

## WORKSHOP HANDBOOK

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## INTRODUCTION

### PURPOSE:

The purpose of this document is to provide both writing and workshop couples with further information for writing and workshopping new presentations. This document is meant to enhance, embellish and explain the outline and mentality for the weekend and is not meant to replace them.

### ORGANIZATION:

The handbook is divided into three sections: information for writers is first and should be read and reviewed by all presenters, whether they have written in the past or are new writers; the second section focuses on the workshop process, but its contents are not limited only to workshoppers. All presenters should be familiar with these points as well. The final section comprises supplementary material relating to particular talks. Presenting couples should familiarize themselves with this material before writing or workshopping.

### LIMITATIONS:

This document also contains information about the weekend as a whole and about the purpose and conduct of the presenting couples on the weekend. These are meant as general guidelines, and should not be construed as hard and fast rules that must be followed on all weekends.

The material in this document (except for the Non-Negotiables) is not compulsory like the outline and mentality; however, it is meant to help you better understand what Lutheran Marriage Encounter expects of you as Presenting Couples and Workshoppers. If any wording is in conflict between the various documents, the following is the order of precedence: the Weekend Workbook (which the participants receive), the outline, and lastly this Workshop Handbook.

We thank you for your continued faithfulness to the Vision and Mission of Lutheran Marriage Encounter and the non-negotiables of being a presenting couple. We also thank you for your continued YES to serve the Lord by rewriting your talks. We welcome your input and comments.

## GENERAL SUGGESTIONS TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN WRITING

Quotations appearing either in outline or mentality in bold print are to be read as is. Other quoted material may be used as desired.

Whenever possible, include your personality style, particularly when the outline/mentality uses the phrase "because of the person I am."

Be aware of "key words" such as *teach* or *explain*. This means you are to address the participants and explain a concept. Usually you will illustrate with a personal example.

In dialogue sharings, model the ways we use to describe our feelings using the guidelines and suggestions on page 63 of the workbook.

### **Transition statements**

Be aware of what comes before your part in the outline. If there's a change of subject, you need to tell the participants! Watch for headings to new sections. You should begin the section with a statement containing the information in the outline. Example: Self, V: "Some other ways to find out how I see myself." Begin with a statement like, *There are some other ways to find out how I see myself.*

When introducing an exercise, always give a transition telling participants what we are doing and why we are doing it. Watch the time -- it is not necessary to wait the full suggested time if all participants are finished early.

### **Write with the weekend workbook in front of you.**

When something you say is contained in the workbook, such as a definition, refer to the page number unless the participants are already on the correct page.

Do not give times for exercises. The only time we tell them is for Extended Dialogue. (If a participant really has to know the time, one of the non-presenting presenting couples can tell him/her privately.)

Always follow the pattern of lists, etc., presented in the workbook (i.e., listening patterns, dialogue pitfalls).

### **Watch out for the following problems:**

**Jargon** [see Words and Phrases to Avoid]

**Absolutes** such as *always*, *never*, or *everyone*: It's generally inaccurate to say things like, "My wife NEVER forgets to call me," or, "We ALWAYS hug before we walk out the door." However, there are times when absolutes DO apply, such as when we say, "God will ALWAYS love us."

**Justifying feelings:** When you start writing things like, "I felt sad because...." you are justifying your feelings. Just describe the situation and add your feelings.

**Giving the impression that we have it made:** We are all on the same journey; we may be a little further down the road than some of the participants, but none of us have arrived!

**Confusing workbook and notebook:** The **notebook** is the spiral-bound book handed out during "Today's World."

### **Focus on feelings**

Although we can use "judgment words" such as *guilty*, *inadequate*, *loved*, to describe our feelings, don't stop there. How do you feel when you feel guilty or inadequate? Try to further describe the feeling. Dig for the deeper feelings!

As much as possible avoid the use of the phrase *negative feelings*. Since we tell the participants that feelings are neither right nor wrong, we shouldn't attach judgments to them. Try using *feelings difficult to share* or *sad feelings*, *angry feelings*, etc.

### **Words and Phrases to Avoid:**

*[If you can, use Word Search when you finish writing in order to catch these errors]*

**original weekend:** When you are talking about your own weekend experience, you simply say *our weekend* -- it will be clear which weekend you mean.

**discuss** when talking about dialogue.

**feel that:** Remember, if you can't substitute *am* for *feel* you have not described a feeling.

**makes me feel:** Feelings are spontaneous inner reactions and they are ours alone, not caused by anything or anyone. Try using *I feel \_\_ when...* or some other form.

**judge:** Very few of us use this word in everyday language; so don't use it in talks. Try *think* or *believe* instead.

**spouse:** a word we *need* to use often enough; however, if you are referring to your own spouse you can call him your husband or her your wife, or even refer to him/her by name.

**share:** Yes, we do want to share our feelings, but try to avoid overusing the word. You don't have to *share* the news that the sun is shining. Just *tell* us! Or even *inform* us. Whatever.

## **HINTS FOR TALK FORMAT**

- \* Begin numbering with Title Page as page 1.
- \* Include the outline numbers and headings as you type your talks.
- \* Color-code or otherwise clearly cue your talks each time there is a new speaker.
- \* Include cues for noting when someone else should be reading, such as *to clergy*.
- \* Each presentation needs a cover (or title) page containing title of talk, time, writers and their personality styles, date completed, workshoppers and notes of special supplies (such as a Bible) or other considerations. (See example, page 4.)

SAMPLE COVER PAGE

John - Thinker

Jane - Helper

GOD'S DESIRE FOR MARRIAGE

Writer:  
John & Jane Doe  
555 Unity Lane  
Paradise, PA 32220  
512-555-1010

Workshop Couple:  
name  
address  
address  
phone

Second Reader:  
name  
address  
address  
phone

Needed: NRSV Bible  
21 Min. Talk  
4:20 Saturday Afternoon  
Writing time: 15 Min.  
Dialogue time: 20 Min.  
Wives stay in Conference Room

## **FINAL PREPARATION FOR THE WEEKEND**

After all talks are weekend-ready, the final step for the workshop couple is to prepare the writing couple for the weekend and their duties. If it is to be the couple's first weekend, the workshop couple should "walk" them through the weekend including duties and procedures for presenters such as meetings, prayer times, communion, and other details so the couple will not be "surprised" by expectations of them. It may also be helpful if the couple can practice at least one presentation (with a corresponding lay or clergy couple) in front of some other presenters prior to the weekend. This can often reduce some first-time nervousness and apprehension about presenting. Workshoppers of new Set 2 presenters should review the duties of meal seating and pass along any helpful hints or charts that have worked for them. Workshoppers of Admin presenters are responsible for reviewing all Admin duties including reviewing with them the Admin Packet (obtained from the Area Presenting Couple Coordinator).

Workshop couples should review the following two pages with a new writing couple before the couple presents a weekend.

## **PRESENTING TALKS ON THE WEEKEND**

1. Read at a normal conversational pace and speak with voice inflection.
2. Remember that the mind absorbs more information if the talk is spoken at a faster pace than at a slower pace.
3. Speak loudly and clearly. Arrange for an amplification system if you think you might need it.
4. Look around the room. Maintain eye contact.
5. When you give a page number, give participants time to find the page before continuing; otherwise they may miss something important.
6. If a cue is missed and you can easily bring in what was left out, do so. Otherwise, try to ignore it as much as possible; the participants probably won't know the difference.
7. Don't flip papers. Slide them to the side. Worry about rearranging the page order after the talk is completed.
8. Talk to each other when reading love letters.
9. Don't chew gum or eat snacks while at the presenting table.
10. Fully participate in listening, doing the exercises, taking notes, etc., while at the presenting table. Avoid whispering, conferring, or critiquing presentations while sitting with the participants.

## ON THE WEEKEND

The primary goal of the weekend is to awaken in each couple the truth that they love their spouses, and to give them a gift with which to renew, reinforce and strengthen that love. Beyond that, as a movement in the Lutheran Church, Lutheran Marriage Encounter presents its weekend for the church: to renew, reinforce and strengthen it.

The ideas and concepts of the weekend are not the invention solely of Worldwide Marriage Encounter. What Worldwide Marriage Encounter did was to string them together in a logical and approachable order, and to decide not to preach them, but to share a lived, 44-hour experience of them. A Lutheran Marriage Encounter weekend results from sharing the living out of that string of concepts by 8 people.

If people are not "participating" in the weekend by doing the exercises, etc., it is usually best just to let them internalize the weekend in their own way. They may just be auditory learners who do not like to do the kinetic exercises or share except in the privacy of their room. Do not confront these people unless their conduct is distracting to the other participants. Let them make the choice to participate or not.

Although we do not require them to remove their watches, it is still a "timeless" weekend in that they do not know what time things start and end or how long they are supposed to last. If someone is insistent about what time it is, what time something will start or what time they will be getting up in the morning, tell them. Being treated in a juvenile manner is usually a bigger distraction to them than knowing the time.

The presenting couples need to do the exercises throughout the weekend. This makes us part of the participants where they are, and not superior to them. We also should be writing and dialoguing after every presentation so we are into the weekend ourselves, growing and being in the same emotional place as the couples are.

