on an altered form when observed within the blended family scenario in contrast to the traditional family, as noted in the following points:
- With polygamy, it was found that jealousy quickly arose between different spouses – particularly between wives.
- Jealousy also arose between wives and offspring of different wives.
- Jealousy and identity issues arose between different children of different parentage.
- Favouritism within the blended family caused extreme hurt and resentment
- Inadequate disciplining within the blended family caused fragmentation and identity problems in children.

2.10.7 Christian Counselling Approaches

- The nouthetic approach believes that God's word is sufficient for all problems faced by mankind which therefore secures it as being the only source of divine authority. It can only be used with Christians in times of conflict as it challenges people to re-look at their stand before God. This

approach has been criticised for being too legalistic and confrontational in character.

- The behavioural approach aligns very much to the idea of changing behaviour, thoughts and feeling through positive reinforcement. It emphasizes the use of goals for the present as well as future, and, incorporates the critical role of counsellor as encourager. This approach might need to focus also on the deep emotional wounds of the past so very evident in the case of blended families which require healing before behavioural change.
- The cognitive approach evaluates the negative thought life of counselees and the impact this negativity has on day to day life. Counselees are taught to become observers of their thought lives and to implement the sufficiency of God's word in incorporating change. Again, the emotional wounds of the past would need to be dealt with as well.
- The narrative approach draws awareness to the presence of life stories created by the misperceptions and tragedy of life's blows. The community are encouraged to listen to the stories and to help remarried families to integrate into the life of the church. Integral to the healing is the pastor who can interpret the church's 'traditions' to the stories of the wounded. This approach emphasizes listening and sharing God's grace.
- The connecting aspect of Larry Crabb's approach focuses on the goodness which has been placed in a believer's heart at the time of conversion. Contrary to nouthetic counselling it focuses on the good urges not the bad urges within a person believing that if the counsellor focuses on that which is God given and draws the counselee's attention to that, the counselee will seek positive change. When a client is encouraged, he will want to change.
- It would appear that the above approaches can all be utilized in one form or another to deal with a conflict situation or trauma within a blended marriage.

2.10.8 Attitudes for Christian counsellors

- Counsellors should use the example of Jesus Christ as the ultimate counsellor in all their dealings with counselees.

- Aspects of his ministry include: Compassion, acceptance, worth, discernment, using the right words, giving hope, encouragement, peace of mind, inspiration, teaching, and confrontation.
- The end result whilst dealing with people is to emphasize right behaviour, to encourage people to accept responsibility for their actions, to reshape people's thinking and to help them focus on the authority of God's Word.
- The challenge to Christian counsellors is to magnify this behaviour and to emulate a warm, caring personality and the gentle leading of God's Holy Spirit. It is this example that makes Christian counselling different from the secular sphere.

It would appear that the very problems that are typical today within the *blended* situation were shown to be present from the moment that man deviated from God's plan for the ideal marriage within the Old Testament pages. God's plan for marriage was confirmed by Jesus in Matthew 19 and yet we see a continuance of blended or stepfamilies. Evidence shows us that man and woman have wandered from God's original plan for marriage but despite this God will reveal his compassion and love, particularly to those who are His people.

2.11 IN CONCLUSION

In response to the objectives of this chapter we find that a Biblical understanding of marriage, divorce and remarriage and the conflict experienced in these blended families has been ascertained and that there are various Christian counselling theories operating today that deal particularly with conflict in marriage.

CHAPTER 3

META THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT WITHIN THE BLENDED FAMILY

3.1 OBJECTIVES AND INTRODUCTION OF CHAPTER 3

The objectives of this chapter are:

1. To gain an understanding from other disciplines, *inter alia* sociology, and psychological perspectives of marriage, divorce and remarriage and on how conflict is interpreted in the blended family in today's world.
2. To draw on literature on psychological approaches to ascertain how conflict can be handled in the blended family within the secular realm.

In chapter 2, the basis theory as per Zerfass' hermeneutical model was examined and in the pursuit of understanding conflict within the blended family situation more clearly, the meta theoretical perspective will now be examined from the disciplines of psychology and sociology. In employing a meta theoretical perspective, an investigation is undertaken, using knowledge from the areas of psychology and sociology to bring about understanding regarding the issues at hand. Heitink (1999:113) says that Zerfass believed that relying purely on church theology cannot give an overall analysis of the problem at hand – practical theology has the task to lead in this process by giving perspectives from both theology and the social sciences.

The meta theory perspective takes a thorough look into the current scenario, and examines the evidence at hand to gain deeper insight into the problems experienced by the *blended* family. As the basis theoretical view gave a systematic description from the pages of Scripture, the meta theoretical view gives a description from life as it is now. The research will look at the condition of marriage, divorce and remarriage

in the 21st century and will also examine some of the approaches used by psychology and sociology to deal with marital conflict in the present day.

3.2 MARRIAGE

The researcher is of the opinion that as it was important to explore the origins and types of marriages found within the Biblical context so also is it essential to examine today's context. Marriage has deviated immensely from the Biblical model as discussed and understood in Chapter 2 and, because of this, it is vitally important to gain a further understanding of the settings that have brought about the formation and problems found within the blended family.

Virtually everyone, in all societies, is brought up in a family context, and in every society the vast majority of adults are, or have been married. Marriage is a very pervasive social institution (Giddens, 1993:389) and as with every other aspect of social life, there is a great variation in family and marriage patterns across different cultures. Giddens (1993:390) says that we first need to define the basic concepts of family, kinship and marriage because of the vast variant found within these structures. *A family* is a group of persons directly linked by kin connections, and *kinship ties* are connections between individuals, established either through marriage or lines of descent that connect blood relatives. *Marriage* is defined as a socially acknowledged and approved sexual union between two adult individuals. When two people marry, they become kin to one another; the marriage bond connects together a wider range of kinspeople. Parents, brothers, sisters and other blood relatives become relatives of the partner through marriage (Giddens, 1993:390). As the researcher has observed, traditionally, marriage was between two adults of different genders whereas today marriage is also recognized between two adults of the same gender. Same sex marriage is dealt with in section 3.2.3.

3.2.1 Definitions of marriage

Reynolds (2001:7) came to the conclusion that the classical jurists were not inclined to reflect upon the nature of marriage. He says that Roman law merely applied and appealed to certain principles and maxims regarding a marriage, only when a man and his female partner needed to determine whether or not they were in fact married or at what point they had become married. Marriage is “the union of a man and a woman” (*maris atque feminae coniunction*) according to a text from Ulpian’s *Institutes* (cf Reynolds, 2001:7), and it was an Ulpian student Modestinus who gave a more formal definition, with added phrases which have been translated in various ways: “a partnership for life involving divine as well as human law”; “the sharing of their entire life, the joint participation in rights human and divine”; and “an association for the whole of life, in which the two share the same civil and religious rights” (Reynolds, 2001:8).

“Marriage has traditionally been the prerequisite for starting a family, which in turn serves as the building block for a community and the formation of society”. It would seem then that marriage has not only served the interests of two individuals, but also the interests of their children and society (Wikipedia - Marriage, 2006:1).

In seeking to arrive at a suitable definition of the marriage relationship as described and defined by various dictionaries and encyclopedias, the following came to light when sources were examined via the internet:

The Webster Dictionary’s (ARTFL, 2006:1) comes from a Judeo Christian basis as it defines marriage as follows: “The act of marrying, or the state of being married; legal union of a man and a woman for life, as husband and wife; wedlock; matrimony”. Interestingly Matthew 12:2 is quoted in reference to marriage: “The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king which made a *marriage* for his son” and yet again another verse from Hebrews 13, “*Marriage* is honourable in all”. This infers that the

state between husband and wife is to be honourable to themselves as well as their dealings with others. Words that are used as synonyms for *marriage* are matrimony, wedlock, wedding and nuptials. These definitions would appear to be biblically based. Tulloch (1991:935) adds a reason for marriage to the definition of marriage: “the legal union of a man and a woman in order to live together and often to have children”. It would appear that the reasons given here infer that marriage comes about because people want to live together and then later because they want to procreate. Interestingly the observation is made that there is an absence of ‘for life’ in the more recent dictionary definitions. Under classical Roman law, it is observed due to the ease with which spouses could divorce each other, that the official dictum regarding marriage never meant for it to be permanent (Reynolds, 2001:9).

The Online Etymology Dictionary (2006:1) adds an interesting interpretation to marriage as given by George Bernard Shaw:

“When two people are under the influence of the most violent, most insane, most delusive, and most transient of passions, they are required to swear that they will remain in that excited, abnormal and exhausting condition until death do them part.”

In the 21st century, typically, marriage is the institution through which people join together their lives in emotional and economic ways through forming a household. It often confers rights and obligations with regards to raising children, attaining property, sexual behaviour, kinship ties, tribal membership, emotional intimacy and love (Wikipedia - Marriage, 2006:1). The term *marriage* nowadays is usually reserved for a union that is formally recognized by the state which is why the phrase ‘legally married’ is often used.

Ingoldsby (1995:94) adds a final definition within the post modern context

“Marriage: a culturally approved sexual relationship that often also contains economic and psychological expectations.

Family: a kinship group providing the nurturant socialization of their children (natural or adopted).

3.2.2 Origins

In the first few centuries A.D., there was considerable ambivalence on the part of church leaders towards such subjects as marriage, women and sexuality (Ingoldsby, 1995:44). The early church fathers praised those that did not get married and accorded higher status to virgins and widows than those who were married (Ingoldsby, 1995:44). In 305, the Council of Elvira forbade women to marry non-Catholics and celibacy for church officials was encouraged from 398 onwards (Ingoldsby, 1995:45). Ingoldsby summarizes the situation in the following “the status of women and of marriage declined during the early Christian era. In fact, women and sexuality were associated with evil” (Ingoldsby, 1995:46).

Two considerations led Augustine to posit a spiritual, non-carnal relationship as the essence of marriage and these were: firstly, that he was inclined to suppose that marriage before the fall was a purely spiritual relationship, and that secondly, after a change of mind in the first decade of the fifth century that marriage was no less a marriage when spouses lived together chastely, without sexual congress (Reynolds, 2001: 241). In treatises composed after AD 410, Augustine emphasizes that God made marriage for the sake of procreation and that the proper purpose of marriage now is to provide a remedy for lust (Reynolds, 2001:254), nevertheless, the spiritual aspect still arises when Augustine felt that sexual relationship was not a necessary condition for the existence of marriage (Reynolds, 2001:254).

The Catholic Church in the 12th century formally instituted that marriage was a relationship between a man and a woman, further defined as a sacrament between

three people: God, the husband and the wife. It was through the Protestant Reformation that marriage was further formulated as being a life-long covenant (Wikipedia – Marriage, 2006:1).

3.2.3 Marriage Models or Structures

Davidson & Moore (1996:5) observe that one of the major controversies in the field of family science is whether marriage and family, as we know them, will become extinct. What fuels the debate is that the number of divorces has more than doubled since the 1970s and both first marriages and remarriage rates have declined throughout the ensuing years. Other considerations become a factor, such as how the women's movement and continuing changing gender identities further influence women's and men's roles in the spouse and parent relationship and as more and more men and women receive tertiary education, how does this affect the likelihood of marrying, parenting and/or divorcing? (Davidson & Moore, 1996:6). Browning (2001:3) is concerned about modernization and the effects that are evidenced in families, as this force of modernization is changing families and undermining their ability to perform their customary tasks. Most social scientists are ready to acknowledge this cost to society as a whole and it would seem that most scientists feel that very little can be done to alter the inevitable consequences (Browning, 2001:4).

According to Goode "all Western and non-Western societies are becoming 'high divorce' societies", and furthermore cohabitation and out-of-wedlock births have dramatically increased in all Western societies. South Africa was included in his list of Westernized societies (cf Browning, 2003:7).

From a South African perspective, a white paper was written in 1997 regarding the general conditions in communities, which impacted upon families: "The majority of South African families and children live in unhealthy, unsafe, disadvantaged communities. Overcrowding, a lack of housing and basic amenities such as sanitation and recreational facilities, and a lack of public transport have serious consequences

for the stability and security of families Families are faced with many new demands and challenges as they attempt to meet the needs of their members” (White Paper, 1997:1). This paper stated that internal family problems incorporated some of the following: problems with drug abuse, marital conflict, lack of preparation for marriage, remarriage and family life, parenting problems and a lack of family and community support networks (White Paper. 1997:1).

It would appear that, as mankind has come into the 21st century, diverse marriage models have surfaced as man has taken his eyes of the principles and precepts of God. The researcher believes that it necessary to explore some of these modes or models of marriage that have been and are being practiced, to gain an understanding of the origins of blended families in today’s society.

Ingoldsby (1995:133) has drawn up the following table for better understanding of some of these marriage models.

Marital type	Husbands	Wives
Monogamy	One	One
Polygyny	One	Two or more
Polyandry	Two or more	One
Cenogamy	Two or more	Two or more

3.2.3.1 Monogamy

As discussed in depth in chapter two, the origins of marriage come from the Jewish tradition, from the inception of the Old Testament. This model of marriage has been followed primarily by Judaism and Christianity alike. In the Christian tradition, a “one man one woman” model of marriage was advocated by Saint Augustine in 354-439 A.D. He wrote against the practice of polygamy and in fact Emperor Justinian in 534 A.D. used the influence of Augustine’s letters to criminalize all but monogamous sex between husbands and wives within the confines of the marriage context (Wikipedia - Marriage, 2006:1). It is within this model that Christianity has insisted on monogamy

as an essential part of marriage. In Western societies nowadays, marriage and therefore family is associated with monogamy, yet it is not necessarily the most common type of marriage style in the world as a whole, as a study done by Murdock in 1949 (cf. Giddens, 1993:392) found that out of 565 societies, polygamy was permitted in 80 percent of them. (Giddens, 1993:392). Although this study shows a permission of polygamy it is observed that it does not necessarily say that 'only' polygamy is practised.

3.2.3.1.1 Serial monogamy

In the present century, within the western societies, divorce and remarriage are easily undertaken. It is within these structures that another practice has surfaced which has been called 'serial monogamy'. This practice allows couples to enter into successive marriages over time. Serial monogamy also describes the situation where couples cohabit without getting married so that it would appear that the very essence of monogamy which inferred one partner 'for life' has been replaced by a model of multiple partners, committed to each other for a season of time (Wikipedia - Marriage, 2006:1).

3.2.3.2 Polygamy

Polygamy describes any type of marriage which allows a husband or wife to have more than one spouse. There are two types of polygamy: *polygyny*, in which a man may be married to more than one woman at the same time and *polyandry*, (which is less common), in which a woman may have two or more husbands simultaneously (Giddens, 1993:392). Within the present day scenario most existing societies do not allow polygamy and in the societies where polygamy is still observed, having many wives is usually considered a sign of wealth. In China, the government shifted from allowing polygamy to continue by supporting only monogamous marriages. Although some African and Islamic cultures allow polygamy, and the Qur'an in chapter 4 allows a man four wives in certain circumstances, less than 3% of Muslim marriages are

polygamous which seems to imply that monogamy is the favoured marriage model world-wide (Wikipedia - Marriage, 2001:1-2).

3.2.3.3 Polygyny

Most men in polygynous societies in fact only have one wife. The right to have several wives is often limited to individuals of high status or where the sex ratio and economic factors keep polygyny in check. Co-wives are frequently known as co-operative and friendly within these polygynous families but their situation is often one that can lead to rivalry and tension (Giddens, 1993:393). There are structures that are often put in place to try and ensure an easing of discord and in some societies the senior wife or wives are given more authority over the family than the junior wives (Giddens, 1993:393).

3.2.3.4 Polyandry and Polyamory

Polyandry is the practice of one woman taking on multiple husbands and although this only occurs nowadays in a few isolated tribal societies, it has occurred throughout history, as in the case of the Spartans, who practised 'adelphic polyandry' which is the practice of marrying biological brothers (Wikipedia - Marriage, 2006:2). In today's world there are evidences of polyandry being practiced in small villages in India by a pastoral tribe called the Todas. When a Todas woman marries a man, she automatically becomes married to all his brothers, even those who are not born yet (Ingoldsby, 1995:125). In addition to permitting woman to marry multiple husbands, many of these societies allow the husbands to marry additional wives under various circumstances, resulting in group marriage (Ingoldsby, 1995:124). Polyandry creates a situation absent in polygyny and that is that the biological father of the child is usually not known. It would seem that polyandry is only practised in societies who live in extreme poverty and in which female infanticide is practised (Giddens, 1993:393).

In modern days, some married people practise various forms of consensual non-monogamy (called polyamory) by permitting other intimate relationships or sexual

partners into the marriage which gives the impression that the concept of marriage does not necessarily hinge on sexual or emotional monogamy (Wikipedia - Marriage, 2006:1), and as is observed by the researcher, has made a mockery of the original plan of marriage ordained by God.

3.2.3.5 Cenogamy

This is a structure which is described as a group marriage where the husband and wives all share the same spouses. Stephens in 1963 mentioned two groups that he considered marginal and those were the Siriono of Bolivia and the Reindeer Chukchee who both practised a form of cenogamy. Another description of cenogamy has been called sexual hospitality (cf Ingoldsby, 1995:132). Usually within this practice all the participants know each other and share the same residence (Ingoldsby, 1995:125), and it would seem that this particular model has been used within various cultic and religious movements. An example of this was observed in the 1800s, in Vermont, where the Oneida Community practiced 'economic communism' in which all things were held in common, including sexual partners (Ingoldsby, 1995:133).

In the present day certain marital structures have become more widely practised and are discussed follows:

3.2.3.6 Same-sex marriage

This is usually described as a marriage between two people who are of the same sex (i.e. man and man, woman and woman). There have been various terms used to describe these marriages, and amongst them is: 'civil marriage', gender-neutral marriage' and 'equal marriage' and the most well known universally is the 'gay marriage'. The term 'civil' is used to emphasize the fact that these marriages are civilly based and not religiously based. Since the 1990s there have been ongoing debates and efforts to legalize or to ban same-sex marriages and so far same-sex

marriages are recognized in the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain and Canada, and some states of the United States of America (Wikipedia - Same-sex, 2006:1).

3.2.3.6.1 South Africa

On December 1st 2005, South Africa's Constitutional Court extended marriage to include same-sex couples (Wikipedia - same-sex, 2006:1) and this became officially legal on the 30th November 2006, when the Civil Unions Bill was enacted after having been passed by the South African Parliament earlier that month. South Africa became the fifth country and the first in Africa to legalize same sex marriages (Answers.com, 2007:1). Nullis (Washingtonpost.com, 2007:1) says "that gay rights groups welcomes the law, although they criticized provisions allowing clergy and civil marriage officers to turn away gay couples for reasons of conscience". As the researcher observes we have come a long way from God's ideal for marriage.

3.2.3.7 Common-law marriages

There seems to be an overlap between cohabitation and common law marriages. Cohabitation is sometimes entered into as a basis for a 'trial marriage' in which a couple live together for a set length of time before making any final commitment to each other. At the end of the set length of time the decision is made to separate or to get married. The thought of an eventual commitment to marriage lies at the heart of this undertaking. Common law marriage eventually comes to place when a couple decides that they were going to live together, without being formally married (Wallechinsky & Wallace, 2006:2). The essential points according to Wallechinsky & Wallace, (2006:2).that distinguish a common law marriage from a legal marriage are the following:

- Common law marriages are not licensed by governmental authorities and there is no public record of a common law marriage, e.g. there is no marriage certificate. These marriages are also not blessed by religious authorities and are not solemnized.

- Cohabitation alone does not amount to common law marriage as the couple in question must commit to each other as husband and wife.

Interestingly enough, the requirements for this type of marriage is the same as for a statutory marriage, as the parties involved must mutually consent to this union, must be of legal age and must have their parent's consent, etc (Wikipedia - Common-law. 2006:1).

3.2.3.8 Cohabitation

Although cohabitation is not officially recognized as a 'marriage' it is becoming more and more popular as the model that many couples are opting for as a precursor for marriage or as an option to marriage. In Britain, In the mid 1960s, only 5% of single women lived with a man before getting married (Cohabitation, 2006:1), whereas nowadays, in the United States about a quarter of unmarried women aged between twenty five and thirty nine are currently living with a partner and an additional quarter have lived with a partner at some time in the past (Facts, 2006:1). In Sweden, at the moment, there are a little over two married couples for every cohabitating couple, and in England, presently, 70% of single women opt to live with their partners, before marriage, which leads to the conclusion that between 50% to 60% of couples who come to be married in first world countries are living together before they get married (Facts, 2006:2). In the U.S. in 2006, there is one cohabitating couple for every twelve married couples and it is estimated that by the year 2010, if the present trend continues there will be one cohabitating couple for every 7 married couples (Facts, 2006:1). It would seem that these statistics are not available in South Africa so therefore the researcher would assume that the situation in this country would not necessarily differ from that of another country. Of course one has to take into consideration in South Africa, how these statistics can change depending upon which cultural group is the focus.

It would seem that there is a greater probability of these relationships breaking up, especially when children are factored into the equation. It is said, that today, more than 20% of children are born to cohabitating couples, yet only one third of these children will remain with both their parents throughout their childhood. Due to the pressures of finance and support issues, the statistics show that these relationships with children are more likely to break up than childless ones (Cohabitation, 2006:2). Studies also show that cohabitation is much more unstable than marriage and correlates with higher divorce rates for couples who do not go on to marry (Browning, 1996:10). The risk of divorce amongst cohabitating couples is seen to be 40 to 85% higher amongst those who have lived together than amongst those who did not live together (Bumpass in Facts, 2006:3). This implies that those who live together before marriage are almost twice as likely to divorce than those who did not.

Step families are formed within these situations when one parent is divorced and then lives in another cohabitating relationship. The children live within an informal 'step-family' where the other parent has no biological or legal tie to the child, and unfortunately there then develops a potential for physical and sexual abuse and child killing (Cohabitation, 2006: 3). Once again it would appear that children become the innocent victims of wrong choices. So insecure are some of these arrangements that statistics show us that young men living in these step families are more likely to become serious or persistent law offenders (Cohabitation, 2006:3).

3.2.2.9 Marital Status in South Africa

Most of these marriage models are evidenced in South African society. The following statistics are available from 2003 from Statistics South Africa and give an indication in percentages of the marital status of South Africans over the age of 20 (Statistics South Africa, 2006). Unfortunately there are no recent updates (see 3.3.5) on this particular information.

Status	Percentage
Never married	39.46
Married: Civil	28.78
Married: Traditional	12.11
Married: Polygamous	0.10
Living together	9.12
Widowed	7.04
Separated	1.22
Divorced	2.16
TOTAL	100.00

3.2.4 Family structures within these models

In virtually all societies sociologists and anthropologists have identified the *nuclear family* – which consists of two adults living together in a household with their own or adopted children (Giddens, 1993:391) (cf Ingoldsby, 1995:84). Where kin other than a married couple and children live either in the same household or in close and continuous contact, this is called an *extended family* up (Giddens, 1993:392) (cf Goldenberg, 2006:5). This usually describes a group of three or more generations living together. Whether they are extended or nuclear, families can be divided into families of

- *Orientation*. The family into which the person is born, and
- *Procreation*. The family into which the individual enters as an adult and within which a new generation of children is brought up (Giddens, 1993:392).

Where the couple moves to live with the bride's parents this is called a *matrilocal* arrangement and where the couple moves to be with the parents of the groom this is called a *patrilocal* arrangement (Giddens, 1993:392).

Families are organizationally complex emotional systems. Affection, loyalty and a continuity is found to be a characteristic of all families, and regardless of format (be they *nuclear* families or *stepfamilies*), most families are typically resistant to change and are likely to try and engage in corrective manoeuvres to re-establish family interactive patterns caused by conflict and crisis (Goldenberg, 2006:5).

Embedded in society, the family is shaped by a multitude of factors, such as: its place and time in history, race, ethnicity, social class membership, religious affiliation and so on. The way it functions, establishes rules, communicates and negotiates between members, has numerous implications for the development and well-being of members. Gender, cultural background and social class also play an important part in expectations and roles found within the family system (Goldenberg, 2006:21). Family rules are typically developed to outline and allocate the roles and functions of members within the family structure and after a period of time, patterns for negotiating or arranging their lives are usually developed to maximize harmony and predictability.

Goldenberg (2006:34) observes that Americans live in a pluralistic society that is in itself undergoing dramatic changes in family structure, she adds “from a contemporary perspective, it no longer makes sense to refer to what is ‘typical’ when speaking of “the American family”. The high divorce rate, the surge of women into the workforce (cf Giddens, 1993:402) and the greater prevalence of single-parent-led as well as remarried families have all added to diversity in the marriage structure. Barrett and MacIntosh go as far as to say that there is simply no such thing as *the family* (cf. Jagger, 1999:3) because of the fact that families and family are flexible, fluid and contingent, and encompass a whole variety of historically and culturally specific types of domestic arrangements and kinship systems (Jagger & Wright, 1999:3).

Jagger & Wright (1999:34) made a further observation: “as we enter the 21st century, because the family does not and cannot exist outside social, cultural and economic

will not stand still as the rest of the world changes. Far from being at risk of extinction, it will continue to be transformed by new family values”.

3.3 DIVORCE

Hayman (2001, viii) has observed that two in five marriages end in divorce and says that by the year 2010 it is predicted that cohabitation, marriage, divorce and remarriage will become the normal pattern of family formation. In the following section the researcher will examine the area of divorce, as it is more often than not the precursor to the problems found in blended families.

3.3.1 Definitions of Divorce

Divorce in the Biblical sense has been aptly described as “separation from that which God ordained” (Heyns & Pietserse, 1991:39) and as mentioned earlier in 2.4 that the concept of divorce has in it the idea of the severing of the covenantal relationship that previously existed (Adams, 1982:32). Within the modern day context varying definitions are found. The Columbia Encyclopedia (TCE, 2006:1) speaks about divorce as being ‘the partial or total dissolution of a marriage by the judgment of a court’ (cf OEDO, 2007:1). It goes on to qualify what *partial dissolution* is by stating that this means that both parties remain married whilst cohabitation is forbidden. Encarta (2006:1) defines *divorce* as the ending of a marriage by an official decision in a court of law which seemingly indicates that it is only considered a divorce if the marriage relationship is severed from a legal aspect and not a religious aspect. Divorce or the dissolution of marriage can also be defined as the “ending of a marriage before the death of either spouse” (Wikipedia - Divorce, 2006:1).

3.3.2 Origins of Divorce

As discussed earlier in Chapter 2 we see that divorce was already being practiced in the days of the patriarchs. These laws regarding divorce have followed through into the present day particularly in religious settings. Christianity has had no greater practical effect on the life of mankind than its belief that marriage is no mere civil

contract, but a vow in the sight of God binding the parties by obligations of conscience above and beyond those of civil law (Love to Know, 2003:1).

The history of divorce in the context of the modern world is said to start with the law of Rome which based its focus on the power of the head of the family over its members, which entered deeply into the practice of ancient Rome. The wife was transferred at marriage to the authority of her husband and became so subject to him that he could renounce his rule over her and terminate his companionship with her. The husband's power was derived from the father of the bride who still had authority over his daughter to the extent that he could actually take his daughter from her husband against the wishes of both. In these times the *'paterfamilias'* could create a divorce between his child, and a daughter or son-in-law, although Treggiari (1991) says it seems doubtful that it was socially acceptable by 1st century B.C. for a marriage to be invalidated by a naked exercise of *'patria potestas'*. It is observed that the community was so shocked by the inhumane treatment of wives that it fought against the unwarranted use of power, and it was subsequently stated under the rule of Romulus, that wives were not to be repudiated unless found guilty of adultery or of drinking wine. (Love to know, 2003: 1). In pagan Rome, the term *divorce*, (*divortium*, from *divertere*, *divortere*, "to separate") was employed for the mutual separation of married people. It is not clear whether or not this included the dissolution of the marriage bond, or only meant a limited divorce, which indicated the cessation of 'common life' (separation from bed and board) (CE, 2007:1), or otherwise known in English law as "*divorce a mensa et thoro*" (OEDO, 2007:1).

3.3.3 Grounds for divorce

In A.D. 331, in an attempt to equalize the power play between husband and wife, the legislation of Constantine specified certain causes for which divorce could take place without penalties, and then stipulated three causes for a wife to divorce her husband: (1) murder, (2) preparation of poisons, and (3) violation of tombs. If she divorced him for any other reasons, for example: drunkenness, gambling or immorality, she

forfeited her marriage dowry and incurred further penalties. There were also three causes for a husband to seek divorce and that was: (1) Adultery, (2) Preparation of poisons, and (3) Acting as a procuress. If he divorced her for any other reason, he forfeited any interest in her dowry, and if he married again, the first wife could take the dowry of the second (Love to know, 2006:2).

In A.D. 449, the law changed to include 12 reasons why the wife could divorce her husband: treason, adultery, homicide, poisoning, forgery, violating tombs, stealing from a church, robbery, cattle-stealing, attempting to take his wife's life, beating his wife, and introducing immoral women into his house. A husband could divorce his wife for the above reasons as well as three others: going to dine with other men against the wish of her husband, going from home at night against his wish, and frequenting the circus, theatre or amphitheater if it was against his wishes. It would seem that the above legislation was an attempt to put men and women on an equal footing in regard to divorce, and it was also an attempt to curtail remarriage and focus on the contract of marriage (Love to know, 2006:3).

In the 21st century context, in the U.S.A. whilst the 'no fault' divorce (neither party is expected to prove the spouse the 'guilty party' in the marriage) has become increasingly common, there are still many cases where marital partners seek to establish fault and where the most common grounds for divorce are adultery, desertion and physical or mental cruelty. Habitual drunkenness, incurable mental illness, conviction of a crime, non-support or constructive abandonment have also become other grounds for divorce (TCE, 2005:2).

3.3.4 Why divorce is becoming more common

Both Giddens in 1993 and Davidson & Moore in 1996 observed that the increased frequency of divorce was to do with several factors, and particularly to do with wider social changes in the area of values:

- Except for a few exceptions, marriage today no longer has much connection with the desire to perpetuate property and status from generation to generation (Giddens, 1993:405).
- As women become more economically independent, marriage is less of a necessary economic partnership than it used to be (Giddens, 1993:405).
- The shift in female and male roles has also fostered changing values. Previously taboo behaviour such as women going into single bars, initiating opposite sex relationships and sharing the expenses of dating, women in the work place, single parenting by choice and one child families all contribute to a shift in values related to the family (Davidson & Moore, 1996:32).
- Greater prosperity means that it becomes easier to establish another household, in the case of a marriage separation (Giddens, 1993:405).
- A further factor is the growing tendency to evaluate marriage in terms of the levels of satisfaction it offers – the rising rate of divorce seems to indicate a general dissatisfaction with marriage (Giddens, 1993:405).
- “Permissiveness-with-affection” has led to a greater percentage of single individuals participating in sexual intercourse at earlier ages. Such behaviour has precipitated a myriad personal and social problems e.g. teenage pregnancies, abortions etc (Davidson & Moore, 1996:32).

3.3.5 Divorce Statistics in South Africa

In the Daily News, in South Africa, in 1990, an article quoted that “73 percent of children living in South Africa come from broken homes; and 150 000 children have been affected by divorce in the last four years” (Tittley, 2006:1). It would appear that even a decade ago divorce featured prominently in this country. As this was prior to the democratic situation in South Africa a more recent census from the year 2003 is featured below. According to Statistics South Africa (2006:1-2), up until August 2005, the key findings regarding divorce across population groups were as follows:

	Total	Whites	African	Coloured	Asian/Indian
Total No. Official Recorded divorces – 2002	31 370				
2003	28 587				
Divorces by population groups		11 890	6 637	3 394	1 486
Divorces by age by population group	All pop. Groups highest incidences ages 25-54	Highest incidences between 30 – 34 Divorces amongst whites remains the highest no. of divorces in all groups in which marriage was solemnized in a religious ceremony	Highest incidence between 40 - 44		
Minor Children involved in 2003	33 424				
Incidences of divorce	Mainly common among couples married for 5 – 9 years				

The Statistician General in South Africa adds the following to the above findings: "Undocumented cases of abandonment do not appear in the statistics nor does divorces that have been granted by religious or traditional authorities outside the civil courts" (2005:3). The report following the key findings suggests that the above findings exclude customary, traditional marriages and certain religious rites, especially that of Islamic marriages.

