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WESTERN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

COPING WITH DIVORCE:

EFFECTIVE PROGRAM METHODS

A PROJECT PAPER SUBMITTED TO THE
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DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

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ABSTRACT

COPING WITH DIVORCE: Effective Program Methods.

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This project is designed to provide the information local church leaders need to carry out ministries to assist those coping with divorce. The research was carried out during work with several hundred individuals involved in ministry at Good News Community in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Chapter One presents a dynamic theoretical model for understanding the process of divorce to help shed light on the opportunities for ministry. The model ties together the events in divorce with the affective grief cycle. This synthesis shows how the emotional stages can be seen responding to specific losses involved. Human needs are identified which develop from the succession of losses seen and also from the emotions and profound identity questions which accompany them.

Chapter Two provides components and strategies for effective programs addressed to the needs identified. These are drawn from research in the social sciences and illustrated by examples from selected programs in use across the country. The methods favored are also shown to be expressed in biblical models of ministry. In addition, results of empirical testing show remarkable changes for the better in seminar participants. A detailed analysis of results compared with those of a control group is provided in the Appendix.

Chapter Three describes a variety of forms for this ministry that would be appropriate for different communities. Guidelines for selection and training of lay ministers are provided. Detailed learning objectives to guide the ministry are suggested. Program limitations and the potential for failure are addressed. Practical strategies for promotion and follow-up are provided.

This project shows that a specialized divorce ministry is, indeed, worth doing. Measurable results can be expected. Effective methods are available. An abundance of human resources can be developed when those who are helped become, in turn, the next generation of dedicated workers.

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INTRODUCTION

Divorce has become so frequent an occurrence that few of us can avoid facing it in one way or another. We live in a society where the proportion of marriages ending in divorce approaches fifty percent. Still, the divorce phenomenon catches many of us unprepared. How can people cope with the uprooting experience of divorce? How can pastors cope with divorce, the draining pastoral demands, the complexity of needs? How can lay persons cope with divorce when it occurs within their range of responsibility as care-givers or as congregational leaders? How can the church cope with divorce, described as one of the most widely impacting "non-institutions" of our time? Can we really minister to those in pain, salve the wounds, work for rebuilding, and keep our organizations in order, all at the same time?

Perhaps that is too much to expect. However, it is my conviction that we can carry out ministry which is effective by focusing on the actual needs which divorcing individuals present. When the church and its people touch a point of human pain with a mission of mercy we are being faithful to Jesus' call. With that purpose in mind, an experimental ministry began at Good News Community in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The ministry at Good News Community began a decade ago, with the support of the Classis of South Grand Rapids, Reformed Church in America. By its third year, the ministry was drawing 500 new people per year to its seminars and support groups. During the eight years I headed the ministry, 2,000 people attended the eight-week "Coping With Divorce" seminars. Hundreds of lay volunteers were trained. Support came from dozens of churches and private companies. The program designs included in this Doctor of Ministry Project were developed and tested in that ministry setting. Volunteers, both lay and professional, met together regularly to evaluate, refine, and develop new programs. I acknowledge, with a deep sense of gratitude, that the research I am reporting herein has a special value because it grew out of the dedicated work of hundreds of volunteers, who learned to do ministry, while they themselves were ministered unto.

This project is also about pastoral ministry, not only ministry for the divorced. It has implications for many other pastoral care needs we face. Whenever the expected life cycle is intersected by a critical loss or trauma, pastoral care and guidance is expected. Pastors, elders, and other care-givers are frequently overwhelmed and shrink back from the depths to which suffering humanity calls them. There is not enough time. There is not enough energy, nor enough understanding of each individual of problem. Some churches have begun to use programs such as Stephen

Ministries to put lay persons into pastoral ministry in greater numbers, with good training and support.

The most important result of this project may be that it shows there is a much greater potential for ministry, and a greater potential supply of lay-volunteers available to carry out pastoral care than we have often believed. A mode of ministry is possible that makes greater use of lay persons who are trained in helping skills and small group leadership. I contend that there is an abundance of resources available for this kind of ministry. Frequently they simply are not used because we fail to entrust ministry into the hands of the inexperienced or wounded, although Jesus did so quite readily (Luke 10:1-18, and Mark 5:18-20).

We may also be overlooking potential benefits in the form of individual spiritual growth that are present. Opportunities for spiritual growth and personal development are inherent in the crises we face. They are also built into the adventures in ministry we choose to take. This project is specifically aimed at helping people cope with divorce. But ministry occurs with divorced care-givers, who enter into the lay ministry that we initiate. Lay ministers often find great satisfaction in this work. Spiritual growth and the stretching of our boundaries of faith often occur in surprising ways. Shared ministry stretches all its participants.

This report presents an analysis of the divorce recovery experience in the first chapter. The second

chapter identifies the key components for effective programming, supported with suitable research. The actual ministry can take on many different forms. The third chapter describes a variety of forms for this ministry, with guidelines for successful implementation of programs to assist people coping with divorce. I present a variety of alternatives for different kinds of communities and churches with varying approaches to their ministry.