Presenting couple behavior on the weekend should be consistent with what we say in the presentations and what we profess as a movement. This means at the front table as well as in the dining room, in the halls or at the snack table. Remember that you are a model to them, and any inconsistencies you show them in your behavior compared to your talks or the concepts we teach on the weekend can cause them to doubt other things we say.

Our first priority on the weekend is always the couples making the weekend. If they do not need us at the moment, our next priority is working on our relationship with our spouses. After these priorities come the small details of making sure the snack table is clean, etc. The greatest gift we have to present to them on the weekend is our relationship -- it needs to be good!

## **ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR PRESENTERS DURING THE WEEKEND**

1. Maintain and carry to the weekend copies of **all** weekend-ready talks in case of emergency.
2. Hand-carry your talks -- don't check them with the luggage!
3. To avoid appearances of exclusivity, refrain from wearing Marriage Encounter jewelry and clothing.
4. Use discretion in dress on the weekend. Remember, you are the participants' guide. Avoid logos or slogans on clothing or other items that might distract, cause controversy, or lead the participants off the track. Clergy should bring appropriate vestments for Sunday's worship. While we want to be casual, we also want to be good examples.
5. Pay attention to the other presenters and your spouse when they are reading, especially when at the presenting table.
6. Show support for each other and use non-verbals both when reading talks and other times during the weekend.
7. Take notes when you are sitting with the participants during presentations.
8. Don't sit in the same location at the presenting table every time.
9. Watch posture, twitches, dress, etc., particularly when the presenting table is not fully covered with a drape.
10. Avoid any actions that could create the impression that you are not fully participating in the weekend for yourself as a couple. Fully experience the weekend as you present.
11. Be alert for needs of the couples at the presenting table. One may be signaling you to come forward because they forgot something in their room that is needed for the current talk. If so, go quietly to the side or back of the presenting table to get their key or other instructions.
12. Be careful about circle hugs and other community activities on Friday night and before the end of the weekend. Most weekend participants are not ready for them.
13. Make sure all community customs before and during the weekend benefit the weekend couples.

## **LUTHERAN MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER**

### **MISSION STATEMENT:**

Lutheran Marriage Encounter is a ministry dedicated to assisting married couples to live intimate and responsible relationships by providing an Encounter Weekend experience as well as ongoing community support.

### **VISION STATEMENT:**

The Lutheran Church renewed and our world changed through strengthened couple relationships and stronger personal relationships with Christ.



## **NON-NEGOTIABLES OF WORLDWIDE MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER**

In 1983-1984, Worldwide Marriage Encounter (the Catholic expression) went through an extensive reorganization, which decentralized much of the control of the marriage, encounter movement. In an effort to encourage local autonomy, the worldwide leadership encouraged local areas to come up with new and innovative approaches to continue the dream of weekends for all. As part of this process in 1984, a list of non-negotiables was developed (for the Catholic expression) to insure that there would be certain areas that would not change within the movement around the world. The purpose of this list was intended to free areas to try new ideas and not to constrain them behind rigid rules.

### **NON-NEGOTIABLES:**

At the basis of the term "family" are certain non-negotiables. These are common to the Worldwide Marriage Encounter Family throughout the world and are fixed by the International Council (of Worldwide Marriage Encounter). No other board or leader within our movement is free to change them independently.

1. Fidelity to the Worldwide Marriage Encounter Weekend outline and its mentality in every detail. The text of the outline may not be changed without action by the International Council.
2. The same manner of fidelity to the official Deeper Weekend Outline when used in team training. It should be noted here that Sunday evening and Monday after outlines are not part of the Worldwide Deeper Outline, but are peculiar to particular areas or countries. The Deeper Weekend Outline is to be used in a weekend experience as part of the training of any presenting team.
3. The Worldwide Marriage Encounter will continue to be a Catholic experience (with license given to other faith expressions).
4. The population of the Weekend will be such that the presenting denomination's values and attitudes can be proclaimed readily, without fear of offending and without apology.
5. All members of any team on any Worldwide Marriage Encounter Weekend will be members of the presenting faith expressions.
6. It is obvious that fidelity to the outline requires that a clergy of the presenting faith expression be part of all presentations on the Weekend.
7. As a movement, commitment to daily dialogue as an indispensable means of living a dialoguing way of life is a non-negotiable.
8. As part of every local Encounter, a support community will become available to every couple who has experienced the Weekend. The impossibility of establishing such a community is always a contra-indication for conducting the weekend in any area.
9. Interdependence at all levels of structure is a non-negotiable. No element of the Encounter can stand alone. This interdependence is expressed by a sense of belonging to one another. Decision-making in any area that isolates, separates or divides without regard for other parts of the structure is irresponsible independence.
10. The United States Secretariat, the National board (of Worldwide Marriage Encounter) has established a further non-negotiable: fidelity to the Mission Statement of Worldwide Marriage Encounter in the United States, adopted February 13, 1984.  
*(Lutheran Marriage Encounter Mission on page 6 of this document)*

*[To be given to the new writing couple along with the Weekend Synopsis]*

## **WRITING PRESENTING COUPLE'S RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS**

**RIGHT:** To expect a "partner" relationship with your workshop couple, with the objective of producing quality presentations for the weekend in both content and delivery.

**OBLIGATION:** To give fully of yourselves and your feelings -- to be a full partner in preparing and presenting quality weekend talks. Please remember that those who preceded you gave fully of themselves for your relationship and that you are being given the opportunity to do the same for those who will come after you.

**RIGHT:** To receive prompt attention and support from the workshop couple as you begin to write "Self" prior to the Deeper, as well as when you return from the Deeper.

**OBLIGATION:** To capture the momentum and commitment of your original weekend and begin to write talks as soon as possible. To continue the momentum and renewed commitment following the Deeper Weekend experience.

**RIGHT:** To be yourself, conveying your sharings in a style and wording that reflect your uniqueness and personality.

**OBLIGATION:** To follow the outline and to be clear, understandable and relatable in your sharing.

**RIGHT:** To receive the workshop couple's undivided attention during the workshop session.

**OBLIGATION:** To use the workshop couple's time effectively by being well prepared for the session with written, timed material that includes corrections from previous sessions.

**RIGHT:** To receive direction, guidance and clarification so that your efforts are within the framework and intent of the outline.

**OBLIGATION:** To make use of this guidance to optimize your time and effort in preparing presentations that meet the directions of the outline.

**RIGHT:** To expect your struggles to be kept **confidential** with your workshop couple.

**OBLIGATION:** To be open, honest and vulnerable to your workshop couple.

**RIGHT:** To expect the workshop couple to be a mentor, coach, and friend.

**OBLIGATION:** To respond to the workshop couple's experience, guidance, and encouragement without disappointing yourself or the LME family. To not only do your best but, with the coaching of your workshop couple, to improve on your best.

**RIGHT:** To expect a compatible working relationship between the writer and the workshopper, and to request a change, if necessary, from the Area Presenting Couple Coordinator.

**OBLIGATION:** To make every effort to foster a workable relationship and to maintain confidentiality in cases of controversy between writer and workshopper.

## GENERAL SUGGESTIONS FOR THE WORKSHOP PROCESS

1. It is important to understand that, as presenting couples, we are on the weekend to reveal and speak about the everyday reality of our lives together, with its ups and downs and its little successes and failures. Giving the ordinary experiences and reality of our lives is much more powerful than giving ideas, awareness or even inspiration. We are not primarily on the weekend, therefore, to give presentations. Ideally, the weekend participants will experience **the reality of us**, not a nice talk or a stirring presentation. Therefore, our presentations should be completely us and should be distinguishable from any other couple's talks in tone, in language, in our examples and in the simplicity of talking about our lives, especially in the personal sharing parts.
2. Couples workshopping for their first or second time should have an experienced workshop couple act as a mentor.
3. "Writing Presenting Couple's Rights and Obligations" (p. 8) should be one of the first things discussed in the workshop process.
4. Whenever possible, a different couple should workshop the second set of talks than workshopped the first set. Avoid having the same couple workshop all three sets.
5. Workshoppers should remind writers, particularly first time writers, of the confidential nature of the sharings that occur on the weekend.
6. Workshoppers should remind writers that the specifics of the weekend donations are confidential and should not be discussed, even with other presenters.
7. Workshoppers should remind writers that the NRSV Bible is the only version that is to be used for scripture passages in any of the weekend talks, since that is the version used for scripture printed in the workbook. If other versions were used on the weekend, there would be an inconsistency in the talk, which could confuse the participants.
8. All presenters should keep their talks current and fresh. This means each presenting couple should be constantly reviewing their talks to insure that all sharings and personal examples accurately reflect who they really are and where they are in their marriage relationship. When sections of talks no longer reflect this, they should be updated before the talk is used on a weekend. Additionally, all presenters should have a willingness and enthusiasm to rewrite any talk or section of a talk when there is a change in the outline. Major changes **must** be workshopped.