Particularly pertinent to the purpose of this study is the finding regarding 'divorce and minor children involved'. In this country alone, in 2003, there were approximately 34 thousand minor children put into a compromising situation between two parents in conflict. This study deals only with minor children, yet there would seem to be many other older children who have had to also be part of a divided family.

3.3.6 Divorce and its impact on the child

Divorce is a sequence of events that involve a transitional phase in the lives of many children. Swart, in 'Marriage and Family Life in South Africa' (1997:119) maintains that this phase usually includes the following three stages: (1) family before and during the divorce, (2) experimenting with coping mechanism after the divorce and the separation from the other parent, and (3) reorganizing their lives in the single-parented family. The child experiences the changes in the following ways, firstly, by losing a parent, because the lack of income demands a further job; secondly, the child is often caught between two parents and develops divided loyalties; thirdly, some children find the intermittent fathering too painful and so therefore withdraw; and fourthly, the child has to adapt to a relationship that is mainly a mother-child relationship (Swart, 1997:121-122). Evidence indicates that children adjust better to divorce when their parents are less hostile and conflictual toward each other, use effective child rearing and discipline practices and continue to maintain positive relationships with their children. In addition children from these homes are found to have better emotional and behavioural adjustment after separation (Davidson & Moore, 1996:685).

Clapp (2000:84) asked the question "Would it be better to stay together for the children sake?" and gave the following research findings:

- Most of the problems found in children from divorced families (and attributed to divorce) can be identified in the children several years *prior* to the divorce, probably due to the conflict in the family.

- If the divorce ends the conflict, then the child's adjustment improves with divorce.
- Children from conflict-free divorced families are better off than children in conflict-ridden intact families
- Continued parental conflict is more damaging to children who have gone through divorce than for children who remain in intact families.

This research has led mental health professionals to conclude that divorce could provide a better environment for children if the parental conflict ends.

3.3.7 Psychological implications of divorce for the children of divorced couples

McCall (in Viljoen & Smith, 1997:42) observed that children may display emotional stress through a variety of nervous behavioural patterns. Pre-school children are often seen to have nightmares, temper tantrums, bedwetting episodes and unusual fears. The older child can also suffer from nightmares as well as excessive moodiness, headaches and stomach aches, whilst teenagers have academic and behavioural problems at school (Viljoen & Smith, 1997:43).

Clapp (2000:86) wrote that "divorce places children at greater risk of developing emotional problems, long-term behavioural problems, academic difficulties and problems with heterosexual relationships during adolescence and young adulthood".

In the 1980s, in South Africa, Little (cf Viljoen & Smith, 1997:43) identified five patterns of behaviour that developed over a period of time after a divorce, ranging from the least to the most traumatized. These particular patterns determined the decisions made regarding custody of the children and can be catergorised as follows:

- Stabilizer. In this pattern the child enjoys the support of both parents before and after divorce. These children are the least disturbed by the divorce.
- Competitor. The maternal custodial placement
- Obstacle. The paternal custodial placement

Both these patterns show a child protected by one parent, whilst the second parent, although not living with the child, continues to care and to contribute some support and attention.

- The most difficult patterns are the roles of hostage (uncommitted parenting pattern) and caretaker (split parenting pattern). The children are caught between two warring parents and become involved in the ensuing tension and conflict. The result is that the child has very little emotional security with either of the parents and becomes a hostage or pawn in the marital battle. Sometime there is an imbalance of power between two parents and the child is often caught in a caretaker situation having to provide a protective role for this parent whilst living with the other parent. This particular pattern can cause a split within the child, which reflects an inner confusion and ambivalence – expressions of fierce loyalty versus anger and rebellion.

In the last two patterns the child becomes the battlefield and all the marital tensions and hostility become lodged within him or her (Viljoen & Smith, 1997:43-44).

3.3.8 Areas of conflict within the divorce scenario

One of the major areas of conflict within the family focuses around children. As Hayman (2001:15) observes there are often bitter fights and conflict regarding children, particularly in the areas of access, upbringing and or about money. These fights can be ongoing for months or years, with as she says “both parties being able to give convincing explanations as to why they are doing what they are doing, and feeling what they are feeling”. She maintains that it is because both parties try desperately to keep control, with money, yet again, being used to maintain control over the other.

3.3.9 Single parenting families

It would seem that divorce has become one of the major contributors towards the inception of single parented families. In the US alone there are: 11.9 million single

parents, of whom there are 9.8 million single mothers, and 2.1 million single fathers, which shows an increase of 25% over the past three years. The number of children living within a divorced or separated single parented family is as follows: 38% living with a divorced parent and 19% living with a separated parent (Single Parent Central, 2006:1).

3.4 REMARRIAGE

The researcher notes that statistics for divorce are on the increase all the time and blended families are fast becoming the acceptable norm in society. Society's view of what the norm is regarding the blended family has seemingly changed over the years. What was viewed as the traditional norm (two parents involved in only one marriage, with their own children) has in part made way for the new 'acceptable' norm. The nuclear family is no longer the typical American family in the States as observed by Berger (1998:3), and Visher and Visher went as far as to predict that in the year 2010, stepfamilies would be the predominant family structure in America (in Berger, 1998:3). Hayman (1999:199) observed in 2001 as many as one in three people in the UK were involved in some sort of second family. Comparative studies to the UK census found that in the States the findings suggested 11 percent of married couples with dependent children were in blended families and 16 percent of all children still living at home had a step father or mother (Hayman, 1999:201).

3.4.1 Definitions of the Blended or Stepfamily

The word 'step' comes from an old English word meaning orphan – 'steop'. In those days a stepfather or mother was someone who married a widower or widow and took over the role of parenting their motherless or fatherless children (Hayman, 2001:13) The Stepfamily Association defines a stepfamily as "a household in which there is an adult couple, at least one of whom has a child from a previous relationship" (Kelley, 1995:2). This is a broad enough definition to include those who have primary custody and those who do not, couples who are married and couples who are not, couples

who are a man and a woman as well as same sex couples, couples with one biological parent or two, and couples where the parents have been divorced, widowed or are not previously married (Kelley, 1995:2).

Robinson (1991:123) classifies stepfamilies under the following categories:

- *Legitimizing*, where the biological parent had not previously been married and the children were illegitimate,
- *Revitalised*, where the biological parent has remarried following the death of the other natural parent,
- *Reassembled*, where one or both parents have been divorced, and the biological parent brings into the family a stepparent who had not previously had children, and
- *A combination*, where both parents have been previously married and have children from their first marriages, who may or may not live with the stepfamily full-time.

3.4.2 The Blended or Step family structure

Structurally, remarriage and consequent step family life is complex because of the variety of parental figures, siblings and extended family that are involved in current as well as previous marriages (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2006:42). A further system is created as an off shoot of the remarried system and that is the 'metafamily' system which is composed of the remarried family, plus former spouses, grandparents, step-grandparents, aunts, uncles and others who may a significant part to play in the remarried system (Goldenberg, 2002:175). Visher refers to this complexity of stepfamilies as the remarried family's suprafamily system (cf Berger, 1998:20).

In 1981, Wald (cf. Robinson, 1991:123) classified that there were fifteen different combinations regarding children and parents as a result of prior unions of either the husband or wife, but according to the British organisation 'Stepfamily', there are at least 72 different forms of step-families, depending upon "whether or not the adults

are single, widowed, divorced or separated, or whether you have children from a previous marriage, no children or children within a present blended marriage” This ratio can also include people who have had previous marriages; relationships, and who are from heterosexual backgrounds as well as people involved in homosexual relationships (Hayman, 2001:220).

Goldenberg (2002:168) puts remarried families into three main structures:

- Those in which the wife becomes a stepmother,
- Those in which the husband becomes a stepfather, and
- Those in which both become stepparents.

In 1975, Bohannon (Berger, 1998:20) calculated eight possible dyadic relationships in a nuclear family, for example: mother-son, father-daughter and so forth, to a possible twenty-two dyadic relationships in a remarried family with ONE remarriage.

Within the secular arena nowadays, step families are regarded as the normal and natural family to be which is encapsulated in these thoughts by Hayman (1999:226) who suggests that the motto for stepfamilies should be: “You are not alone. Blended families are just as normal as any other type of family and just as natural”. Goldenberg (2002:165) agrees and says that the social revolution of the 60s contributed to a jump in divorce, single parenthood and remarriage which made step-families a normative family forum.

3.4.3 Statistics regarding divorce of remarried families

For most divorced people, single life is fairly short-lived, with the median interval before remarriage for previously divorced men being 2.3 years and for divorced women 2.5 years (Goldenberg, 2002:166). The statistics seem to infer that almost 30% of divorced persons marry within 12 months of becoming divorced, suggesting shorter courtships with their future partners (Goldenberg, 2002:166) and the desire to start again despite a previous divorce. Samuel Johnson (in Berger, 1998:1) once said

“Remarriage is the triumph of hope over experience” Unfortunately despite this the divorce rate for remarriage is found to be 10% higher than that for first marriages, and more than 25% of remarriages never make it past their fifth year (Clapp, 2000:308).

The following observations regarding divorce and stepfamilies in Britain are found:

- 75% of divorced men and 66% of divorced women remarry
- Remarriage with *children in the home from a previous marriage* have a 50% higher casualty rate than those without
- More than 25% of remarriages end within five years. *The rate is higher for families with children from a prior marriage*
- Among men and women who do not remarry, *cohabitation* rates are high
- When stepfamilies are redefined to include cohabitating couples, the percentage of children living in stepfamilies increases by 30% (Hethering, Bridges, Isabelle in Clapp, 2000:308).

The researcher has highlighted points one and two as being pertinent to this study.

In 1987, Jacobsen & Gurman (in Sager, 1987:321) made the observation that ‘currently 75% of divorced women and 83% of divorced men remarry’ and the question arises ‘why such a discrepancy between this statistic and the statistic present in point one in the paragraph above? It would seem that cohabitation might well have become one of the ‘norms’ of today’s society compared to the 1980s which could well indicate why the percentages differ.

3.4.4 Issues typical of the remarried family

It would appear that the world we live in today, has accepted marriage in its various forms, divorce has become common place and subsequent marriages are commonplace but what has now transpired is the fact that over time these ‘subsequent’ alliances are not turning out as ideal as initially planned.

Psychology Today printed an article in 2000 by Hara Marano (2000:1) headed "Don't even think of remarrying until you read this!". He observed "If our optimism steers us into marriage, it goes into overdrive with remarriage. Despite the disappointment and the pain trod in the disruption of divorce, most of us opt to get back on the horse. An astonishing 75% of the broken-hearted get married all over again. And if you count among the remarried those who merge lives and households with legal ratification, the de facto remarriage rate is even higher" and yet as he adds: "a whopping 60% of remarriages fail. In fact after an average of just 10 years, 37% of remarriages have dissolved versus 30% of first marriages (Marano, 2000:1).

Nancy Recker (2006:1), assistant Professor at Ohio State University states that there are very specific problems associated with couples who consider marriage for a second time, she says that:

- (1) Compared to first marriages, the studies reveal that remarriage tends to include more individuals who might well have personality characteristics that increase the likelihood for divorce (e.g. impulsivity, neuroticism).
- (2) Remarriages often lack the social support that first time marriages receive.
- (3) More remarried couples opt for divorce as a vehicle for ending marital problems than do couples in first marriages.
- (4) Most couples in remarriages have not learned to successfully resolve marital differences.

3.4.5 Theories on the high failure rate of second marriages

From the 1980s until the present day several theories have been put forth considering the causality of divorce within second marriages. In the 1980s Virginia Clemente (1982:84-86) put forward some factors which she believed influenced second marriages to end in divorce and which are still pertinent for today:

- *Mobility*

Children are often separated from their non-custodial parents and if this parent becomes married and is forced to move to another city the separation issues

become worse as both parties have to deal with separation and loss, which in turn places stress on the present marriage.

- *Inward Family Pressure*

There are continued inward pressures and expectations on the family in regards to family roles. These expectations can cause immense stress within the remarriage situation.

- *Economic Inflation*

Economic inflation factors in a major way towards the break up of second marriages. When a second marriage has to be catered to, it takes far more money to keep the previous family going as well as the present one. Both parents might be required to work full time and this adds stress to the adjustment of trying to meet all the needs within the family.

- *Women's liberation*

Many women decide that there is too much responsibility within the second marriage, and because of extra burdens, leave the marriage.

- *Permanence and commitment*

In society today, there seems to be a decline in the concept of commitment. Many people fail to look at the responsibilities tied to the word commitment.

- *Work*

Most couples do not seem to realize that a successful marriage requires 'work'. It is vitally important to have the backing of support groups in times of need.

- *Romantic Love*

Most couples going into a second marriage fail to deal with reality. Once the romantic feeling has gone and boredom sets in, often couples do not have the strength to work through the issues.

- *Deferred Gratification*

There are many times within the context of the second marriage that the desires and the needs of the husband and wife have to be postponed because of the needs of the children. There might well be attitudes from the parents of 'want it now' and because of all the demands upon them these desires might well have to

be placed on the back burner. If there is no balance within the family then anger and resentment can prevail which can increase the likelihood of divorce.

In 1987, Sager (1987:321) added to the above with some further insights. He said:

1. If both partners have come out of a previous marriage which has left scars, caveats and bonds, this will affect them in their second marriage.
2. More likely than not, if the couple have started their married life with an instant family, this will cause the couple to have very little time to consolidate their marriage before dealing with the immediate presence of children and their care. Remarriage with children is definitely a very difficult undertaking.
3. In some cases, the former spouse may present problems for the newly remarried couple.
4. Children who have only one biological parent in the remarried family find adaptation difficult because of not having a life long history with the stepparent.

Berger (1998:14) devised a further two models that are generally used to explain the pattern of divorce within a second marriage.

The Institutional Model

According to this model, the lack of adequate social norms to regulate behaviours in stepfamilies leads to stress and uncertainty and eventually makes them particularly vulnerable to dissolution. This model has also been criticized by recent studies that suggest that remarriage and stepfamilies are not necessarily associated with more frequent marital conflict (MacDonald, in Berger, 1998:14).

The Processual Model

This model says that it is more difficult to achieve solid "family culture" which is essential for marital stability, because of the fact that "baggage" is carried in from the previous marriage.

Finally, Goldenberg & Goldenberg (2006:43) maintain that adaptation to a second marriage becomes even more complex when spouses come from different cultural backgrounds or different individual life cycles. They give an example of an older man with adult children marrying a young woman with no children or perhaps small children. Fear and anxiety set in as a family that has had previously to adjust to a single parent home now has to deal with new relationships and a new family. They say that there may be difficulties in assuming parental roles with step children, rivalries and jealousies can also develop between step children and competition between the step mother and real mother may occur (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2006:44).

3.4.6 Integration

In 1991, Margaret Robinson (1991:115) concluded that the integration of a stepfamily into a functioning family system can take years, rather than months, and can depend on many factors "Amongst the most significant are the age and sex of the children at the time the stepfamily is formed and the type of stepfamily". She maintains the minimum time for integration is generally considered to be two years and for some families integration is often not achieved before the step children leave home. Goldenberg & Goldenberg (2006:44) agree with this and say that the process is likely to take several years before full step family integration is achieved and those that demand "instant love" are likely to end up feeling frustrated and rejected.

3.5 CONFLICT WITHIN THE BLENDED FAMILY

For the purpose of this study, the researcher feels that it is imperative to examine some of the causes for conflict found within the *blended* family by investigating some of the findings of research done in this area over the past few years. According to Pino (1996:4) there are unique problems typical to blended families that elicit conflict within these families, and these problems surface over some of the following:

- Step-parent authority;

- Angry stepchildren;
- Stepsibling relationships; and
- Extended stepfamily relationships (for example, step-grandparents).

3.5.1 Handling change

De'Ath (1996:80) pinpointed that in addressing specific issues family researchers have identified an increasing range of different factors that in part explain the differences in outcomes between children living in different forms of family households and that what is clear is that family change, resulting from death, separation, divorce and remarriage of parents is distressing for children, particularly when accompanied by socioeconomic stress and conflict. The potential for conflict in managing change, discipline and boundaries where children are members of two households, the difficulties of developing and sustaining numerous relationships and the multiple parenting roles all add to a fragile stepfamily structure (De'Ath, 1996:82).

Berger (1998:45) adds to this by observing that family members in a remarriage situation have to often adjust to multiple roles simultaneously. She observes that as an example, a mother of two young children may have to instantaneously become a wife, a mother of four adult children, an aunt and even a grandmother. An only child may become the middle child of five and the youngest may become an older brother. "These recurrent upsets cause confusion and bewilderment, especially for children because they feel they have no control over what is happening in their lives", the result she says is "they often blame the stepparent for the situation, since they are afraid to risk an additional experience of abandonment by blaming their custodial parent" (Berger, 1998:46)

3.5.2 Intra-household and inter-household conflict

In 1996, Hanson & McLanahan (in McLanahan, 1996:141) conducted research into the area of conflict within the blended family, focusing particularly on *intra-household* conflict (conflict between parents who reside in the same household) and *inter-*

household conflict (conflict between biological parents who reside in different households), and came to the conclusion that children in stepfather households seem to be worse off than those in other households (McLanahan1996:153). The results seem to indicate (1) that these children are exposed to more parental conflict overall than children in other households, and (2) that conflict has similar negative effects on a child's well-being regardless of what household they are from.

3.5.3 Marital conflict

Jenkins (2005:24) indicates that the relationship between marital conflict and child adjustment has been well established, and that marital conflict has been found to be associated with the external as well as internal outcomes in children.

3.5.4 Categories of marital and remarital conflict

The observation is made too that marital quality appears to decline far more quickly in stepfamilies than in first marriages and it would appear that children represent a frequent source of conflict within these marriages (Jenkins, 2005:26). These findings as summarized by Jenkins (2005:31-37) are as follows:

- (1) Partner conflict affects the development of children's behaviour and causes problems within this area. There are three types of partner conflict which were all examined in this study: general partner conflict, arguments about children and exposure to conflict, and it is seemingly the second category that causes the most behavioural problems;
- (2) Children affect the development of partner conflict: and it would appear that within the step family the children's externalized behaviour affected parental argument more so than in the biological family.
- (3) Sibling rivalry also seems to be evidenced within these families as siblings in stepfamilies experience more differential argument and exposure than those in biological families.

3.6 COUNSELLING FOR BLENDED FAMILIES

There would seem to be a variety of counselling programmes for marital conflict but it would appear that there is a lack within the area of remarital counselling. Two premarital/remarital programmes have been investigated by the researcher, they are not based on biblical foundations and are based on experiences drawn from the social sciences and psychology. The findings are as follows.

3.6.1 The Stepfamily Enrichment Program

This particular programme is a multi-couple intervention designed to help stepfamilies successfully negotiate the process of family formation (Michaels, 2000:3). Michaels looks at the fact that stepfamilies are at higher risk than intact families for various problems and observes that early intervention with stepfamilies in their early years has been neglected (2000:3). When she investigated even further she discovered that few programs for remarried couples have ever been developed and found to actually be effective. Michaels conducted a study to evaluate this program and the following results were tabled.

The objectives of this program were incorporated in five two-hour sessions and were

- to normalize the stepfamily experience;
- to understand how stepfamilies develop;
- to strengthen the marital relationship;
- to define and nurture the biological and stepfamily parent – child relationship and
- to focus on the progress made and plans for the future (Michaels, 2000:3-4).

Michaels (2000:10) focused on a few important aspects of this program:

- she found the structure of the program helpful to all participants. The groups experienced a relaxed atmosphere with an open environment conducive to sharing thoughts – they were not judged negatively in any way.

- the topics were salient to those involved and provided perspectives not encountered before.
- each topic was found to build upon the previous topic so that the whole program was experienced as a relational whole.
- by focusing on specific issues, the program allowed participants to discuss personal experiences related to the issue.

Conclusions regarding this program were found to be the following: Most specifically, the stepfamily experience was normalized for the couples involved and they began to create behavioural norms during the group discussions. Couples learnt about the developmental cycle of stepfamily formation and found the programme a useful tool to assess their progress. Participation by both parties in the intervention made a big difference to some and to others the group discussions were held up as influential factors in bringing about change in the marital relationship (Michaels. 2000:12). The researcher has found this programme to have merit especially within the area of group therapy and discussion. Although this programme seemed to have some very positive results, it was conducted on people who were already part of a blended family. Perhaps it would have been useful to have proceeded with a programme like the above before the couples had married.

3.6.2 FOCUS (facilitating open couple communication, understanding and study)

FOCUS is a premarital and remarital counselling inventory widely used within the Catholic Church to prepare couples for marriage (Stahman & Hiebert, 1997:130). This inventory has been developed with four goals in mind,

- to provide couples with objective criteria for assessing their relationship;
- to address both contemporary and specialized needs of couples
- to reflect the values and ideals of a sacramental marriage
- to develop an instrument that would be user friendly for counselor and couples alike (Stahman & Hiebert, 1997:130).

Within this premarital inventory, FOCUS has nine items that have been developed specifically for couples entering a marriage in which one or both partners have been previously married (Stahman & Hiebert, 1997:132). The items explore a variety of issues such as dealing with children from previous marriage and the impact that the previous marriage has on the current relationship. Some of the issues addressed are:

- (1) Child support and alimony
- (2) Disciplining of children
- (3) Possible troubles caused by the ex-spouse.

The inventory could be a useful guide for counsellors as it assists with identifying themes both within and across various topic areas. The manual that accompanies the inventory provides the counsellor with added reading and resources for each topic area. This is mainly a pre-marital inventory with very little attention given to remarriage with only 9 items out of 156 focused on blended marriages. Unique problems are experienced in a second marriage and perhaps this very fact calls for more attention.

3.7 PSYCHOLOGY

Within the field of psychology there would appear to be an ongoing tension between practitioners, on the one hand, and both theoreticians and researchers (scientists), on the other (Egan, 1994: xvii). Practitioners will face the immediate and desperate needs of their clients and need to access now that which will help the client to return to normality whereas researchers very often focus on such parts that are not immediately evident. Conflict situations within marriage and remarriage have been treated throughout the years of psychology utilizing various models and theories and the researcher would like to explore some of these theories to ascertain the efficacy of such models

3.7.1 Psychoanalytic Theory

Sigmund Freud devoted most of life formulating his theory of psychoanalysis and it was developed whilst observing in particular his parents at work with their own problems in analysis (Corey, 2004:67). Some of his works in this area include: *Three essays on the theory of sexuality*. (1905/1970), and *Introductory lectures on psychoanalysis : a course of 28 lectures delivered at the University of Vienna*. (1922), This particular approach of psychoanalysis has been widely used and is under continual modification by writers on and practitioners of psychoanalysis (McLeod, 2003:80).

3.7.1.1 Key concepts

The key concepts of Psychoanalytical therapy

Corey (2004:68-69) says that according to Freud our behaviour is determined by irrational forces, unconscious motivations and biological and instinctual drives which evolve through key psychosexual stages during the first 6 years of life.

Instincts are central to this approach and serve the purpose of survival of the individual. Freud also sees the goal of much of life as gaining pleasure and avoiding pain. He attributes aggressive behaviour to death instincts. In Freud's view, both sexual and aggressive drives are powerful determinants of why people act as they do.

Gleitman (1996:527) says that there is also constant conflict between the demands of instinct and of society, but that this war goes on within the individual and usually without his knowledge, and as a result the individual becomes divided against himself and this manifests in irrational behaviour.

McLeod (2003:118) says that a person's problems can often be understood as representing unresolved developmental tasks, for example: separation from the mother/parents. Freud suggested a series of biologically focused stages of development: oral, anal and oedipal, whereas Erikson (a recent writer in psychodynamics) identified more socially orientated stages: trust, autonomy, initiative, industry, identity, intimacy, generativity and integrity, which covered all stages of life.

The underlying theory is that if a person's attachments are disrupted in early life, they will grow up having difficulty in relationships and commitment to other people.

3.7.1.2 Techniques

McLeod (2003:85-86) identified a number of techniques that are used by psychodynamic therapists:

- Psychoanalytical counsellors and therapists tend to deal with their clients in a neutral way. They do not share their own experiences with clients. By being neutral and detached the therapist ensures that the feelings the client has toward him are not caused by anything the therapist has done. The client uses transference to project his images of relationships onto the counsellor, and is then able in turn to understand his relationships with other people.
- The counselor helps the client to identify his own resistances and defense mechanisms in dealing with relationships.
- The intention is to help the client to talk about himself and others without the use of defense mechanisms
- Freud held great importance on dreams and fantasies. He saw the dream as "the royal road to the unconscious" and encouraged clients to verbalize their dreams.
- The therapist will use the above material to interpret the problems. However it is recognized that interpretation can be difficult at times by therapists.

It has been found that this specific model integrated with cognitive behavioural techniques can lead to observable client change (Corey, 2004:86). Basically this theory has developed into a model which accesses past memories and wounds and deals with the anger, guilt and conflict brought about by these memories. If unattended to, these wounds can cause conflict in the present day scenario. This therapy focuses primarily on childhood experiences, which are discussed, reconstructed, interpreted and analyzed. The assumption is, that this exploration is necessary for character change (Corey, 2004:98). Freud recognized that the family

provided the early environment in which neurotic fears and anxieties developed although it is observed that he failed to follow through in identifying how the current relationships helped maintain the problematic behaviour (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2006:129). But as 'A Science Odyssey' (2006) has observed, not only did he influence the professional practice of psychology and psychiatry, but he changed the way people within the western culture viewed themselves and their own lives.

3.7.1.3 Criticisms to the Psychoanalytical approach

1. From a Biblical point of view, Jay Adams (1973:76) is vehemently against this type of approach. He calls this approach the 'Expert Knowledge' approach and says that it is based squarely upon the presupposition that man is not responsible for what he does. He goes on to say that this is a fundamentally non-Christian assumption so therefore the methods used are anti-Christian.
2. The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2006) observes that in general Freud's genius is not in doubt, but the precise nature of his achievement is still the source of much debate. His followers are noted for their zeal to the point of becoming some kind of secular religion, having an initiation process for psychoanalysts, who must first be analyzed. It is often alleged that the unquestioning acceptance of a set of principles becomes an acceptance into the movement – as with most religious groupings.
3. Bowen (in Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2006:129) notes that the psychoanalytical principle of dealing with only one family member (so as not to contaminate the therapist) impeded the earlier growth of the Family therapy movement.
4. Corey (2204, 101) says that time, expense and availability of trained therapists limit the practical applications and that it needs a long term in time commitment.
5. This approach seems to give greater responsibility to mothers for deficiencies and distortions in development.

It would seem to the researcher that the stages mentioned in 3.7.1.1 play an integral part in gaining an understanding into the conflict within marriage. It has been observed by the researcher that the lack of commitment in a client's life has often led to exacerbating issues in a problematic marriage relationship.

3.7.2 The Family Systems Approach

This systematic approach is based on the assumption that the key to changing the individual is: understanding and working with the family (Corey, 2004:8). Several concepts and movements in the field of psychology influenced the evolution of family therapy and shifted the view of life and problems from an individual to a systemic level (Family Therapy, Historical Overview, 2006), the basic assumption being that underpinning all versions of family therapy, is that distress, conflict or maladjusted behaviour of the individual is better understood as something going wrong at a systemic level (McLead, 2003:190). The first institutes for marriage counselling were established in the early 1930's as clinicians recognized the advantages and efficiency of treating married couples in conjoint sessions. Of particular importance were the many studies on marital conflict and the effects on children's development that came out of this type of therapy (Family Therapy, Historical Overview, 2006). This particular therapy is represented by a number of divergent theories and approaches of which the researcher will focus on one in particular called 'The Human Validation Process' model.

3.7.2.1 The 'Human Validation Process' model

Virginia Satir's approach emphasizes communication and emotional experiencing, and stresses the involvement of the therapist with a family (Human validation process, 2006) (cf Webster online, 2006). She wrote her book: *Conjoint family therapy : a guide to theory and technique* in 1978 and in 1983 officially began to emphasize family connection by calling her approach 'conjoint family therapy'. The 'Human Validation Process' model grew out of Satir's mission to release the potential that she saw in every family (Corey, 2004:405).

3.7.2.2 Key concepts

Satir's genuine warmth and caring was evident in her natural inclination to incorporate feelings and compassion into the therapeutic process. She felt that caring and acceptance were integral to and key elements in helping people face their fears and open up their hearts to others. (Family Therapy, Therapist Profile, 2006). Corey (2004:405-409) says that Satir's model stresses enhancement and validation of self-esteem, family rules, congruence versus defensive communication patterns, sculpting, nurturing triads and family mapping, and family life-fact chronologies. It looks at:

- Family Life The transitions that a child makes throughout its life within a family system, often leaves the child with feelings of fear, helplessness and even anger. When a parent feels worried or helpless, they tend to set rules in an attempt to control a situation, and these rules can initially help or assist a child in handling the anger as they can provide a safety net for the child as they enter the world. Unfortunately these rules can also be perceived as absolute and often impossible by the children and they in turn decide whether to accept them or fight against them. Rather than trying to get people to give up survival rules in their lives, Satir assisted them in transforming those that are extreme into something useful. She would suggest than instead of using 'always' and 'never' the range of choice would be broadened which would transform the impossible standard.
- Defensive Stances in coping with Stress or Conflict. When stress, or conflict increase, threatening a breakdown of the family system, Satir observed that members tend to resort to defensive stances which are identified by four universal communication patterns:
 - Placating Family members who use placating behaviours pay the price of sacrificing themselves in an attempt to please others.
 - Blaming People who adopt a blaming posture in conflict will sacrifice others to maintain their view of themselves.
 - Super-reasonable These people strive to live a life governed by principle. In their attempt to avoid humiliation they keep their emotions within a tight check.

Irrelevant behaviour The irrelevant person will be unable to relate to what is going on and because these people are frightened by stress they avoid taking a clear position lest they offend others. Satir shows how people who live in congruency live in this type of stress, and this is by transforming the stress into a challenge and dealing with it in a useful way. Their words match their inner experience and they are able to make clear and direct statements.

- Family roles and family triads Various members assume roles that influence family interaction, for example, Father may take on the role of stern taskmaster, or the mother might take on the role as the hard working caregiver. Satir sees the possibility of the parents forming a nurturing triad with each of the children, with the children forming a place for themselves, with allowance for mistakes and all three engaged in congruent communication. The idea is to build the child's self – esteem whilst being heard, acknowledged and allowed to complain whilst handling situations both in and out of the family system.
- The Goals The goal is to facilitate desired change within the family system and incorporates: Generating hope and courage in the members to bring about new options; to access, strengthen, enhance and generate coping skills and to encourage the family members to exercise options resulting in health and not the mere elimination of symptoms.

Further goals incorporate open communication, whilst individuals honestly report their perceptions; the enhancement of self-esteem; the encouragement of growth, which allows differences to be acknowledged; and the transforming of extreme rules into useful and functional rules (as mentioned earlier), which incorporates the awareness of the fact that families have many spoken and unspoken rules (Psychoanalytic Therapy, 2006:1).

Satir was for many years the only woman to have developed a complete model of family therapy and was concerned with the *personhood* of everyone within this system, men, women and children alike (Corey, 2004:411-412). She argued that

dysfunctional families follow dysfunctional rules and because of this attempted to help families to become aware of those unwritten rules that retard growth and maturity in marriage (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2006:76).

It would seem that above all other therapists, Satir's was the most powerful voice to wholeheartedly support the importance of love and nurturance as being the most important healing aspects of therapy (Family Therapy, Therapist Profile, 2006).

