

# **LUTHERAN MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER**

## **POST WEEKEND RESOURCE**

### **LOVE CIRCLE SIX**

LOVE CIRCLE SIX consists of a group of five to seven LME couples who agree to meet six times at least, and to dialogue the questions between sessions.

The purpose is to enable us to practice dialogue, and to share with each other new skills in the dialogue process. A second purpose is to give us the opportunity to share our love with others in our group so that they are also learning how to share the beauty of their lives with us and others. Through our sharing we develop a deeper trust in one another, and so we build up our own relationship, and the Church which is our community of faith.

#### General Guidelines

- Each session is facilitated by a lead couple. Please consider asking other couples also to lead. Each session should last about 2 to 2 1/2 hours.
- The lead couple should begin, after the devotions, by reading the introduction and expanding on it, in preparation for the dialogue question.
- After the dialogue question, there would be time for a short break. Then, go to the sharing questions. They are not in any particular order so any one of the suggested questions could be the first.
- The following are good courtesies to consider in sharing:
  - Stick to the original question as much as possible.
  - Share feelings, but of course, thoughts and opinions will be shared.
  - No interrupting during sharing.
  - If someone can't answer the question, pass.
  - If someone is having a hard time to share, wait.
  - Remember, a pause or silence while someone thinks, is okay.
  - Wait for the person who is sharing to finish.
  - Really listen to what is shared. Don't listen getting ready to answer.
  - If there is crying or a lot of emotion, be patient.
  - Don't advise or console. Let the person work at sharing.
- Practice confidentiality. What is shared in the Love Circle must stay with the group. We are building a deep level of trust in one another. Keeping confidentiality will allow us to share personally and openly with confidence.
- Each couple should receive a copy of these General Guidelines.
- Each couple receives the Dialogue Questions for use between sessions at the end of the group meeting.
- Depending on the number of couples, and the length of sharing, each session may be divided into two or three units, if the group negotiates and is in agreement.
- Consider bringing a small snack for sharing, at each session.
- Consider moving from home to home. The home couple would host.

## SESSION 1

Lead couple opens with a Scripture and prayer, or designate a couple in advance.

### Introduction:

On Saturday morning we learned about *Marriage in Today's World*. Often time, there is a loneliness in our relationship and disillusionment is normal. Even then, we can still make the decision to love. The world has trained us to live separate and isolated lives. But, we can break the downward spiral of the "married singles lifestyle"—thinking, planning and acting as if I were still a single person. We can make the decision to love and find new joy in our marriage. Joy is embracing each other for who we are including the flaws in both of us. God's plan for our marriage is for us to have unity, oneness in the Lord and being one with each other.

When we are open to *God's Desire In Our Marriage*, we will begin to live in a more responsible and intimate relationship. Responsibility means living out the decision to love in our daily lives. Intimacy means being open to love, and to be loved. In our married love, we long to live in a loving relationship and to find complete happiness. We discovered that the Lord also has this same desire for unity and togetherness in our coupleness. The Lord wants the very best for each of us in our marriages. Married singleness tends to distance us from each other. God's plan brings us closer as a couple, and into a place where the Lord can bless us.

Dialogue Question: I realize that I must constantly work on our marriage relationship.

What are my feelings about my answer? WAMFAMA

### Sharing Questions:

1. Would you share with the group where you were born and raised?  
And how many were in your family?
2. Would you share with the couples what warmed your home?
3. How has your idea of intimacy changed (or not)?
4. Share with us how married singleness has affected your relationship?
5. What was the loneliest time in your life, and your feelings about it?
6. God's plan for your marriage is unity, meaning a oneness with the Lord and each other.  
Would you share a time when you have felt ONEness with each other and share your feelings as you might recall them.
7. When do you feel most loved, and what are your feelings?

### Closing Prayer Circle

Distribute Dialogue Questions, For Session Two

Prayer, and Social

Home, and next Time and Place

## SESSION 2

Lead couple opens with a reading from Ephesians 5: 21-33 and prayer, or designates a couple in advance and help them in the process.

### Introduction:

We wrote our Extended Dialogue loveletters to confirm our desire to go on living with each other. In looking at *Marriage As A Covenant*, we began to understand the blessings available to us as married couples. Our covenant love will be strong as we share forgiveness and make amends to each other. We will build love and trust as we honestly and faithfully keep the dialogue process a priority.

Keeping *Our Relationship A Priority*, makes the dreams we have of life and partnership together come true. When we pray and dialogue, we benefit each other. Our sexuality includes tenderness and playfulness, gentleness and romance, affection and attentiveness. Our act of lovemaking gives us an opportunity for the most intimate, unconditional giving of our love to each other. When we live passionately, and reach out in our talking and touching, we grow our love. Therefore, it is extremely important to keep our commitment alive and vibrant in all that we do as a couple.