The thesis of this project is that a special ministry for the divorced is worth doing. Carefully designed programs taking into account the needs of persons in transition due to divorce can be expected to have measurable positive effects. In this project, the Tennessee Self Concept Scale, a widely-used testing instrument, was employed to provide empirical data. Participants showed an enhanced ability to cope with divorce, and indicate a significantly improved sense of identity and self worth. With a renewed sense of grace and the support of God's people, we frequently saw people return to the church and to God with gratitude. In spite of the pain inherent in the path of the divorced, a new joy and appreciation for life can grow, because they find companions in the faith who are willing to walk with them on this life-changing journey.

CHAPTER ONE

AN ANALYSIS OF DIVORCE TO
ENABLE MINISTRY

An effective ministry is an informed ministry. Since pastors, counselors, and lay leaders are confronted with the challenge of divorce, it becomes essential that we understand the process of recovery from divorce. Our intent to minister must find its starting point in the experiences of the people we intend to serve. The experiences of the separated or divorced reported in the counseling office, in the research literature, and those shared by someone in the home of a friend most often indicate there is plenty of confusion about what is going on. Each person's experience of separation and divorce is different, of course, but there are patterns.

Although many researchers and therapists have begun to recognize some common patterns, they continue to be perplexed by a wide array of emotional patterns and the depth of the issues which frequently surface. People often appear to fall into repetitious and confusing cycles of emotional stages rather than making progress in a recognized pattern. Some researchers have applied Kübler-Ross' stages

of grief¹ (emotions) to help understand the process. Others have focused primarily on events or behavioral steps which accompany most divorce experiences, while recognizing that a shifting array of emotions swirl through these events, often with great intensity. Confusing spirals of progression or regression are reported with little or no explanation.²

In this chapter, I present a synthesis of these two points of view from which researchers have analyzed the problem. The patterns reported do make sense, when seen as an interaction of distinct losses, and the emotional stages of grief that respond to those losses. This framework, which is my own proposal,³ provides a fresh vantage point from which to understand the needs of divorcing persons as a group. Consequently, this theoretical structure becomes the foundation for many programmatic elements in Chapters Two and Three.

I also suggest some tools for assessment of individual needs. Erik Erikson's thematic theory of development and the Tennessee Self Concept Scale are recommended to help specify the areas of identity most threatened or damaged by the marriage breakdown. Charts are provided which show how these tools connect to the divorce experience explained

¹ E. Kübler-Ross, On Death and Dying, (New York: Macmillan, 1969).

² J.F. Crosby, B. Gage, and M. Raymond, "The Grief Resolution Process in Divorce," Journal of Divorce 7 (Fall 1983):3-18.

³ Stanley Hagemeyer, "Making Sense of Divorce Grief," Pastoral Psychology 34 (Summer, 1986):237-250.

earlier in the chapter.

Finally, the experience of divorce is re-examined with regard to its potential for faith development and spiritual renewal. A new and painful awareness of one's human limitations may provide a depth from which fresh spiritual growth may flow. Uncharted waters force us to cry out for the Master of the sea.

My purpose is to provide a kind of road map showing the basic outlines of the route traveled by many divorced persons. Knowledge of the pitfalls, detours, and hidden dangers will help disarm those demons of despair, confusion, and doubt that so often raise their heads. With this help, both professionals and lay volunteers can have added confidence and perspective, because they recognize more distinct goals and methods with which to carry out a healing ministry.

Sequence, Order and Disorder in the Process of Divorce

Researchers have offered numerous theoretical models to describe the process of recovery from divorce. Salts⁴ divided such models into two general classifications: those focusing on the emotional or affective dimensions of the process, and those describing the process in terms of

⁴C.J. Salts, "Divorce Process: Integration of Theory," Journal of Divorce 2 (Spring 1979):233-240.

behavior or event. In the first category, Herrman⁵ applied Kübler-Ross' five stages of grief to the process of recovering from divorce. The stages of grief have often been identified, although it appears that little empirical research has been done to verify these stages to date. Wiseman⁶ and Kraus⁷ put forth similar descriptions with slight variations. These five steps may be briefly described as follows:

- a time of shock and denial
- anger and guilt, a time of fixing blame
- bargaining, attempts to salvage what is being lost
- depression and resignation
- acceptance and renewal.

The intense emotions and confusion that accompany these stages are often very troublesome to the individual and the care giver. They do not always appear in the same order and often repeat in various combinations. The experience of actually "going around in circles" adds an extra dimension of frustration and pain. Confusion and self-doubt often arise because of the instability perceived by both the subject and the care giver.

A second category of researchers includes those who

⁵ S.J. Herrman, "Divorce: A grief process," Perspectives in Psychiatric Care 12 (Spring 1974):108-112.

⁶ R.S. Wiseman, "Crisis Theory and the Process of Divorce," Social Casework 56(4) (1975):205-212.