3.7.2.3 Criticisms to the 'Human Validation Process' model

In being caught up with the consideration of systems, therapists have sometimes lost the personal aspect of counselling as they can get lost in the jargon of, e.g. the 'diads', 'triads' as being 'enmeshed' or 'disengaged' etc. Occasionally the family was considered as a machine that had broken down which might involve not viewing the system as people with emotions (Corey, 2004:446).

A positive aspect of this approach was the fact that Satir's model is the one approach that offered a fully human and emotionally respectful language of the family participants (Corey, 2004:446). The researcher feels that Satir has a lot to contribute towards the resolution of conflict within marriage because of the positive aspect of her approach to people in conflict.

3.7.3 The Person-Centred Approach

This person-centred approach is based on concepts taken from humanistic psychology and the basic assumption is that people are generally trustworthy, and basically have the potential for understanding themselves and resolving their own problems. Carl Rogers, author of *Client-centered therapy: its current practice, implications and theory* (1951) emphasized the attitudes and personal characteristics of the therapist, together with the quality of the client/therapist relationship as being the two fundamental determinants to the outcome of the therapeutic process (Corey, 2004:170).

3.7.3.1 Key concepts

- The common theme that runs throughout Roger's earlier writings and permeates all of his work is a basic sense of trust in the client's ability to move forward in a constructive way if the right conditions for fostering growth are present (Corey, 2004:172).
- The therapeutic process within this person-centred approach proceeds through a series of stages of deepening experiential awareness and the acceptance of self (McLeod, 2003:187), and has been developed as an effective alternative to theoretical models (McLeod, 2003:163).
- This approach focuses on the client's responsibility and capacity to best discover ways to more fully encounter reality.
- The therapist's function is to be present and accessible to clients and to focus mainly on the here and now experience (Corey, 2004:173).
- This approach is looked at as being the journey that the client and therapist tread together as they share their humanness and participate together in a growth experience
- Within the person-centred framework, the client, who previously suffered from feelings of basic helplessness, powerlessness and the inability to make decisions, learns to become less oriented to meetings others' expectations and thus begins to behave in ways that are truer to themselves (Corey, 2004:175-176).

3.7.3.2 The therapeutic process

The goals for this approach differ from other traditional approaches in that it aims for a greater degree of independence and integration of the individual. Rogers describes four characteristics of people that are revealed once the facades are worn away through interaction in the therapeutic process. These characteristics are (1) an openness to experience, (2) a trust in themselves, (3) an internal source of evaluation and (4) a willingness to continue growing. He says that encouraging these characteristics is the basic goal of person-centred therapy (Corey, 2004:174).

Ryan (2006) adds to this, by stating that client centred therapists:

- *Listen and try to understand* how things are from the client's point of view
- *Check their understanding with the client* if unsure
- Treat the client with *utmost respect and regard*
- There is mandate for the therapist to be "congruent" or "transparent" – which means being *self-aware, self-accepting and having no mask between oneself and the client.*

3.7.3.3 Criticisms of the Person-Centred approach

In 1988, Cain (in Corey, 2004:186-187) organised a roundtable to feed back reasons why this particular theory did not operate widely, even though Carl Rogers was highly respected. Some of the following observations came to the fore:

1. It is limited to techniques of attending and reflecting and can lead to undirected rambling by the client.
2. Not all clients have the capacity to trust their own inner direction and find their own answers.
3. This approach has been somewhat resistant to the notion that the counsellor should function as a teacher which is difficult as a counsellor does influence a counsellee with verbal as well as non verbal behaviour.

Pescitelli (2006:1) observes that that whilst Roger's humanistic conception of personality has both strengths and weaknesses, it is a valuable contribution to the study of persons, recognizing agency, free will and the importance of the self. He also notes that this particular theory has had an impact on domains outside therapy such as family life, education and conflict resolution which is of interest to the researcher within the realms of this study.

It would seem that in the marriage context this approach could well contribute towards a person's sense of self worth and ability to manage conflict. The researcher believes that it is vitally important for the client to take the initiative in terms of solving conflict instead being told what to do and in growing through it, the client can then take ownership and responsibility and move forward in a positive vein.

3.8 PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS REGARDING CHAPTER 3

3.8.1 Marriage

- In today's world, marriage is the institution through which people join together their lives in emotional and economic ways through forming a household. It often confers rights and obligations with regard to raising children, attaining property, sexual behaviour, kinship ties, tribal membership, emotional intimacy and love.
- Nowadays diverse different marriage models are found. For example, monogamy, polygamy, polyandry, same sex marriage, common law marriages and co-habitation.
- The blended family is incorporated within all these models.
- It appears that affection, loyalty and continuity is still characteristic of all families, and regardless of format (be they *nuclear* families or *stepfamilies*) most families are typically resistant to change and are likely to try and engage in corrective manoeuvres to reestablish family interactive patterns.
- The observation is made too, that man seems to have digressed away from the original plan for marriage laid down in Scripture and that many variant models are now acceptable to society be it by choice or force of circumstances, which has in fact, contributed to the development and place of blended families in the world.

3.8.2 Divorce

- Statistics for divorce are on the increase all the time and blended families are fast becoming the acceptable norm in society.
- The grounds for divorce have extended over time away from the Biblical principles to include many reasons and nowadays a 'no-fault' clause is also considered grounds for divorce.
- Statistics also reveal that many minor children as well as older children are caught up in a broken marriage, and that there is deep psychological trauma imprinted upon most children through a divorce situation.
- One of the main areas of conflict around divorce is generally focused on children.
- One of the off-shoots of divorce is the formation of single parenting families.

3.8.3 Remarriage

- The British organization 'Stepfamily' says that there are at least 72 different forms of step-families, depending upon "whether or not the adults are single, widowed, divorced or separated, or whether you have children from a previous marriage, no children or children within a present blended marriage" This ratio can also include people who have had previous marriages; relationships, and who are from heterosexual backgrounds as well as people involved in homosexual relationships
- Within the secular arena nowadays, step families are regarded as the normal and natural family to be. The social revolution of the 60s contributed to a jump in divorce, single parenthood and remarriage which made step-families a normative family forum.
- For most divorced people, single life is fairly short-lived, with the median interval before remarriage for previously divorced men being 2.3 years and for divorced women 2.5 years

- Unfortunately despite this the divorce rate for remarriage is found to be 10% higher than that for first marriages, and more than 25% of remarriages never make it past their fifth year.
- There are very specific problems associated with couples who consider marriage for a second time:
 1. Compared to first marriages, the studies reveal that remarriage tends to include more individuals who might well have personality characteristics that increase the likelihood for divorce (e.g. impulsivity, neuroticism).
 2. Remarriages often lack the social support that first time marriages receive.
 3. More remarried couples opt for divorce as a vehicle for ending marital problems than do couples in first marriages.
 4. Most couples in remarriages have not learned to resolve marital differences successfully.
- Many theories have been put forth considering the causality of divorce within second marriages. Amongst these theories the following reasons have been identified: mobility, inward family pressure, economic inflation, women's liberation, permanence and commitment, work, romantic love and deferred gratification and further, that if both partners have come out of a previous marriage it will have left scars, caveats and bonds, and more likely or not, if the couple have started their married life with an instant family, this will cause the couple to have very little time to consolidate their marriage before dealing with the immediate presence of children and their care..
- Berger devised a further two models in 1998 that are generally used to explain the pattern of divorce within a second marriage. The Institutional Model and The Processual Model.
- Another contributing factor is the mixing of two cultural backgrounds.
- The integration of a stepfamily into a functioning family system can take years, rather than months, and can depend on many factors. The minimum time for integration is generally considered to be two years and for some families integration is often not achieved before the step children leave home.

3.8.4 Conflict in the Blended Family

- There are unique problems typical to blended families that elicit conflict within these families, and these problems surface over some of the following: step-parent authority; angry stepchildren; stepsibling relationships; and extended stepfamily relationships (step-grandparents, for example).
- Family researchers have identified an increasing range of different factors that in part explain the differences in outcomes between children living in different forms of family households and that what is clear is that family change, resulting from death, separation, divorce and remarriage of parents is distressing for children, particularly when accompanied by socioeconomic stress and conflict.
- Research has been conducted into the area of conflict within the blended family, focusing particularly on *intra-household* conflict (conflict between parents who reside in the same household) and *inter-household* conflict (conflict between biological parents who reside in different households). The conclusion found that children in stepfather households seem to be worse off than those in other households.
- Marital conflict has been found to be associated with the external as well as internal outcomes in children.
- It would appear that conflict within the blended family manifests itself within four major areas. (1) Parental conflict which includes Intra-Household and Inter-Household aspects, (2) The confusion of bringing children into a family different from its own-day-to day environment and the changes and discipline that is needed to deal with this child. (3) The expectations between stepparents and stepchildren and the difficulties that arise in this relationship, and (4) The crisis of identity found within children desperately seeking to find a place of acceptance within the new family.

3.8.5 Counselling for the Blended Family

3.8.5.1 The Step Enrichment programme

Although this programme seemed to have some very positive results, it was conducted on people who were already part of a blended family. Perhaps it would have been useful to have proceeded with a programme like the above before the couples had married.

3.8.5.2 The FOCUS inventory

Yet again this is mainly a pre-marital inventory with very little attention given to remarriage with only 9 items out of 156 focused on blended marriages. Unique problems are experienced in a second marriage and perhaps this very fact calls for more attention.

3.8.6 Psychological Approaches

3.8.6.1 The Psychoanalytical approach

- According to this theory our behaviour is determined by irrational forces, unconscious motivations and biological and instinctual drives which evolve through key psychosexual stages during the first 6 years of life.
- The Psychoanalytical theory attributes aggressive behaviour to death instincts, and says that both sexual and aggressive drives are powerful determinants of why people act as they do.
- Freud suggested a series of biologically focused stages of development: oral, anal and oedipal, whereas Erikson (a recent writer in psycho-dynamics) identified more socially orientated stages: trust, autonomy, initiative, industry, identity, intimacy, generativity and integrity, which covered all stages of life. The underlying theory is that if a person's attachments are disrupted in early life, they will grow up having difficulty in relationships and commitment.

- This theory has developed into a model which accesses past memories and wounds and deals with the anger, guilt and conflict brought about by these memories. If unattended to, these wounds can cause conflict in the present day scenario. It focuses primarily on childhood experiences, which are discussed, reconstructed, interpreted and analyzed. The assumption is, that this exploration is necessary for character change.
- The approach recognized that the family provided the early environment in which neurotic fears and anxieties developed although it is observed that Freud failed to follow through in identifying how the current relationships helped maintain the problematic behaviour.

3.8.6.2 The Human Validation process model

- This systematic approach is based on the assumption that the key to changing the individual is understanding and working with the family.
- This approach emphasizes communication, emotional experiencing and stresses the involvement of the therapist with a family
- Within this model caring and acceptance were integral to and key elements in, helping people face their fears and open up their hearts to others.
- Satir's model stresses enhancement and validation of self-esteem, family rules, congruence versus defensive communication patterns, sculpting, nurturing triads and family mapping, and family life-fact chronologies.
- This model argues that dysfunctional families follow dysfunctional rules and because of this attempts to help families to become aware of those unwritten rules that retard growth and maturity in marriage.
- It would seem that above all other therapist, Satir's was the most powerful voice to wholeheartedly support the importance of love and nurturance as being the most important healing aspects of therapy.

3.8.6.3 The Person-Centred approach

- This person-centred approach is based on concepts taken from humanistic psychology and the basic assumption is that people are generally trustworthy, and basically have the potential for understanding themselves and resolving their own problem.
- The common theme that runs through out Roger's earlier writings and permeates all of his work is a basic sense of trust in the client's ability to move forward in a constructive way if the right conditions for fostering growth are present.
- Within the person centered framework, the client, who previously suffered from feelings of basic helplessness, powerlessness and the inability to make decisions, learns to become less oriented to meetings others' expectations and thus begins to behave in ways that are truer to themselves.
- The goals for this approach differ to other traditional approaches in that it aims for a greater degree of independence and integration of the individual.
- The characteristics that underline this approach are
 - (1) an openness to experience,
 - (2) a trust in themselves,
 - (3) an internal source of evaluation and
 - (4) a willingness to continue growing.

3.9 IN CONCLUSION

In response to the objectives of this chapter the researcher has been able to gain an understanding from a sociological and psychological perspective of marriage, divorce and remarriage and how society interprets conflict in the blended family in today's world.

The researcher has also ascertained in a general sense how some secular psychological approaches deal with the area of conflict within the blended family.

CHAPTER 4

META THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES GLEANED FROM EMPIRICAL RESEARCH ON INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT WITHIN THE BLENDED FAMILY

4.1 OBJECTIVES AND INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER 4

The objective of this passage, through the use of qualitative research is:

1. to gain an understanding of the efficacy of premarital counselling within the area of blended families,
2. to gain an understanding of the conflict experienced in blended families,
3. to gauge the respondents confidence in the church and the help that they feel the church family and counselling can give them within this area

The research question asks the following: "Due to the potential of conflict, how can couples be adequately prepared for remarriage through the use of pastoral counselling?" With this question in mind the researcher took the decision to use qualitative research as she believed that it would give a more realistic picture of the conflict that arises within blended marriages, and would also give more insight into the role of premarital counselling. Using quantitative research would not accurately cover the actual problems experienced within blended marriages.

Cohen & Manion (1994:54) wrote "the proper subject-matter of historical research consists to a great extent of verbal and other symbolic material emanating from a society's or culture's past" Whereas numbers are important to gain an understanding of the impact that these families have on society as seen in chapter 3, qualitative research gives the insight and the stories needed in constructing proposed guidelines for premarital counselling. Goodson (c/f Cohen & Manion, 1994:59) says that these life stories 'have the potential to make a far reaching contribution to the problem of understanding the links between 'personal troubles' and 'public issues'.

Studies that are qualitative in nature aim to provide an in-depth description of a group of people and are embedded in the life-world of the actors being studied and produce insider perspectives of the actors and their practices. (Mouton, 2001:148). Qualitative findings grow out of three kinds of data collection: (1) in-depth, open ended interviews; (2) direct observation; and (3) written documents (Patton, 2002:4). The researcher has chosen the first and third options by which to collect data. *Interviews* which yield direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings and knowledge (Patton, 2002:4); and *Written documents*, which includes the studying of written responses to questionnaires and surveys (Patton, 2002:4). The qualitative researcher talks with people about their experiences and perceptions, and these methods are used because they capture and communicate the participant's stories (Patton, 2002:10). Although this research is qualitatively focused there is always an overlap between quantitative and qualitative research for as Einstein said "Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted" (Patton, 2003:12).

4.2 THE PROCESS

A questionnaire was devised in such a way that it would elicit honest comment regarding the premarital counselling received, and the subsequent conflict found within these blended families.

The aim of the empirical part of this study was to ascertain whether or not people entering into another marriage received adequate preparation for this marriage. This was undertaken in the questionnaire:

- Firstly, by determining whether or not couples had received counselling, and whether or not the counselling was Christian based.
- Secondly, by determining if the pre marital counselling had dealt sufficiently with the unique potential problems found within a blended family, and

- Thirdly, by putting to the sample, four potential conflict arousing situations to ascertain whether indeed these couples had found difficulty within these areas and whether or not counselling in these areas before marriage might have been helpful.

Further to this, interviews (4.7) were conducted with 3 people whom the researcher had observed had really struggled in these areas despite the fact that they had received premarital counseling. These interviews were designed to bring out the gaps within the premarital counselling that did not deal with the issues that the couples experienced within the new marriage. The interview also focused on the issues being experienced at present within these marriages and concluded with questions regarding the place of the church in the care of blended families.

4.3 THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire was 11 pages in total and was made up of four sections (cf Appendix C). The sample was asked to write considered responses within each category, and if they found there was not enough space after a question, to then write on the back of the pages. A few did this.

The first section of the question dealt with the demographics of each couple. Questions were asked in this section to elicit information regarding the number of years the couples had been married and to determine how many children were involved in the present marriage.

The second section asked whether or not the couples had received counseling, whether or not they thought that the counseling had dealt in a realistic way with the issues that surfaced within their blended families and whether or not they believed they had been adequately prepared. This section fell into sub sections:

- Counselling before marriage
- The counseling you received

- Whether counselling assists with your marriage
- Counselling, the ex-spouse and the children

Within this section, the samples answered Yes/No/NA questions, as well as being given the option to tick or circle answers. Under the section: "Counselling, the ex-spouse and the children", comment was asked for in response to Yes or No questions.

The third section "Conflict" put forward four areas identified in Chapter 1 and 3, in which potential difficulties might be found. Each question elicited a response of:

- Never
- Occasionally
- A lot of the time, and
- All the time.

On those questionnaires that answered, 'a lot of the time', and. 'All the time', comment was asked for to clarify the extent of the difficulty.

A further category was explored in that another question was asked to ascertain if there were any other issues that brought about conflict with the blended marriage. Yet again comment was elicited in the form of a description of the conflict.

The fourth section seeks to ascertain whether or not the samples were of the opinion that the church could be of help in dealing with the issues mentioned in section three. It also asks the question and elicits comment on whether or not the couples felt that the church could help in a practical way to prepare these families for a blended situation.

The fifth section looks at whether or not the samples believed that the Bible had guidelines that could be of help in a remarriage situation and elicits comment as to what areas the Biblical guidelines could be of help in.

4.4 THE SAMPLE

The sample of people in the form of couples, were approached to be part of this empirical study. All of the sample attend the same church and have been involved actively in church life. These couples are in marriages that include one partner or both partners that are now in a second marriage. The age span is from early forties until late sixties. All of the sample have children from previous marriages, either from his or her side or from both, and some of them have children from the second marriage. All the couples have been given fictitious names so that their identities will not be compromised.

4.4.1 Couple A

Matthew and Emily Atherson have both been married between 6 – 10 years. Matthew was previously married and subsequently widowed. He married Emily who had not been married previously and he brought two children into the marriage. These children are now twenty-one and nineteen years old. Matthew and Emily have a child of their own who is now seven years old.

4.4.2 Couple B

Don and Sally Wilkins have both been married for more than 16 years. He was a widower very early on in his first marriage and brought a son (now 32) into this second marriage. Sally had not been previously married and the two of them now have two more children, girls of twenty-five and twenty-eight, from this marriage.

4.4.3 Couple C

Tom and Maria Smith have both come from previous marriages, and were both divorced. They have been married between 3 – 5 years. Tom has two children from his previous marriage and they are now eighteen and twenty-one. Maria also has two children from her previous marriage and they are now twenty-five and twenty-two years old. They have no children from this marriage.

4.4.4 Couple D

Derrick and Jennifer Steyn have both been married between 3 – 5 years. Derrick was widowed and has two children from his previous marriage who are now thirty-eight and thirty-six years old. Jennifer was divorced and also has two children from her previous marriage – one of thirty and one of twenty-six years. They have no children from this marriage.

4.4.5 Couple E

Nicholas and Brenda De Villiers have both been married between 3 – 5 years. Nicholas has been previously divorced and has two children aged nine and thirteen from his first marriage. Brenda had not been married before and there are no children in this second marriage.

4.4.6 Couple F

David and Wendy Cummings have both been married for over 16 years and both had been previously divorced. Both have children from their previous marriages but do not have children from this marriage. This couple are now in their late sixties.

4.4.7 Couple G

Paul and Marcia Smith have both been married for 6 years. Both had been previously divorced and have five children between the two of them from previous marriages. Marcia has three children, two sons and one daughter, aged 31, 34 and 35. Paul has two daughters aged 24 and 26. There are no children from this marriage.

4.4.8 Couple H

James and Liz Berry have both been married between 6 and 10 years. Both had been previously divorced. They have two children from his previous marriage aged 17 and 15 and two children from this marriage together aged 8 and 5.

4.5 ANALYSING THE DATA

4.5.1 The Questionnaire

4.5.1.1 Counselling

The following table gives answers to five of the most pertinent questions in the questionnaire regarding premarital counselling. The goal of this question was to ascertain whether or not the couples used Christian counselling and whether or not this counseling was adequate for their needs within the blended family.

- Did you receive premarital counselling before you married?
- Did the counselling assist you with this marriage?
- Did the counselling prepare you for marriage? and
- Was the counselling you received realistic?
- Was the counselling Christian based?

Questions	Couple A	Couple B	Couple C	Couple D	Couple E	Couple F	Couple G	Couple H	Total No	Total Yes
<u>1. Did you do Premarital Counselling?</u>	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	2	6
<u>2. Did it assist you?</u>										
Husband	No	-	No	Yes	Yes	-	Yes	Yes	2	4
Wife	No	-	No	No	Yes	-	No	Yes	4	2
<u>3. Did it Prepare you?</u>										
Husband	No	-	No	-	Yes	-	Yes	Yes	2	3
Wife	No	-	No	No	Yes	-	No	Yes	4	2
<u>4. Was the Counselling Realistic?</u>										
Husband	No	-	50%	No	Yes	-	Yes	Yes	2	3
Wife	No	-	No	?	Yes	-	Yes	Yes	2	3

5. Was the counselling Christian Based?	Yes	-	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	Yes	Yes		6
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This table shows us the following:

- In Question 1, of the eight couples who filled in the questionnaire only two did not receive premarital counselling.
- In Question 2,
 - (1) 4 of the 6 husbands said that the counselling had assisted them.
 - (2) 4 of the 6 wives said that the counselling had not assisted them.

The evidence suggests that the husband and wives differed in their opinions of whether or not the counselling had actually assisted them, and that the husbands felt more prepared than the wives.

- In Question 3,
 - (1) 3 of 6 husbands said that the counselling had prepared them for a remarriage situation.
2 said it did not prepare them.
 - (2) 4 of the 6 wives said that the counselling had not prepared them for a remarriage situation.
2 said it did prepare them.

The evidence suggests that the husbands generally felt more prepared for marriage than the wives.

- In Question 4,
 - (1) 3 of the husbands said that the counseling was realistic.
2 of the husbands said that the counselling was not realistic.
1 was undecided at 50%
 - (2) 3 wives said that the counselling was realistic.
2 wives said it was not realistic.
1 was undecided by showing a '?'

The evidence suggests that the husbands and wives were in agreement and that 50% of the couples (both husbands and wives) found the counselling realistic.

- In Question 5, all the counselling that was received was Christian based.

4.5.1.2 Counselling assists with your marriage

Three further areas were examined to see if the counselling had been of assistance in the present marriage since the couple had been married.

Questions	Couple A	Couple C	Couple D	Couple E	Couple G	Couple H	Total No	Total Yes
1. Has the counselling assisted your marriage?	<u>Husband:</u> No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	4	2
	<u>Wife:</u> No	No	No	Yes	No	No	4	1
2. Did the counselling assist your relationship with your Spouse?	<u>Husband:</u> No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	4	2
	<u>Wife:</u> No	No	No	Yes	No	No	5	1
3. Did the counselling assist the relationship with your step children?	<u>Husband:</u> N/A	No	No	N/A	Yes	N/A	2	1
	<u>Wife:</u> No	No	Yes?	Yes	No	Yes	3	3

- Question 1
 - (1) 4 husbands were of the opinion that the counselling did assist in their present marriage.
 - (2) 5 wives said that the counselling did not assist their present marriage.

The evidence suggests that the husbands were generally agreed on the fact that the counselling actually assisted their present marriage whereas there was dissatisfaction from the wives who generally felt that the counselling did not assist them in this present marriage.

- Question 2

(1) 4 husbands felt it did not help with the relationship with their wives.

(2) 5 wives felt it did not help with the relationship with their husbands.

The evidence suggests that both husbands and wives generally experienced that the counselling had not been useful in their relationship with each other in this present marriage.

- Question 3

(1) 2 out of 3 husbands who had step children said that the counselling had not helped them with the relationship with their step children.

(2) 3 out of 6 wives who had step children felt it had not helped them with their relationship with their step children, 2 felt it had and 1 was undecided.

The evidence suggests that the husbands generally agreed that the counselling had not assisted them with their step children whereas the wives were divided as to whether it had been helpful or not..

Both of the following questions dealt with the areas in which counselling had helped or not helped, or had assisted or not assisted with the present marriage. Because of the aim of this research, the researcher is going to focus mainly on the areas where the couples believed they had not been prepared adequately for marriage in these following questions.

4.5.1.3

Tick the issues where counselling helped to understand the issues at hand, and circled those where it did not

Issues	Couple A	Couple C	Couple D	Couple E	Couple G	Couple H	Total did not help	Total Did help
Expectations	x	X	√	√		√	2	3
Wife's role	x	X	x	√		√	3	2
Husband's role	x	X	x	√		√	3	2
Typical changes	x	X	x	x		x	5	0
Finances/property	x	X	x	x	√	√	4	2
Wife's career	x	X	x	√		√	3	2
Husband's career	x	√	x	√			2	2
Inheritances	x	√	x	√			2	2
Time out together	x	X	√	√		√	2	3
Interests		X	√	√		√	1	3
Vacations	x	X	x	√		√	3	2
Sex		X	x	√		√	2	2
Step Children	x	X	√	x			3	1
Adopted Natural	x		√ x	x x		x	3 3	1 0
Children's role	x	X	√	x			3	1
Discipline methods: Spouses Methods Your methods	x x x	x x x	x x x	x			4 3 3	0 0 0
Compromise	x	X		√		x	3	1
Discipline of: His children Her children	x x x	x x x	x x x	x x			4 4 3	0 0 0
Christianity Biblical Guidelines	x	x x	√ √	√ √	√	√	2 1	2 4
Religion		√	√	√				3
Materialism	x		x	√		x	3	1
Extended Family	x	√	√	x		x	3	2
Parents in law	x	√	x	√		√	2	3
Ex spouse	x	√	x	x		√	3	2
Ex In laws	x	√		x		x	3	1
Relationship to family of Origin	x	X	√	√		x	3	2
Conflict		X	x	x		√	3	1
Communication		X		x			2	0
Totals (did not)	27	24	21	11	0	7		
Totals (did)	0	7	11	17	2	13		

x represents 'did not help', ' represents 'did help'. *Columns left blank indicate 'No response'

The Evidence suggests that:

The areas in which the counselling *helped* the couples to understand the issues at hand were found to be within the following six main areas:

- Biblical Guidelines (4 couples)
- Religion (3 couples)
- Expectations (3 couples)
- Time out together (Quality time) (3 couples)
- Interests (3 couples), and
- Parents in law. (3 couples)

The top five areas in which the counselling *did not help* was found to be in:

- Typical Changes (5 couples)
- Finances/property (4 couples)
- Discipline methods (4 couples)
- The Discipline of his/her children (4 couples)

A further 17 areas in which counselling did not help were identified by an agreement of three couples: Wife's role, Husband's role, Wife's career, Vacations, Step children, adopted, natural, children's role, Compromise, Discipline of her children, Materialism, Extended Family, Ex spouse, Ex in laws, Relationship to family of Origin, Conflict.

The counselling that was all Biblically based seemed to focus mainly on Biblical guidelines and the relationship with the couple themselves. As shown by the evidence above areas that were not dealt with were the typical changes experienced by blended families, finances and the discipline of children, be they natural or adopted. Overall when one considers the further 17 areas in which counselling did not help the areas of step children, ex spouses and extended family seem to feature prominently.

The table above shows that the counselling did not help at all in these areas with a 0 score for Step children, Discipline methods and discipline of children, communication and typical changes. Overall the evidence shows us that:

- 3 couples (A, C & D) said that Counselling did not help more than it actually helped.
- 2 couples (E & H) said that counselling helped more than it did not help.
- 1 couple (G) felt that counselling helped only in two areas.

This evidence again shows that the counselling was unhelpful in preparing couples for potential conflict areas within blended marriages.

Matthew and Emily (A) believed that the counselling had been totally ineffective, shown by circling every issue in the question. Matthew said: "Marriage counselling was waffy and I do not consider I was told anything I did not already know. Nothing regarding problems which may arise in a second marriage, which would not have arisen in a first marriage, were discussed". Emily seconded that by adding: "I did not find it useful but particularly unhelpful in the areas circled".

Maria and Tom (C) agreed that the counselling had been extremely ineffective in certain areas by also circling many of the issues put to them. Paul (G) mentioned that "I cannot think of any aspect that helped me understand anything that I did not previously understand. There were no surprises only good reinforcement"

4.5.1.4 **Tick the issues where counselling assisted you in this marriage**
and circle where it did not

Issues	Couple A	Couple C	Couple D	Couple E	Couple G	Couple H	Total did not assist	Total did assist
Expectations	x	x	√	√		√	2	3
Wife's role	x	x		√		√	2	2
Husband's role	x	x		√		√	2	2
Typical changes	x	x	√	√		√	2	3
Finances/property	x	x		√	√	x	3	2
Wife's career	x	x		√		√	2	2
Husband's career	x			√		√	1	2
Inheritances	x			√			1	1
Time out together	x	x	√	√		x	3	2
Interests		x	√	√		√	1	3
Vacations	x	x		√		√	2	2
Sex		x		√		√	1	2
Step Children	x	x	x	x	x		5	0
Adopted	x		x	x			3	0
Natural				x		√	1	1
Children's role	x	x	x	√		√	3	2
Discipline methods: Spouses Methods	x	x		x		x	4	0
Your methods	x	x		x			3	0
	x	x		x			3	0
Compromise	x	x		√			2	1
Discipline of: His children	x	x		x			3	0
Her children	x	x		x		√	3	1
	x	x					2	0
Christianity	x	x		√		√	2	2
Biblical Guidelines		√	√	√		√		4
Religion		√		√			0	2
Materialism	x			√			1	1
Extended Family	x			√			1	1
Parents in law	x			√	x	√	2	2
Ex spouse	x			x		x	3	0
Ex In laws	x			x			2	0
Relationship to family of Origin	x	x		√			2	1
Conflict		x		√		x	2	1
Communication		x	x	√		x	3	1
Total did not	27	23	5	11	2	6		
Total did	0	2	5	23	1	14		

x represents 'did not help', ' represents 'did help'. *Columns left blank indicate 'No response'

The 4 main areas in which the counselling actually assisted the couples in this marriage were found to be within the following areas:

- Biblical Guidelines (4 couples)
- Expectations (3 couples)
- Typical changes (3 couples), and
- Interests (3 couples)

The top 2 areas in which the counselling did not assist were found to be in:

- Step children (5 couples)
- Discipline methods (4 couples)

A further 7 areas in which counselling did not assist were identified by an agreement of three couples: Finances/property, Time out together, Children's role, Discipline methods of both spouses, Discipline of his children, Ex spouse and Communication.

Again where the counselling did assist was found in the areas of Biblical guidelines, and the relationship between the couple found within the areas of expectations, typical changes and interests. Yet again where the counselling did not assist was in the area of step children and discipline of such. When one observes the further 7 areas that the counselling has not helped in, in 50% of the couples, it has had to do with the children and discipline, and the children's role within the step family. As the evidence suggests the counselling did not assist them with dealing with the former spouse.

- 2 couples (A, & C) thought that the counselling did not assist in their present marriage.
- 2 couples (E & H) thought that the counselling assisted more than it did not assist.
- 1 couple (D) felt that the counselling assisted as well as did not assist (50-50)

- 1 couple (G) said that the counselling assisted in only 1 area (Finances) and especially did not help in 2 (Step children & Parents in law).

The evidence suggests

- That the couples (A & C) who were adamant that counselling did not help them understand or assist them in this present marriage, were couples that brought children from a previous family, into a present family, to live there permanently.
- That Couple H who also brought children from a previous relationship did say that counselling had helped them.
- That Couple E who found that the counselling had assisted them more than it did not were a family who brought in children from an existing family into a present family on holidays only.