9. When workshopping, we should strive to be in relationship with each other and with the couple we are workshopping in order to bring out the very deepest sharings from them. This means spending time together before they even put pen to paper. Whichever "set" they are writing, we need to be willing as workshopers to be as open to sharing ourselves as we expect the couple to be with us.
10. Remember to guide the couple in the presenting style and demeanor they need to use at the presenting table. Remember, the **words** in the talk are less than 10% of the message given. **How** we present it, the tone of our voices, the expression on our faces, our eye contact, the emotion with which we present, all give much more important messages than the words. The presenters are telling their story, giving of themselves, on the weekend. How they give the gift of themselves is what can "make or break" the talk.
11. For first-time writers, take time to review the entire philosophy of the weekend. Spend an evening going through the personality styles assessment, explaining in more detail what it means and why it is so important to the success of the weekend. Take time to describe your dominant personality styles and behaviors, and ask them to describe theirs. This will build relationship and trust, and give them a better understanding of what we are asking them to do in "Self." By listening and asking questions about their behaviors and seeing their reaction to each other, you can discover whether the dominant personality style that they have determined is theirs is truly the correct one.
12. Go through **your** experience of the weekend and what it meant for you, and ask them to describe in detail what happened to them on their weekend. You can learn a lot about them by **listening** to them. Ask them what happened to them as individuals and as a couple on their weekend.
13. Always have the writing couple read aloud part (if not all) of a talk for you, especially if you have doubts about whether a point is clearly made. Sometimes what is written sounds different when it's read aloud.
14. Just as not each couple on the weekend should be a presenting couple, it is equally reasonable to say that not all experienced presenting couples are equipped to be workshopping couples.
15. If you are in doubt about the working of a particular section, it may help to have the presenters read it aloud for you. Sometimes the presentation style has a big effect on how a passage is understood.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF A WORKSHOP COUPLE

Workshopping, in Marriage Encounter terms, has been defined as “The art of assisting a couple to understand, internalize and personalize the weekend concepts into their relationship, and to articulate to the weekend couple these concepts through lived examples.” Not all presenters will have the ability to interact effectively with a writing couple, and not all presenters should be expected or required to workshop. The selection of workshop couples should be made by the Area Presenting Couple Coordinator in consultation with the District Presenting Couple Coordinator.

When selecting workshop couples, we should strive for couples who have strong talks, have a deep understanding of the weekend, are open and even-handed, are easily relatable, and include dialogue and prayer as a part of their daily lives. They should be people who can let go of being in control so they can let the writing couple be themselves. They **must** be active presenters with their talks current. They may workshop any talk that they have written which is weekend-ready. They must keep the weekend in its form according to the outline without changing content or sequence: that is, maintain fidelity to the outline.

The following guidelines are **not** intended to imply that every workshop couple must be perfect in each of these items. Rather this list is intended to be goals for which each workshop couple should continuously strive. The more we work at improving ourselves in each of these areas, the better workshop couple we become.

1. Be prayerful for wisdom and vision. Begin each session with a prayer.
2. Be a **mentor** to the writing couple. This is **not** a relationship like superior to subordinate or parent to child. A mentor relationship is one of mutual respect between the couples. It might be compared to the best and closest relationship an older brother or sister has to a younger sibling as he/she models examples of growth and maturity in a way that helps their younger brother or sister develop to be the best they can be.
3. Be sensitive to the writing couple and where they are in their relationship.
4. Be firm in the requirements for high quality talks, but have patience with the writing couple.
5. Be caring in your guidance to the writing couples. Your guidance should not destroy the couple, their confidence in their relationship or their self worth. Ask questions and give challenges without criticizing and offending the couple.
6. Be intuitive. An intuitive workshopper is one who can look beyond the written word to the message the writer is trying to convey. The key here is to be able to sift through the superfluous and help the writing couple focus on identifying the dominant feelings and how best to describe those feelings.

7. Be tenacious in getting the talks completed in a manner that accurately reflects who the writers are.
8. Be responsible in handling your workshop duties in a timely and proficient manner.
9. Hold the private sharings and the unacceptable portions of talks in strict confidence.
10. Be a **coach** to the writing couple. This is intended to mean that you guide, encourage, praise and push the writers with the goal being that their talks are weekend-ready and completed in a timely manner.
11. Be non-judgmental. As workshoppers, we must approach each talk without preconceived ideas about the rightness vs. the wrongness of what a couple is sharing. It is important to remember that each writer brings his/her own experiences to each presentation and we must work within the framework of his/her life story. Our challenge is to enable each writer to tell that story effectively within the framework of the outline.
12. Be good listeners. Let the writers use you as a sounding board. Ask questions to draw out deeper feelings. Workshopping can be likened to an artist doing a sculpture from a marble block. He has to be able to see the figure within the stone and draw it out. In the same way, we need to draw out things from the couple that may not be obvious on the surface. After working with them for awhile and getting to know them we may need to acknowledge that we must move in a different direction than we were originally going based on our initial impression. We must be open to assisting them in forming their talks from who they are inside.
13. Develop good friendships of trust and love with the writing couple.
14. Respond to the needs and personality styles of the writing couple. See the section on "Interaction of Personality Styles between Workshopper and Writer."
15. Have the flexibility to workshop face-to-face, by letter, by tape, phone, or email. Face-to-face workshopping is preferred, especially for first-time writers.
16. Keep your focus on the effect the talk will have on participants who will hear it.
17. Strive for more than just having the talks weekend-ready. The writing couple should have a full understanding of the weekend.
18. Be willing to ask for help from other workshoppers when needed. In summary, focus on being a mentor, a coach and a friend.

## PITFALLS FOR WORKSHOP COUPLES TO AVOID

Workshop couples are human and therefore are not perfect. However, we have a profound effect upon the writing couple, and we should strive to be the best we can be at this task. Some cautions (red flags) for workshop couples:

1. Don't let yourself become so overloaded that it affects your responsiveness and quality, or your own dialogue.
2. Be hesitant to workshop your closest intimate friends. Ask others to do the workshopping if your doing it will negatively affect your friendship.
3. If you can't answer yes to the question, "Do you love and care for the writing couple?" then request that another do the workshopping.
4. Don't end up doing more work than the writing couple in writing the presentations. You should not rewrite talks for the couple or do all the work to get the presentations on focus.
5. Avoid imposing your writing style, grammar and wording on the writing couple; allow and encourage the couple to be themselves. Do not correct spelling or punctuation unless errors might cause confusion during reading of the talk.
6. Don't set yourself up as experts or your presentations as perfect.
7. Don't let workshopping become a negative experience for either the writer or the workshopper to the extent that it affects their relationship or their dialogue. Avoid becoming so consumed with the content and word being "right" that your relationship with the writing couple suffers.
8. Don't allow a predetermined "mind set" (i.e. difficult couple, super couple) to interfere with the writing and workshop process, especially if based on information from a third couple.
9. Don't forget to remind the writing couple to keep the focus of the weekend on the participants. Specific details such as occupations, gender of children, years of marriage or second marriage/divorce are rarely if ever necessary. If the writing couple has difficulty in not including these items because they think the participants need this information to "relate to us," ask them, "Are the participants on the weekend there to **relate to us** or **experience us**?" This is a very important concept and needs to be understood by the writers. We must be vulnerable with our story -- full of feelings but authentic, full of risk, full of passion, full of being so in love with our spouse -- so in love for God's Desire for Marriage that the couples will experience us, not relate to us.
10. Avoid other pitfalls which you know about yourself that would interfere with your abilities to be an effective workshop couple as **mentor, coach, and friend**.

## WORKSHOPPING CLERGY

Either lay or clergy may workshop a clergy couple. If it is a lay couple, it should be a third set couple unless they are only doing a specific talk(s) that they have already written and presented. Lay couples must realize that the clergy emphasis in the talk may be different from the lay emphasis. Therefore, they should become even more familiar with the outline and all the supplemental material included with the outline.

When workshopping a clergy couple, it is important to note that they should be treated the same as any other writing couple. This applies to both deadlines and content. It may be easy for clergy to hide behind theology, but when a talk becomes preachy it loses its effectiveness. Just as we caution a lay couple not to come across as **telling** the weekend couples what to do but rather to share their own lived examples, the clergy couples must do the same to be real and identifiable. The clergy couple must come across as a couple with struggles and successes just like the lay couple.

It may be difficult to encourage the clergy to let their vulnerable side shine through, but this is crucial to the writing process! The clergy become apostolic to the non-believer when they come across as fully human and just themselves. Don't be afraid to require that the clergy reveal that they are as human as everyone else is. The clergy are most effective when they are seen as real with faults and mistakes, like the rest of us, rather than just being the "religious authority."

In the healing sharing of Covenant, as in most rules for sharing, the incident is secondary to the **feelings** evoked as a result of the incident. The hurt that is being shared doesn't have to be traumatic. It may very well come from a minor conflict in normal everyday living. The key here is that the resulting hurt is important no matter how seemingly minor the conflict might have been.

In summary, here are some specific hints for workshopping clergy:

1. Remember, the clergy **is** a couple.
2. Keep the clergy sharing on the personal side rather than just the spiritual side.
3. Remember to share faults and that we do stumble and fall.
4. Consider that not all participants will see the clergy as important in their lives.
5. Remember that God works through weakness, and sharing ourselves is a result of this.
6. Be aware that the clergy talks are not sermons, but rather they are lived examples of one couple's journey in marriage.
7. Finally, any workshop couple should be certain that they do not let the writing couple intimidate them. This is especially true if you are workshopping a clergy couple and are either a lay couple or clergy with much less experience in ministry.

**IMPORTANT:** Clergy talks should be workshopped and second-read by both lay and clergy workshopers. If the workshopper is lay, second-reader should be clergy and vice versa.