Dialogue Question: What do I value most in our relationship, and WAMFAMA?

### Sharing Questions:

1. Would you share, what I am doing to deepen our covenant relationship?
2. How has your personal prayer life changed, or what you have attempted in prayer to deepen your relationship. Describe your feelings?
3. On the day of your marriage, what was your primary focus? Would you share where your focus and dream is now after being on a LME Weekend?
4. On the Weekend, the clergy couple gave an example of giving and receiving forgiveness. To forgive is usually not easy. Would you share a time (recent) when you gave or received forgiveness from your spouse?
5. Healing love is our most precious gift. Would you share a time when healing—mental, emotional, spiritual, social or physical healing has come to you? What are your feelings as you tell us at this time?
6. Would you share, what you think is the bottom line to keep your relationship a top priority, and describe your feelings?

Thank you all for sharing:

### Our Secret Prayer Partners:

Until our next session, we want to pick one couple's name and be their secret prayer partner. Each couple write out their names and address on a card or paper, and draw another couple's name. Please don't reveal whose name you drew. Instead, keep the name a secret. Pray daily, trying to be as specific as you can be with the other couple's spiritual and emotional needs. Come prepared to tell whom you have been praying for at the next session.

### Closing Prayer Circle

Distribute Dialogue Questions, For Session Three

Prayer, and Social

Home, and next Time and Place

## SESSION 3

Lead couple opens with a short reading and prayer, or a presentation, or designates a couple in advance, and helps them in the process.

### Introduction:

The importance of having *Risk and Confidence*, in each other is a continuous need. There are fears and obstacles that limit our willingness to trust each other. We are encouraged to break through these limitations, be as honest as we can, and dare to trust each other with confidence and risk.

The *Impact of Dialogue* is immeasurable and on-going. Trust in our dialogue is a decision I make to risk sharing my feelings with the person I love. We know that love is our gift to each other. Trust is having confidence in my spouse's love which accepts me just as I am. And so, I am willing to take the risk of sharing who I am and how I feel. Risk means I am willing to take the chance to let my hair down—become vulnerable and transparent. Trust is a virtue, a quality that is built. Relationships are built on risk and trust and love. We want to build our love and trust in this session.

Dialogue Question: When I hear the statement, "Trust means having confidence in your love for me," what are my feelings? (WAMF)

### Sharing Questions:

1. Where are you in your relationship of trust with each other right now?
2. Would you share an experience when your trust was deepened?
3. What are some of the fears that limit your willingness to trust?
4. What are some things you do for each other that help you risk more?
5. What do I judge I need to do to dare to risk more of my feelings with you?
6. By risking, how am I growing in my understanding and openness of you?

Thank you all for sharing:

### Our Secret Prayer Partners:

Until our next session, we want to pick one couple's name and be their secret prayer partner as we did in Session 2. Again, please don't reveal whose name you received. Keep the name a secret. Pray daily, if that is your habit, trying to be as specific as you can be with the other couple's spiritual, emotional, and physical needs.

We suggest we shower our couple with our love, not only by praying for them, but please consider sending a love letter, cards, one-ringers, maybe a gift through the mail (or on the door step), and any other way you can think of. We will not only be sharing our love, we will also be learning how to receive love and trust. Come prepared to tell whom you have been praying for at the next session.

### Closing Prayer Circle:

Reveal the name of the couple you have been praying for since the last session.  
Draw the name of a new couple.

Distribute Dialogue Questions for Session Four

Prayer, and Social

Home, and next Time and Place

## SESSION 4

Lead couple opens with a short reading, or devotion and prayer, or presentation.  
Or the lead couple designates a couple in advance to begin the session.

### Introduction:

Our Weekend showed us that love includes giving of our *Self* fully to our Spouse. We learned new insights about our personality styles and our behavior patterns. Often, we want to be someone we are not, and cannot be. We looked at ways we try to present ourselves to others. We all have self-doubts about who we are, and on the weekend we tried to get in touch with them so these doubts would not limit us in our relationship.

God has a plan for us as individuals, and as couples committed to each other. The Lord asks us to be part of each other in all *Areas Of Reaching Out* in our lives together. And, to be accepting of our uniqueness, our thinking, our feelings and all that we are as different as we are. Through our spouse we can experience a reflection of God's own love. This is particularly true when we are responsible to, and become more aware of each other through the sharing of our feelings.