The researcher did not examine further into where each couple received their counselling but only to clarify that it was Christian counselling. In the meta theoretical perspectives in chapter 3, the argument was put forward that the main areas that promote conflict within the blended family seemed to be the in the areas of children (step as well as natural) and the discipline of those children. The evidence above seems to suggest that the counselling that was done with these couples, even though it assisted in many areas, did not adequately prepare the couples for dealing with the children in these marriage.

4.5.1.5 On balance, did the counselling assist with blending the two families?

This question again pointedly asked the couples where the counselling assisted them. Two options were given: YES or NO. Six couples did premarital counselling - 12 responses were given from the different partners.

- 3 answered YES (although 2 spoke about counselling during marriage, not premarital counselling)
- 7 answered NO

- 1 answered YES & NO
- 1 answered N/A

The result seems to infer that the majority of partners within these marriages did not feel that the counselling had helped with blending their marriages. The following comments were noted:

UNDER YES

- Liz: "It was helpful in blending with step children and understanding the impact they would have on the relationship"
- Marcia: "His children realized that this marriage was important enough and they were important enough to get good grounding 'ahead of time'".
- Nicholas: "It assisted me by looking at everything from a Christian perspective. Believe this did assist in reducing the conflicts and potential conflicts"

UNDER NO

- Tom: "There was no probing done, whether we both knew the ex spouses, and the manner on how to deal (with it) when, one day meeting the ex spouses. Also there was no discussion on how we want to discipline our own kids and the importance of the children (of both spouses) to make continuous efforts to accept each other"
- Matthew: "No counselling in regard to blending families was given"
- Emily: "Did not even address the fact we were a blended family. It was a 2hr. session with a priest and a questionnaire to fill in"
- Maria: "Because my children were out of the home. His daughter moved out immediately & I had no idea that I would not agree with his parenting of his son at all!"
- Derrick: "Used common sense and Biblical principles previously learned and practiced"
- Jennifer: "We needed to work issues with the non-compliant step child, and use our common sense for the rest"

James: "My children from the previous marriage remained with me and therefore there was no significant change".

Liz: "because with regard to the ex-spouse – she has not accepted the situation and plays with the children's emotions (Husband was given custody)".

UNDER N/A

Paul: "The children were grown up and not living at home as dependents"

4.5.1.6 Did you consider the counselling pertinent to your situation?

The research question asks if couples can be adequately prepared because as the evidence shows many felt that the counselling was not pertinent to their particular situations. Two responses: YES and NO

The Couples were down the middle with their answers.

- 6 answered YES
- 6 answered No

YES

Nicholas: "Reinforced what should be known, but not emphasized. Christian view of a family has assisted me personally"

Brenda: "Counselling does definitely help, but the situations are not always able to be worked out beforehand, as emotions run high and there are so many outside factors and people affecting your marriage relationship"

Paul: "Difficult to say. I just know that I was surprised at how worthwhile it was, having been quite skeptical of it originally. We were able to identify specifics where we would like each other to focus".

James: "The counselling helped to identify problems in the 1st marriage and make necessary changes so as not to fall or make similar mistakes in our new relationship".

Liz: "We had both been married before and it helped identify the pitfalls and how to deal with them and also taking on the responsibility of two young step children"

NO

Matthew: "Counsellor was non specific and wishy washy. The questionnaire was reasonable and addressed a few issues, though I can not remember what"

Emily: No it was not pertinent or useful to our situation of a blended family particularly in dealing with his children, his in laws and his money. He is a widow"

Tom: "Firstly, the Counsellor should be neutral/impartial i.e. none of the spouses should know the counsellor. Secondly, the counsellor should have joint sessions with the spouses and individual sessions ongoing, 6 months before marriage and every 6 months after marriage has been performed until all the parties agree to stop counselling"

Jennifer: "The counselling did not take into account the personality and history of the spouses and whatever was discussed eg. Expectations, were not considered once we were married".

Maria: "It was very theoretical and I found that in our situation it had very little relevance".

4.5.1.7 Are there any other areas within this remarriage situation that counselling would have been helpful in?

The following comments were made:

Marcia: "Yes! Relationship of spouse and his/her parents should be examined deeply. Could cause serious conflict! Also the values of step children if values are different to the parent".

Tom: "The danger of having the preference with mixing mainly with one's own friends, than mixing equally with both spouse's friends".

- Maria: "Psychometric testing essential to understand the different personalities".
- Emily: "Yes! Finances and inheritance – his in laws"
- Matthew: "Addressing problems specific to reconstituted marriages may have been helpful. It's difficult to know how much it would have helped, since practice is not always the same as theoretical".
- Liz: "Ex-Wife – is a "loose cannon" – we cannot control her and interfere when she has the children. She is their biological mother – very difficult"

Conclusions:

- It was generally found that the counselling overall did not prepare the couples adequately and was not realistic to the situation.
- The couples were asked to circle those issues where they believed the counselling had not helped them to understand or assist them with the issues as hand. The prominent issue that they felt had not been dealt with was the issue of 'Step Children", the discipline of those children and the different methods used by different parents.
- It was found that the other areas that counselling might have been helpful in was: (1) relationships with spouse's family of origin, (2) in determining personality profiles, (3) Inheritances, (4) dealing with former spouses, (5) priorities regarding friendships and (6) the specific problems typical to reconstituted families.
- In terms of the actual blending of the family, most of the couples seem to agree that they were not prepared adequately.
- The couples were divided down the middle in terms of the pertinence of the counselling to their situations. 50% said it was pertinent, whilst 50% felt it wasn't.

4.5.2 Conflict

Four options were given to the participants regarding difficulties in marriage, and they were:

- Dealing with your former spouse
- Disciplining of children
- As a step parent, difficulties in your relationship with your step child(ren)
- Difficulties with a step child or children adjusting to a new family
-

The answers to these questions were summarized in the following table, with the options being 'Never', 'Occasionally', 'A lot of the time', and 'All the time'.

	Couple A	Couple B	Couple C	Couple D	Couple E	Couple F	Couple G	Couple H	Total Occas	Total A lot	Tot al All the time
Quest. 1											
Husband	Never	Occas.	Occas.	Never	N/A	All the time	Never	A lot	2	1	1
Wife	Never	A lot	Occas.	Never	Never	Occas.	Never	Never	2	1	0
Quest 2.											
Husband	No	Occas.	A lot	Never	A lot	A lot	N/A	Occas.	2	3	0
Wife	Occas.	Occas.	A lot	Never	A lot	A lot	N/A	Occas.	3	3	0
Quest 3.											
Husband	n/a	n/a	A lot	Occas.	N/A	Occas.	Never	N/A	2	1	0
Wife	A lot	Never	A lot	A lot	A lot	A lot	Occas.	Occas.	2	5	0
Quest. 4											
Husband	Occas.	n/a	A lot	Occas.	A lot	All the time	Never	Occas.	3	2	1
Wife	Occas.	Occas.	A lot	Never	A lot	A lot	Occas.	Occas.	4	3	0

The Data shows the following:

4.5.2.1 Question 1 Dealing with your former spouse

This question shows the majority of couples never had or only had occasional conflict in this area.

- Only one husband David, answered that he had conflict all the time and this couple (F) were a couple that had not received counselling before marriage.
- Both James (H) who had premarital counselling and Sally (B) who had no premarital counselling answered that they had had conflict a lot of the time, although with Sally it related to the memory of a deceased wife of her husband.

This suggests that those who had no premarital counselling tended to have conflict in this area, as well as some who had had counselling but had not been adequately prepared.

Sally: Don "was still grieving for his deceased wife and he was not emotionally ready for another relationship".

James "my inability for admitting mistakes or hurting feelings and sincerely apologizing and asking for forgiveness"

David No comment

4.5.2.2 Question 2 Disciplining of children

This question shows that 3 out of 8 couples had conflict in this area "a lot" of the time. 3 other couples said that they had conflict "occasionally" in this area, whilst 2 couples said they had no problems in this area and this was because the children were adult and had left home. This suggests that most of the conflict within this area is found with younger children and that most families struggled with this issue at sometime or another.

The following comments described the conflict:

Wendy: "Being fair to my biological child when I felt I couldn't discipline the other 2 as David felt I was too hard but our counsellor told us in family counselling this was essential (disciplining)"

- Brenda: (1) "Lack of respect for you as the stepmom,
 (2) Challenge of boundaries, to see how far the kids can push you,
 (3) Lack of acceptance of you as the father's new wife,
 (4) Kids can be very manipulative."
- Tom: "Generally step children do not like to be disciplined by step parents. Also step parents tend to back or defend their own kids regardless of their errors, but are quick to point out faults in step children (not their own)."
- Maria: "Only with regard to my stepson who lives with me & is allowed to do more or less what he likes and is not disciplined particularly in serious matters."
- Nicholas: "Because you see them so seldom, you tend not to want to discipline them. Feeling sorry for the children meant that you did not discipline them the way you should in a 'normal' marriage".

4.5.2.3 Question 3 As a stepparent, difficulties in your relationship with your step child(ren)

This question elicited a high response in the 'occasionally' (5) and 'a lot' (6) categories.

- According to the answers in the table above it would seem that the wives had more problems with step children than the husbands did, with 5 wives out of 8 answering 'a lot', and 1 husband only answering 'a lot'.
- 7 out of 8 couples had problems at some time within this area, with 5 couples having problems most of the time.
- The data shows us that whether or not the couple received premarital counselling they still experienced problems.
- This category elicited the most 'a lot' responses than all the other categories, which suggests that this category (out of the 4 given) contributes mostly towards conflict within the blended family.

Some of the comments regarding the conflict were as follows:

Emily: “Communication – Am I doing the right thing. Am I as a good a parent as the real parent who is deceased? Difficulty to get close to them & understand them”

Jennifer: “My step daughter resented me and became difficult and rude to me at times.”

Wendy: “They didn’t want me, didn’t feel they should obey me, weren’t proud of me in front of their friends, pretended not to understand my instructions and constantly spoke to their biological mother in hushed tones”

Tom: “Right from the beginning my stepchildren (much older than my 2 children), refused to cooperate, accept, greet and befriend my 2 kids. My step children quite often would never greet me – I’ve learnt to live with this.”

Liz: “Tend to get annoyed with their biological mother and then take it out on the children – pick on them, get annoyed with them”

4.5.2.4 **Question 4 Difficulties with step children adjusting to a new family**

Within this category, the following was observed:

- 7 couples responded in the ‘occasionally’ category.
- 5 people responded ‘a lot’.
- 1 person ticked ‘all the time’. The same person (husband F) answered ‘all the time’ for both question 1 and 4.
- All the couples experienced at sometime or another, problems with children adjusting to a new family system.

The following comments were made regarding the conflict in this area:

Tom: “My daughter left home after 2 months because of the extreme severity of her step mother’s ways of disciplining”

- Wendy: "Space was invaded, loyalties divided, comparisons made, uneasiness with "the blend" & difficulties in relating to other families as a unit – fragmented"
- Maria: "Having to cope with a child who has been brought up very differently from my own".
- David: "Relating to new circumstances – My former wife abandoned the children".
- James: "Children were 4 & 6 – adjusted relatively easily to their step mother. For a period of time about 1 year, the children were unsettled for 1 or 2 days after returning from their biological mother"
- Liz: "Children adapted very well to having me as their mother, as they were desperate for a 'mother's love'. They were disruptive for about the first 18 months when spending weekends with their biological mother".
- Nicholas: "Responsiveness of step children to stepmother. Children caught up between the two parent's squabbles. Children's lack of understanding of your craving for their time and attention".

The Evidence suggests that

- None of the questions given to the couples elicited a response of difficulties experienced 'all the time' by more than one couple in any given category.
- Every question elicited a difficulty response in the 'A lot' category, although with question 1, only 2 people responded this way and, questions 2 and 3 showing the highest amount of conflict with 6 people responding.
- Every question elicited a difficulty response in the 'Occasionally' category, with question 4 showing the most responses in this category, question 2 showing the second most responses, and the rest of the questions eliciting the same number of responses.
- Only 1 couple (D) consistently answered 'never' to the questions, other than question 3, which elicited a response of 'occasionally' and 'a lot'. It is noted

that this couple has adult children and did not have children living in the house with them.

- Most couples answered 'never' for aspects of Question 1.
- From these four areas it is seen that the area that deals with children, seemed to elicit the most negative responses. With a majority of the couples, the wives seem to have the most problems in contrast to their husbands who were more often than not seemingly unfazed by the problems, except for Tom who commented extensively on the issues that the children brought into his and Maria's marriage.

4.5.2.5 Other issues

The couples were then asked to give some input regarding the area of other issues that had brought about conflict within the marriage, and the following comments were made:

1. Dealing with estates and wills.

Matthew: "How I wished to deal with my estate in the event of my death and my last will and the fact that I did not specifically support the adoption of my children from my first marriage".

Emily: "What he brought into marriage and inheritance to his children and what I brought into the marriage".

2. The role of the previous family and a deceased scenario

Emily: Deceased mother's family and their involvement in our lives".

Wendy: "A mother who left her children & suffered intense guilt, didn't want me to bring up her children. She was critical & made me feel like a 'mere housekeeper".

3. Finances

Maria: "Financial issues where I've had to help bail him out. The feeling of being used".

4. Different personalities
Sally: “Our different personalities and our lack of understanding of marriage principles and male and female traits”.
5. Baggage from a previous marriage
Sally: “Our individual baggage: Don’s grief and my insecurity”.
6. Alienation of children and step children, and dealing with adult step children
Tom: “My children feel very uncomfortable in my home when my wife is present, as they do not appreciate the way their step mother raises her voice continually to me in an improper, impolite way. My children were not invited to their step sister’s wedding, and my wife did nothing to overrule her daughter’s decision”.
Liz: “I am sometimes seen to be ‘picking’ on the eldest daughter and this causes conflict. Styles of discipline can be a problem”.
7. Losing my identity as a marriage partner
Maria: “Feeling that my home is not my home, that I must be a typical submissive wife. That I must accept all decisions even if they are wrong and haven’t been discussed with me.”
8. Openness in communication
Derrick: “There was a lack of openness in communication and a lack of trust. Kept important issues to oneself”
9. Comparison to a deceased spouse
Jennifer: “Comparison to Derrick’s late spouse”
10. Lack of support
Jennifer: “He was set in his ways – and did not accept change. His lack of understanding and support”
11. In laws
Marcia: “Mother-in-law! She has trained her sons to jump and has unreasonable expectations. Also sometimes insensitive to the wife i.e. will link arms with the son while the wife follows behind!! Husband behaves differently when his mother is around”.

Brenda: "In-laws, ex-wife, my family, his family, his mother, my mother and ex-wife's maid!"

12. Dealing with both ex-spouse and current spouse

James: "Handling of ex-spouse and current spouse with regard to the children, this places pressure on children".

13. Giving to children

Nicholas: "Giving materially to my children. Wanting to let them experience different things in life".

The comments seem to suggest that the areas that seemed to create the most conflict not discussed previously are: (a) the role of the previous family [2]; (b) In-laws [11]; (c) alienation of step children and dealing with adult step children [6].

4.5.2.6 Do you think counselling to prepare for these issues would have been helpful?

	Couple A		Couple B		Couple C		Couple D		Couple E		Couple F		Couple G		Couple H		Totals
	H	W	H	W	H	W	H	W	H	W	H	W	H	W	H	W	
Yes		X		X		X				X	X	X		X	X		8
No			X										X			X	3
Not sure	X				X		X	X	X								5

This evidence suggests that

Of the 16 people who filled in the questionnaire all answered this question even those who had had no counselling.

- Eight answered YES
- Three answered NO
- Five answered NOT SURE

- From these answers it would appear that the most of the couples believe that counselling might have been helpful in certain areas.
- Only three felt that counselling would have been of no help.
- Other than couples D & F, all the couples differed from each other in their responses.

Comments were given in response to this question:

YES

Emily: "Discuss scenarios and give me an idea of what I could expect in a blended family. Advice on how to deal with ex-spouse's family and husband's attitude to family – would have saved me a lot of hurt and tears".

Sally: "Make us aware. We were so naïve & unprepared for what we faced. In 1977 knowledge of those things was limited"

Maria: "I'm not sure how but if we were able to address these I'm sure it would have been helpful"

Brenda: "Yes, to prepare you for certain critical issues & situations you may face in a blended family situation"

David: "Thought everything would be okay but wasn't realistic in my thinking – looking ahead."

Wendy: "Knowledge is power & I didn't realize that (1) a mother who leaves her kids lives the rest of her life justifying this and (2) I should not try so hard to please the kids"

Marcia: "Adult step-children (late teens/early 20's) are young adults but also members of a family. The counselling did not examine this at all. Only dealt with young children.

How do spouses respond to their parents if still alive? This can be difficult for a husband with his mother pulling in one direction and his wife in another"

James: "Prepared children – making a smoother transition from mother to step mother. N.B. Children were involved with the courtship and remarriage process right from the beginning"

NO

Don: "Our differences in parenting styles were the cause of some of our difficulties in parenting our children, not the fact that (for me) ours was a second marriage"

Paul: "Difficulties hadn't arisen, that would have been relevant"

Liz: "Each blended family is unique and situations differ. You can never know in advance what problems you will face"

NOT SURE

No comments

4.5.2.7 What could have been useful to you before you married to deal with these problems?

This question was asked to see if the couples were of the opinion there were some additional help that could have been of value to them. The responses have been given in couples. Where there is only one of the couple, the other partner has made no comment.

Matthew: "Very difficult to prepare for the teen years"

Emily: "Do a proper marriage course over 6-8 weeks with someone who knows about step families so it would not be uncharted waters"

Don: "Counselling that helped us face and handle differing parenting styles"

Sally: "Talking with others who experienced grief and remarriage. Doing personality tests – Don thought all women were the same!!"

- Maria: "Understanding how he ran his life – finances, children particularly. Psychometric testing".
- Tom: "Continuous counselling, from 6 months before marriage until all parties agree to stop.
- Derrick: "Unpacking of baggage from previous marriages. Differences between 36 years of happy – not without disagreements – marriage for one spouse, and the other coming from a broken marriage".
- Jennifer: "To have an understanding of the 'real' man – good and bad. Maybe personality profile and then deal with issues of possible conflict – Biblically and practically".
- Nicholas: "Extremely difficult to say. Believe there are natural human problems that will always be prevalent in an extended family situation. Need to spend more time in counselling".
- Brenda: "To discuss ex-wives, step children & friends before we got married".
- David: "Discussions with experienced counsellor".
- Wendy: "Discussions with biological mother"
- Marcia: "If the pre-marital counselling had been more focused on self-examination some issues may have arisen but often small things become big issues only when one has been married for a few months/years".
- Liz: "Spending time alone with the children. Laying down rules of discipline".

4.5.3 The Church

4.5.3.1 Would you look for help in the above situation to your church or outside?

	Couple A		Couple B		Couple C		Couple D		Couple E		Couple F		Couple G		Couple H		Totals
	H	W	H	W	H	W	H	W	H	W	H	W	H	W	H	W	
Church	X		X	X		X		X	X				X	X			8
Outside							X				X	X				X	4
Church and Outside		X			X				X						X		4

- 8 people answered CHURCH
- 4 people answered OUTSIDE
- 4 people answered CHURCH and OUTSIDE

The data suggests:

- That despite differences between husbands and wives in their replies 50% of people still believed that the church would be able to help them in difficult situations.
- Couple F who had had no counselling before marriage, still believed that they would only be helped outside of the church.
- Only two couples (B & G) both agreed that the church would be able to help them.
- All of these couples are involved in the same church family. The fact that 8 people have opted to also look outside the church for help seems to indicate a lack of confidence in the church's ability to deal with the issues brought about by a blended family situation.

The following comments were made regarding this issue:

CHURCH

Matthew said that the church “should give us a Biblical basis for dealing with things in life”, with which Don agreed saying “I would want Biblically based answers”. Sally said the church would “be coming from the same value system” as herself, and Jennifer also agreed with this saying that “these value systems were the way I choose to direction my life and relationships” .

Maria felt strongly that “in the church we should have the training to do pre-marital counselling for re-marriage situations WELL” Nicholas says that the “Bible teaches us how we should deal with matters”. Marcia added to this by saying that “Hopefully the counselling would be Bible-based and include God’s wisdom, not only man’s knowledge. Good to also know that prayer accompanies counselling”. Her husband Paul backs her up by feeling that “Christian based counselling is solid”.

OUTSIDE

Derrick said that “I would not go to an organization – rather a close, trusted Christian friend”. Wendy did not agree and said “I find ‘outside’ objective, they’re strangers, feet firmly on the ground, pro-active, not pray-active.” She qualifies this by saying: “The latter is necessary of course but not in family counselling if all are not Christians”. Her husband David agrees saying that “they are more in tune with outside problems”. Liz says that “I believe that counselling needs to be biblically based, from a qualified & trained professional – not necessarily from the church”.

CHURCH AND OUTSIDE

Emily maintains that the church is part of the community with which she is involved but believes that FAMSA has the experience that is needed for counselling couples. Tom says that both are “must be unknown to us, so as to ensure neutrality and impartiality”, whereas Brenda takes another slant: “The church is the body of Christ

who ministers to you in times of crisis" but would go outside because "of privacy and confidentiality reasons". James says" that depending on the severity of the problem, I would be prepared to seek the best qualified (good track record) professional".

4.5.3.2 In what practical ways could the church prepare you and your children for a blended family situation?

The following was discussed:

- Family workshops and courses (James, Liz, Jennifer, Wendy).
- Discussion groups on various topics (Jennifer, Wendy).
- Teaching and Seminars (Don).
- Sunday school – personal teacher-child relationship – outings – events – holiday hobbies etc. (Wendy).
- Family counselling (James, Marcia).
- The counselling of children in a non-threatening environment. (James, Liz, Nicholas).
- Weekends away with new 'parent' (Liz).
- Role-playing (acting), considering how one would respond to certain situations (Matthew, Wendy).
- Get-togethers with other couples / families in same situation i.e. weekend away (Emily, Jennifer, Wendy).
- Opportunities to meet with other families who have successfully navigated similar situations (Don, Sally).
- Church leaders, especially youth leaders should focus on Christian programmes for uniting children from both spouses by organizing joint events, outings with the aim to promote harmony, acceptance and tolerance of both spouses' children – This would be the KEY to a successful harmonious re-marriage (Tom)

The discussion found the following:

The top three suggestions made as being helpful in dealing with the blended family in a practical way were:

1. Family workshops and courses.
2. The counselling of children in a non-threatening environment.
3. Get-togethers with other couples / families in same situation i.e. weekends away.

Other suggestions that could be considered were:

4. Discussion groups on various topics.
5. Family counselling.
6. Role-playing (acting), considering how one would respond to certain situations.
7. Opportunities to meet with other families who have successfully navigated similar situations.

All of these ideas could be used by the church to deal with the conflict issues found within blended families.

4.5.4 Biblically Based Guidelines

4.5.4.1 **Question 1 Do you believe that the Bible has the guidelines to help them in a practical way for another marriage?**

Question 2 Do you think that a Scripturally based remarriage programme would be of use in a remarriage setting?

Questions	Couple A		Couple B		Couple C		Couple D		Couple E		Couple F		Couple G		Couple H		Totals	
	H	W	H	W	H	W	H	W	H	W	H	W	H	W	H	W		
1																		
Yes		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		13
Not sure	X						X											2
No					X													1

2												
Yes	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	14
Not sure	X				X							2
No												0

The answers they could choose from were: YES, NOT SURE and NO

The evidence suggests that:

- 13 people out of 16 said that they believed the Bible could help them in a practical way.
- 14 people out of 16 said that a Scripturally based programme would be of use in a remarriage setting.
- Only 1 person did not agree with this.
- Only husband A and husband B said that they were unsure that the Bible could be of use in these areas.
- 5 out of 8 couples were in full agreement that the Bible would be of help in these areas.
- Couple F, although previously saying they would look outside for help, here indicates confidence in the Bible's ability to help.

The following comments were made

YES

- Emily "Some issues in disciplining children, and different roles are scripturally based"
- Don "It would provide Biblical guidelines for handling the inevitable adjustments & conflict".
- Sally "Biblical concepts & principles work in any life and any situation"
- Tom "Focus the program on all Biblical verses where marriage is dealt with, with a lot of practical interactions on how to deal in difficult situations mentioned in this questionnaire"
- Maria "The Bible always must be used as a basis for any relationship – all interpersonal relationships"
- Nicholas "Teaches one how to deal with situations in all spheres of life"

- Wendy "The Bible is sensible, practical, information on relationships generally easily adaptable to marriage"
- Marcia "Hopefully the counselling would be Bible-based and include God's wisdom, not only man's knowledge. Good to know prayer accompanies counselling"
- Paul "The Bible is full of solid guidelines for practical issues"
- James "Biblical principles are essential in making a marriage work"
- Liz "First marriage was not Biblically-based – Second one is and it makes a HUGE difference!"

NO

No comments

4.5.4.2 Tick the areas in which you think Biblically based guidelines COULD HELP you prepare for a blended marriage

Issues	Couple A		Couple B		Couple C		Couple D		Couple E		Couple F		Couple G		Couple H		Totals
	H	W	H	W	H	W	H	W	H	W	H	W	H	W	H	W	
Expectations	x	x	x	x	x			x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	13
Wife's role			x	x	x		x	x	x	x		x			x	x	11
Husband's role			x	x	x		x	x	x	x		x			x	x	11
Typical changes				x				x	x		x		x	x			6
Finances/property	x	x	x	x	x			x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	13
Wife's career				x					x	x			x		x	x	6
Husband's career				x					x	x			x		x	x	6
Inheritances	x	x	x	x					x	x		x	x				8
Time out together				x	x				x	x			x		x	x	7
Interests				x	x			x	x		x		x		x	x	8
Vacations				x					x			x	x		x	x	6
Sex	x		x	x			x	x	x	x		x	x		x	x	11
Step Children	x	x		x					x	x	x	x	x	x	x		10
Adopted									x		x	x	x				4
Natural	x										x				x		3
Children's role	x		x	x			x	x	x		x		x		x	x	10
Discipline methods:	x		x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x		x		x	x	13
Spouses Methods			x	x	x						x						4
Your methods			x	x	x						x						4
Compromise			x	x	x				x			x	x		x	x	8

Discipline of: His children		x	x	x		x	x			7
Her children		x	x	x		x			x	6
		x	x	x		x				5
Christianity	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	9
Biblical Guidelines		x	x	x	x	x	x		x	8
Religion			x	x	x			x		5
Materialism	x		x		x	x		x	x	7
Extended Family	x	x	x	x		x		x	x	9
Parents in law	x	x	x			x	x		x	9
Ex spouse		x	x			x	x			6
Ex In laws		x		x		x		x	x	5
Relationship to family of Origin			x	x		x		x	x	5
Conflict	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	13
Communication	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	11

Within this table, the data shows that:

(a) 13 out of 16 people said that Biblically based guidelines would be most helpful in the following areas:

Expectations

Finances

Discipline

Conflict

(b) 11 people said that Biblically based guidelines would be helpful in the following areas:

- Wife's role
- Husband's role
- Sex
- Communication

(c) And 10 said that the Biblically based guidelines would help with the following:

Step Children

Children's roles

(d) Couple B, E & G said that the Bible based program would be helpful in all areas.

(e) Wife (Couple C) did not answer this question. (Comments found under 4.4.4).

(f) Couples D & F, who did not do premarital counselling, both agree that they believe that a Biblically based program would be helpful.

Other areas where people felt that these guidelines would helpful was in:

Sally: "In every area of life"

Tom: "Submission, humility, unconditional giving and most importantly: love"

Jennifer: "Selfishness / love & respect, care helpfulness"

4.5.4.3 Tick the areas where you think that perhaps Biblically based guidelines would NOT be of help

Issues	Couple A		Couple B		Couple C		Couple D		Couple E		Couple F		Couple G		Couple H		Totals
	H	W	H	W	H	W	H	W	H	W	H	W	H	W	H	W	
Expectations						x											1
Wife's role											x						1
Husband's role																	0
Typical changes			x			x										x	3
Finances/property		X				x											2
Wife's career						x					x						2
Husband's career						x											1
Inheritances		X				x									x	x	4
Time out together			x			x					x						3
Interests			x			x					x						3
Vacations						x											1
Sex																	0
Step Children						x											1
Adopted						x											1
Natural						x											1
Children's role																	0
Discipline methods:																	0
Spouses Methods						x											0
Your methods						x											0
Compromise						x											1
Discipline of:						x											1
His children						x	x										2
Her children						x	x										2
Christianity																	0
Biblical Guidelines																	0
Religion											x				x	x	3
Materialism																	0
Extended Family		X				x									x	x	4
Parents in law						x	x										2

Ex spouse				x	x				x	x	4
Ex In laws	X			x	x					x	4
Relationship to family of Origin				x					x	x	3
Conflict											0
Communication											0

Only 6 out of eight couples responded to this question.

The data suggests that:

- 4 out of 6 couples agreed that Biblically based guidelines would not help them in the following areas:
Ex spouse,
Ex In laws
Extended Family, and
Inheritances
- 50% of the couples agreed that Biblically based guidelines would not help them in the areas of:
Time out,
Interests,
Religion,
Relationship with the Family of origin, and
Typical changes.
- Couple E were of the opinion that the Bible is helpful in every area of a blended family situation.
- One couple (D) seemed to feel that the Biblically based guidelines would not be helpful in many areas as indicated above, seemingly indicating a total lack of confidence in the use of the Bible in practical applications.

Maria (Couple C) said: "the last two questions I find unable to answer in that depending on the counselling course you could use the Bible to guide in the way you want to go. E.g. Using the typical passages for husband & wives one lands up with the "old school" idea of marriage where the husband is altogether head of the home

and the wife is submissive with no say even though she not only looks after the house but must also contribute financially. OK if done properly (to my mind) that marriage is a partnership & in that I am sure that Scripture is helpful in changing our attitudes & expectations in all aspects”.

4.6 PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS DERIVED FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRE

4.6.1 Counselling

- Even though all the counselling was Christian based, it was generally found that the counselling did not adequately assist, and nor was it useful in preparing the couples for a blended family.
- It was also found that the counselling did not adequately prepare them for their present marriage.
- It was also found that generally the husbands seemed to feel the counselling had been of help but the wives were in disagreement with this.
- The counselling had been no help whatsoever in the relationship between the husband and wife, and very little help in the relationship with step children.
- With regards to the counselling being realistic it was found that the answers were divided regarding this issue.
- The Premarital counselling seemed to focus mainly on Biblical guidelines and the relationship with the couple themselves.
- The counselling did not assist in the area of step children and discipline of such.
- The counselling did not assist the couples with dealing with the former spouse.
- The results seem to infer that the majority of partners within these marriages did not feel that the counselling had helped or assisted them with blending their marriages. This indicates that they were inadequately prepared for these marriages.

4.6.2 Conflict

- In the area of “Dealing with their former spouse”, the evidence suggests that both the couples who had and the couples who did not have counselling tended to have conflict in this area, which implies that those who were counselled were not adequately prepared in this area.
- In the area of “Disciplining children”, the evidence suggests that most of the conflict within this area is found with younger children and that most families, whether they have received counselling or not, struggled with this issue at sometime or another.
- In the area of “As a stepparent, difficulties in your relationship with your step children”, the data shows us that whether or not the couples received premarital counselling they still experienced problems within this area.
- This category elicited the most ‘a lot’ responses than all the other categories, which suggests that this category (out of the 4 given) contributed mostly towards conflict within the blended family.
- In the area “Difficulties with step children adjusting to a new family”, the evidence suggested that all the couples experienced at sometime or another, problems with children adjusting to a new family system.
- From these four areas it is seen that the area that deals with children, seemed to elicit the most negative responses. With a majority of the couples, the wives seem to have the most problems in contrast to their husbands.
- Generally it was agreed that no couple was exempt from these areas of conflict.
- The comments seem to suggest that the areas that seemed to create the most conflict not discussed previously are: (a) the role of the previous family [2]; (b) In-laws [11]; (c) alienation of step children and dealing with adult step children [6].