## GUIDELINES FOR SECOND READING

For the purposes of this document, a "Completed Talk" is one that the workshop couple has judged weekend-ready. A "Weekend-Ready" talk is one that has been approved by a second reader.

In most cases, it is helpful for the second readers to review a whole set of talks; that way they can follow the personality styles, behaviors, examples and stories throughout. The exception is for the clergy set.

Once a writing couple has a set of Completed Talks, the Area Presenting Couple Coordinator informs the District Presenting Couple Coordinator, who will assign a second reader.

The second reader should be a workshopping couple from a different District who has the same set of talks weekend-ready. (If a talk has been workshopped out of District, then a local workshopper can second read.)

In the case of clergy writers, their talks should be checked by both lay and clergy. Thus, if their workshopper is lay, second reader should be clergy, or vice versa.

If second reader and workshop couple agree on the second reader's recommendations, there is no need for second reader to re-read the amended talk. It will be considered weekend-ready. However, second reader **may** request an amended copy if desired.

If there should be a serious disagreement between workshopper and second reader about a point in the outline, refer the question to the DPCC.

### How to second read a talk:

- ◆ Focus on fidelity to the outline. You should be checking three things:
  - ◆ Are the concepts called for presented clearly and on focus?
  - ◆ Are all speakers clearly cued and the order given in the outline followed?
  - ◆ Is the writing within the time limits?
- ◆ Remember, your job is NOT to workshop the talk. Correcting grammar, spelling or punctuation is not your job, nor should you "re-word" parts of the talk to fit your perception of good English! Unless such errors seriously detract from the focus of the talk, leave them alone.
- ◆ Your communication should be ONLY with the workshop couple, not directly with the writing couple. It is the responsibility of the workshopper to instruct the writers.
- ◆ When a talk is Weekend-Ready, workshopper should notify the DPCC and the NAR PCC.
- ◆ Occasionally you may run across a talk that needs serious re-writing. In that case, do not try to "correct" it but return it to workshoppers for rewrites. Notify DPCC.
- ◆ Above all, remember that we are all working together to produce quality talks. We need to proceed in a loving and tactful manner.

## INTERACTION OF PERSONALITY STYLES BETWEEN WORKSHOPPER AND WRITER

As we have learned, personality style affects our interactions and relationships with others. Therefore, in workshoping it's helpful to understand some of the attitudes and behaviors each personality style brings to both the workshoping process and the writing process.

### CATALYSTS

#### **AS WORKSHOPPERS:**

Prepare writers but don't want to overdo it  
Believe relationship of writer/workshopper is not marriage; keep it in perspective.  
Prefer to have spouse (different personality style) do the bulk of the job  
Want them weekend-ready as soon as possible  
Give deadlines to avoid delay or confusion about what is expected  
Are interested in having writing on focus but the couple should be in the talk.

### HELPERS

#### **AS WORKSHOPPERS:**

Believe relationship is of prime importance.  
Surround the whole writing process with prayer.  
Give lots of information before and during writing, sometimes too much.  
Focus on helping them finish as soon as possible  
Use hints, starter sentences, phrases like "Try something like this."  
Give suggestions, rather than the flat statement, "This is wrong."  
Stress importance of writing that reaches, touches, participants  
See deadlines as a way to help the writer stay on track  
Would rather wait for writers than have writers wait for them  
Find love & acceptance in the relationship more important than the task at hand

#### **AS WRITERS:**

Want clear, concise instructions and then back off!  
Prefer to write when "in the mood"  
Like praise; usually believe it's well-deserved  
May not want to take the time to dig for deep feelings  
When criticism is absolutely necessary, prefer it blunt and to the point; say it and let them get back to the job.  
Hate to hear expressions such as, "This part is good, *but* \_\_\_\_."  
Do not like red pen!  
Generally have a high opinion of their work  
Work well under pressure  
Tend to write in bits and pieces  
Describe preparation time vs. writing time as "Ready, Fire, Aim."

#### **AS WRITERS:**

Believe relationships come before the task at hand; if a neighbor needs help, the writing can wait.  
Want a close relationship with workshop couple  
Like praise because it means they have pleased workshopper and/or workshopper likes them  
Prefer criticism to be given gently, lovingly and wrapped in lots of praise  
Appreciate a sense of humor  
Want to do it right in order to please the workshopper  
Will strive to meet deadlines in order to avoid inconveniencing workshop couple  
Will most likely give in on areas of disagreement in order to preserve relationship

### ORGANIZERS

### **AS WORKSHOPPERS:**

- Want to have all materials at hand and well-organized (color-coded, filed, etc.)
- Believe writers should be well prepared before writing (mini-sweeps, extra notes, etc.)
- Believe in mutual, shared expectations -- comfortable with "rules" and standards to evaluate talks
- Expect talks to be properly divided, labeled, in correct order
- Set dates, schedule workshop sessions ahead, deadlines necessary
- Set a goal of having a good talk, high quality, completed in a timely manner
- Prefer timelines -- step by step -- rather than one deadline
- Prefer to read talks ahead of time rather than spontaneous, face-to-face process; need time to prepare answers, check facts, etc.
- Dislike corrections from second readers

### **THINKERS**

#### **AS WORKSHOPPERS:**

- Will set ground-rules and stand back to let writers begin.
- Have definite expectations for talks; will not let concerns about relationship deter them from insisting they be met
- Look for clarity in all presentations
- Focus on "hearing" what the participants are likely to hear
- Can be impatient with writers who seem to be confused
- Primary goal of workshoping is to have the best quality talk, on focus

#### **AS WRITERS:**

- Want to be well-prepared, know the rules, have all the "pieces" together
- Tend to be "self-workshoppers" -- will reread and check over writing before sending it to be workshoped
- Prefer totalities, rather than bits and pieces; most likely to sit down and write a whole section or talk at one time
- Appreciate specific parameters and deadlines; dislike vague or general instructions
- Want clear and constructive criticism. References to outline or mentality are appreciated; want to know "why"
- Express preparation time vs. writing time as "Ready, Ready, Ready, Aim, Aim, Aim, Fire!"
- Dislike workshopers who don't meet deadlines or provide timely feedback
- Goal: To be the best they can be

#### **AS WRITERS:**

- Dislike a lot of instructions, information, etc., from workshopers; prefer to work it out for themselves
- Are less interested in relationship building than in getting it done
- Workshopping preference: Give sweep, give materials, and give peace to do the job
- Often find criticism difficult to accept; should be straightforward, not softened or sugar-coated
- Will not easily accept correction; be sure it's backed up with logical reasons
- Don't care for deadlines (see them as childish) but understand necessity for them
- Like quiet but sincere praise

## WORKSHOPPING THE TALKS

We all write "Encounter with Self" first, because we need to know who we are and how that affects our relationships before we can share it on the weekend. It is also critically important because our dominant personality style and our behaviors are part of every talk we write. Make sure every talk brings out the dominant personality style and behaviors of the presenter. We then have 8 people describing their dominant personality styles and behaviors throughout the weekend, giving the participants a clearer picture of themselves and their spouses.

The outlines have dialogue questions at the end to help the couple prepare to write the presentations. It would be good to occasionally have a dialogue sharing with the presenting couple on a pertinent question that would bring out something you need to hear. Some of the dialogue sharings in the talks could come from these questions.

Remember to go through the clergy couple's parts with lay couples you are workshoping (and vice-versa). It is important for them in understanding the mentality of the entire talk and in comprehending the flow of the talk and the weekend.

On sections that are indicated as H or W, you need to make sure one spouse is not dominating the talk! These parts should be shared equally between the two. It is acceptable to occasionally split these parts (where it is warranted and appropriate) but the total time should not go over the allowed maximum time.

When sharing dialogues for any of the talks, the rule of thumb is not to mention topics such as sexual abuse, physical abuse or other traumatic situations that can put the focus on the issue rather than the couple and their relationship. We always need to remember the participants and the reason why we are sharing.

In the dialogues shared throughout the weekend, there is no rule as to whether or not the dialogue question is stated unless it is in the outline or mentality to do so. Do whatever is clearest for the participants. In all dialogue letters shared on the weekend, it is important to keep the simple format that is taught. There should just be two or three sentences answering the question and the rest of the letter naming and describing your feeling

All of the personal sharings and dialogue sharings throughout the weekend should have current personal meaning to the presenters. If the feelings are no longer pertinent or meaningful, the dialogue sharing should be rewritten and workshoped. **All rewrites must be workshoped before they are given on the weekend**

None of the presentations on the weekend should reflect to the participants that we have "arrived." On the contrary, we want them to know that we are all still "works in progress," and the tools we are teaching them are the same ones that we use at home every day to strive to keep our relationship where we want it to be. If we paint them a picture of perfection it will look too hard for them to live up to what we appear to be.

## INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME

### WORKSHOPPING OBJECTIVE:

To have the writers give the necessary details of the weekend in a relaxed and friendly manner that invites the participants to feel at ease and be prepared to begin the weekend trusting us; to set the tone of the weekend; to get the participants writing right from the start. Therefore it is important to do the exercises in a way that is clear and fun.

### CONNECTION WITH OTHER TALKS:

This is the beginning of the weekend. It sets the stage for all the talks, giving the flow of the weekend. It prepares them to use the workbook throughout the weekend.