Dialogue Question: If I could lovingly change one thing about myself, what would it be?  
WAMFAMA?

### Sharing Questions:

1. Would you share, what has been the high point of your life in the last 12 months?
2. What three things are most important in your life right now?
3. What one area do you think you need to work on to build your relationship stronger?  
Please, describe your feelings.
4. Would you share, a recent time when you had a "close call", a near accident, a serious illness or injury. What are your feelings recalling this event?
5. How do you think others see you?
6. How do you see yourself?
7. If you could change one thing about yourself, what would you change?

Closing Prayer Circle: Lead couple begin by saying to the couples:

Please, stand with your arms around your spouse.

Please look into each other's eyes, and say to each other,

"You should never be alone again, as long as we both shall live. You shall always have me, for support and affirmation. I love you and trust you!"

Reveal the name of the couple you have been praying for. Draw a new name. Please honor this new couple with prayer and your giftedness as we have done before.

Distribute Dialogue Questions for Session Five

Prayer, and Social

Home, and next Time and Place

## SESSION 5

Lead couple opens with a Scripture reading from Matthew 13: 3-9, 13-15, and prayer.

Or the lead couple designates a couple in advance to make a presentation.

### Introduction:

We have learned and experienced that *Feelings* are the foundation of intimate communication—of all of our talking, touching and listening. Therefore, it is extremely important that we learn how to LISTEN, and that we practice *Listening* skills. We have discovered the importance of recognizing and revealing our feelings. We have learned to accept our spouses' feelings without questioning them or challenging the sharing of those feelings.

As we dialogue, we continue to explore and uncover the ways we enrich our marriage by sharing our feelings and listening carefully to each other's thinking. There is a difference between communicating thoughts and feelings. Talking reveals our ideas. Sharing our feelings is like touching, and necessary to build an intimate relationship. There is a difference between listening with the mind and the heart. Listening means that both of us are connecting. We must be on the same level, the same wavelength. Listening is the key to open and receptive communication.

Dialogue Question: When I know you are listening to me, HDIFAT? And WAMFAMA?

### Sharing Questions:

1. Would you share, a time you knew your feelings were being listened to and accepted by your spouse?
2. Please share how you have been listening to God and to each other in prayer.
3. How did you feel when you knew a couple had honored you in their prayer time?
4. Listening is always hard work for most couples. Please share how difficult quality listening continues to be for you.
5. Feelings are spontaneous responses to people and situations. They are neither right nor wrong. Please share what you have experienced about that.
6. What has been one of the most joyful, happy moments in your life?

### Closing Prayer Circle:

Join in circle of love, and pray "pop-corn" prayers—very short prayers of thanksgiving for each other, and for any mentioned needs that any may have. Try praying for each other, like maybe the person on your right.

Please select a new prayer couple. Until the next session, think about them, and pray for them, and honor them with your giftedness.

Before the next meeting, write a love letter to the couple you are praying for—woman to woman and man to the man, and sign it. Put the person's name on the envelope. Place the letter in an envelope and bring it with you to the next meeting.

Also next time, please bring one candle with you which you will take home, again.

Distribute Dialogue Questions for Session Six

Prayer, and Social

Home, and next Time and Place

## SESSION 6

Lead couple opens with short reading, or Scripture and prayer, or designates a couple in advance.

Introduction: We have come to the final session of our Love Circle. We are called to reach out to others with our love, our time, our money and our giftedness. We are called to reach out to those who are hurting, any one who is in need. We know about the *Dream* and the challenge to change the world, one couple at a time, just as we ourselves have been changed.

Perhaps we need to recall that list which we compiled of couples that might be invited to go on a Weekend. As we continue on our *Journey*, we remind ourselves of the dream which has become a reality for us. We have been given the gift of love. We can make the “New World Somewhere” possible for other couples as we work together.

Dialogue Question: How can we best share our couple love? HDIFAMA?

### Sharing Questions:

We have shared some of our deepest and most profound feelings with each other in the sessions we have had. We have laughed and cried together, and prayed for each other. Now we want to read the loveletters written to us by our prayer partners. (Lead couple, hand out the loveletters to read).

1. Would you share, after asking the writer's permission, a part or all of the love letter you received? HDIFAT?
2. What one best quality in each of us do you most admire? “A quality is an endearment, a virtue or value.”  
(The husband tells his wife one of her best qualities. The next couple then tells her, etc. Then that wife tells her husband one of his best qualities, and the next couple (each person) tells him, etc., until each person has told every other person how neat he/she is).