4.6.3 Church

- The church is not regarded as being the institution that can help blended families in their conflict issues. It is seen that it inadequately prepares couples for blended marriages, even though people feel that it could help them in the difficult situations they face.
- People are prepared to look outside the church for assistance in their marriages.

It is believed that the church needs to help especially in the areas of:

1. Family workshops and courses.
2. The counselling of children in a non-threatening environment.
3. Get-togethers with other couples / families in same situation i.e. weekends away.
4. Discussion groups on various topics.
5. Family counselling.
6. Role-playing (acting), considering how one would respond to certain situations.
7. Opportunities to meet with other families who have successfully navigated similar situations.

4.6.4 Biblical Guidelines

- It is generally believed that the Bible could help in a practical way, and that a Scripturally based programme would be of use in a re-marital counselling setting.
- The Church must be challenged to create an adequate Biblically based re-marital programme for potential blended marriages.

4.7 THE INTERVIEWS

The researcher undertook 15 minute interviews with the three selected people, as most of the information had already been gathered from the above questionnaires. As Patton (2002:341) points out the purpose of the interview is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective and therefore explore more deeply the areas discussed in the questionnaire. An interview guide (Patton, 2002:343) was used so that the same basic lines of inquiry were pursued with each person interviewed. This interview is attached as Appendix D.

The following three people were chosen because they were all of the opinion that the premarital counselling had not been helpful to them in their second marriages.

In these interviews three basic areas were covered:

- Personal History
- Counselling
- Church and Biblical Guidelines

4.7.1 The aim of the interviews

The aim of the interview was to understand where this person believed there had been a lack in the premarital counselling and what could have been added to make a difference in terms of preparation for the unique problems found within the blended family. These interviews were quick and to the point as a lot of pertinent information had already been gleaned from the questionnaires

4.7.2 Maria

An interview was conducted with Maria who has now been married for 5 years to Tom and went out with him for one year before they were married. She had been divorced from her first husband for two years when she met him. She went into this marriage

with two adult children from her side living out of the home, one adult daughter of Tom's living out of the home and his son of 18 living with them.

At the time of undertaking the premarital counselling she said that she believed that the counselling would have been helpful as there was no reason to think otherwise. In retrospect she found that there were gaps in the counselling and that there were some issues that could have been explored. "I think the biggest major issue was on upbringing and discipline of children and how I did it and how he did it because I had none, I had no idea"

The issues she struggles with now are: "With communication, uh, I tend to confront and he tends to withdraw". Maria believes that they should have had some sort of personality testing before they married. "Mainly because I thought I knew who I was and he knew who he was and when I eventually did do psychometric testing I realised that we are two basically different, very very different people"

Further comments regarding added contents for premarital programs suggested that parents should be given direction regarding the boundaries that should be laid down with children.

In terms of ongoing care and the interest that the church could show to blended families Maria observed that they really don't show much interest at all. She mentioned that a support group for blended families might be something to pursue

A full copy of this interview is to be found as Appendix E.

4.7.3 Marcia

An interview was conducted with Marcia who had been divorced for 10 years before she married Paul. They were long term friends for many years and went out seriously for about one year. She said that she had no intention of going to premarital

counselling and only did so because the minister insisted they did it before committing themselves to each other in marriage.

The areas that she has struggled with mainly, within her present marriage, are the personality differences between her and her husband and the relationship between her husband and his mother.

Marcia said that the area of dealing with existing parents should be incorporated into a premarital programme. Another issue that could have been addressed in counselling, according to Marcia, was the differences in value systems, in dealing with the upbringing and expectations of children. She maintains that boundaries for these adult children should have been discussed.

Ideas for further content for a premarital programme included the following:

For people in their 40s – looking at problems with teenagers, discipline and what the rules are.

For people in their 50s – must take into account retirement, work, expectations of leisure time and different interests.

Marcia was of the opinion that there might be a place for focus groups (on blended families) within the church as she herself had benefited greatly from a divorce recovery group. She also believed that a group facilitated by a counsellor in a confidential setting was another aspect that could be explored.

A full copy of this interview is to be found as Appendix F

4.7.4 Jennifer

An interview was conducted with Jennifer had been separated and then divorced for a total of fifteen years before she met Derrick. She then went out with Derrick for two and half years before she married him. They have now been married for four years.

Derrick had two children both in their thirties – a boy and a girl, and Jennifer had two children, a girl and a boy both in their early twenties.

They went to a pastor for counselling because Derrick did not want to go for official counselling. When asked if the counselling had been useful and helpful, Jennifer answered with an emphatic “No!”

Jennifer was asked what she thought were the actual gaps in the counselling programme

And she mentioned the following:

- “They didn’t deal with the children issue very much”.
- “They didn’t deal with the age difference” (there is ten years between Jennifer and Derrick).

“Finances weren’t addressed”.

“Sexuality wasn’t really addressed and just general living I guess”

With reference to the issues that they were struggling with now, Jennifer mentioned the following:

The issue of personality differences, and the issue of putting a late spouse on a pedestal which the present wife can never reach.

She mentioned that that the church could perhaps help in the following areas:

- I “Are there perhaps any practical structures that the church could bring in to handle the problems? Of Blended families?”
- J “Yes. I think if they could address things like, expecting the new spouse to be the same as the old spouse. Umm, or triggers that have upset people in the past, to watch out for them in the future. Some sensitivities. Ummm.”
- I “How would they be addressed that in a practical way? Do you think if there was a forum like a discussion group? Or meeting with people who have been there before.....?”

- J “Yes I think some of the common problems would come to the fore, those that most people would get, Ja there could even be tapes or talks to do with that”
- I “So maybe just a group of support, of people going through the same thing is not a bad idea”.
- J “It probably would have been good”.

She says too that some of the questions that should have been asked before marriage included:

- What's the reason for getting married?
- Are you getting married for security or companionship or what?

She mentioned too that there had been an effect on her son because of the conflict within her marriage

- J “But for my son, especially in those first couple of years, they were very difficult years. He picked up that I was unhappy. And, ja, it has been difficult for him to even look at marriage and there have been very few marriages that are happy. That seems to have had an effect on him”

4.8 PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS REGARDING THE INTERVIEWS

4.8.1 Gaps in the counselling

From the three interviews conducted the following came to light regarding the gaps in the pre-marital counselling:

- The upbringing and disciplining of children. How the husband and wife do it differently.
- Dealing with existing parents, your relationship with your own parents and your relationship with your future-in-laws. How much time must you spend together? And where are the boundaries?
- The differences in value systems, in dealing with the upbringing and expectations of children.

- The possessiveness of children towards their parents.
- Dealing with age differences between husbands and wives.
- Finances.
- Sexuality and general living.

4.8.2 Issues being faced now

- Problems with communication.
- Personality differences between husbands and wives.
- Relationships between a spouse and his/her mother,
- Issues of putting a late spouse on a pedestal which the present wife can never reach.

4.8.3 Additional information that could have been dealt with in the premarital counselling

- Psychometric testing to determine personality differences.
- Boundaries that should be laid down with children.
- Practical, issues of day-to-day living.
- For people in their 40s – dealing with problems associated with teenagers, discipline and what the rules are.
- For people in their 50s – dealing with retirement, work, expectations of leisure time and different interests.
- Looking at the reasons for getting married. eg. Security or companionship?

4.8.4 Suggestions for practical ways in which the church could be of help

- The implementation of support groups.
- Focus groups (on blended families). Incorporating talks on areas of difficulty.
- A group facilitated by a counsellor in a confidential setting could be another aspect that could be explored.

Both the information gleaned from the questionnaires, and the interviews, were in agreement regarding some of the areas explored. For example, both revealed that the counselling did not deal with the area of children and discipline; that there were definite gaps in the premarital counselling and that the church could be of help in practical ways.

4.9 THE OBJECTIVES

Through the use of questionnaires and interviews, and the findings thereof, the researcher believes that the following objectives have been attained. This chapter has given insight into the efficacy of premarital counselling within the area of blended families, it has helped give insight and understanding into the conflict experienced in blended families, and it has given insight into the respondent's confidence in the church and the help that they feel the church can give them in a practical sense.

4.10 APPENDICES

- **Appendix A.** Letter: 'Empirical study – Interpersonal conflict within the Blended Family'
- **Appendix B.** Consent Form for Empirical study. Interpersonal conflict within the Blended family.
- **Appendix C.** Questionnaire: 'Interpersonal conflict within the Blended Family.'
- **Appendix D.** Interview Sheet
- **Appendix E.** Interview with Maria
- **Appendix F.** Interview with Marcia
- **Appendix G.** Interview with Jennifer

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS TO INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT WITHIN THE BLENDED FAMILY

5.1. OBJECTIVES AND INTRODUCTION OF CHAPTER 5

The objectives of this chapter are:

1. To draw conclusions from the last four chapters regarding interpersonal conflict in the blended family. This will be done by looking at the basis theoretical, meta theoretical and practical theoretical perspectives as presented by this study.
2. To draw conclusions into the efficacy of premarital counselling within the area of blended families,
3. To draw conclusions into the conflict experienced in blended families
4. To draw conclusions into the respondent's confidence in the church in the area of assisting blended families and the help that the respondents believe the church can give them in a practical sense.

The aim of this chapter is to formulate conclusions based on the information gleaned from the preliminary conclusions given in the previous chapters, and in turn to use these as part of the information given to create proposed guidelines for a remarital programme in chapter 6 for blended families.

5.2 BASIS THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

5.2.1 Marriage in the Old Testament

The curse confirmed the fact that Satan would always be instrumental in the attempt to turn man from God, and that women would, in their pain and woundedness, strive

against the man who would seek to rule over her. Physical toil and sheer weariness, plus a tendency to dominate, would contribute to the problems that would start to surface within a marriage situation as man succumbed to the evil influences around him. Throughout the book of Genesis and into the era of the New Testament, sin took control of the earth but because of God's wondrous grace He has not let man totally destroy himself but mitigated many an act of rebellion in mankind.

The evidence at hand suggests that God has compassionate grace and that this grace extends to all of humanity despite their sin. Evidence shows that man and woman have wandered from God's original plan for marriage but despite this God will reveal his compassion and love, particularly to those who are His people.

Stringent protection of the marital bond is indeed what is found when the relevant laws regarding marriage are examined in Deuteronomy. The death penalty was imposed upon those who committed adultery according to Deut. 22:22, which once again underlines the seriousness with which God viewed the marriage union.

The Biblical perspective says however that the monogamous model of marriage found within Gen. 2 is what was acceptable to God before the fall of man but God has allowed the establishment of blended families due to death and divorce as an allowable alternative since the fall.

5.2.2 Divorce in the Old Testament

Marriages were no longer solely monogamous. Polygamy was practised as a regime to enhance family growth.

The Israelites were marrying Godless people and therefore raising Godless offspring. Men were choosing to leave their wives and children, and the support given by family life, to marry other women, and therefore divorce became commonplace practice.

Divorce was acceptable – and practised widely especially from the husband’s side. The reasons for divorce were varied and more often than not, fickle and without substance. Further, divorce was often accompanied by violence

5.2.3 Blended families in the Old Testament

Polygamy was the cause of many serious family problems which are evidenced in the pages of the Old Testament. The practices of polygamy and levirate marriages in the Old Testament led the researcher to observe that a vast number of marriages featured within the Old Testament pages were blended in one way or another. Within these systems interpersonal conflict resulted because of the fact that man had strayed away from the marriage ideal found in Gen. 2:24

5.2.4 Conflict within blended families of the Old Testament

It would appear that conflict takes on an altered form when observed within the blended family scenario in contrast to the traditional family, as noted in the following points:

- With polygamy, it was found that jealousy quickly arose between different spouses – particularly between wives.
- Jealousy also arose between wives and offspring of different wives.
- Jealousy and identity issues arose between different children of different parentage.
- Favouritism within the blended family caused extreme hurt and resentment
- Inadequate disciplining within the blended family caused fragmentation and identity problems in children.

Again we find that the very problems that are typical today within the *blended* situation were shown to be present from the moment that man deviated from God’s plan for the ideal marriage within the Old Testament pages.

5.2.5 Marriage in the New Testament according to Jesus

Jesus Christ in the Book of Matthew, Chapter 19, confirms the three purposes of marriage as discussed in 2.3.1.2 which were, procreation, support and the unity of one flesh, as well as the initial purposes given by God in Gen. 2:24 as being the ideal for marriage. This gives the researcher insight into how sin has impacted upon our present day world and where blended marriages need to incorporate the original ideals of marriage as a vehicle in dealing with the conflict evidenced in these marriages

5.2.6 Marriage according to Ephesians 5

Paul looks at the attitudes to be incorporated within a marriage context, for example respect and love as found in Eph. 5, and also mutual submission between husbands and wives. Out of this passage definite spiritual attitudes are to be observed within the marriage relationship. Both the husband and the wife should have a spiritual walk with God to be able to implement the ideal attitudes. The husband is to love his wife with a love akin to the same sacrificial love that Christ has for the church and this love is all-giving and will elicit respect from his wife. The wife is to have an attitude of loving submission to the leadership role of her husband and by doing this will bring him the respect he deserves.

These are the ideals laid down by Scriptures and yet it is observed that in today's world many marriages lack the basis of love and respect.

5.2.7 Current Christian Counselling Approaches

Various approaches have been utilised by Christian counsellors in dealing with the area of conflict within marriage. The following are a summary of some of the approaches in use today:

- The Nouthetic approach believes that God's word is sufficient for all problems faced by mankind which therefore secures it as being the only source of divine

authority. The basis of nouthetic counselling comes from the fundamental Biblical principle found in 2 Tim. 3:16-17. This approach is used ideally with Christians as it challenges people to re-look at their stand before God.

The Institute of Nouthetic Studies stipulates that nouthetic counselling embraces three ideas and those are: 1. *Confrontation*, 2. *Concern* and 3. *Change*. Within the marital conflict area, the Bible is used to challenge, and confront couples to re-look at their stand before God and to change their behaviour according to the principles laid down by Scripture. Adams maintains that sin is the cause of all problems and says that the Bible will enlighten to the recurring themes of sin. These various lists of sins provide clear cut data for discovering common sinful practices and will enable counsellors to understand the patterns of behaviour surfacing in everyday life.

This approach has been criticised for being too legalistic and confrontational in character.

- The Behavioural approach aligns very much with the idea of changing behaviour, thoughts and feeling through positive reinforcement. It emphasizes the use of goals for the present as well as future, and, incorporates the critical role of counsellor as encourager. This approach might need to focus also on the deep emotional wounds of the past which require healing before behavioural change.
- The Cognitive approach evaluates the negative thought life of counselees and the impact this negativity has on day to day life. Counselees are taught to become observers of their thought lives and to implement the sufficiency of God's word in incorporating change. Again, the emotional wounds of the past would need to be dealt with as well.
- The Narrative approach draws awareness to the presence of life's stories created by the misperceptions and tragedy of life's blows. The community are

encouraged to listen to the stories and to help remarried families to integrate into the life of the church. Integral to the healing is the pastor who can interpret the church's traditions (and the stories of the Scriptures) to the stories of the wounded. This approach emphasizes listening and sharing God's grace.

- The Connecting aspect of Larry Crabb's approach focuses on the goodness which has been placed in a believer's heart at the time of conversion. Contrary to nouthetic counselling it focuses on the good urges not the bad urges within a person believing that if the counsellor focuses on that which is God given and draws the counselee's attention to that, the counselee will seek positive change. When a client is encouraged, he will want to change.

It would appear that the above approaches can all be utilized in one form or another to deal with a conflict situation or trauma within a blended marriage.

In response to the objectives of this chapter the researcher found that that a Biblical understanding of marriage, divorce and remarriage and the conflict experienced in these blended families has been ascertained and that there are various Christian counselling theories operating today that deal particularly with conflict in marriage.

5.3 META THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

5.3.1 Marriage

In today's world, there are various definitions of marriage and the following gives a fairly concise definition as the secular world sees it: "*Marriage* is defined as a socially acknowledged and approved sexual union between two adult individuals. When two people marry, they become kin to one another; the marriage bond connects together a wider range of kinspeople. Parents, brothers, sisters and other blood relatives become relatives of the partner through marriage". Nowadays diverse marriage

models and structures are found, for example: monogamy, polygamy, polyandry, cenogamy, same sex marriage, common law marriages and co-habitation.

It appears that affection, loyalty and continuity is still characteristic of all families, and regardless of format (be they *nuclear* families or *stepfamilies*) most families are typically resistant to change and are likely to try and engage in corrective manoeuvres to re-establish family interactive patterns.

The observation is made too, that man seems to have digressed away from the original plan for marriage laid down in Scripture and that many variant models are now acceptable to society, which has in fact, contributed to the development and place of blended families in the world, as it is within all of these models and structures that the blended family is incorporated.

5.3.2 Divorce

Statistics show that divorce is on the increase all the time and blended families are fast becoming more common and the acceptable norm in society. The grounds for divorce have extended over time away from the Biblical principles to include many reasons and nowadays 'a no fault' clause is also considered grounds for divorce in the United States.

Statistics also reveal that many minor children as well as older children are caught up in a broken marriage, and that there is deep psychological trauma imprinted upon most children through a divorce situation. One of the main areas of conflict around divorce is generally focused around children.

One of the off-shoots of divorce is the formation of single parenting families as well as step or blended families.

5.3.3 Remarriage

The British organization 'Stepfamily' says that there are at least 72 different forms of step-families, depending upon "whether or not the adults are single, widowed, divorced or separated, or whether you have children from a previous marriage, no children or children within a present blended marriage". This ratio can also include people who have had previous marriages; relationships, and who are from heterosexual backgrounds as well as people involved in homosexual relationships.

Within the secular arena nowadays, step families are regarded as the normal and natural family to be. The social revolution of the 60s contributed to a jump in divorce, single parenthood and remarriage which made step-families a normative family forum. For most divorced people, single life is fairly short-lived, with the median interval before remarriage for previously divorced men being 2.3 years and for divorced women 2.5 years.

Unfortunately despite this the divorce rate for remarriage is found to be 10% higher than that for first marriages, and more than 25% of remarriages never make it past their fifth year.

There are very specific problems associated with couples who consider marriage for a second time:

- The studies reveal that compared to first marriages, remarriage tends to include more individuals who might well have personality characteristics that increase the likelihood for divorce (e.g. impulsivity, neuroticism).
- Remarriages often lack the social support that first time marriages receive.
- More remarried couples opt for divorce as a vehicle for ending marital problems than do couples in first marriages.
- Most couples in remarriages have not learned to resolve marital differences successfully.

Many theories have been put forward considering the causality of divorce within second marriages. Amongst these theories the following reasons have been identified: Mobility, Inward Family Pressure, Economic Inflation, Woman's liberation, Permanence and commitment, Work, Romantic Love and Deferred Gratification and further, that if both partners have come out of a previous marriage it will have left scars, caveats and bonds, and more likely or not, if the couple have started their married life with an instant family, this will cause the couple to have very little time to consolidate their marriage before dealing with the immediate presence of children and their care. Other contributing factors towards a break up are the mix of two cultural backgrounds.

The integration of a stepfamily into a functioning family system can take years, rather than months, and depends on many factors. The minimum time for integration is generally considered to be two years and for some families integration is often not achieved before the step children leave home.

5.3.4 Conflict in the Blended Family

There are unique problems typical to blended families that elicit conflict within these families, and these problems surface over some of the following: step-parent authority; angry stepchildren; stepsibling relationships; and extended stepfamily relationships (step-grandparents, for example).

Family researchers have identified an increasing range of different factors that in part explain the differences in outcomes between children living in different forms of family households and that what is clear is that family change, resulting from death, separation, divorce and remarriage of parents is distressing for children, particularly when accompanied by socioeconomic stress and conflict.

Research has been conducted into the area of conflict within the blended family, focusing particularly on *intra-household* conflict (conflict between parents who reside

in the same household) and *inter-household* conflict (conflict between biological parents who reside in different households). The conclusion found that children in stepfather households seem to be worse off than those in other households.

Marital conflict has been found to be associated with external as well as internal outcomes in children.

It would appear that conflict within the blended family manifests itself within four major areas:

- Parental conflict which includes Intra-Household and Inter-Household aspects.
- The confusion of bringing children into a family different from its own day-to-day environment and the changes and discipline that are needed to deal with this child.
- The differing expectations between stepparents and stepchildren and the difficulties that arise in this relationship, and
- The crisis of identity found within children desperately seeking to find a place of acceptance within the new family.

5.3.5 Counselling for the Blended Family

Various counselling and psychological approaches are utilized by the social sciences and psychology today in dealing with conflict in families. There would seem to be a few that actually attempt to prepare these families beforehand.

5.3.5.1 The Step Enrichment Programme

The researcher has found this programme to have merit especially within the area of group therapy and discussion. Although this programme seemed to have some very positive results it was only conducted on people who were already part of a blended family. Perhaps it would have been useful to have proceeded with a programme like the above before the couples had married.

5.3.5.2 The FOCUS inventory

This is mainly a pre-marital inventory with very little attention given to remarriage with only 9 items out of 156 focused on blended marriages. Unique problems are experienced in a second marriage and perhaps this very fact calls for more attention. The inventory could be a useful guide for counsellors as it assists with identifying themes both within and across various topic areas.

5.3.6 Psychological Approaches

The researcher has examined some of the techniques and approaches available in the world of psychology in dealing with conflict and established the following:

5.3.6.1 The Psychoanalytical theory

According to this theory our behaviour is determined by irrational forces, unconscious motivations and biological and instinctual drives which evolve through key psychosexual stages during the first 6 years of life. The Psychoanalytical theory attributes aggressive behaviour to death instincts, and says that both sexual and aggressive drives are powerful determinants of why people act as they do.

Freud suggested a series of biologically focused stages of development: oral, anal and oedipal, whereas Erikson (a recent writer in psycho-dynamics) identified more socially orientated stages: trust, autonomy, initiative, industry, identity, intimacy, generativity and integrity, which covered all stages of life. The underlying theory is that if a person's attachments are disrupted in early life, they will grow up having difficulty in relationships and commitment.

This theory has developed into a model which accesses past memories and wounds and deals with the anger, guilt and conflict brought about by these memories. If unattended to, these wounds can cause conflict in the present day scenario. It focuses primarily on childhood experiences, which are discussed, reconstructed,

interpreted and analyzed. The assumption is that this exploration is necessary for character change.

The approach also recognized that the family provided the early environment in which neurotic fears and anxieties developed. The researcher believes that this can be a major key in dealing with conflict within the Blended family.

5.3.6.2 The Human Validation Process Model

This systematic approach, developed by Virginia Satir, is based on the assumption that the key to changing the individual is understanding and working with the family. This approach emphasizes communication as well as emotional experiencing, and stresses the involvement of the therapist with a family.

Within this model, caring and acceptance were integral to and key elements in, helping people face their fears and open up their hearts to others. Satir's model stresses enhancement and validation of self-esteem, family rules, congruence versus defensive communication patterns, sculpting, nurturing triads and family mapping, and family life-fact chronologies.

This model argues that dysfunctional families follow dysfunctional rules and because of this attempts to help families to become aware of those unwritten rules that retard growth and maturity in marriage.

It would seem that above all other therapists, Satir's was the most powerful voice to wholeheartedly support the importance of love and nurturance as being the most important healing aspects of therapy.

5.3.6.3 The Person-Centred Approach

This person-centred approach is based on concepts taken from humanistic psychology and the basic assumption is that people are generally trustworthy, and have the potential for understanding themselves and resolving their own problem. The common theme that runs through out Roger's earlier writings and permeates all of his work is a basic sense of trust in the client's ability to move forward in a constructive way if the right conditions for fostering growth are present.

Within the person-centred framework, the client, who previously suffered from feelings of basic helplessness, powerlessness and the inability to make decisions, learns to become less oriented to meeting others' expectations and thus begins to behave in ways that are truer to themselves.

The goals for this approach differ from other traditional approaches in that it aims for a greater degree of independence and integration of the individual. The characteristics that underline this approach are

- (1) an openness to experience,
- (2) a trust in themselves,
- (3) an internal source of evaluation and
- (4) a willingness to continue growing.

In response to the objectives of this chapter the researcher has been able to gain an understanding from a sociological and psychological perspective of marriage, divorce and remarriage and on how society interprets conflict in the blended family in today's world.

The researcher has also ascertained in a general sense how some secular psychological approaches deal with the area of conflict within the blended family.

5.4 META THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES GAINED FROM EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

5.4.1 Questionnaires

The information and evidence gathered from the questionnaires led to the following conclusions

5.4.1.1 Counselling

Even though all the counselling was Christian based, it was generally found that the counselling did not adequately assist, and nor was it useful in preparing the couples for a blended family. It was also found that the counselling did not adequately prepare them for their present marriage.

It was also found that generally the husbands seemed to feel the counselling had been of help but the wives were in disagreement with this. The counselling had been no help whatsoever in the relationship between the husband and wife, and very little help in the relationship with step children. With regards to the counselling being realistic it was found that the answers were divided regarding this issue.

The premarital counselling seemed to focus mainly on Biblical guidelines and the relationship with the couple themselves. The counselling did not assist in the area of step children and discipline of such. The husbands generally found that the counselling had not assisted them with their step children whereas the wives were divided as to whether it had been helpful or not. Neither did the counselling assist the couples with dealing with the former spouse.

The results seem to infer that the majority of partners within these marriages did not feel that the counselling had helped or assisted them with blending their marriages. This indicates that they were inadequately prepared for these marriages.

5.4.1.2 Conflict

Within the area of "Dealing with their former spouse", the evidence suggests that both the couples who had and the couples who did not have counseling tended to have conflict in this area, which implies that those who were counseled were not adequately prepared in this area.

In the area of "Disciplining children", the evidence suggests that most of the conflict within this area is found with younger children and that most families, whether they have received counselling or not, struggled with this issue at some time or another.

In the area of "As a stepparent, difficulties in your relationship with your step children", the data shows us that whether or not the couples received premarital counselling they still experienced problems within this area. This category elicited the most 'a lot' responses than all the other categories, which suggests that this category (out of the 4 given) contributed mostly towards conflict within the blended family.

In the area "Difficulties with step children adjusting to a new family, the evidence suggested that all the couples experienced at sometime or another, problems with children adjusting to a new family system.

From these four areas it is seen that the area that deals with children, seemed to elicit the most negative responses. With a majority of the couples, the wives seem to have the most problems in contrast to their husbands.

Generally it was found that no couple was exempt from these areas of conflict. The comments seem to suggest that the areas that seemed to create the most conflict not discussed previously are:

- (a) the role of the previous family;
- (b) In-laws;

(c) and the alienation of step children and dealing with adult step children.

5.4.1.3 Church

The evidence showed that the church is not regarded as being the institution that can help blended families in their conflict issues. The church's premarital preparation for couples entering blended marriages is perceived to be inadequate (even though some people feel it will help them in the difficult situations they face). Furthermore, people are also prepared to look outside the church for assistance in their marriages.

It is believed that the church can perhaps offer help within the following areas:

- Family workshops and courses.
- The counselling of children in a non-threatening environment.
- Get-togethers with other couples / families in same situation i.e. weekends away.
- Discussion groups on various topics.
- Family counselling.
- Role-playing (acting), and considering how one would respond to certain situations.
- Opportunities to meet with other families who have successfully navigated similar situations.

5.4.2 Interviews

The information and evidence gathered from the interviews led to the following conclusions:

5.4.2.1 Gaps in the counselling

- From the three interviews conducted the following came to light regarding the gaps in the pre-marital counselling:
- The upbringing and disciplining of children. Looking at how the husband and wife approach this differently.

- Dealing with existing parents Looking at the relationship with parents and relationships with future-in-laws. How much time must you spend together and where are the boundaries?
- The differences in value systems, particularly in dealing with the upbringing and expectations of children.
- The role of children and the possessiveness of children towards their parents or origin.
- Dealing with age differences between husbands and wives.
- Finances.
- Sexuality and general living.

5.4.2.2 Issues being faced now

The following problems were being experienced now in the marriage:

- Problems with communication.
- Personality differences between husbands and wives.
- Relationships between a spouse and his/her mother,
- Issues of putting a late spouse on a pedestal which the present wife can never reach.

5.4.2.3 Additional information that could have been dealt with in the premarital counselling

The following additions were suggested by the interviewees for the remarital counselling programme:

- Psychometric testing to determine personality differences.
- Boundaries that should be laid down with children.
- Practical, issues of day-to-day living.
- For people in their 40s – dealing with problems associated with teenagers, discipline and what the rules are.

- For people in their 50s – dealing with retirement, work, expectations of leisure time and different interests.
- Looking at the reasons for getting married. For example, security or companionship?

5.4.2.4 Suggestions for practical ways in which the church could be of help

From the information gleaned from the interviews the following suggestions have come to light as a way in which the church family could be of help to blended families:

- (1) The implementation of support groups, and sharing experiences with people who have been through the same problems.
- (2) Focus groups (on blended families). These could incorporate talks and presentations on areas of difficulty.
- (3) A group facilitated by a counsellor in a confidential setting could be another aspect that could be explored.

5.5 IN CONCLUSION

Both the information gleaned from the questionnaires, and the interviews, were in agreement regarding some of the areas explored. For example, both revealed that the counselling did not deal with the area of children and discipline; that there were definite gaps in the premarital counselling and that the church could be of help in practical ways.

5.6 THE OBJECTIVES

Through the use of questionnaires and interviews, and the findings thereof, the researcher believes that the following objectives have been attained. This chapter has given insight into the efficacy of premarital counselling within the area of blended families, it has helped give insight and understanding into the conflict experienced in blended families, and it has given insight into the respondent's confidence in the church and the help that they feel the church can give them in a practical sense.

This chapter has drawn together all the information from the previous chapters in the form of conclusions which will in turn be used as part of the information used to create proposed guidelines in the following chapter for a remarital programme for blended families.

CHAPTER 6

PROPOSED GUIDELINES FOR REMARITAL COUNSELLING FOR BLENDED FAMILIES

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Under investigation in this study has been the question of whether or not participants within a blended family have been adequately prepared for potential conflict within their marriages. As discussed in the preceding chapters the research has shown that these families were generally inadequately prepared for a further marriage.

The main areas of conflict within blended families, seems to lie within four main fields: parental conflict, the disciplining of children, maternal negativity and the crisis of identity experienced by a child as he/she enters into a new family system (cf 1.2). The basis theoretical perspective (chapter 2) based on Zerfass' model explored theological insights regarding the subject, and the meta theoretical perspectives examined the social sciences and psychology, (chapter 3) in an attempt to understand the history of, and current trends in, blended families. The meta theoretical perspective from an empirical angle (chapter 4) gave insight into the conflict being experienced by these families in these present days and as Kim noted, it is important to put research into the context of concrete life and it is in this regard that a selection of practice-theoretical perspectives, utilizing the concluding aspect of Zerfass' model, will be examined and proposed in this final chapter

The central theoretical argument in regard to this research stated that couples could be adequately prepared for remarriage through the use of pastoral counselling in dealing with conflict in the blended family. It is with this in mind that the following guidelines are proposed using the results of the research gleaned from the previous chapters and keeping in mind the four main areas that need to be addressed.

6.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim is to propose a programme to be used by pastors and counsellors, which explores the attitudes of both pastors/counsellors and couples; examines conflict within the blended family and investigates other areas pertaining to this study.

The objective is to create a programme based on Scriptural principles, utilizing information taken from the previous chapters. The researcher believes that the Bible supplies principles for living in every area of life that we as humans experience and it is with this in mind that Biblical principles have been applied to each section of these guidelines.

These guidelines take into consideration:

- Counselling (premarital as well as follow-up),
- The church's role in dealing with these families in a practical way.
- The areas of parental conflict, the disciplining of children, maternal negativity and the crisis of identity experienced by a child as he/she enters into a new family system.