### IMPORTANT POINTS:

When we are up at the table for this talk, the participants need to get a sense of security from us. They are putting themselves in our hands for 44 hours. They will hear the information given and appreciate the information, but at an emotional level they will get a sense of security and confidence if we project it. Because of this, it is critical that we go into the weekend as presenting couples in a daily dialoguing relationship. What we are there to show them is our relationship. It needs to be at its best -- not that it just looks good, that it **is** good.

We want to impart confidence and security through our body language, through our relationship. "It's not what we say, but who we are." All the investment we put into our relationship will come across. The way the weekend starts will affect the flow of the weekend. If the participants go to bed on Friday night with the sense of "what have we gotten ourselves into?" -- it's going to be a lot of work, but if "it looks like we are in good hands," they will feel secure.

### CAUTIONS:

The couples giving this talk need to be open, friendly, authentic and relaxed or this talk will not set the tone we need for the weekend to flow. Being nervous is natural, but we still need to exude a natural confidence.

All of this talk should be written, even though the presenters may give some sections without reading directly from the paper. The workshopper needs to make sure that what is presented and how it is presented is clear and accurate and given in a manner that is friendly, not as directives.

We **invite** them to participate and go along with the few disciplines of the weekend, not **force** them to follow what sound like rules and regulations. Give reasons for what we ask them to do and not do.

## COMMUNICATING OUR FEELINGS

### WORKSHOPPING OBJECTIVE:

To be sure the presenting couple understands the different types of communication and can relate the benefits of sharing feelings. The talk and sample dialogue should be able to raise the attendees' interest level so they will want to hear more. We want them to have a personal experience of identifying feelings after giving them clear, simple examples. We want to show that feelings just happen as we experience different situations. Through examples we want participants to discover that feelings are an important part of who they are.

The sample dialogue letter and the verbal sharing should explain and model the dialogue process in a simple and attractive manner that encourages the participants to make the decision to share feelings with each other through the dialogue technique on the weekend. In writing your dialogue, use the Suggestions for Describing Feelings on page 63 of the workbook.

### CONNECTION WITH OTHER TALKS:

This talk is a foundation for the rest of the weekend; feelings and the dialogue technique will be used throughout the weekend.

### IMPORTANT POINTS:

In this talk the most crucial thing is to help the couples understand that our emotions and feelings are the underpinning of all human communications. Everything we do, think or say is affected and shaped by our feelings. This presentation is an introductory course that gives the basic tools for communicating feelings. It must include an orientation to feelings, how important it is to communicate those feelings, and basic misunderstandings about feelings.

We introduce them to the tool of dialogue and teach them the steps, including different ways to describe feelings -- smell, feel, taste, etc. This is important because different people take in information in different ways. It is important to have couples get as large a scope as possible of the many different ways we can communicate our feelings. The more we can do to help people find diverse ways of describing the feelings, the more it will help them to communicate more effectively.

We want them to hear, experience and feel what we mean by the word dialogue. It is the tool we are going to ask them to use the entire weekend. That is why we go into a sample dialogue. It is very important that they get a good grasp of what we are asking them to do right away.

What we want to create on Friday evening is an anticipation, to whet their appetites. It will give them a taste of what this weekend is about -- remember that when you put together the dialogue for this talk. It is a sample dialogue. It needs to be simple and clear. We don't presume to tell you how to dialogue, but for teaching purposes, it is important that we are all teaching the same technique of dialogue. We want any couple going on the weekend anywhere in the world to experience a similar picture of dialogue and we want to use descriptions of feelings in as many different ways as possible in order to touch every person on the weekend. This should not be a downer example but one that shows dialogue as inviting and even fun.

We end the talk with motivation to share their feelings throughout the weekend. We hope to let them go on Friday night at a decent hour. This will help them to have a positive anticipation for the rest of the weekend.

#### CAUTIONS:

Presenters should write out some sort of "generic" description for the exercise in III.E so workshopers can check their understanding of what to write. While a form of this description may be used on the weekend, presenters should still write it in their workbooks.

The dialogue is a written, workshopped dialogue of how we want the couples on the weekend to do it. This is for consistency and clarity on the weekend. If we stray from the written dialogue, it can get off focus and teach discussion rather than sharing of feelings. It must not be an impromptu live dialogue.

## **ENCOUNTER WITH SELF**

#### WORKSHOPPING OBJECTIVE:

The most important objective is to help the presenting couple to identify their dominant personality styles and then to describe their behaviors and how they developed them. Make sure the presenting couple has a good grasp on the concepts of this talk, since they will be used throughout all of their talks. Another objective is to draw out of the presenting couple the thing(s) that are difficult to share with others, including their spouses, and to help them discover that they have self doubts (if they think they do not).

#### CONNECTION WITH OTHER TALKS:

This talk weaves through all the other talks. Because of the kind of person I am, it's difficult to listen, to share difficult areas, to risk with my spouse, etc.

#### IMPORTANT POINTS:

This is the cornerstone talk of the weekend. The information the participants get threads through the rest of the weekend. As you will see as you start writing, all the other talks are based on this talk. If the couples don't get "Encounter with Self," it will be very difficult for them to participate in the process of deepening their intimacy throughout the weekend. If **we** don't know who we are, it is impossible for us to share who we are with our spouses.

New writing couples need to understand how important this talk is. We are trusting them to lay the cornerstone! Their talk needs to be the very best it can be!

#### CAUTIONS:

We should not use our personality styles as an excuse for our behaviors.

We need to be aware of using words such as help, think, organize throughout this talk. It can confuse what we are saying about our personality style if the organizer talks about helping or the helper talks about thinking.

When workshopping personality styles, remember that all people with the same personality style should not sound the same. Within each personality style there are introverts and extroverts, optimists and pessimists, masculine and feminine traits. Even though we don't talk about those dynamics, it should show up clearly in how we describe ourselves.

#### HINTS:

As presenting couples, we need to understand our personality styles and how they affect the way we process things and share feelings before we go into the other talks. It is imperative that the Self talk be written **first** by all presenting couples! We will be using what we learn in this talk in the other talks as well. **We need to refer to our dominant personality styles in the other talks.**

For the information of those writing this talk, the concepts we are presenting are based upon the universally accepted Myers-Briggs test. There is good basis for what we are saying -- this is not just something that M.E. dreamed up. We have modified it to be more relatable on the weekend, using names that are easily understood.

## **MARRIAGE IN TODAY'S WORLD**

#### WORKSHOPPING OBJECTIVE:

To help the writers see that what we are trying to do is put the couples on the weekend in touch with who they are in their relationship. This talk helps us to see how we are/are not accepting "us as a couple."

#### CONNECTION WITH OTHER TALKS:

This talk builds on the talks which preceded it. In order to communicate during times of disillusionment, it is essential that there is an understanding of sharing feelings as taught in "Communicating Our Feelings." From "Encounter with Self" we continue to see how our personal behaviors affect our spousal relationships.

"Marriage in Today's World," along with "God's Desire for Marriage" and "Keeping our Relationship a Priority," form a block of talks dealing with a couple's daily living together. What you share in "Marriage in Today's World" is contrasted with the alternative life style in "God's Desire for Marriage."



The concept of "To love is a decision" will be necessary for them to be able to listen actively in their "Listening" dialogue, to get into difficult areas in "Areas for Reaching Out" and to risk and trust in "Risking to Trust in Dialogue." The introduction of the love letter provides a tender vehicle for the rest of the weekend and for their journey when they go home.

#### IMPORTANT POINTS:

The talk begins with the romance of marriage, continues with **disappointments** (not disillusionment) which lead to the married singles lifestyle, and from there moves on to disillusionment. Joy is the result of making the decision to love.

#### CAUTIONS:

Be sure the section on disappointments does not sound like the marriage was terrible; the focus is that it just wasn't up to our romantic expectations.

There is a danger in being too absolute in this talk. We are giving a fair evaluation of our marriage, not an exaggeration. We can sound as though it was black (which it wasn't) and is now white (which it isn't). If we sound as though we had huge problems, we destroy our credibility and break down their trust in us.

## LISTENING

#### WORKSHOPPING OBJECTIVE:

To help the presenting couple get an understanding of the poor listening habits they have and to help them to share these in easily relatable ways, so they can encourage the participants to look at their own poor listening habits. We need to make sure the sharings in V. and VI. are sharings about listening and are filled with feelings and descriptions rather than a story. The dominant personality styles should clearly be a factor in listening habits.

#### CONNECTION WITH OTHER TALKS:

This talk is threaded through all the talks of the weekend, even the ones previous to it. This talk links to "Encounter with Self" in that who we are directly affects the way we listen. It is especially important in preparing them for the dialogues in "Areas for Reaching Out" and "Risking to Trust in Dialogue."

#### IMPORTANT POINTS:

Participants could very well be struggling at this point. That is okay. They may still be trying to fix their problems instead of just listening with their hearts

It is very important to get them to begin to really listen before we go into the next talk and have them look at an area that is very difficult for them to talk about or share about. If they realize

that their spouses will really listen, they may dig deep and share what is really going on in a difficult area of their life together.

#### CAUTIONS:

This is a short talk and we may have a tendency to think it isn't very important. The presentation may be short, but it covers very important concepts that must be taught well.