Closing Prayer Circle is a Closing Candle Ceremony

Each couple should have a candle. The lead couple should light their candle, place it in the center of the room if possible, and read the following paragraph:

“Regardless of the shape or size of the candle, the light represents the love of Jesus for us. He is the light of the world. His light should not be hidden, but instead uncovered for all to see. As we begin to light our candles, we see we can't hide from the light of God's love, nor cover it with our hands, nor do we want to. The light of His love is equally bright throughout the room as it shines equally upon each one of us.”

(Lead couple holds out the lighted candle so that the other candles can also be lighted.)

Now the room is brighter—the ceiling, the walls, and our faces, too. The light of the Lord's love, without us to spread it and share it, would die. We will not hide the light of our love. We all know couples who are waiting for someone to lift up the light of Jesus in their relationship and their lives.

Prayer: Center on what and how we can share the Lord's love. Social time!  
Some couples may want to continue in a new love circle. Discuss the possibilities!  
New resource materials are available at, [nguthrie@suite224.net](mailto:nguthrie@suite224.net), phone 440-599-9090

## LOVE CIRCLE SIX DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

Instructions for handing out the dialogue questions: The intent is that the dialogue questions be given, one per couple, at the end of each session. If the Circle meets weekly, then each couple will have to choose their questions. For longer intervals, they should use the WEDS. In preparation, the Lead couple should make a copy for each couple, and distribute them at the close of a session.

Example: The questions, "For Session Two", would be distributed at the close of Session One, and those, "For Sessions Three", at the end of Session Two, etc.

### For Session Two

The result of making the decision to love is joy. HDIFAT?  
When my best traits show up in our children. HDIFAT?  
I'm writing my love letter for you and not me. WAMFAMA?  
When I know you are praying for me. HDIFAT?  
I don't have enough time to do the things I want to do. WAMFAMA?  
When you compliment me in front of others? HDIFAT?  
I am God's gift to you. WAMFAMA?  
Our marriage is a commitment. HDIFAT?  
What is my most treasured memory about you? HDIFAMA?  
How do you comfort me? WAMFAMA?

### For Session Three

HDIF when you are gentle with me?  
We are committed to each other. HDIFAT?  
HDIF when I'm able to be more open with others than you?  
When I act unlovingly and you choose to love me, WAMFAMA?  
HDIF when you lovingly accept part of me I have difficulty sharing with you?  
What quality in you am I most dependent on? HDIFAT?  
HDIF when I experience distance in our relationship?  
When you want to love me and I am not accepting, HDIFAT?  
HDIF when I saw the name we drew to shower our love on?  
How do I want you to remember me after I die? HDIFAT?

### For Session Four

HDIF when we share ourselves with others?  
I wish for you, my dear, the happiness that I've found. HDIFAT?  
HDIF when a friend helps you and not me?  
Jesus is counting on us to make His love believable. HDIFAT?  
HDIF when God allows us to suffer?  
"Much is required from those to whom much is given." Luke 12:48, HDIFAT?  
HDIF when we share our dialogue with others?  
When I hear you sharing with the group, HDIFAT?  
HDIF knowing someone is praying for us?  
Where am I in my relationship with The Lord right now? WAMFAMA?



## LOVE CIRCLE SIX DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

### For Session Five

When I don't listen to you, what happens to our relationship? WAMFAMA?  
HDIF when we give generously of our time to others?  
"You have not chosen me, I have chosen you." John 15:16, HDIFAT?  
HDIF about our relationship right now?  
When friends refuse the invitation and gift of a weekend? HDIFAT?  
HDIF about the direction our life is taking now?  
When we have prayed out loud together for each other, WAMFAMA?  
HDIF when we share deeply with each other, and those around us?  
Do I really believe our love can make a difference in the world? WAMFAMA?  
HDIF about surrendering our lives and love to God?

### For Session Six

HDIF when others give generously of their gifts to us?  
When I suggest we become prayer partners for a weekend? HDIFAT?  
HDIF after we have shared our love with others?  
HDIF about the song, "The Rose"? (Words are in the Notebook, page 44)  
When we have friends on a weekend? HDIFAT?  
HDIF about the song, "Because You Loved Me"? (page 39)  
HDIF about the song, "If Tomorrow Never comes"? (page 49)  
When someone we know is going on a Weekend? WAMFAMA?  
HDIF when I read the words, "Love one another as I have loved you"?  
HDIF about continuing in a love circle?

Two resources for inspirational devotional material are:

*Meditations On Proverbs For Couples*, by Les and Leslie Parrott, Zondervan Publishing

*Marriage Made Simple*, by Kris Conover and Gayle Gardner, Penguin Group, publisher

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