6.3 ATTITUDES AND APPROACH TO REMARITAL MARRIAGE COUNSELLING

Before the counsellor can deal with couples entering into a blended marriage there are various aspects within the counselling attitudes and approaches that have to be highlighted.

6.3.1 The Christian pastor or counsellor

- The counsellor cannot approach blended families or potential blended families with a negative judgmental attitude. Certainly it is the duty of the pastor/counsellor to give Biblical principles for marriage, divorce and remarriage but it is not the duty of the pastor to be condemning especially taking into consideration the mitigating grace that God Himself has shown to the counsellor by His provision of salvation (cf 2.37, 2.10).

- There has to be certain qualities that the counsellor displays in his dealings with people (cf 2.10.8). These qualities are based on the attitudes that Christ Himself displayed in dealing with people:
 1. The counsellor must be God-fearing, well versed in Scripture, Spirit led and a person of discernment (cf 2.1).
 2. The counsellor must show compassion, be encouraging, non-judgmental and give people worth and hope (cf 2.9.5).
 3. The counsellor must also have the ability to confront skewed thinking and to guide and challenge couples in their thought life and behaviour (cf 2, 9.1, 2.10.8).
 4. The concepts of edification, encouragement and confrontation are to be used with wisdom and discernment (cf 2.9.1, 2.9.2.1).
 These four points are underscored by the principle found in 2 Tim. 4:2 where the believer is encouraged to *“Be prepared in season and out of season; to correct, rebuke and encourage – with great patience and careful instruction”*.
 5. The counsellor should maintain confidentiality with the couple. Deep issues will be discussed and the clients need to know that what they share is not spoken about with anyone else unless they have given permission to do so. Again, we are encouraged by Scripture to look at our motivations: *“He who goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets, but he who is trustworthy and faithful in spirit keeps the matter hidden”* Prov 11:13. (AV, 2004).
 6. Underlying all of these traits within the counsellors own life, is the life of prayer and of listening to God.
 7. It is recommended that the counsellor/pastor keep in touch with current trends regarding counselling with blended families. There is much literature available written by Christian psychologists and pastors which can be of immense benefit. Networking with fellow workers (be it in the community or on the internet) within this field is also advised.

6.4 A PROPOSED STRUCTURE FOR REMARITAL COUNSELLING

It has been the researcher's observation that most premarital programmes are not equipped to deal adequately with the unique conflict problems of the blended family. The fact that there was so much dissatisfaction with premarital counselling, as discussed in chapter 4, bears witness to this. It is with this in mind that the following acronym has been devised by the researcher to provide a basis for a remarital counselling programme: *WISER FAMILIES*. The researcher has used a combination of (1) her experience and expertise within this field which has comprised of being part of a blended family for the past 16 years, and included bringing in two step children from her husband's previous marriage, and merging two families together with a total of four children; (2) her experience and work with premarital counselling for the past ten years and (3) the research produced by this study, to create these guidelines.

6.4.1 Wiser Families

This acronym has been created by the researcher to incorporate all the elements found within the results of the study and does its best to look at every aspect of remarital counselling.

- The "Wiser" part of the acronym deals mainly with the relationship between the husband and wife and looks at various ways of dealing with parental conflict, including expectations and roles within the marriage. This section also looks at the importance of having Scriptural guidelines within the marriage context.
- The "Families" part of the acronym looks at the financial side of the marriage relationship, attitudes of all members of the household (including personality differences and dealing with conflict), the disciplining of children and the way parents can help their children to be accepted into a new household.

In dealing with all of the following facets of the acronym, the pastor/counsellor and counselees are encouraged to explore the problem areas by asking some of the questions supplied. This programme examines the practical issues at hand and mainly through the use of pointed questions tackles these issues. Biblical principles

regarding most of these areas will also be examined and discussed. As each area is discussed (within this chapter), reference will be made alongside the issue to the section where they originally surfaced in the research. Every aspect dealt with in the acronym involves an element of discussion between the couples themselves as well as the counsellor. Additionally incorporated into every section is the element of coaching from the side of the counsellor.

It is the ideal to have both participants as committed Christians in a blended marriage. The researcher is fully aware that there are a majority of marriages in which participants are not Christians and would trust that the following guidelines will be helpful to them as well.

W WOUNDEDNESS
I INTIMACY
S SCRIPTURAL PRINCIPLES
E EXPECTATIONS
R ROLES

F FINANCES
A ATTITUDES
M METE OUT DISCIPLINE
I IDENTITY
L LEARNING TO RESOLVE CONFLICT
I INDIVIDUALITY
E EQUIPPING
S SUPPORT

Within this acronym is found aspects of counselling that deal with the four major areas of conflict i.e. parental conflict, the disciplining of children, maternal negativity and the crisis of identity experienced by a child, as well as basic instructions for the

well being of this further marriage. All of the categories that are to be dealt with have surfaced at some time or another throughout the research.

Every aspect of these marriage guidelines (Wiser Families) will be based on Biblical principles. It is the duty of the counsellor to make sure that these principles are understood and accepted by the couples (cf 1.4).

6.4.2 W - Woundedness

Counsellors must tackle the area of woundedness and baggage (cf 3.4.5) that more often than not comes from the failure of a first marriage which then impacts upon the present marriage (cf 3.4.4). These areas of woundedness have to be dealt with as they contribute to the breakdown in relationship of the husband and wife within the second or third marriage scenario.

- Past Memories

The counsellor must also deal with past memories that plague a person because of an emotional echo to a place of hurt (cf 3.7.1). This can be done either through prayer by using the Lord Jesus' healing and truth into past memories or by using a psychoanalytical approach (cf 3.7.1.1). The behavioural approach (cf 2.9.2) can also be used to correct faulty behaviour, thoughts and feelings through positive reinforcement. The cognitive approach (cf 2.9.3) evaluates the negative thought life of counselees. The counsellor must challenge counselees to become observers of their thought lives and to implement the sufficiency of God's Word in incorporating change. As it says in Scripture: "*We take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ*" (2 Cor.10:5). It is with this in mind that the counsellor can challenge his counsellee to call upon the power and strength of the Holy Spirit to give wisdom and strength to overcome these negative thoughts.

- Forgiveness

In dealing with past memories, the next step often leads into the Biblical principle of forgiveness, as being one of the key ways to deal with woundedness.

Questions to be asked

- In what areas in my relationship with my ex family do I find it hard to forgive?
- Who has hurt me the most?

Practical applications for the couple:

1. Make a list of all the people or situations to forgive.
2. Take one of these situations or people and start praying for the Holy Spirit to give you the power to forgive this person and to release it to God
3. Write a letter to the person you want to forgive even if you do not see them any more and then pray over this letter and ask God to help you to forgive them. When you have reached a stage where you feel at peace then you destroy the letter.

The Lord Jesus encouraged us to not put a limit on the amount of times that we should forgive those who wrong us. This principle should apply particularly to husbands and wives. *"Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?". Jesus answered "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times". (Matt. 18:21).*

- Triggers

Emotional and psychological triggers to certain behavioural patterns need to be explored and corrected.

Questions to be asked:

- What is it that triggers this angry reaction towards my partner/spouse?
- Are there times when he/she sounds just like my ex? Why?
- The counsellor might need to refer counselees for further therapy if deep pathology distress is evidenced as sometimes this can impede negatively upon a second marriage (cf 3.4.4). Psychometric and other kinds of testing within the psychology field is available to diagnose such conditions.

6.4.3 I - Intimacy

One of the goals for marriage is intimacy. Intimacy incorporates the Biblical concept of 'becoming one flesh' in all areas of the marriage. This concept is found within the emotional, physical, intellectual and spiritual realms (cf 2.3.2). The counsellor is to assess each one of these areas to see whether or not there are any discrepancies, and whether or not the goals are alike in these areas, as the lack of these intimacies will contribute to parental conflict. The role of the counsellor within this whole area of intimacy is to guide couples into a place where they feel that they have tools and the know-how, on how to strengthen their marriages (cf 3.6.1). Understanding the principle of 'being there for each other' reinforces the desire to do the very best for their marriage, as explained in the following verse. "*Two are better than one. . . If one falls down, his friend can help him up, but pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!*" (Ecc. 4:9-10).

6.4.3.1 The four intimacies

- Emotional This aspect incorporates support of each other on an emotional level. (cf 2.3.2.2, 3.4.5 and 3.2.1).

Questions to be asked:

1. How would I like my partner to support me after a hard day at work?
2. How can I share deep issues regarding myself with my partner?
3. Why do I feel threatened when I speak about myself?
4. Which of my partner's emotional longings and needs am I aware of?
5. In what ways are we not supporting each other?

Recommended reading for couples could be:

The Five Languages of Love Dr. Gary Chapman

This book illustrates to couples how they can discover their own emotional love language and that of their spouse, and then learn how to meet each other's emotional needs.

- Physical This aspect deals with all areas of my physical life including the sexual side (cf 2.3.2.2).

Questions to be asked:

1. In which way do I not feel nurtured physically?
2. In what ways are we continually drawing closer together or isolating ourselves from each other?
3. How are my needs being listened to?
4. How can I fulfil my partner's needs?
5. Why are we struggling to meet each other's needs?

Recommended reading for couples could be:

Fit to be tied

Bill Hybels

- Intellectual This area looks at the whole area of deep communication. It is vitally important for a couple to be on a par within the realm of sharing information and being able to be understood by his/her partner (cf 2.3.2.2).

Questions to be asked:

1. Why do we only communicate verbally when we need something?
2. In what areas do we share our day to day lives with each other?
3. In what areas do I not think of my partner as being my best friend with whom I can share anything?
4. Why are we not sharing intellectually?
5. In which ways can we stimulate each other intellectually?

This area also looks at compatibility and mutual interests

- Spiritual Within a Christian marriage this is the one area that a lot of couples struggle with. People so often have their own walk with the Lord but find it difficult to share with their husband or wife. The counsellor needs to encourage spiritual intimacy as being one of the keys to becoming 'one flesh' (cf 2.3.2.3).

Questions to be asked:

1. What aspects of our spiritual life do we share?
2. How do we encourage spiritual growth in each other?
3. How do we together try to further our relationship with God?
4. Why are we not supporting each other spiritually?

Explore practical goals to develop spiritually together.

6.4.4 S – Scriptural Principles

Couples have to be challenged, as God fearing people, with Scriptural principles regarding Christian marriage. The Bible is the handbook given to us by God with principles that govern every aspect of human living. *“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path”* (Ps. 119:105). This passage infers that right now (feet) His Word is the guiding force as we travel through life, and that in the future (path) His Word will also be ever there to direct and guide us. It is with this in mind, that the counsellor should give this message to his counselees regarding the principles governing marriage.

Firstly, in regard to marriage as an institution that God ordained, the following principles are important to discuss:

- The counsellor needs to emphasize the permanence of marriage (cf 2.7.1.1). The mindset and approach to marriage should be permanence. Total commitment to each other is required. The meaning of the word commitment should be discussed by the couple and then discussed with the counsellor from a spiritual angle (cf 3.4.5). *“Therefore what God has joined together let man not separate”* (Matt. 19:6).
- Divorce is not an option as marriage is a covenant with God (cf 2.4.2, and 2.7.1.1). *“I hate divorce”, says the LORD God of Israel”.* (Mal. 2:16). A discussion on the passage in Malachi might be useful as well as discussing the differences in divorce statistics between first and second marriages (cf 3.4.3).

Secondly, there needs to be a spiritual foundation on which every marriage is based. The counsellor should explain the foundation of marriage and what God's intention for marriage is.

- Within Genesis (2:18-24) is founded the model that God intended his creation to follow before the fall (cf 2.3.1). Attitudes towards each other need to be examined with mutual submission, being a predominant attitude, and the further attitudes of love and respect for the individual participants also being vitally important (cf 2.7.2.2). At this point, it would be helpful to elicit information from the couple on how they interpret the word 'submission' and how they can apply this principle within their own lives.
- Once an understanding of the Biblical meaning of 'submission' has been explored then both need to be guided into how they can be submissive to each other (cf 2.7.2.2) and can complement each other with the different gifts that God had given them as male and female (cf 2.3.2). *"Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ"* (Eph. 5:21). Understanding submission from the aspect of Eph. 5 helps the couple to equate submission and God's love for them.
- Unity is certainly a prerequisite and manifests itself in the form of 'becoming one flesh together' in all areas of life intimating emotional, physical, intellectual and spiritual intimacy as discussed previously (cf 6.4.2, 2.3.2 and 2.7.1.1). *"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife"* (Gen. 2:24). One of the most important aspects of unity involved leaving the family of origin and focussing on each other.
- Both the husband and the wife should have a spiritual walk with God to be able to implement the ideal attitudes (cf 2.7.2.2).
- The counsellor can employ the nouthetic approach (cf 2.9.1) to challenge Christians to examine the Biblical precepts and principles laid down by Scripture in relation to the functioning of the family and interpersonal relationships.

6.4.5 E - Expectations

Expectations which are unrealistic will lead to frustration and a lack of commitment to the blended family. Expectations are dictated by the training, upbringing and culture of the family of origin, and in a remarried situation, expectations are sometimes created by the disappointments of the first marriage and can cause a severe stress in a present marriage (cf 3.4.5).

- Realistic

Counsellors need to coach participants in being realistic regarding their expectations of their partners.

- Culture

Different culture perceptions need to be explored (cf 3.4.5). Exploring areas such as family of origin and how these different backgrounds can affect expectations of each other.

- Biblical attitudes

From a Biblical aspect, the attitudes of patience, understanding and forgiveness must be taught. The couple should be encouraged to explore each other's expectations and to apply a Christ-like attitude in the way that they deal with them. *"Love must be sincere.....Be devoted to another in brotherly love. Honour one another above your selves"* (Rom. 12:9-10).

- Disappointments

The counsellor should deal with the disappointments of past marriages and relationships, and challenge couples with the goal that this marriage can be different. *"You, my brothers, were called to be free. ... serve one another in love"* (Gal. 5:13).

6.4.6 R – Roles

Roles play a vital function within the mechanism of a well-run family and it is the blurred view of these roles that contribute more often than not to parental conflict. These roles within the blended family encompass a wider field than that which is

found in the first marriage (cf 3.2.4). The counsellor will have to look at interpersonal relationships and role expectations (cf 3.4.2 and 3.4.5) within the following areas:

(1) Husband and wife in present marriage (cf 3.5.2, 3.5.3 and 3.5.4). When a husband and or wife remarry they bring with them many other relationships. Some of the greatest conflict is caused by the relationships each spouse has with his or her previous marriages. This in itself is a major cause of parental conflict (cf 3.4.5).

(2) Present husband and former wife (cf 2.5.2) (whether divorced or widowed). The demands on the present family is exacerbated more often than not by the demands of a previous wife regarding maintenance and custody of children (cf 3.3.8, 3.4.5 – 3.4.7, 3.5.1 and 3.5.2).

- Will this cause resentment to his second wife?

(3) Present wife and former husband (cf 3.3.8 and 3.5.2,) (whether divorced or widowed) Issues of maintenance and discipline need to be discussed (cf 3.5.1).

- Will this cause resentment to her second husband?

(4) Present husband and former family including grandparents (cf 3.5).

- What is the husband's relationship with his former parents-in-law?

(5) Present wife and former family including grandparents (cf 3.5).

- What is the wife's relationship with her former parents-in-law?

(6) Present husband and children from his wife's previous marriage (cf 3.4.5, 3.5 and 3.5.4).

- What should they call me?
- What about discipline? (cf 6.4.8).
- What are my expectations of them?
- How do I set boundaries with these teenage children? (discipline as well as sexual).

(7) Present wife and children from husband's previous marriage (cf 3.4.5, 3.5 and 3.5.4). As observed previously, maternal negativity is one of the major contributing factors toward conflict within the blended family (cf 4.5.2.3).

Wives would seem to have far higher expectations of step-children than fathers. These expectations place an enormous pressure on the family (cf 3.4.5).

1. Within the scope of these expectations the counsellor must address issues of reality, mobility, history (cf 3.4.5), and control. The wife's expectations of her stepchildren within her home environment should be discussed and the route of compromise should be explored.
2. Added to these are the expectations of the father of the children to assume that his wife can "instantly" love his children and be a mother to them (cf 3.5.1.). Are these expectations realistic?
3. The counsellor should explore the effect of these potential areas of conflict as being a major factor in the breakdown of communication between parents (cf 3.5.4 and 4.6.1).

Questions to be asked:

- How do I draw the fine line between respect and friendship?
 - How do I win their respect?
- (8) New grandparents and aunts and uncles (cf 3.5). Some of the questions to be dealt with here include:
- What do I call my new aunts and uncles?
 - Am I expected to love my new Granny/Grandpa in the same way as my other grandparents?
 - What do I call them?
- (9) Present wife and ex wife of present husband (cf 3.4.5).
- Why do I find it hard to speak to her civilly?
 - Do I resent her intrusions into my life?
 - Where are the boundaries?
- (10) Present husband and ex husband of present wife (cf 3.5).
- What is my role when dealing with this person?
 - Do I get in-between to defend my wife?
- (11) Present husband and husband of ex wife

- How do I deal with the thought of someone else bringing up my children?
 - What say do I have?
- (12) Children and their relationship with their previous grandparents. The child is often caught between two families and experiences divided loyalties (cf 3.3.6). The counsellor has to work with the family to identify the problems here and help the child to adjust with the minimum amount of stress. It is important that the children are consulted regarding these roles (cf 6.4.9).
- (13) Present parents and relationship with new extended family. Couples need to face the issue of newly acquired ageing parents and examine what their expectations are regarding their spouses involvement.
- What are the expectations regarding my spouse's relationship with my family of origin and how much time do I expect him/her to give to them? (cf 4.5.2.4)
 - What do I call my new parents-in-law?
- (14) Children in present family dealing with children coming from an outside family Boundaries need to be put in place especially with teenage children. Opposite genders are sometimes attracted to each other and these issues need to pre-empted and dealt with.

6.4.7 F - Finances

It is imperative that the counsellor sit with the couples to discuss how they are going to manage the finances of two household once operating independently and now merging into one (cf 3.4.5). A first marriage is very different from a second marriage especially when children are involved, in relation to the way finances must be handled (cf 3.4.5).

Questions to be asked should address the following:

Full time work (cf 3.4.5)

Within a second marriage the need might arise for both marriage partners to be in full time employment and this can place stress upon the 'mom' and 'dad' to meet all the demands within a busy family.

- Would it be possible to cut down on some hours of work to meet needs?

- Would it be possible to manage financially on a morning job?

Needs versus wants (cf 3.4.5)

- Why are we both working so hard?
- What is the difference between the things we want and the things we need?
- What is more important the need to have everything or the needs of our children?

Financial support (maintenance) of children from a previous marriage (cf 4.5.2.4,).

- Have we sat down and discussed the ramifications of supporting the children from a previous marriage?
- Where does supporting these children impact on the support of 'our' children?

Inheritances and wills (cf 4.5.1.7 and 4.5.2.4).

- Who is going to inherit my estate when I die?
- Would I leave my money to my family or both of ours?
- How are we going to divide inheritances between two families?

Who pays for what in this marriage?

- Have we fairly distributed expenses between us?

Resentments

- In what areas regarding our finances do I sometimes feel resentful?
- Which areas evoke a jealous response within me?
- Why can he/she spend more money on himself than I can?

Tithing

Tithing is an area that needs to be discussed. Various aspects come into this e.g. if one of the couple is not a committed Christian. If both are Christians and are fairly hamstrung for finances then the whole concept of tithing needs to be explored.

- Where does tithing enter into our financial planning?
- What are our different expectations regarding tithing?
- Why is it important to tithe?

Ours

Can we create a financial mindset where we think of our finances as 'ours' and not 'yours' and 'mine'? The challenge for the couple is how they can view their finances

as 'ours'. It is wise for the counsellor to have on hand a couple of models that can be presented to the couple to create a sense of oneness within the financial realm.

- Are there ways of organising the financial budget so that one or the other does not seem to feel inferior in any way to the other partner?
- If so, how?

Both partners need to reflect on the Biblical principle found in the following passage and see how they can relate this to the financial aspect of their marriage. *“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your interests, but also to the interests of others”* (Phil. 2:3-4).

6.4.8 A - Attitudes

Attitudes in marriage are incorporated throughout the Bible for the betterment of a marriage union (cf 2.7.2.3). Both counsellor and couples should examine the challenges presented by the Bible in the way people deal interpersonally with each other. Taken into consideration here are the differences in gender and the way the Bible confronts both sexes to look at how they deal with each other. The Biblical principle of *love* for the wife and *respect* for the husband as based in Ephesians 5 (cf 2.7.2.3) is the underlying standard for every marriage union, and if these principles are not practised there will be continual marital and parental conflict.

The Bible is full of advice and gives many principles which can be used as guidelines within a blended marriage in the relationship between husbands and wives. The following are an example of some of the principles that the couple and counsellor can consider together.

6.4.8.1 Wives

Proverbs, chapters 19 through to 29, gives advice mainly to wives. For example if the counsellor deals with the area of “being quarrelsome”, some of the Biblical examples are as follows:

- “Better to live on a corner of the roof than share a house with a quarrelsome wife” (Prov.21:9 and Prov. 19:13).
- “Better to live in a desert than with a quarrelsome and ill-tempered wife” (Prov. 21:19).
- “.....restraining her is like restraining the wind or grasping oil with the hand” (Prov. 27:15-16).

The understanding here is that a husband cannot feel respected by his wife if she adopts the attitude of continually undermining him and his authority in the family. This will bring no respect (cf 2.7.2.2) to himself and to his dealings with the different members of the family. Incorporated into this is the understanding of the Biblical foundations of marriage (cf 6.4.3).

Questions to be asked:

- What is causing our frustration?
- What patterns of behaviour have developed that tend to have negative outcomes? (cf 2.9.6).
- In which areas do you have only a negative view about the marriage? (cf 2.9.6)
- What stops you from forgiving your husband?

The counsellor can then replace the negative attitudes with some of the following guidelines for better relationships. By understanding what her husband needs, (cf 2.7.2.2), she can then start to implement some of the principles laid down by Scripture for happy relationships. Following are some examples of these:

1. A husband needs to know he is secure in his spouse's love for him.
“What a man desires is unfailing love” (Prov. 19:22).
2. The wife is to build her husband's esteem with positive strokes, not back biting comments.
“She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life” (Prov. 31:12).
3. Her husband will respond to her thoughtful and wise ways knowing that she only seeks his good.
“A prudent wife is from the Lord” (Prov. 19:14) (cf Prov. 31:26).

4. A Christian husband takes delight in, and will praise, his wife because she fears and obeys the Lord.

"The fear of the Lord leads to life" (Prov. 19:23). (cf Prov. 31, 28)

5. A wife who is generous and honourable in all her dealings with her husband and family brings her husband respect and contentment.

"A wife of noble character who can find?" (Prov. 31:10) (cf Prov. 31:25)

6.4.8.2 Husbands

Husbands too, need to be challenged in the area of showing nurture and love towards their wives (cf 2.7.2.2) as found in Eph. 5, and again to look at their own attitudes according to Biblical principles. The counsellor could do well to go to the book of Proverbs to examine some of these. He needs to remind the husband that to be married is part of God's plan for him and not a negative aspect in his life.

"He who finds a wife finds what is good" (Prov. 18:22).

His attitude of anger and stubbornness is not what God's plan for marriage is. (6.4.1 could impede upon the husband's attitude as well and this would need to be explored). Perhaps if a husband is prone to angry outburst it would be wise for the counsellor to address the 'anger' issues and explore the origins. Within the Biblical context people are advised to control their anger because of the damage it causes in relationships. *"Like a city whose walls are broken down is a man who lacks self-control"* (Prov. 25:28). The counsellor can take his client back to the principles of Eph. 5:33 (cf 2.7.2.2) to help him understand what part of God's plan for marriage is. Once again the husband's spiritual standing before God should be investigated in depth.

Questions to be asked:

- What triggers the anger within you?
- Why do you not want to listen to your wife?
- Do you believe that God can forgive your wife?
- Can you? If not why not?

The husband's attitude regarding his children also needs to be evaluated. The Bible says: "*Fathers, do not embitter your children or they will become discouraged*" Col. 3:21 (cf Eph. 6:4 and 1 Tim. 3:4). The expectations that the father has of his child are often implemented in harsh and unyielding ways and these need to be examined with the help of Godly principles and the encouragement of the counsellor.

6.4.8.3 Both

Both husbands and wives must look at further aspects of forgiveness, patience, trust and judgementalism (Prov. 24:23). They must learn also to celebrate and acknowledge the areas within their marriage that are admirable and enjoyable.

The counsellor needs to guide them into the area of being open to the advice of those who are more experienced within these areas and to learn to incorporate 'wisdom's direction' into their day to day lives. Again and again within the Biblical context we are encouraged to seek wisdom and advice firstly, from God's Word and secondly, from trusted, wise, Christian mentors. "*Apply your heart to instruction and your ears to words of knowledge*" (Prov. 23:12 and Prov. 22:4).

6.4.8.4 Children

When two families from different backgrounds unite, there is bound to be a reaction from the side of the children.

- It is suggested that a round-table mediation process might be very useful in helping everyone within the family to air their fears regarding the up-coming marriage (cf 3.7.2.2).
- The parents will have to take time out with the children to help them understand the importance of loving attitudes within the family. Young kids need to know they are special and to be assured of their parents' love continually. The counsellor will have to educate the parents on how to implement these actions without causing an imbalance in time spent with other members of the family.

- With older children it is advisable to put 'special times' aside where the parent of origin as well as the 'new parent', spends time alone with them.
- Extremely high unrealistic expectations from the parents of the children in regard to the new family dynamics can put abnormal stress on the children so prioritising the expectations will have to be examined.
- Negative attitudes due a traumatic divorce situation (cf 3.3.7) need to be addressed as in 6.4.9. For example: resentment, anger and sulking.
- The attitudes of respect and obedience can also be discussed with the children based on the principles found within Scripture. "*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right*" (Eph. 6:1 and Col. 3:20).

6.4.9 M – Mete out discipline

Within the remarriage context this particular area is one of the main contributory factors towards parental conflict (cf 3.3.8, 3.5.1, 3.5.4, 3.5.5 and 4.5.2.2.). It would seem that the biggest failing with couples preparing for marriage, is that more often than not, the whole aspect of disciplining is not discussed beforehand. The couples need to evaluate their methods of discipline and the expectations they have of the children.

- Do we both use corporal punishment or do we agree on another system of discipline?
- Do we both agree to use Biblical principles when disciplining the children?
- What is our understanding of these principles?
- Do we agree or not agree with the principle of physical discipline and that this form might be the best way to impart correction in certain cases and circumstances? "*The rod of correction imparts wisdom*" (Prov. 29:15)?
- Do we incorporate our children in the decisions regarding discipline?

Further questions have to be asked in dealing with this area:

- To the parent whose child comes from a previous marriage into a present marriage

- When do you not feel at liberty to discipline your child when they do something wrong?
- When is there reticent regarding discipline because of the possibility of alienation?
- In what areas do you not treat your step children the same way as you treat your own child?
- To the parent of the child who lives with the family
- When do you find yourself feeling resentment in the way your spouse deals with your child?
- In what ways do you find your spouse unreasonable in the area of discipline?

All of these situations should be explored by the counsellor and the couple must be encouraged to reach consensus.

1. Goals and models for disciplining must be explored.
2. The whole principle of disciplining children vs. not doing so, taken from a Godly view point, has to be discussed with the guidance of the counsellor.
3. Boundaries must be agreed upon in regard to the children (cf 2.5.1.3, and 2.6.3).
4. Each parent should be encouraged to discipline their own children and “the other parent” is there to support them.
5. The couple should be encouraged to support each other no matter what decision is made regarding discipline.
6. The couples should determine never to have a major quarrel regarding discipline in front of the children.

“Parents do not treat your children in such a way as to make them angry. Instead raise them with Christians discipline and instruction” (Eph 6:4).

6.4.10 I – Identity

One of the most difficult adjustments that take place within the blended family is that of the child or children who come from one family environment and are introduced to another family dynamic on an intermittent basis.

The following issues need to be discussed:

1. When divorce occurs children are often caught in between two parents (cf 3.3.6) and find themselves pulled back and forwards between parents fighting over access rights.

Issues to be dealt with here include the following:

- *Divided loyalties* (cf 3.3.6). This includes the aspect of children being caught between two biological parents.
- *Guilt and fear*. Can involve the aspect of guilt due to being better treated in one home than the other. Fear can be caused by step parent negativity and also the fear of perhaps losing a parent permanently.
- *Emotional stress* (cf 3.3.7) Where is the child feeling emotionally unsupported?
- *Separation from one parent* (cf 3.4.5). The child can experience deep emotional trauma with the reality of being separated semi-permanently from their biological parent.
- *Responsibilities* How do the expectations of one family differ from another? What are the child's responsibilities within the new family?

Questions to be asked:

- Are we as parents giving any thought to the impact that our arguing is having upon our children?
 - Are we making sure that the child is not feeling the whole situation is his/her fault?
 - Are we checking the child's emotional health? Are we spending time alone with him or her? (cf 3.7.2.2).
 - Are we making sure this child is made to feel important and special in this new family?
2. The child's role changes from family to family and his/her relationship and standing with his step siblings can contribute towards major conflict (cf 3.5.1).

Issues to be dealt with here include the following:

- *Position in the family* (cf 3.5.1)

- Anger (cf 3.5)
 - Relationship with step siblings (cf 3.5.4)
 - Jealousy (cf 2.6.4)
3. Some of the fears that children have that affect their behaviour within the marriage relationship fall under the following:
- Will my dad/mom love me as much as they did before?
 - Do they love the other kids more than me?
 - Will they want to spend time with me?

Questions to be asked:

- Are we working together to make both sets of children feel special?
- When can we take time to speak with each child and develop a relationship?
- How are we going to address the areas of anger and jealousy?
- Does Dad do fun things with the boys and Mom with the girls?

This particular area of conflict is identified as being one of the four major causes of breakdown in the blended family. It is vitally important that the counsellor addresses the issues of a child's position in the family and that the parents are instructed on how best to help the child to adjust. The teachings of Jesus focussed a lot on the value of people and how special they were in God's eyes and this can applied to the value of children as well. *"Therefore do not fear, you are of more value than many sparrows"* (Matt. 10:31).

6.4.11 L - Learning to resolve conflict

"Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you" 2 Cor. 13:11. This Biblical principle of living in peace and being of one mind is the challenge that the counsellor has to deal with, within this marriage. The whole area of conflict becomes far more complicated within the blended family.

Areas of conflict:

- There is parental conflict – involving conflict between husband and wife within the present family, and also conflict between present and former spouses (cf

1.1.2, 3.3.6 and 3.5.2). It is vitally important to instil the whole aspect of respect within the marriage context (cf 6.4.7, 2.7.2.2 and 2.9.2.2). What so often is evident within the conflictual relationship is the ability of one or the other partner to tear the other one down and to affect the esteem of that person. One negative stroke delivered against another needs many positive strokes to reaffirm their sense of self worth.

Questions to be asked:

- Do you find yourselves quarrelling in public?
 - When are the times when we feel tempted to interrupt and not listen?
 - When are we not listening to each other?
 - What causes us to be very stubborn?
 - When do I feel I need to win?
 - Which conflict surfaces again and again?
 - At what times do we not draw closer after conflict?
 - What areas do I need to consider changing in my own behaviour within the conflict arena? (cf 2.9.2.2)
- There is conflict between a stepparent and children as well as stepchildren and a new 'parent' (cf 1.1.2, 3.3.6 and 3.5.1.). This area of conflict is one of the major causes of marital conflict (cf 1.2, 3.5, 3.5.1 and 6.4.5).
- The parents have to understand and identify the trauma found within the child regarding the new parent and the adjustment from one parent to the other.
 - The stepparent must sit down with the child and explain that she/he is not replacing the child's biological mother/father.
 - The stepparent must reiterate the fact that they are there to support the child in any way they can.
 - See 6.4.12 and 6.4.13.
- There is sibling conflict – children of different families are forced together and expected to get on with each other (cf 1.1.2 and 3.5.1). A child is uprooted from a family where perhaps he has been an only child into a new family

situation where he could perhaps become a middle child. Used to having his own way he now has to share with two other step siblings – this can bring about immense conflict between siblings.