## **AREAS FOR REACHING OUT TO EACH OTHER**

#### WORKSHOPPING OBJECTIVE:

To have the presenting couples look closely at the areas where they find it difficult to share their feelings with each other, and to help them understand why -- because of the people they are, and because of their past history. This is necessary to make sure that they can make the talk relatable to the couples on the weekend.

#### CONNECTION WITH OTHER TALKS:

This talk connects to "Encounter with Self" in that our personality styles help us understand why we have difficulty sharing in some areas. It builds on "Marriage in Today's World" because we use the concept of making the decision to love in deciding to share on these difficult areas with each other. "Listening" has prepared us to listen to our spouses with our hearts in the areas we find difficult to share. Dialogue in these difficult areas prepares us for risking in the "Risking to Trust in Dialogue" talk.

#### IMPORTANT POINTS:

The Clergy Couple starts this talk with what is really a continuation of the "Listening" talk, by telling them the ways we all typically react to each other's feelings -- by rejection, toleration or acceptance. These must be clearly **taught**, not just illustrated with personal examples.

This can be a difficult dialogue for them, so we give them the 45-minute break at this point in the afternoon so they can have some time to share deeply and intimately.

#### CAUTIONS:

The objective here is not to tell traumatic stories. Our words are only 8% of the message. We need to communicate the deep feelings we have in these areas through our body language as well as our words. Don't get caught up in telling the story -- it isn't the story we want to focus on, it is the feelings we have because of the type of people we are.

Sections II, V and VII can come across as teachy, preachy. Presenters need to make it come alive for the participants by using examples that are relatable to them. The judicious use of humor is encouraged if it helps to draw the couples into the concepts.

### DIALOGUE SHARING:

This is the first complete dialogue sharing to be presented on the weekend, so it is important that we model for the couples exactly what we want them to do. While the topic of death may be a shock for some participants, the purpose is to challenge each couple to share what is most difficult. As in all dialogue sharings, the topic is not the important thing; the sharing of feelings is where our emphasis should be.

Keep your sharing in chronological order so participants can follow your thought-process. Be clear about **why** you chose death as a topic for dialogue and fully describe the interior wrestling that took place as you began to write. Remember, this loveletter should be about your feelings, not your theology or beliefs about death.

When you begin the dialogue portion of the sharing, it is appropriate to show the struggle to share. Roadblocks to continuing the dialogue should be mentioned, such as a desire to stop talking and just hold each other, or to avoid exploring a painful feeling. Some couples might believe that all they want to say is in the letter so no further probing is needed.

This is not a dialogue demonstration like you did in the "Feelings" presentation, so don't switch back and forth. Take turns describing what was said and your feelings as you talked and listened. Since participants just heard the presentation on listening, it would be helpful to include some references to how you listened with the heart or avoided some of the listening barriers. Clergy has discussed the use of non-verbals just before this dialogue sharing, so be sure your description of your dialogue is rich with non-verbals.

It is important to reflect how one helped the other to continue the dialogue. Supportiveness and encouragement to keep going can be key here. It would be easy to stop dialoguing and comfort each other, but not helpful to the dialogue process. Make it clear that keeping on with the dialogue was a deeply moving experience that led to growth in your relationship.

There is a tendency to express the dialogue wrap-up (effects on our relationship and importance of living today) in a sentence or two. Unless we bring these ideas out fully and eloquently, the sharing can sound like something chosen for shock value instead of a means to enhance the relationship.

## GOD'S DESIRE FOR MARRIAGE

### WORKSHOPPING OBJECTIVE:

The first job in this presentation is to make sure that the talk comes off really upbeat and joyful. The joy of living God's Desire needs to come through clearly. This is a talk about couple relationship and how God desires so much happiness for us. God is a part of our relationship and the strength of God in our relationship strengthens our love and intimacy.

Presenters should describe how making daily decisions based on "us" rather than "me" ultimately leads us to God's intention for marriage: two people striving to be one. Many couples experience unity for the first time on the weekend because of dialogue. We want to develop a condition of the heart that makes us strive to live in intimate and responsible relationship with our spouses.

Unless the presenting couple is **living** God's Desire, it will be hard for them to write it. If you sense that they are not, your objective should be to have them re-evaluate their lifestyle before writing.

### CONNECTION WITH OTHER TALKS:

This talk, with "Marriage in Today's World" and "Keeping Our Relationship a Priority" forms a series of presentations centered on our daily lives together. In "Today's World" we talked about the married singles lifestyle and its resulting loneliness and disillusionment. In this talk we will explore our deepest longing as husband and wife: to live in a loving relationship, which is God's desire. The way we experience love in our relationship is by living intimately and responsibly.

To live responsibly and intimately we need to listen to one another in sensitive areas as taught in the "Listening" talk and to be willing to risk with one another as we will discuss in "Risking to Trust in Dialogue." It leads to an experience of God's intention for marriage -- the joy of truly loving one another. Through that experience, we experience God's love.

### IMPORTANT POINTS:

The couples may have struggled through the day, looking at some areas in themselves and their relationship that were very uncomfortable. We now talk to them about the JOY of "God's Desire for Marriage." This is a joyful talk! We start off by talking about our longings for happiness, and how society gives us all of the wrong answers as to where it is found. Then we tell them how they can find it so easily and so completely right there within their relationships with their spouses!

We share actual dialogue letters that we wrote about a time when we experienced intimacy in our relationship with our spouses; and we share the deep sense of joy and intimacy that this brought to us. This is a very joyful sharing that should lead them to the same experience in their rooms during their dialogue.

## CAUTIONS:

Couple prayer or forming a couple relationship with God should not be part of this talk.

We don't want to imply that our spouses are God. The focus of the talk isn't about finding God through our spouses.

## DIALOGUE SHARING

This dialogue is all about experiencing joy as a result of dialogue. It should be the means of drawing couples closer together on the weekend. The examples and feelings should be expressed in a way that will make the participants want to taste and experience the same kind of intimacy.

The loveletters written for this dialogue should focus on the **feelings** about the event. The event itself shouldn't require more than a sentence or two. Remember, we are not trying to show the participants so much what we **did** as what we **felt** when doing it. Make it clear that we are not talking about "romantic" feelings, but something deeper and richer. They have all probably experienced "romance" but we want to lead them into intimacy and the resulting joy.

The dialogue sharing needs to be full of joy, rich with descriptions, non-verbals, and shared feelings. **Emphasis here is not on the feeling of intimacy that we are describing in our loveletters, but on the intimacy we shared as we recalled these events.** Since we are talking about God's Desire for Marriage, it would be appropriate to mention that our dialogue is one way we experience what God wants for us.

Unlike the Areas sharing, only one spouse describes the verbal dialogue. Usually it is best for the spouse whose feeling is being explored to handle this part of the sharing.

As in all dialogue sharings, it's important to make the final portion rich and inviting. If all we do is briefly mention, "This dialogue increased our intimacy and led to great joy," we have not inspired the participants to try it for themselves.

## **RISKING TO TRUST IN DIALOGUE**

### WORKSHOPPING OBJECTIVE:

To make sure the presenting couple understands what makes it difficult for **them** to risk and trust in dialogue; to make sure they know the difference between risk and trust and are able to explain it in a relatable way to the participants; to have the clergy clearly teach what kind of things we do **not** share in a risk sharing, and to make the sharing of risking in dialogue a meaningful example of what we want the participants to do on their own.

### CONNECTION WITH OTHER TALKS:

In "Encounter with Self" we discover why it is difficult to trust and risk because of our personality styles. In "Marriage in Today's World" we learn about making the decision to love, which we need in order to risk with one another. "Listening" taught us how to listen with our hearts. When we listen with our hearts, it helps us to build trust. The dialogues in "Areas for Reaching Out" gave us examples of difficult sharings and gave us the motivation to accept our spouses' feelings when they risk with us. It connects to God's Desire because risking is being responsible, and it leads to intimacy.

### IMPORTANT POINTS:

Both lay presenters share personal examples of a time that they risked to trust in dialogue and the resulting joy and acceptance. This needs to be a deep personal risk to share about an area that is very uncomfortable -- **a true risk in every sense**. We teach them about our inner struggles to risk in this area because of **who we are inside** and give a rich description of the feeling in as many ways as possible. Then we talk about how we came to a deeper intimacy and acceptance through our verbal dialogue.

Clergy then gives a **moving** motivation to risk and trust in dialogue by sharing emotionally what it has meant to them in their relationship. A deep sense of trust must be shown here in order for the participants to trust enough to risk in their own dialogue coming up. This sharing should give them a sense of hope that they will be accepted when they risk like the presenters did.

### CAUTIONS:

The risk sharing can become a story rather than a sharing of a difficult feeling. The objective here is not to tell traumatic stories. Don't get caught up in telling the story -- it isn't the story we want to focus on, it is the feelings that the presenters have because of the type of people they are. Our words are only 8% of the message, so we need to communicate the deep feelings that are most difficult to share through our body language as well as our words.

The risk sharing should not be a healing and forgiveness sharing, nor should it demonstrate problem-solving. Keep the focus on the struggle and resulting rewards of trusting and risking.

## DIALOGUE SHARING:

This is the First Set couple's first experience in writing a dialogue sharing. By this time, the couple has just begun to think they may have the idea of talk writing down fairly well. Now we get into a really new way of sharing ourselves as presenters. This can be a difficult challenge to the writers.