- Parents have to be instructed in how to make this transition for their children easier.
- Suggestions for this transition include meeting with other step families and learning from their experiences (cf 4.5.3) and working hand in hand with social workers experienced in this area (cf 6.4.12 and 6.4.13).
- Parents need to spend time with the children, having fun with them and organising times of interplay.

6.4.12 I - Individuality

In discussion with the couples who completed the questionnaires and those that took part in the interviews (cf 4.5.2.5, 4.5.2.7, 4.7.2 and 4.8.2) the ongoing problems with communication and personality differences seemed to surface repeatedly.

Part of dealing with these marital problems is helping couples to understand themselves, from a personality slant as well as being able to appreciate the differences between genders. The counsellor can reiterate the principle of how unique each person is in the eyes of God, and how he has given us differences and created us in a totally unique way so that we might complement each other.

"You created every part of me; you put me together in my mother's womb. . . You saw me before I was born. The days allotted to me have all been recorded in your book, before any of them began" (Ps. 139: 13-16).

The following is suggested:

- Modes of communication need to be explored. Areas of inaccuracy, dishonesty and lack of verbal support need to be addressed.

- The counsellor (if aptly qualified) can conduct personality tests on the couple themselves (e.g. DISC profile) or send them to a registered psychologist for psychometric testing.
- Once the couple have an understanding of themselves, they can then begin to work on understanding the differences between themselves and their partners and how these differences can complement each other.
- The counsellor can help them realise that these differences can impact upon expectations (6.4.4) and can result in conflict.
- Compromise needs to be considered.

6.4.13 E – Equipping

An extension to counselling for blended families is the whole area of education. It would be helpful for couples to read literature to do with stepfamilies, alongside working with a counsellor as this might draw awareness to other issues that need to be discussed.

- Firstly, there are a few books available both in the realm of sociology and psychology, as well as in the area of popular reading. These books are written by professionals who have studied in this area, and are written mainly by authors in England and America. Unfortunately there seem to be very few written by South Africans, but the ones from overseas are also applicable to some of the situations in South Africa. Due to the lack of research in this country in this area the literature unfortunately falls short within the realm of specific cultural issues found within the church scenario.

Following are a few titles which could be of help to counsellors who need to recommend reading material to their clients.

Christian Books

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| ✓ <i>Happily Remarried.</i> | David and Lisa Frisbie |
| ✓ <i>I'm not Your Kid</i> | Kay Adkins |
| ✓ <i>Becoming Family</i> | Robert and Jeanette Lauer, (Ph.D) |

Non-Christian Books

- ✓ *Your Kids, my Kids* Suzie Hayman
- ✓ *Step Families* Suzie Hayman
- ✓ *Making peace in your
Stepfamily* Harold H. Bloomfield, M.D.
- ✓ *"The complete Idiot's Guide"
To Stepparenting* Ericka Lutz – Alpha Books

- Secondly, another aspect of education, is suggesting to couples that they could attend topical workshops, seminars and conferences (cf 4.4.3.2). These are usually hosted by associations like FAMSA (Family life centre of Johannesburg, Family and Marriage Society of South Africa) www.familylife.co.za. They can further investigate what their own churches have to offer in this area. There is a relatively new awareness of stepfamilies within church families and so therefore, there is more often than not, no support for participants of a blended family.

6.4.14 S - Support (cf 3.4.4 and 3.4.5)

The counsellor needs to examine the support system of the couple and suggest ways in which the couple can feel a measure of support during difficult times. Areas that could provide a potential foundation for support are as follows:

- Meeting with other couples who have experienced the same issues (cf 4.5.3.2) and building strong relationships with these couples.
- Family outings with other families (cf 4.5.3.2)
- Joining a couple's home cell group, and developing a good prayer support as well as support in a practical way.
- Being mentored by an older couple.

These basic guidelines have been devised to fill a gap in the premarital counselling for blended families. All the topics that have been considered and explored come directly from the issues researched and the conclusions reached within the previous

chapters. As mentioned before, this chapter looks at basic guidelines and creates an opening to explore this area in even greater detail.

6.5 EQUIPPING THE CHURCH

In response to the questionnaires and the interviews it would seem that most of the respondents were of the opinion that the church could be of help in a variety of ways. It is generally observed that churches are not equipped to deal with the growing numbers of blended marriages (cf 1.2) and that generally people enter into a further marriage with a degree of naïvety, being unprepared for the potential conflict that awaits them (cf 3.4.3 and 3.4.4).

6.5.1 Equipping Pastors

It is important that the pastors or counsellors educate themselves in the area of blended families. As mentioned earlier in 6.4.12 there are programmes available in non-Christian organizations to educate those who would deal with these issues. There are quite a few good Christian books written on step families but very few in the area of equipping pastors.

One book the researcher can recommend is:

- *Pastoral Care with Stepfamilies, mapping the wilderness* Loren L. Townsend

The previous books mentioned in 6.4.12 would also make informed reading.

6.5.2 Equipping the families

There is a place for the church to stand in the gap and to start acknowledging the place of step families in their congregation and the place of remarital counselling as a vehicle to halt the flow of further divorces and broken marriages. The major area where the church can be of use, is in the area of educating and equipping potential blended families and also those that are already part of a step family.

The following suggestions are proposed in order of priority:

- Support groups for blended families A monthly support group facilitated by a counsellor (cf 4.5.6.4) would be of benefit for those with ongoing problems.
- To create counselling for children in a non-threatening environment. (cf 4.4.3.2 and 4.5.3) Qualified social workers could be used to engage with younger children particularly to explore problems. Such techniques as art and play therapy could be utilized.
- 'Round table' counselling facilities for the whole family. It is suggested that families would benefit from 'round table' mediation as a 'family together' (cf 4.4.3.2). These could be organised through the church's counselling centres with experienced and qualified facilitators being available to help.
- The formation of topical discussion groups (cf 4.4.3.2) dealing with specialized needs as:
 - Child support and maintenance
 - Disciplining of children
 - Boundaries
 - Issues regarding the ex spouse
 - Finances
 - Identity as a marriage partner – sharing with the whole family (cf 4.4.5.5).
- Family outings of adults and children in step families (cf 4.4.3.2 and 4.5.3). These could be held once or twice a year to encourage blended families to meet others and to socialize with those from the same situation.
- Holding Family workshops and seminars (cf 4.4.3.2 and 4.5.3). These could be held once a quarter and the focus would be on the issues that these families face constantly as blended families. These workshops would be used as a time to draw both adults and children together
- Dealing with the whole issue of developing step family formation (cf 3.6.1). This would include sessions (run by church counsellors) to introduce families to the differences between nuclear and stepfamilies, and to help step families

define their goals for the future (cf 3.6.1) and to focus on the process being made.

6.6 CONCLUSIONS REGARDING THE PROPOSED PROGRAMME

The researcher believes that these guidelines meet the criteria to propose a programme to be used by pastors and counsellors, which looks at the four main areas of conflict found within the blended family. This programme is based on Scriptural principles and utilizes the information taken from the previous chapters. It has explored the attitudes to be implemented by pastors/counselors, has taken regard of the conflict issues that surface within the blended family scenario, and has challenged the church to re-look at the aspect of blended families and to take cognisance of how these families can be helped and equipped in a practical way.

6.7 FINAL CONCLUSIONS

The research has concluded the following:

- It has been shown that blended families are fast becoming the pattern for marriage in a century where divorce is prevalent.
- Couples are not being adequately prepared through premarital counselling for the problem areas found within these blended family.
- The very problems that are typical today within the blended family were shown to be present from the moment that man deviated from God's plan for the ideal marriage.
- Conflict manifested itself in these blended families within four major areas: Parental conflict; Discipline of children; Expectations of stepparents and maternal negativity; and the crisis of identity found within stepchildren.
- Whether couples had done premarital counselling or not, all had struggled within the same areas in their marriages and it was found that there were areas that were not addressed within the counselling given and these gaps correlated with the four main conflict issues mentioned above.

- It was further found that the church is not regarded as being the institution that can help blended families in their conflict issues.
- The practical aspect of this study addressed particularly the conflict areas that the research identified, and also suggested guidelines for the church, to assist them in dealing with the problems experienced by blended families.
- Practical steps and suggestions were given to pastors and counselors to assist them in equipping members of blended families to face the areas of interpersonal conflict within their families.
- The church was challenged to re-look at its view on blended families and to draw alongside them in a supportive role.

6.8 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

- Spiritual direction for blended families
- A blended family challenge – How to love someone else's children
- Becoming family – in the blended family context
- Preparing and equipping step families for a new family direction
- Identity crises within the blended family
- Boundaries and discipline in the blended family

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APPENDIX A

36 Hill Road,
Emmarentia,
Johannesburg.
2195.
Cell. 083 292-2650

28th February, 2006

RE: EMPIRICAL STUDY – INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT WITHIN THE BLENDED FAMILY

I am presently busy with my dissertation on the above mentioned topic as partial fulfillment for the requirements of the Masters Degree in Practical Theology at the Potchefstroom Campus of the North West University, under the direction and supervision of Prof. G.A. Lotter of the Dept. of Practical Theology.

As part of this study I plan to do research through the medium of the attached questionnaire with select couples and if found necessary to conduct interviews with select couples who are presently involved in a blended family situation.

It is with this idea in mind that I would like to approach you as one of my 'samples' and ask if you would be willing to take part in this research.

All information will be treated with the strictest confidentiality and only pseudonyms will be used in the actual dissertation. At no time will your identity be compromised. You will reserve the right to withdraw from the research at any time. Once the research has been completed a copy will be available for you to peruse.

If you willing to take part in this study, could you please sign the attached consent form and return it to me with the completed questionnaire.

Thanking you for your time and looking forward to our work together.

Yours sincerely

Jenny Basson

APPENDIX B

**CONSENT FORM
FOR EMPIRICAL STUDY
INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT WITHIN THE BLENDED FAMILY**

I hereby give my permission for Jenny Basson to use the attached questionnaire in her research for her Masters Degree.

I understand that all personal particulars will remain confidential and that pseudonyms will be used in the dissertation. I also reserve the right to withdraw from the research at any time.

.....

Signed

.....

Date

APPENDIX C

**INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT WITHIN THE BLENDED MARRIAGE
QUESTIONNAIRE**

May I ask you to write your considered responses to the questions below in the space provided. Should this space not be sufficient, please make additional notes on the reverse side of each page indicating the questions to which it responds, or on additional pages attached to this questionnaire. The questionnaire is intended to elicit your experience of counselling for re-marriage, and I'd greatly appreciate your views of this experience. Thank you too for your responses and time.

Jenny Basson

Sept. 2006

1. DEMOGRAPHICS

- 1.1 Name: Age: Gender
- 1.2 Is this your: 1st 2nd 3rd 4th 4+ marriage?
- 1.2 Were you widowed, divorced or single before this marriage?
- 1.3 How long have you been re-married?
1-2 yrs. 3-5 yrs. 6 -10 yrs. 11 -15 yrs. 16 Years +
- 1.4 Do you have children from this marriage Yes No
- 1.5 If you have children, are they :
(i) Your own? , Your own by adoption?
How many, their age?.....
(ii) Your spouse's? Your Spouse's by adoption

How many, their age?.....

(iii) Your own with your present spouse?

How many?....., their age.....

2. COUNSELLING

**Please tick one response only to the following questions on pre-marital counselling, re-marriage, the blended family.*

**In the questions which follow please note that, 'counselling' refers to pre-marital counselling for remarriage, 'marriage' to re-marriage, and 'family' to blended family.*

2.1 Counselling before marriage

- 1. Did you receive counselling before you married Yes/No
- 2. Was the counselling Christian based? Yes/No
- 3. Was the counselling secular based? Yes/No

2.2 The Counselling You Received

- 1. Did counselling assist you with this marriage? Yes/No/NA
- 2. Did the Counsellor discuss with you what marriage entails? Yes/No/NA
- 3. Did the issues discussed in counselling prepare you for marriage? Yes/No/NA
- 4. Tick the issues that were discussed in the counselling:

Expectations	wife's role	husband's role	typical changes
finances/property	wife's career	husband's career	inheritances
time out together	interests	vacations	sex
step children	adopted	natural	children's role
discipline methods	spouses methods	your methods	compromise
discipline of	his children	her children	
Christianity	Biblical guidelines	Religion	materialism

extended family	parents-in law	ex-spouse	ex-in-laws
relationship to family of origin		conflict	Communication
Other			

5. Tick the issues where counselling helped to understand the issue at hand, and, circle the issues where it did not:

Expectations	wife's role	husband's role	typical changes
finances/property	wife's career	husband's career	inheritances
time out together	interests	vacations	sex
step children	adopted	natural	children's role
discipline methods	spouses methods	your methods	compromise
discipline of	his children	her children	
Christianity	Biblical guidelines	Religion	materialism
extended family	parents-in law	ex-spouse	ex-in-laws
relationship to family of origin		conflict	Communication
Other			

~Was the counselling you received realistic?	Yes/No/NA
~Was the counselling you received explicitly Christian?	Yes/No/NA
~Was the counselling you received explicitly non-Christian/secular?	Yes/No/NA
~Were you referred for remarital counselling?	Yes/No/NA
~Did you decide to have remarital counselling?	Yes/No/NA
~After counselling and prior to marriage, did you think the counselling worthwhile?	Yes/No/NA

2.3 Counselling Assists With Your Marriage

~Since being married, has the counselling assisted your marriage?

Yes/No/NA

~Did counselling assist your relationship with your spouse?

Yes/No/NA

~Did counselling assist you with your relationship with your step children?

Yes/No/NA

~Tick issues where counselling assisted you in this marriage, and, circle the issues where it did not:

- | | | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Expectations | wife's role | husband's role | typical changes |
| finances/property | wife's career | husband's career | inheritances |
| time out together | interests | vacations | sex |
| step children | adopted | natural | children's role |
| discipline methods | spouses methods | your methods | compromise |
| discipline of | his children | her children | |
| Christianity | Biblical guidelines | Religion | materialism |
| extended family | parents-in law | ex-spouse | ex-in-laws |
| relationship to family of origin | | conflict | Communication |
| Other | | | |

~Do you think you are better able to deal with issues in this marriage than another who did not have counselling before marriage?

Yes/No/NA

~Did the explicitly Christian focus of counselling give insight into your marriage?

Yes/No/NA

~Did the explicit non-Christian/secular focus of counselling give insight into your marriage?

Yes/No/NA

~Having been married for sometime now, do you still think that the counselling was worthwhile? Yes/No/NA

2.4 Counselling, the ex-spouse and the children

~On balance, did the counselling assist with blending the two families? Yes/No/NA

~If yes, How?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

~If No, Why not?

.....

.....

.....

~Did the counselling help you to deal with the relationship between

- | | | |
|-----|--|-----------|
| (1) | You and your former spouse | Yes/No/NA |
| (2) | You and your former in/laws | Yes/No/NA |
| (3) | You and your step children | Yes/No/NA |
| (4) | You and your present spouse | Yes/No/NA |
| (5) | Your children and your spouse's children | Yes/No/NA |

~Did you consider the counselling pertinent to your situation?

Yes No

If Yes, In which ways?.....

.....
.....
.....

If No, why not?

.....
.....
.....

~Are there any other areas within this marriage/remarriage situation that counselling would have been helpful in?

.....
.....
.....

3. CONFLICT

3.1 Do you/did you find difficulties within the following areas in your marriage:

a. Dealing with your former spouse

Never Occasionally A lot of the time All the time

If you have marked the last two categories, in which areas particularly did you have problems?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

b. Disciplining of Children

Never Occasionally A lot of the time All the time

If you have marked the last two categories, in which areas particularly did you have problems?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

c. As a step parent, difficulties in your relationship with your step child(ren)

Never Occasionally A lot of the time All the time

If you have marked the last two categories, in which areas particularly did you have problems?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

d. Difficulties with a step child or children adjusting to a new family

Never Occasionally A lot of the time All the time

If you have marked the last two categories, in which areas particularly did you have problems?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

e. Other Issues that have also brought about conflict within the marriage situation

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

3.2 In retrospect, do you think that counselling to prepare you for the issues in a, b, c, d & e before your marriage, would have been helpful?

Yes Not sure No

If Yes, how?

.....
.....
.....
.....

If No, why not?

.....
.....
.....
.....

3.3 What could have been useful to you before you married to deal with these problems?

.....
.....

.....
.....
.....

4. THE CHURCH

4.1 Would you look to your church for help in the above situations or to an outside organisation?

Church Outside

If church, why?

.....
.....
.....

If outside, why?

.....
.....
.....

4.2 In what other ways could the church help you in a practical sense to prepare you and your children for a blended family situation?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

5. BIBLICALLY BASED GUIDELINES

5.1 Do you believe that the Bible has the guidelines to help you in a practical way for another marriage? Yes Not sure No

5.2 Do you think that a Scripturally based remarriage program would be of use in a remarriage setting?
Yes Not sure No

If yes, in what ways?

.....
.....
.....
.....

If no, why not?

.....
.....
.....
.....

5.3 Tick the areas in which you think Biblically based guidelines could help you prepare for a blended marriage:

Expectations	wife's role	husband's role	typical changes
finances/property	wife's career	husband's career	inheritances
time out together	interests	vacations	sex
step children	adopted	natural	children's role
discipline methods	spouses methods	your methods	compromise
discipline of	his children	her children	
Christianity	Biblical guidelines	Religion	materialism
extended family	parents-in law	ex-spouse	ex-in-laws

relationship to family of origin	conflict	Communication
Other		

5.4 Tick the areas where you think that perhaps Biblically based guidelines would not be of help

Expectations	wife's role	husband's role	typical changes
finances/property	wife's career	husband's career	inheritances
time out together	interests	vacations	sex
step children	adopted	natural	children's role
discipline methods	spouses methods	your methods	compromise
discipline of	his children	her children	
Christianity	Biblical guidelines	Religion	materialism
extended family	parents-in law	ex-spouse	ex-in-laws
relationship to family of origin	conflict	Communication	
Other			

Thank you for taking part in this study. Your time and effort has been greatly appreciated.

Jenny Basson

APPENDIX D

Interview sheet.

Interpersonal Conflict within the Blended Family

PERSONAL HISTORY

1. Name:.....
2. Age
3. Previously: Divorced..... Widowed Unmarried
4. Marital History 1st 2nd 3rd 4th marriage?
5. How long have you been widowed/divorced from first husband when you met your present husband:
6. How long did you go out together?
7. How old were your children when you first met you present husband
8. How old were his children?
9. How long have you been married now?

COUNSELLING

1. When you did the counselling did you think it was helpful at that time?
2. Is there anything that sticks in your mind as being pertinent then?
3. Where do you think the gaps were in the counselling? And did you actually discuss these issues at all?
4. What issues do your struggle with most now?
5. Do you think that counselling could help you now?
6. In retrospect could you, yourself have handled the situation any differently?
7. Can you think of any particular structures that could have been added to the premarital programme that could have eased the potential conflict?

CHURCH AND BIBLICAL GUIDELINES

1. Are there perhaps any practical structures that the church could bring in to handle the problems in blended families?
2. If a premarital programme was to be developed for potential blended families what suggestions would you make in terms of content?
3. In terms of ongoing care do you have any ideas how we as a church could deal with these issues in a blended family?

APPENDIX E

Interview: MARIA

I: How old are you?

M: Forty-nine.

I: And you have been previously divorced, widowed, and have remarried?

M: Yes. (...)

I: Now how long had you been divorced from your first husband when you met your present husband?

M: About two years.

I: Ok, and how long did you go out?

M: About a year.

I: Alright. Now how old were your children when you first met your present husband?

M: My daughter was about 20 and my son, 17.

I: Alright and how old were his children?

M: Ummm, his daughter 16, and his son 13

I: 16 and 13, alright, now how long have been married in this marriage?

M: Nearly four years.

I: I know that you did go for premarital counselling, I want to ask you a few questions regarding the counselling. When you did the counselling, did you actually think that it was helpful at the time?

M: At the, ja, at the time I thought it should be helpful, I wasn't sure.

I: Ok, so there was no reason to think that it would not be helpful.

M: No, no.

I: Ummm, if you think about the pertinence of the counselling, was there anything really pertinent to your situation, going into a second marriage?

M: Marriage. Umm, not specifically. It was the usual general stuff, which not having done that kind of counselling for my first marriage, I had no idea what that kind of counselling was about. So I felt that it should be, that it should help.

I: And a lot of the areas that you dealt with in the counselling probably were very helpful...

M: Yes, yes oh yes.

I: In terms of getting to know each other.

M: Yes.

I: Alright, now umm, there were gaps in the counselling obviously regarding blended families that's why I'm interviewing you.

M: Yes, yes.

I: Ummm, If you think where the gaps were, what gaps were there in the counselling, what issues could have been discussed?

M: I think the biggest major issue was on upbringing and discipline of children and how I did and how he did it because I had none, I had no idea.

I: And you hadn't even given it thought?

M: No. Cos I didn't think with friends and family you have a norm and things there. I understand that we are different and so on but I didn't realise that we could be SO different.

I: Difference mainly in discipline of the children?

M: Ja.

I: Difference in personalities in yourselves? Do you think that made a big difference in terms of the disciplining of the children?

M: Yes, definitely.

I: Now, if you think of the issues you struggle with now. What are the issues that you struggle with now, four years along the way.

M: Umm with communication, uh, I, I tend to confront and he tends to withdraw. I, we. My children don't live with us, his son does who is now 18 years old and his son to my mind is allowed to do exactly as he pleases with no respect to anybody else in the household and I find that very difficult to cope with and if I confront that issue I am ignored.

I: Ok. If you think about counselling, do thing that counselling could help you now?

M: Yes

I: But at this point, both of you are not necessarily wanting to go for counselling.

M: No, no.

I: Not wanting to go, alright.

M: He doesn't, he doesn't really believe that there is a problem. And he also comes from a culture where you don't take your family problems outside.

I: Yes yes. Ummm. I've got here, in retrospect, could you yourself have handled the situation any differently if you had known what was lying ahead, could you have prepared yourself any differently, could you have started handling the situation any differently from the way that you are handling it now?

M: Yes. I would have gone for counselling myself earlier. Of myself, so that I could realise that I'm not in charge of the home.

I: Yes that's right, that's right. Can you think of any particular structures that could have been added to the premarital program that could have eased the potential conflict? Think about structures.

M: Uh, my thoughts on the broader, I'll give you my thoughts on the broader issue. Umm first of all I do believe that we should have had psychometric testing and we didn't. Mainly because I thought I knew who I was and he knew who he was and when I eventually did do the psychometric testing I realised that we are two basically different, very very different people and if one had to look at it, purely from even grassroots level, we maybe shouldn't have married. Maybe. That's not to say that's an issue for now. Its not. Both personality-wise, both interest-wise, both educational-wise, and in every every respect we are almost complete opposites and that came out in the psychometric testing.

I: Now when did you do the psychometric testing?

M: About a year and a half ago.

I: Alright, now did that help you to understand suddenly why there the conflicts.

M: Yes, yes very much so.

I: So in fact what you are saying if you had had that as part of a premarital program, a personality profile or something like that it would have been helpful?

M: Yes Yes, very, in fact I, I would insist that that happen again. He didn't do it, I did it, but when I was filling out the form I had photocopied it and asked him to do it, so I took it in with me to the psychologist and she went through both of them with me and shy I was having the difficulties I was having, because of my personality and because he didn't feel that there were, or that he was at fault, I have been the one trying to make the changes, which I have found exceptionally difficult altogether because you doing it on your own.

I: Yes yes. Have you found because of the conflict regarding the disciplining of the children especially that it causes a situation where you find you can't communicate especially in certain areas?

M: Absolutely in most areas, because then, well now that he understands how I work he just shuts down whenever I want to speak to him about something even if its it not about the child.

I: Hmm, ok now I just going to rush us through here because I know you have to go. I'm looking at the church in Biblical guidelines because part of the study is looking at whether or not the bible can be used in a practical way in terms of principles and guidelines and practicalities that can come out of that. But also looking at the church, the blended family scenario is a fairly recent thing in the church, getting more and more couples in a blended family. Now if you look at that, look at how the church can help, are there any practical structures the church can put in place to handle these problems in blended families?

M: I don't know, its very difficult. Other than have a separate set of counselling set up for first marriages and for blended families and have that available.

I: ok, so that's a practical structure, someone who knows something about blended families who could conduct the counselling and what I'm thinking about would you see there is a place for support groups or; those are practical structures or would you not feel that that could be...

M: Yes yes, it certainly could I think its, its just well, when all of that happens and when one falls in love again, you know that love is blind story is very very true and you are not particularly interested in in any of that at that point of time. And I'm not sure whether folk would open up because its the here and now, its not dealing with an issue that's past and there's the hurt and whatever or there's a situation that you then have to deal with and then you know...

I: Mmm, and you're right, it's the initial part of that relationship you don't want to share, you don't want counselling it's the last thing you want to have but when you start experiencing problems do you think it could be advantageous just to have a place you can learn from people who have gone through similar experiences?

M: Yes definitely.

I: In that respect maybe a support group... I was also thinking in terms of premarital programs ummm, which were to be developed for potential blended families. What added contents could you make in terms of blended families to that program? You've mentioned psychometric testing... yes that's very important.

M: Yes that's the one, I also think that if one sits down and has a situation where, I mean mine were teenagers, so umm, using a teenage child, what what kind of boundaries do they have. What do you expect them to do in the home as a, as in looking after themselves, cleaning their rooms, what sort of programs are they allowed to watch. What sort of things do you allow?

I: So it's discussing the boundaries beforehand isn't it?

M: Yes yes.

I: and stipulating what those boundaries should be before you get married.

M: Yes yes and how do you deal with situations if your child took your car out of the garage without asking at the age of 16 what you know what would be the consequences. Practical, very practical issues of day-to-day living.

I: And how you would face them...

M: Yes and what would be your response to that?

I: Do you think now just going on to another area that can cause conflict in a second marriage, do you think that having some sort of preparation with dealing with ex-spouses could be useful?

M: Ja, ummm, we've been fortunate in the respect. I mean, I don't speak to my ex at all and I don't need to because my children are over the age and he has the children and they go see her from time-to-time and its been amicable but yes I would imagine that that is incredibly important. Because that's another break-down area that occurs.

I: Yes. Now when you got married, you went for premarital counselling for the two of you. The children were not part of that counselling.

M: No.

I: Do you think they could have benefited from being in on some of the counselling?

M: Umm, possibly, I think in, in our situation they like him very much so there was never an issue of like "Mom, are you thinking about what you're doing?" so they have been more than happy. As far as his children are concerned, yes because umm, particularly his son who has been living with us from the beginning yes definitely because he has no idea what he was having to cope with in me, none whatsoever.

I: What about the relationship between children and children, do think they could have benefited...?

M: Again, yes, if they were in the house together, but they haven't been so fortunately we haven't had to cross that bridge.

I: And do all the children get on well?

M: They don't see each other often. If they are at an occasion together they are civil and but there's no interaction as in family members.

I: And they don't regard each other as family members.

M: Family no.

I: In terms of ongoing care now going back to the church. In terms of ongoing care do you have any ideas how we as a church could deal with these issues of a blended family in terms of our care? How does the church show care in terms of blended families? Interest in their lives?

M: Interest? I don't think they do. But I don't see it as a huge issue. I probably look at it as if there is an issue then lets sort it out and deal with it or go and fin, I'm very proactive in my life in terms of, or even my own issues is going and getting help, or talking about it or prayer or in Bible study to work through issues with me, or you know my support structure does that. I think it must be very difficult for folk who don't have that, but then I think, we've got to remember that the onus is also on them to find what's available in a crises situation or problem situation and then we've just got to be sensitive to folk who umm ja and then guide them in the right direction or to see somebody or whatever. Umm, it's a tricky one, its so difficult, you don't kind of want to say, "Look you're going to have issues so your support group will be that one.."

I: No you don't want that. Do you think you have ever felt that there is a stigma in our church in terms of second or third marriages?

M: No, no

I: That's nice huh? So you've never felt any stigma at all.

M: No

I: That's good

M: But I have had a very supportive Bible study you know, makes a huge difference and all of those things. No I have not and doing the stuff I do here and the way we do it, many people say that they do not feel that they have been labelled and that is the exciting thing.

I: Oh that's excellent. Maria, thank you very much I appreciate your time. Thank you.

APPENDIX F

Interview: Marcia

I: Could you just give me a bit of background? Could you give me your age, how long you were previously divorced for, and how long you have been married for?

M: Well I'm 60 now, umm, I was on my own for about 10 years, but I had known Paul for years, we had served on the same committees, rate payers association and so we certainly knew each other but not socially, we didn't socialise. And we met up again, I had an accident and he contacted me – 'was I the same person that he had known from the committee days?' – and he turned out to be a really good friend, you know, a person I would invite around if I had made too much lasagne! Come and help me eat my lasagne, if I had people coming around I would invite him to come around for dinner...so he was a good solid friend.

I: So how long did you actually go out for, before you got married even though you knew each other previously?

M: Well, I think we went out without being an item, about a year on a completely platonic basis. I was absolutely horrified when I realised he had, what my mother would have said – intentions. Totally and utterly horrified because I didn't want to lose a good friend. And it was really only as a result of an accident where his one daughter was actually fighting for her life that I realised that I was really playing with somebody's emotions umm, I knew he cared for me deeply and I really didn't allow myself to care, I didn't even allow myself to explore the thought of caring because I didn't want to get hurt and I didn't really want to get involved. It was only seeing his daughter fighting for her life that I realised what am I doing? I am playing with somebody's emotions. I'm playing with my emotions, his emotions, the family's emotions, I'm not taking anything very seriously, was very light hearted and what right had I to do that? And then I began to think, what would my life be like if he were not around? And I saw him in a different light, as a stalwart reliable person, and then saw him through the different eyes of as a possible husband. Would – but there was no passion involved – there was no huge passion one would associate with getting married and would have in your twenties, it was a different, it was a deeper, I think a far more objective...

I: the decision was there, I can get married?

M: Yes, yes..

I: We would do well together.

M: Yes

I: His children – how old were they when you first got married?

M: I think they were in their early twenties – I'm not good about dates and ages. The one was 19, the one 21, something like that.

I: And your children?

M: Mine were all in their twenties. Ja, late twenties.

I: Late twenties?

M: Mid to late twenties.

I: How many children?

M: Three

I: Boys, Girls?

M: Boy, girl, boy.

I: Alright and he had?

M: Two daughters.

I: Alright now both of you decided to go for premarital counselling – was that just something you decided...

M: No! Not my idea at all. I thought it was a complete waste of time. We were going to get married. I was going to one church – he was going to another and what we would do on a Sunday, we had always done this... I would go to my church come back make a pot of coffee, he would go to his church, pick up a bunch of croissants on his way over come here, we'd both read the Sunday Independent and then he would go off and I would do whatever I needed to do for the day. So when it came to this whole marriage thing, I was now determined that I was going to be this good submissive wife. Which would be very difficult. But my intentions were good. So he was far more traditionally, the church he was attending was quite, quite traditional which is very different to mine and I thought right from a Christian perspective I've now got to learn to keep my mouth shut and let the Lord do the work in changing him. I must really just be quiet. I tottered off with him to this church and it was a pretty building and I like the minister there, fairly. I had attended some Alpha courses there so I was familiar with the person and we were then going to get married and he then he had the strangest attitude. He wanted to know my background, which was fine I gave him my background and I think he had established that I had nothing to do with the breakdown of Paul's marriage and that was easily established. Ok. Then he then oh no we had to wait a long time because we had to get permission from the Bishop, and I thought I wasn't even a member of his congregation and I must get permission from your bishop? And then he suggested premarital counselling and I thought alright we'll do premarital counselling then. But it certainly wasn't an issue it was really to placate this minister. And of course Paul was very happy to concede and to do this.

I: And did you go to counselling through this minister? With this minister?

M: Yes he recommended somebody who was doing it, I don't think this person was part of his congregation but another congregation of the same denomination. And so he gave us the name and we went along, I think it was for three weeks, four weeks?

I: Alright – can you still remember was it like – an hour at a time... how long it was?

M: There was a questionnaire we had to complete and then I think there were four sections and each week we would have a section to concentrate on and I think there was a certain amount of homework we had to do but I think it was more in terms of in the questionnaire which we took home we had to apply our minds to the particular issue.

I: At that time did you find it helpful?

M: -

I: You didn't find it helpful?

M: I didn't find it particularly helpful; I had been through a lot of this before with my own growth.

I: So there was nothing that really struck you as being pertinent to your own situation then.

M: they brought up subjects like finance stuff, organising finances. I was earning, he was earning and we agreed that – he would pay for certain things – I would contribute to certain things and I could bank with whatever was in my contact and he would do likewise in his account there was no really joint account although afterwards he said he thought it would be more practical that I had signing powers for his account just in case I had to draw a cheque for him or something...

I: So that was looking at finances. If you think about gaps in the counselling, did you ever as you were going through the counselling think, I wish there was time discuss this or that or didn't it really enter your mind?

M: No, uh uh.

I: It didn't really enter your mind

M: No.

I: Now if you think about the issues – you have been married for how long now?

M: six and a bit years.

I: Six and a bit years – alright what issues do you struggle the most with now?

M: Well I think – they not even issues – lets say areas that I feel are incomplete. Where they would change on personality – other people might deal with it differently you know – I think, in my understanding – most men tend to be non-confrontational.,

its easier to keep the peace. And sometimes I think one needs a more involved more decision taking, deal with the situation and I find it quite frustrating, that just could be a man thing – it needn't be a personality thing maybe those sort of issues should come up in counselling. I know there was an area on conflict I don't think that came up in terms of the personalities – would you be able to solve a problem? How would you solve a problem?

I: With your different personalities, would it have been helpful to know? Doing a personality profile as well?

M: I think it would have been helpful because the situations that have arisen I have felt a lot of frustration because as I have seen with it – a lack of dealing with it. I don't think he's seen it as a lack of dealing with it as he sees it as a non-issue. I have seen it as something that needs to be addressed. But I see him as being non-confrontational and not wanting to deal with it.

I: One of the other things you mentioned in the questionnaire, was the problem with his mother. Did you deal in your pre-marital counselling with dealing with extended family? Or new family?

M: It only as far as one's children. It didn't go – not as far as I can recall anything to do with one's parents.

I: Would it have been helpful doing that?

M: Well certainly now, looking back, I wish I had known what to do. I had always had the impression that you can see how a man will treat his wife, by the way that he treats his mother. And that I'm sure it holds good, except that I do find, that he treats his mother, and then he treats me much the same way, which is to placate, again to keep the peace. And that annoys me because you are not dealing with the issue. Its almost like he is doing a chicken dance to make you happy. So if he sees that I'm maybe feeling a bit upset, he'll act, get you a drink – 'how about a cup of tea?' do anything but don't be cross with me. It reminds me of a small boy with the mommy withdrawing love, or his perception of her withdrawing love and I felt it was the same thing and the way he is with his mother I think it is ridiculous. She loves it. She loves the flattery, she loves the ... she loves the fuss, she loves – to me I think it is completely superficial nonsense.

I: So if you had discussed it before.

M: If I had known about it.

I: Yes if you had known about it – so you didn't actually know about it.

M: I didn't know about it.

I: Had you not met his mother?

M: I had met her but not to the point of knowing how she behaved and how he responded. Her expectation you see. She wants to be treated like an absolute queen.

I: Do you think that if you went to counselling now it would be helpful or ...

M: But she's 95 and she's never going to change and he adores his mom and that's a good thing. I encourage him to phone her on a regular basis. You know when David (Ratray?) was murdered – 'oh I must tell my mother.' And I said but why? 'Because she's met him.' 'but won't it upset her that he's been murdered? I mean...' No but he must phone and tell his mother – and why not? But having to tell mommy about this, I mean the next time you speak to her, tell her about this but don't phone her specifically for this you know? And it was, there's always this English jokey jokey. I'm sure there wouldn't be that about David being murdered but there a "Oh hello mother ha ha ha ha ha ha, how are you? Oh jolly good. Snowing is it? Oh ha ha ha ha." Well, why can't you just say – 'so whats the weather like? Snowing oh ok...' not this jokey jokey.

I: Do you think that we, and to be quite honest we often do – develop a role where we back into with our family of origin? And this is a role his played...

M: I'm sure he did, Yes a role.

I: And maybe you yourself also play a role, a different role when you are in your family of origin,

M: I think to a degree, one is not aware of the role one is expected to play. So then you fall into the act, but I think one should take stock, oh hang on, I'm reacting in a certain way, is it actually me? How do I actually feel about this now as an adult or coming into the situation now I know that with my own parents I had to do that to see that I wasn't always feeling guilty. I, they could manipulate me into always feeling guilty. I had to stop and learn to say no in a kind way – not to hurt them, but not to allow myself to be manipulated and I don't think that can happen in this mother-son relationship because she has had too much influence on him over the years.

I: And there's been another marriage in between so there's been a lot of distance as you have said. If you think of how you went into this marriage and how these issues have surfaced. Would you have handled anything differently?

M: I didn't know about any of these things. I didn't know about the mother – I know she didn't really approve of me but that's just too bad – that really cant be helped but ummm...

I: Personality differences?

M: She...

I: In terms of you and Paul, would you have handled, if you had known in retrospect, would you have handled things differently?

M: I don't think I would have done anything different, because I cant really pin-point, I just think he is, he's not dependant on her for approval but there's this incredible link between the two. I mean you hear about sons who phone their mother every single

morning... 'How are you mom?' Because the mother wants it and the husband complies and the wife tolerates and there's actually nothing wrong with that. umm I just think its just a woman thing that women don't like sharing their men, whether it is with their mother or...

I: And maybe – I'm just thinking in the aspect of maybe, preparation would be letting the wife understand that that is the case.

M: but I don't think he knows about it himself!

I: But the wives are the ones who have the problems, lets be honest, with having to share him with a mother and if that had been challenged before-hand that you realise that wont always be the one in his life in every aspect.

M: I don't think so, because nobody would have thought that that would have been a problem! I was quite shocked that she had phoned up some of his friends on hearing that he was getting married to check up on me – on one hand that's a caring mother to do that but for goodness sake he is in his 50s, what is mommy doing calling up friends to check-up on his future wife? There is nothing wrong with that per-say, but its everything wrong with it if you look at it from a different perspective.

I: But its not healthy. Mmm alright.

M: and he didn't see anything wrong with it.

I: And he wouldn't

M: You see that is because he is in a certain frame of mind.

I: Alright – going back to preparation for this marriage, going back to that premarital preparation. Could you think of anything that could have been added to that program that might have eased conflict?

M: I think there should have been something to do with existing parents, your relationship with your own parents, your relationship with your future in-laws, and to go right into, do you spend time together? Do you like each other? Have you been shopping together? Do you have a superficial relationship or do you like to share. ... so I think they could have looked into those issues in-depth, not just do you get on with your in-laws but do you know them? How do you feel? Do you feel comfortable in their presence? Do they make you feel at home? Do you think it is a façade? Umm, if he were, if your husband-to-be were not around would you like them as people? Like real honest...

I: That would have been a very good aspect to have put into the program

M: Yes, the same thing now dealing now with children, so now we have step-children, but now they are young adults so you are hardly going to have much influence on them because their pattern has been set. It has been formulated by their teenagers Paul has his children he had to raise them on his own, one was thirteen the other was fifteen, so he had to go through the whole thing of clubbing,

taking the pill, boyfriends all these things and I can sit back and think – I think he did a very good job but was far lenient and there was no moral background – there was no 'you can't bring the boyfriend home' it was too lenient and I think he over-compensated because mom wasn't there. Mom had run off and married – so...

I: So what you're saying is there were different standards between him and you...

M: Absolutely different standards, absolutely different values it was like chalk and cheese.

I: So that could have been addressed in the counselling?

M: That could have been addressed, with adult children, with adult offspring one wouldn't see it as being a problem because they would be living on their own, but one is always a parent and there comes a time when, for whatever reason, one will come home to roost as is what happened, the two girls were sharing the cottage on our property, and they were on their own they had their own independence, did their own cooking, they came here for a meal once a week on a regular basis there was just a gate between the two properties they were completely independent. They could have the boyfriend or not have the boyfriend or whatever it was – they were adults. Then the one didn't belong with the other and the one moved back here, well into the house – not back they hadn't been here before. Umm, and that posed problems because, she wanted the boyfriend to come and stay. And I had to say mmm mmm not ok. And it caused a situation. She wanted to repaint the room, she was quite demanding as to what she wanted, I said but darling you are only here for a short time until things are sorted out with your sister its not a permanent thing, I don't want to have to reorganise the furniture and repaint the room just for a short time. Umm, she was used to getting her own way with Daddy, for she was the oldest of the two girls.

I: So both of you had never had any, well sat down and discussed how you would handle in situations where they approached you...

M: Because we never thought they would come up! Neither did we think that my son, in his thirties would come back from London stay with us for two years! The first year was fine, he was studying but the second year he was working. And for goodness sake he is a young man, he wants to spread his wings and do things and I was really annoyed when I got up one morning and I saw a young girl in her dressing gown, going to the bathroom. I had no idea that he had sneaked her in. Now Paul didn't mind, Paul didn't quite know what I was making such a fuss about, ummm when I took my son aside later in the day and said look that is not to happen again, you know what the rules are here. And I really think the time has come where you have got to fly. You really must fly. Whilst I still like you, because there is going to come a time when I will resent seeing your face at the door and I don't want to be like that. So we actually had to, we went out to lunch – he and I, and we spoke.

I: How was the relationship, how is the relationship between your children and Paul's children?

M: Very very different. They all get along at a wonderfully light superficial level. All very charming, very nice. My lot, I suppose the background is very different, my lot are kind of more serious and are used to discussing in depth and are used to being honest about their feelings because that is how they were brought up, my eldest son gets along very well with the eldest daughter, although he feels he can't always relate to her because he feels that there is a façade, which in fact there is, that's how she is. Gets along very well with her boyfriend. Who happens to be Muslim, which is a concern for me but obviously not for anybody else. But my son likes this chap very much as he is...

I: So basically they get along...

M: They get along.

I: In terms of going – and I'm taking us back to the premarital counselling here. Would you have found a place at any point for a sort of a round table counselling session? Involving both families? In terms of preparation for the impending marriage?

M: I think if the family had been younger, I would have said yes, that was appropriate.

I: Ja,

M: But because they were all adults, I didn't think, I had said to Paul initially what do your girls think about this, because we have to consider them staying with you and you are their security. I had been living on my own. And he said well it doesn't actually concern them because I'm marrying you. And I said no, it is of concern because its family, you have to take them into account and really sit down and discuss with them, the implications, the ramifications and how do they feel, Oh, Daddy's fine, (Denise?) 's fine and Mary's gone (...?) but is that how they really feel? If they so used to the façade of courtesy, politeness, jokey jokey haha... how are you really going to know how they feel? There may be deep resentment.

I: So did you speak to your children and he speak to his?

M: Yes. Mine thought it was the most ridiculous situation, terribly amusing, because they knew the person, not in a nasty way, but they just couldn't imagine us together we were so different. umm

I: And his?

M: His seemed to be very sweet and very, and I think because of the accident, there had been an accident and I had gotten involved with the family, and when the one was in hospital I went to help her wash her hair. So there ..

I: So they got to like you.

M: Ja ja.

I: Alright, I'm going to switch us now to another subject, just looking at the church and looking at how we as a church family can cater for people in blended families. Do you

think that there are any practical structures that can be brought in by the church to help people with, but these sort of things do you think that there is a place for people to discuss, there is a place for people to go to if they know they have problems that they know they will be listened to. Is there a place for that?

M: I don't know, because if they actually are problems, its actually just life isn't it? Just go through and there are certain, you either have mountains or molehills depending on how you look at them.

I: So you never felt that your problems were so much that you couldn't handle them at that point?

M: No, I still haven't got. I think possibly that there is a perception that, but it may have just been me, but it could be that there is a perception of second marriages indicate that there is something wrong with you. That your first marriage failed. Its fine if you've been widowed, but if you divorced, well, what's wrong with you and remarriage. You look and thing well I wonder if he was the cause of the breakdown, people, because it is human nature, start to, to kind of move stories around. I don't think they I don't think that remarried people are accepted on the same level as first married people. I think its just divorce still has a stigma in the church.

I: I was going to ask you – so you think there is a stigma in the church?

M: I think there is, I think it's a very gentle stigma, everyone's very accepting but first prize is not to be divorced. And I think we look at the eldership, up at communion time and I've never seen a divorced couple up there. Its always single people, or married people who have been married for a long time. When they hand out communion. I've yet to see a divorced couple serve communion.

I: ok. If you think about the potential of creating a remarriage program for people getting married again – can you think of any ideas for content? I'm throwing you in the deep end.

M: Well you know, that depends what age they are. That if they are in their 40s and their children are teenagers, one has to look at problems around teenagers, discipline, what the rules are, have got to agree with the pecking order of the children. If there are two lots of a similar age.

I: so what are their boundaries?

M: I think anticipating the problems. If there is a remarriage in life say 50s, they must take into account retirement, umm, work expectations for leisure time because one may not be accustomed to marrying later in life, you haven't had a whole life time building up to similar goals and interests, you coming in together at a certain age when suddenly he might decide to take up bowls or, golf in your 50s? But he might take up something that wasn't there before it might require some adaptation, if you want to do things together – I know Paul loves to walk, he likes walking – so he gets up early in the morning and he goes for a walk to check on the neighbourhood he says. He just likes to walk. So he'll walk from here to the Post Office and around the area, which is very good. I know he's love me to join him. There is no way on earth

I'm going to get up at six o'clock to check on the neighbourhood. I wake up when I hear the rattle of tea-cups and he brings in the tea. Then I am able to face the world. Now I have a feeling that his first wife loved to walk. Umm

I: So its seeing where the interests can be created together and where there are separate interests.

M: Ja and not to mind if they are separate.

I: To know its quite normal to have separate interests.

M: So he is very understanding about me not being a morning person. And I'm delighted that he is satisfied going for a walk. He has a walking friend, a long-standing friend, who's brother was at school with him, the sister is one of South Africa's great walking people and if there is a walk that she feels that he will enjoy, he will join in the walk, she strides way ahead – she is an amazing walker but he will love going on a 15km walk. So there is no way, I can't even undertake to be there at the finish.

I: Now going back to suggestions for the content – very big in your mind, particularly if you are getting married at the age of 40, 50 or 60 is how to deal with adult children. Where are your perimeters and such like. Any other areas? We mentioned – you mentioned earlier extended family. What about the area of aged parents? Who takes responsibility for those – would that be an area that would need.

M: I think you are right about aged parents. I know my mother was alive when we remarried and she was quite a doer person, she didn't really know how to express emotion and he was very good to her. She was very distrusting of him. She had been given misinformation by members of the family but she umm I think she grew to understand that he really had my best interests at heart but it could have been a problem. She was in a retirement home. We were not called upon to contribute financially because her insurance, her medical aid fortunately covered all those expenses. Umm, so in that way no, but we were certainly called upon emotionally. We would take her out every weekend and there was never a thought from his side of 'oh what a drag' it was a matter of what time are we fetching mom today?

I: so you were lucky he was very accommodating.

M: Very very accommodating.

I: but you could foresee that in some marriages, they would not be accommodating.

M: but being as he is so faithful and kind to his own mother, I think he would transfer that to his wife's mother.

I: If you think about ongoing care – and this is the last question, if you think of conflict, now you have experienced a type of conflict, others may have experienced other types of conflict – is there some way you think the church could care for these people or be more helpful to these people. What do you think the church could bring into its structure to help people dealing with conflict?

M: Ja I think it just comes into the everyday way of life. Without anything specific, maybe just in the teachings, in life there is conflict and how does one resolve it, what is the Christian way of solving it? You go to the person, you take someone with you the next time, the third time you go to the church – that the church is the body of support and that one can go to the church to help them resolve without it being an issue. A way of life. The church is there to help you live your life to the best of your ability. And it needn't be only when you have a problem. What is a problem? What could be a problem to me could mean nothing to you. The church is only used to dealing with huge problems.

I: Do you think there is a place for people to be umm, to be focused just in the area of blended families. So people know in second marriages that that is the person that they go to see.

M: I don't know, I think it depends on the personality – I think some people might relate better to other people.

I: a friend?

M: Ja.

I: I 'm just thinking of the stigma, you said around divorce, that you say there has been. Would that same stigma be then with second marriages or does that fall away?

M: I think it falls away as you get to know the people. You see people and oh that's there second, third or fourth marriage and that's how it is. I think particularly if you have known the first husband or the first wife its more difficult then. And I've been at church since the 80s so a lot of people I know, knew my first husband.

I: Do you ever feel a sense of isolation?

M: No, no in fact they were hugely supportive because unknown to me he'd been cooking his goose so to speak, and people saw him, long before I did, in that light. But I think it is difficult once you have been married I remember going to Bible study and they were talking about Matthew and how you may not remarry because that is adultery. And this person went on, and said to me I'm so sorry to say this to you but remarriage is completely out of the question for you.

I: Without knowing.

M: And I just smiled and over tea, and I said to her, there actually was huge adultery on the side of the ex-husband – 'oh I didn't know that' of course, what a relief, now you are free to be remarried. And I thought you know what? I appreciate her honesty, I appreciate the fact that I think there were a lot of remarriages that maybe shouldn't be taking place, where there was, well I didn't belong with him or this or that... it so clear that you may not. Because of your faithlessness but I tell you and this no man may put asunder that you are...

I: And that can be used to judge people unwisely I think, is that right? Like they judged you automatically.

M: It could do, but they did it I think because they did not know the situation.

I: They did not know the situation.

M: but I appreciated that they were being truthful towards scripture. They were not making allowances. And I remember that in my first marriage when he had become a Christian. Now we had both come from a mainstream church he became a Christian and he changed radically, the hallelujahs, the hymn singing and all the rest and I went along to my local chap and said this is what had happened. And he said you know what? Give it about 5 years and if it is still like that maybe you can look for an annulment. And I thought you blooming hypocrite, ... its either the truth or not the truth and in this Bible study she was telling me the truth and I appreciated that.

I: Do you think there is a place for (and I'm going back again) a place for support groups for people in blended marriages, facing conflict, with difficulties in certain areas – sharing with people who are the same?

M: I'm not sure that there would be...

I: Being guided by someone...

M: I always think that a focus group like that would be good and I know that I had great benefit from the divorce recovery, which I attended three weeks after my divorce. And I found that extremely helpful. I don't if that would come into divorce recovery, but that is too raw because you can't think of remarriage when you are going through divorce recovery because you are in a state of recovering, umm

I: After you have been remarried a second time and suddenly you are faced with potential conflict that you hadn't even thought of, would there be benefit in a place to go and discuss it?

M: could be could be. More from a counsellors side, umm

I: It would be a group facilitated by a counsellor.

M: You might not want to mention it to other people.

I: No that's it it's the confidentiality.

M: It may be that well, so and so has been through something similar would you like me to put you in touch with them, so there is that...

I: So there is a place maybe in that,

M: With that sort of structure, where's it private and not a once off. Someone's arriving...

APPENDIX G

Interview with Jennifer

I: Now I just want you to give me a little bit of information, um how long were you widowed, or divorced? You were divorced actually, before you met your present husband? How long were you divorced for before you met him?

J: I separated a long time before I was divorced, and I was divorced for two years before I met him.

I: ok and how many years with the separation and the divorce?

J: ummm, about fifteen years.

I: Fifteen years? Alright. Now how long did you go out together with Derek?

J: Umm, for two years and four months

I: Two years and four months – ok lets say two and a half years. Children? How old were your children when you first met?

J: My children, my daughter was... when we first met?

I: Yes when you first met.

J: ummm, I'm not that good at arithmetic... twenty-six?

I: Twenty-six your daughter and

J: He had just turned twenty-one.

I: Ok, so early to mid-twenties. Alright and his children?

J: In their thirties.

I: Alright. Now at this present time how long have you been married?

J: just about four years – four years.

I: Now when you did the counselling, the pre-marital counselling. When you were actually doing it – did you think it was helpful at that time?

J: No.

I: what, what – why not? What procured at that point that it wasn't helpful?

J: Because they weren't the relevant questions that they were asking. They were kind of fudging over some of the issues and kind of, my husband tends to make light of

things, so he tends to make jokes. So some of the issues, which actually were big issues became just a joke or "oh you'll be alright" or...

I: Because the person who counselled you entered into the joking side of things. Did they? Or responded in a joking way or...?

J: To some extent it was just. They had a very high opinion of him, and I felt like, at the time, that I was just being silly about those kind of things.

I: Now what I didn't ask you, the counselling that you had – was it Christian counselling? Was it by a Christian counselling centre?

J: It was by a Christian Pastor.

I: A Pastor. Who had experience in pre-marital counselling?

J: I would think so.

I: Alright

J: But he was not a counsellor as such.

I: Alright.

J: My husband refused to go for counselling. It was kind of a second option. It was better than nothing, but it was, it wasn't adequate.

I: So you don't think there was anything there that was pertinent to your situation that was dealt with in the counselling?

J: they didn't deal with the things that were pertinent.

I: ok. Think about the gaps. Lets think about firstly going back one step. Think about what they did deal with. Can you remember any of the issues that they did deal with?

J: Yes, they dealt with... They didn't deal with the children issue very much...

I: Alright. So that's a gap that you...

J: Yes. They didn't deal with the age difference.

I: Between you and him?

J: Yes

I: And what was the difference in age?

J: It was numerous years it was ten years.

I: Between the two of you?

J: Yes, so we come from different eras.

I: Alright.

J: So we think differently. So that wasn't dealt with. Ummm,

I: and the things that you did deal with, what was it like? Your expectations? At that stage you wouldn't really know... I suppose

J: Yes we dealt with expectations... no we didn't know what to expect and eventually when we did get married, umm, the expectations that we did expect that we had expected did come up, some of the problem areas. And they were just as big a problem as if we hadn't...

I: It didn't make that much of a difference?

J: No.

I: Alright, you mentioned some of the things that were not mentioned in the counselling... children? For example, what areas in the area of children could have been dealt with in the pre-marital counselling?

J: Umm, maybe the possessiveness of the children, because now, they big children now right? Umm, the fact that maybe his daughter particularly wanted to mother him or be there for her father and she resented me. That was quite a big issue.

I: And with your children? In terms of your children and his children if you think about the situation now four years down the line. Do they think of each other as family? Or Siblings in any way? Or do they not get on at all?

J: I don't think so. Its not that they don't get on. They're quite pleasant to each other when they are together which is not very often. But I don't think they think of each other as family.

I: Ok. So in terms of...

J: Oh like for example, my children were not invited to his daughter's wedding.

I: Ok. Alright. That's how much they didn't think of each other as family.

J: Yes which wasn't a problem to me, that's fine, but it just indicates that...

I: Yes fine. If you think of the areas you struggle with now. Could that have been addressed in the counselling? Think about the areas you struggle with now, or have struggled with in the last four years. Could it have been addressed by counselling?

J: Well some of them. There is one in particular in that my husband likes to go to bed early, I don't like to go to bed early. I don't like to get up early. He does like to get up early. Ok. One of these silly ones...

I: but an irritant.

J: Yes, that was actually mentioned in the counselling, but we were both told we just had to learn to compromise a bit. But when it came to the nitty-gritty there was resentment.

I: Where was the resentment come from? Your side? His side? Or both sides?

J: Maybe both... I mean I have this thing, when even to this day he says, "Well I think I'm going to go and hit the sack" and it's a...

I: a trigger to irritation

J: a trigger yes. I would rather he didn't say it, he just went to bed.

I: And then you would wake up think "where has he got to?"

J: Yes probably (Laughing).

I: If you think about, I'm just particularly trying to think about the counselling where it was helpful, it wasn't helpful, where it wasn't realistic. So in an area like that, could something have been put into the counselling to help you deal with the different ages, different personalities, different expectations?

J: I'm sure there could have been.

I: Would you have listened to that at that point? Taken cognisance of that?

J: Yes I think by that stage I would have. When I first met him I don't think I would've but this was two years down the line. I think we would have.

I: Areas that you were struggling with when you were going to get married, because there might have been areas where you were already struggling with although you had decided to get married. Are those areas that you still struggle with or have those areas in time sort of sorted themselves out? Do you have the same sort of things, the same irritants?

J: Yes. They are not nearly as bad as they were, but they are being sorted out. Yes. There has had to be quite a lot of give and take on both sides I think.

I: I'm just thinking, do you think you could have handled the whole situation differently? Say, I know he wasn't very keen to go to counselling.

J: No

I: Before...

J: He wouldn't go to counselling that's why we didn't actually go to a counsellor.

I: Do you think you could, he would have been open to have gone to a counsellor who was well versed in the area of second marriages or do you think he was beyond...

J: No absolutely not. He was absolutely determined that he didn't need counselling that he could do this on his own. He had been married once, he knew what marriage was about. He was absolutely adamant. I mean the fact that we managed to get to counselling because this wasn't a counsellor...

I: This was a spiritual pastor...

J: Yes

I: So he probably, didn't have much expertise as such, in retrospect if you look back at that... in the area of second marriages maybe.

J: Ja, and I think he probably thought, well much the same. He did the best he could.

I: I'm thinking, that's looking at the premarital counselling. Are there any other thoughts which you could add to that. Anything you think could have been addressed that wasn't addressed? That you think of now. Not really?

J: you mean in the actually counselling?

I: In the pre- marital counselling. In your questionnaire you said it basically didn't help. So I suppose...all areas could have been looked at then?

J: Yes. Finances weren't even addressed; sexuality wasn't really addressed and just general living... I guess.

I: like what are the boundaries you lay down and with children and stuff like that...

J: Fortunately the children have proved not to be a problem in the marriage. They were before we were married but not since.

I: Ok so that has been dealt with. Ok. Lets just look at the church, and the Biblical guidelines. Do you think there is a stigma? Against blended families within the church? Do you ever pick that up?

J: Umm, I think there is, but I think it is less now because there are so many more. So its becoming more of a norm. People are more and more accepting it.

I: That's right. If you think about, in terms of how the church perhaps could help in the area of blended families in practical ways – is there a... are there perhaps any practical structures that the church could bring in to handle the problem? Of blended families?

J: Yes. I think if they could address things like umm, expecting the new spouse to be the same as the old spouse. Umm, or triggers that have upset people in the past, to watch out for them in the future. Some sensitivities. ummm

I: How would they address that in a practical way? Do you think if there was a forum like a discussion group? Or or, meeting with people who had been there before and had experienced that...

J: Yes yes I think some of the common problems would come to the fore, those that most people would get. Umm, ja, and there could even be tapes or talks to do with that.

I: To help you know what to expect in a situation you haven't been in before.

J: Yes.

I: A lot of people say the church – that is the church in general supports people in first marriages and people in further marriages don't feel supported. I don't know if you think that is true of this church?

J: I don't think that's true. I don't think it makes a huge amount of difference. Umm, but I don't know that they entirely understand what it is all about.

I: We can accept a situation without knowing what the situation entails.

J: Yes.

I: Umm, so if a pre-marital program for example was to be developed, we are talking pre-marital now for potentially blended families, what suggestions would you make in terms of content. Now you've said in practical structures which you could bring into counselling. You could look at triggers...

J: Yes yes.

I: Umm, other things that come to mind?

J: also it makes a difference, the blended families coming together as a result of death, or divorce. There is a difference there too. Because...

I: What would have to be dealt with there then? Baggage?

J: Yes baggage because in the case of death sometimes the late spouse is put on a pedestal that the other one will never ever reach.

I: Did you find that in your situation?

J: Oh absolutely.

I: And that is a hard act to follow isn't it?

J: yes yes.

I: And actually dealing with it – discussing it in detail, helping the person understand that's not the way to deal with it? Would it be helpful to do that?

J: Yes.

I: Any other things? What about... now I know you had older children, do you think that the children should have been brought in on the counselling side?

J: Umm,

I: To prepare them for what was about to happen? Maybe not in the thirties, is already quite grown up...

J: They were the problem area.

I: Interesting hey?

J: Yes.

I: What was the problem, the problem was the possessiveness of the daughter.

J: Yes, the son was fine, he wasn't a problem.

I: So do you think maybe having sort of a family forum. Meeting together in a round table?

J: Ja, although I don't know if she would have actually done that.

I: And your two? Would they have done that?

J: My two were very happy, they just wanted to see me happy. That was the bottom line there. So they actually encouraged it.

I: And they weren't against this relationship at all,

J: Not at all.

I: Because they wanted to see you happy.

J: Happy yes.

I: Have they said anything since? Have they seen you still happy? Have they made comments about you being unhappy?

J: Yes, umm, well my daughter is married and not around. So she's not nearly as in touch with it. But my son has, specially in those first couple of years, they were very difficult years. And he picked up that I was unhappy. And ja, it has been difficult for him to even look at marriage and there have been very few marriages that are happy. That seems to have had an affect on him.

I: Yes. Now if you look at that could you have dealt with the situation differently, could you have gone for counselling during your marriage?

J: I did.

I: Go for counselling?

J: I did. My husband didn't. But I did.

I: Did it help?

J: Yes it did. It gave me a different perspective at times. Sometimes it was just well you have to grit your teeth and bear that, but yes it certainly gave me somewhere to voice it and to kind of kind of reassess things a bit.

I: so maybe what we are also saying is that if there had been a facility in the church, a support group. People going through the same things, people being able to air without being too negative and finding out how to deal with these kinds of situations and actually that might have been quite helpful for you.

J: It might have been. But I would have had to go alone.

I: yes. But even so it might have helpful.

J: Yes it would have been helpful. Because the thing with counselling, you cant keep going endlessly, you know. Very often the time between one session and another is quite widely spaced and you don't always get to see the counsellor at the time you need to see them...

I: And its just like you need to speak to somebody about what's going on, don't you?

J: Yes. Yes.

I: So maybe just a group of support, of people going through the same thing is not a bad idea.

J: It probably would have been good.

I: I'm just thinking the last question I have here in terms of ongoing care. Do you have suggestions how we as a church could deal with these issues of blended families? And that's one of them.

J: Yes that is one of them. And yes, to talk about it and to do, make the expectations – from a pre-marital side, expectations need to be more realistic.

I: Need to be dealt with.

J: Yes, that's this is not going to be the same, this is going to be much harder. And the older you are. The harder it will be too.

I: Ja and I suppose exacerbated by the fact that you have been alone for fifteen years!

J: Yes, that too.

I: Even though you went out together for two years.

J: Yes and what's the reason for the marriage. Are you getting married for security or for companionship or for what? What are you getting married for? Because in my case I was running the show and I thought pretty well. And really what I got married for was companionship. And yes, when I and that was something I didn't get when I expected to be getting it. Was companionship from an emotional side.

I: How long before your marriage did Derek's wife, when did she die? How long before you were married?

J: Three years before.

I: So you were alone for fifteen years, and he was alone for three years. And after fifteen years you were lonely.

J: I was lonely yes. And my children were getting bigger and moving out and living their own lives.

I: and maybe then what the counselling could have pointed out was that three years was just time to adjust. He had never reached the stage of being lonely because he had already been going out with you for two years.

J: Yes, I don't think he was lonely. But he was definitely still mourning. He was still in mourning.

I: Yes. Yes. Well Jennifer, thank you. That was very helpful.