When beginning to write this talk, presenters and their workshoppers should review the personality style of each writer and discover how the personality style makes it difficult to share in a certain area. When presenters understand and clearly express this point, participants are led to look for these same difficulties in themselves.

Avoid choosing a traumatic event for this sharing. It can be so distracting that couples will focus on the problem instead of the sharing. The secret to a successful talk is to keep the information general in nature while being specific about the feelings. If we get too specific or detailed, the participants become involved in us rather than in themselves. Generalities allow them to imagine their own idea of the specifics that they see as similar to them. We can, however, be specific about our feelings, as the participants can identify with feelings regardless of the circumstances.

This sharing differs from the others in that each presenter gives a complete dialogue sharing rather than one combined one.

The most important focus of this talk is the following: I had many fears about this dialogue and I struggled to express myself and to be open with my spouse. It was only because I had learned to **trust** him/her through previous experience (either in dialogue or otherwise) that I was able to **risk** sharing this difficult feeling. This point needs to be repeated at the end of the sharing -- that when we trust, we are enabled to risk more, which leads to deeper trust and more willingness to risk. Do **not** leave participants with the impression that we no longer have any fears about sharing!

## IMPACT OF DIALOGUE IN OUR DAILY LIVES

### WORKSHOPPING OBJECTIVE:

To make sure this presentation is clear and to the point, yet make daily dialogue sound so attractive and meaningful that the participants will want to take it home for themselves.

### CONNECTION WITH OTHER TALKS:

All the previous talks helped to teach and assist them on using dialogue. This talk tells them how to take that dialogue home and use it in their daily lives. We emphasize using this tool in our daily lives in the "Keeping our Relationship a Priority" talk. In "Continuing our Journey" we talk about how those we journey with support us in this effort.

### IMPORTANT POINTS:

This talk starts with the nuts and bolts of tomorrow, so we don't have to deal with that at the end of the talk when we want to send them off with motivation and silence after the song.

We begin the actual talk with the Cana passage, and relate how this story refers to the **transformation** of the water into wine, and then talk about how this relates to what has happened to them today through the power of their love for each other. They have been transformed. **Be careful not to assume that all couples are feeling this transformation. Some may still be struggling.**

Participants write answers to two questions in their workbooks and share them with their spouses before being asked to share openly with the group if they desire. This can be an inspiring time for the couples on the weekend, to listen to others share what they may have already written. Whether they share with the group is up to them. The important thing is that they have shared it with their spouses.

We invite them to take dialogue home with them so they can continue to grow in their love and intimacy; and we inspire them to do so by sharing what it has meant to us. Unless we are living a daily dialogue lifestyle, we cannot share this so the participants will believe it and want to take it home. We need to be excited about **our** dialogue to make this appealing.

We invite them to come back for a question and answer period an hour later, so they can make sure that they are "doing it right" before continuing on in their open-ended dialogue time.

### CAUTION:

We can't tell them everything about dialogue in the time allowed.



## MARRIAGE AS COVENANT

### WORKSHOPPING OBJECTIVE:

To make sure the presenting couple really understands what it means to be in a covenant relationship, and to motivate them to write about their covenant and its gifts in an exciting way. This must not come off as a theology lesson. We want to workshop in the joy as well as the responsibility of being a covenant couple, and to help them express the joy they have in sharing its gifts with the people we call the church.

Be sure the presenting couple has a clear understanding of the scripture passages used in this presentation.

### CONNECTION WITH OTHER TALKS:

This is a preparation and motivation for the later talks, "Keeping our Relationship a Priority" in which they learn how to **live** their covenant, and "Sharing in the Dream," where they learn ways to **share** their covenant.

### IMPORTANT POINTS:

We begin this talk by briefly sharing the joys of when we got married, and the things we saw as special about each other. We share our hopes for the future at that time, and talk about our wedding in the church. This is a quick story, but it needs to bring out our lack of understanding at that time about our covenant and the role of the clergy at our wedding.

The clergy couple teaches the difference between the "contract" of a civil marriage and the "covenant" of our marriage.

Each presenter shares his/her journey with the church, and how it changed after their weekend. This is a powerful sharing, especially for anyone attending the weekend who may have been struggling with the church.

We then introduce the Extended Dialogue. Time is 60/75.

### CAUTIONS:

This is not about presenting a theological dissertation on marriage. It is about the joys of a covenant relationship.

DO NOT COPY THE MENTALITY OF THIS TALK. Concepts presented must be in your own words, or they will not be effective.

This talk requires transition statements as we move from one subject to another. Be aware of subject changes.

Clergy needs to introduce Extended Dialogue in a manner that is warm and exciting. Be sure participants know that something special is about to happen. It's OK to acknowledge their apprehension, but keep the focus on the joyful experience the E.D. will be. Do not make promises like, "The mountaintop experience of your weekend." It's not true for all couples.

### CLERGY SHARING ON HEALING

This sharing, when done effectively, gives the participants the opportunity to see that the clergy couple is very real, just like the rest of us. All of us have similar struggles and varying degrees of success. The purpose of this sharing is to have the participants share in the tenderness that can occur as a result of healing in a relationship.

Begin with a transition statement, mentioning that healing is one of the gifts of covenant marriage. In choosing a topic for healing, remember that the most relatable experiences happen as a result of a daily encounter. An everyday event helps the participants realize that healing is needed in all areas, not just when a traumatic hurt occurs. In describing the hurt, be careful to avoid having one spouse become the "villain" -- reactions need to be covered from both perspectives to give a balanced approach. Again, the emphasis of this section should be on the **feelings** in response to the hurt and the situation.

This sharing may or may not include dialogue as part of the healing. Time is limited to five minutes, but it may be helpful to write as much as you need to tell the story, and cut it to the time allowed after that.

This sharing is most effective when a period of isolation, separateness, even "sulking," is involved. If we present healing as something we do instantly and easily, it becomes too simplistic. Participants need to see that we struggle with healing! Be sure to make the point that asking for and giving of forgiveness is only the first step in the healing process. Avoid giving the impression that saying "I'm sorry" is an instant cure.

## **KEEPING OUR RELATIONSHIP A PRIORITY**

### WORKSHOPPING OBJECTIVE:

To have this talk very clearly state that it is not easy to keep the relationship we had on Sunday night of our weekend and that the participants will need to use the five tools we are giving them on a regular basis; to let them know that they will revert to their old ways, but they need only to get up and try again.

### CONNECTION WITH OTHER TALKS:

This connects to "God's Desire for Marriage" by giving us the tools to make changes from our married single attitudes and behaviors to an intimate and responsible relationship. After learning that we have a covenant relationship, we realize that to utilize the gifts we are given in our covenant, we will have to work hard with all five tools. What's been happening in the

couple's relationship as a result of the experience of intimacy through their dialogue can be sustained by the way they choose to live their lifestyle from this point forward.

#### HINTS:

In delivering this talk we need to show that we are excited about living this lifestyle if the couples are going to buy it.

Make it very clear that living this way isn't easy. Remember your own weekend -- you were positive that you'd never revert to your old self again. What we're sharing here will probably not make an impact right now, but will hopefully remain in the participants' memories so they can draw on it later, when the weekend is far away and today's world is knocking on their doors.

### **SHARING IN THE DREAM**

#### WORKSHOPPING OBJECTIVE:

To be sure the presenting couple's focus is not on inviting or finances, but on the vision and the Dream; to write their talks in a way that motivates the participants to join us in our efforts to change the world by their commitment to inviting their friends to a weekend and by sharing their financial resources.

#### CONNECTION WITH OTHER TALKS:

It connects to "Keeping our Relationship a Priority" in that this is our first real challenge to them to change their life style in order to join us in making the dream a reality. It is the first opportunity to re-evaluate as a couple like we just taught them. It flows into "Continuing our Journey" when we talk about changing the world by sharing our love as a couple.

#### IMPORTANT POINTS:

Most couples will be familiar with volunteer organizations like Red Cross or Habitat for Humanity. They will therefore assume that ILME also has a paid executive board. It is very important to make it clear that ILME has **no** paid employees. We are unique!

Although it is necessary to keep in mind that this is a serious and very important talk, a little humor, if used judiciously, is not out of place here. We need to keep the vision strong, but some couples respond better if we are not **deadly** serious or come across as "fanatic."

## CONTINUING OUR JOURNEY

### WORKSHOPPING OBJECTIVE:

Since this talk is often given by a First Set Couple, it is important to explain the concept of "our love as a couple," and to give them the dream of changing the world in their hearts, so they can share it in the presentation. We need to make sure that their experience of Community is sufficient and inspiring to share in III.

### CONNECTION WITH OTHER TALKS:

"Continuing our Journey" is a summary of the weekend. It connects to "Covenant" and "Keeping our Relationship a Priority" by giving them a support community to help them in letting their covenant shine and by teaching them more about using the tools they learned in "Relationship."

### CAUTIONS:

Be sure the focus of this talk is on sharing our love **with others**, not just between the two of us.

If clergy wants the lay couple to handle the open sharing portion of this talk, arrangements should be made during the Friday night meeting so the First Set couple will have a chance to prepare.

We can't relax and blow this talk off because we think the weekend is over. We still have some very important messages here!

We may be tempted to get lax and go overtime on this talk because it is the end of the weekend. We need to remember the greeters who are waiting for the weekend to end. Don't try to tell them every detail of community and everything in the packet. There isn't time to do it.

Avoid simply giving facts. Personalize!

## HOW ARE WE LIVING OUT THE CONCEPTS?

### **1 Intro**

### **2 Feelings**

### **3 Self**

As presenting couples for Marriage Encounter we are called to change for the sake of our relationships. I am called first to change myself because in order to grow in our relationship the only thing I can change is myself. In order to change myself, I need to know and understand myself and those things about me that interfere with our relationship. Encountering myself should be an ongoing journey. Self-knowledge is the key to change.

We need to come to understand that we are precious in God's eyes and accept ourselves as loveable. Only through loving ourselves can we come to love, and believe we are worthy of receiving the love of, our spouses. In order to believe in my goodness and to give myself more completely to my spouse, I need to believe I have something good to give. Another important thing that we need to live out in our daily lives is getting to know our spouses. We should work to understand what our spouses do in light of who they are as people. In looking honestly at this we can come to a deeper intimacy.

### **4 Today's World**

Living out the concepts of this talk means facing and sharing our disillusionment, and making the decision to love and to be loved in our everyday life. We need to be willing to make the decision to love and to be loved -- in order to continue to grow in intimacy and understanding of our spouses. It is in our times of difficulty and pain that we grow the most. These are the times that we can learn the deep feelings of pain and loneliness that our spouses experience. If we are willing to make the decision to love and to be loved we can make difficult times become special times of growth and joy, instead of disappointments and disillusionment. It is not just the big and painful times when we need to make the decision to love and to be loved; it can be those little everyday annoyances and irritations that cause disillusionment when we need to make the decision to love and to be loved.

Living out the concepts of this talk doesn't mean that we won't experience disillusionment in our relationship. It means that we need to make the decision to love and to be loved more quickly and break out of the downward spiral of disillusionment.

We often take the concepts of the weekend and make them ideals, but we don't quite reach the stage of making it part of our lives, because we still hang onto the world's values. The world tells me that I deserve to be angry, to protect myself, to get even, to make my spouse "pay" for the hurt I am experiencing. We know what we want and what we need to do to make these concepts a value, but we struggle to get there because they are only ideals.

## 5 Listening

Living out the concept of "Listening" in our daily lives as Presenters means taking it home with us after the weekend. We need to each go through the list of "Ways I Limit My Listening," reflect, dialogue and talk about the struggles, failures and successes of our personal attempts to listen better. If we haven't made any changes in our listening behaviors since our original weekend, then we are not living the concepts of this talk in our daily lives. Are we working at "listening with the heart"?

It is very easy to just say that we listen to each other; but as presenting couples we need to constantly challenge ourselves to really do it! The next time you are having a disagreement, ask yourselves whether you are really concentrating on listening to your spouse rather than trying to make your point!

## 6 Areas

Living out the concept of this talk in our daily lives means having openness to sharing and dialoguing regularly on topics that are difficult for me to share. It means sharing deeply enough to bring out the deep feelings that I don't like to share. It is easy for us to become comfortable dialoguing each day on the easy topics, or what is going on in our life, and we tend to avoid the tougher areas. Our growth in trust and intimacy is directly proportional to our willingness to share in these areas. It means working at acceptance of our spouses and their feelings. If we are arguing during our verbal dialogue time, then perhaps we aren't accepting our spouse's feeling as this talk teaches.

## 7 God's Desire

Living out this talk in our daily lives as presenting couple is taking the concepts we have learned this far on the weekend from the ideal level to the value level. If we want to live God's Desire for our marriage we need to make these concepts part of our lives, not just what we teach on the weekend. This talk calls us to living in an intimate and responsible way every day, not just when we are on weekends or at Marriage Encounter functions.

We as presenting couples sometimes fall into the trap of living the Modern World values as a couple. On the surface we look good, and we believe that we are living God's desire for marriage; but in reality we have never taken the concepts of the weekend beyond the ideal stage. We are in a "convenient" state, living with others in Marriage Encounter communities, hugging and feeling good about ourselves. God call us to make a choice: to dialogue daily, to grow in intimacy, to change our attitudes and behaviors to keep from falling back into the married singles life style, never being satisfied with where we are in our relationship, and to being ready and willing to make the sacrifices necessary to embrace the values of the weekend.

The thing that makes all of the difference in living out God's Desire for our Marriage is letting God be a living, breathing part of who we are as a couple. The strength we need to take us from the values of today's world into God's Desire is God in our covenant relationship. It is important to realize that in order to live God's Desire we need to invite Him into our relationship. We do not have the strength by ourselves to live out the value of this talk, as much as we might want to do it. It is only through the grace of God that we can reflect His love to our spouses and live the values necessary to live in true unity, intimacy and responsibility.

We are called to acknowledge and invite God to be a part of our relationship every day.

## 8 Risk

We live out the concept of this talk in our daily lives by reaching out in our dialogues into the areas where we have feelings that we don't want to get into in our sharings with our spouses. If we are dialoguing every day, we begin to trust more and more; so that risking becomes a real part of our dialogue. We come to trust our spouses enough to risk sharing the deepest part of ourselves to them without fear.

Even if we are dialoguing every day, if the questions are "fluff" questions we are not growing in our trust or in our relationship. Living out this concept means trusting enough to challenge each other with questions that are really meaningful, so that we can continue to grow in intimacy.

## **9 Dialogue**

Living the concept of daily dialogue is very clear, and something that has been "preached" to all presenting couples forever. Many presenting couples never get beyond the "ideal" stage with dialogue. We need to make dialogue a part of our daily life, just like brushing teeth or shaving.

There are many techniques that are used to inspire couples to dialogue daily. Numbering the pages and starting over at number 1 if we miss a day is a good technique if we need that kind of incentive. What we want to attain is the realization that we should not ever be making the decision as to whether we are going to dialogue today! We should make that decision once: to dialogue every day for the rest of our life together. That is when it becomes a value. It is an automatic thing every night before bed that we will dialogue -- no matter what! There should never be a doubt about it. We just know that wherever, whenever, however, we will dialogue today.

If we say that we are a presenting couple for Lutheran Marriage Encounter, we are saying that we do dialogue daily -- not that we might!

## **10 Covenant**

The ways we live out the concepts of this talk are by being a true covenant Sign of Christ's love for the Church. If we are this living Sign we need to be working on our relationship daily to strengthen and nurture our covenant relationship. We need to look at and expound on how we, as presenting couples, are open to giving out the 4 gifts of our covenant that are described in part IV of the talk.

Our covenant is the very foundation stone of our movement! We cannot possibly be a Sign of Christ's love, unless we are living the concepts of this talk. This does not mean that we will not fight or be upset with one another. On the contrary, we need to be real -- we need to fight and have human disagreements; but we also need to let others see the healing grace of our covenant.

## **11 Relationship**

In trying to live out the concepts of this talk, we need to insure that we are growing in all five areas. This may seem like a no-brainer as to how we live this out in our daily lives, but most of us never re-evaluate these areas on a regular basis. When we re-evaluate, we need to look at which of the five tools is getting dull and needs to be sharpened. We need to challenge ourselves to do this. Maybe we need to put quarterly or monthly dates on the calendar when we will dialogue on what areas we need to re-evaluate. It might be good to form a circle of couples to help with our reevaluation.

When we re-evaluate we need to really listen to our spouses and what is going on inside of them. We need to look at and be responsible for our commitments to re-evaluate and change. We have no right to demand that our spouses change, but we have a definite responsibility to re-evaluate and change ourselves

## **12 Dream**

How do we live out the concepts of this talk? Every presenting couple should be constantly inviting couples to the weekend. Many of us invite for a while after our weekend and then let it slide. It's not that we don't want to invite, but it is no longer the priority it once was to us. It is every presenting couple's responsibility to be evangelizing in this way. If we were truly living the concepts of this talk we would be asking someone to the weekend at least once every week!

At our presenting couple Communities we need to give challenges and we need to lovingly encourage everyone in our community to be looking every day for someone to invite. We cannot go out and give this talk if we are not living it! It will come off as flat and uninspiring. If we believe what we are saying on the weekend, we cannot allow couples to live in Today's World without the joy of the weekend.

We also need to live out the concept of this talk by continuing to donate from our substance regularly to support the dream. All of us as presenting couples need to sacrifice what we can to make it happen. Living the concept of this talk means keeping our priorities in finances in the correct perspective. We need to ask ourselves regularly whether we are spending God's gifts to us where He wants us to spend them. This should be part of our constant reevaluation as a presenting couple!

## **13 Journey**

We as presenting couples need to belong at every level. We need to belong in our local Community first! If we are not attending our local Community, we are not being responsible to the Community or to ourselves. We need to belong to our presenting couple Community. This means making it a priority over other activities. When we said yes at our kickoff, we said yes to being at all of the presenting couple meetings (barring, of course, an emergency).

We need to belong to Regional (NAR) and International LME. We need to buy in, even when we don't agree with the concepts or the way things are done. This does not mean we cannot disagree, but we need to go along with the family in doing things in unity.

We need to belong to our Lutheran Church. Part of what we committed to, as a presenting couple, is to be involved and visible in our local parish.