⁷ S. Kraus, "The Crisis of Divorce: Growth Promoting or Pathogenic?" Journal of Divorce 3 (Winter 1979):107-119.

analyze the process from an event/behavior perspective. Bohannon's six stations of divorce (the emotional, legal, economic, co-parental, community, and psychic "divorces") constitute one of the best known of these models.⁸ Another in this category is Kessler's⁹ description of seven stages of divorce. She approaches the process more as a series of tasks to perform. Another model of this kind is presented by Kressel and Deutsch.¹⁰ There are serious problems with these and other models. Definitions vary among different writers. People do not experience the stages or events in the same order. There is sequence, but it is not fixed. Patterns appear and recur in a wide array of varieties. Some researchers refer to them as cyclical, although the stages do not repeat neatly. Salts' attempt to integrate the various theories has helped by clarifying the different subject matter that each contributor has been using.

These two categories of models serve as a background for a more recent integration of both types by Crosby, Gage, and Raymond.¹¹ They attempted to test the hypothesis that

⁸ Paul Bohannon, "The Six Stations of Divorce," in Divorce and After, ed. Paul Bohannon (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970), pp. 29-55.

⁹ Sheila Kessler, Beyond Divorce: Leader's Guide, (Atlanta: National Institute for Professional Training, 1295 Lenox Circle, Atlanta, GA, 30306, 1977), pp. 7-16.

¹⁰ K. Kressel, and M. Deutsch, "Divorce Therapy: An In-depth Survey of Therapists' Views," Family Process 16 (1977):413-443.

¹¹ Crosby, Gage, and Raymond, "Grief Resolution Process," pp. 3-15.

the experience is characterized by circular rather than linear progression. It seems to me that there is a simpler interlocking dynamic between the two types of models, one that can help us understand the cyclical nature of these experiences.

I propose that these familiar emotional stages appear repeatedly in response to a predictable series of losses. The losses have been identified, for the most part, by researchers in Salts' second category. The reason the emotional stages have often confused observers is that we are observing at the same time a series of losses identifiable on quite a different plane. These losses represent the important psycho-social components of a marriage that are dissolving one or more at a time. These are behavior/event experiences, more easily identifiable by the outside observer. The losses may occur either prior to the separation, during separation, or after the actual divorce decree. The components of marriage slipping away usually include the following succession of losses:

- the dream, one's idealized hopes for the marriage
- intimacy, companionship
- physical accessibility
- opportunity for full time parenting
- money, property
- legal standing as a married person
- community of friends and relatives
- identity with, attachment to the marriage partner.

Each experience of loss must be faced and dealt with. Each loss brings an emotional response. We can see the emotional stages, therefore, as responses to the actual or threatened losses that are occurring. Before going on to integrate these two analytical approaches, it will be helpful to describe the emotional stages and the succession of losses in more detail.

Emotional Stages

The emotions that are so vexing appear to arrive and depart in stages. Crosby and his team¹² developed the concept that people experience both downward and upward spirals wherein the emotional grief, the thinking process, and personal behavior patterns often repeat. They affirm that order, intensity, and duration vary from one person to another. A person may repeat stages, skip some, or have different stages occur simultaneously. This will hardly be news to experienced pastors, counselors, or researchers. Nevertheless, the stages described below are readily affirmed by subjects involved in divorce. Divorce seminar participants frequently come up to a speaker following a presentation of this outline, and ask, "How did you know exactly what I have been experiencing?". What follows will provide some examples of the flavor and intensity of the emotional stages as the grief of divorce is experienced.

¹² Crosby, Gage, and Raymond, "Grief Resolution Process," pp. 5-15.

Shock and Denial

The state of shock often seen at the beginning of a separation seems to reduce the normal range of the emotions to a narrow band. Such a person is numb and lacking expression, as if oppressed by the weight of his or her burden. Denial occurs when a person is avoiding the truth about the marriage breakdown, or of the loss of some particular element of the marriage. Part of denial is to avoid telling oneself the truth. The other side of denial is to avoid letting the truth be known to others. A person may quietly go about their normal routine, pretending that everything is fine. Children may be told falsehoods. In some instances, a couple will even conspire together to present a healthy public image, keeping up the facade of unity, while deep fractures have already been recognized by both of them.

But these elaborate efforts and schemes to pretend everything is all right claim a high price. The primary feeling that accompanies shock and denial is loneliness. There is deep alienation from the spouse. Inner feelings are not recognized or not expressed to friends or relatives. Consequently, a profound alienation from them and society in general is often experienced. Besides this a feeling of emptiness within signals the absence of integration within the self, a profound inner alienation.

Anger or Guilt, Fixing Blame

The realization that something has gone very wrong

leads to the question of who is responsible for it. When an individual feels personally responsible for most of the problems, guilt takes prominence. That person's anger is directed inward, and expressions of self-condemnation may become intense and distorted. On the other hand, when one feels like a victim of the spouse's failures, anger will be prominent and probably be freely expressed. Because of the multitude of problems that accompany the divorce, the subject may also be angry with the legal system, with attorneys, with the bank, the church, the landlord, or society in general. It is not unusual for someone to feel angry with God for "letting this happen to me."

A person often moves back and forth from blaming self to blaming spouse, being angry with self and then angry with the spouse, and so on. "I may have made some mistakes, but I don't deserve this kind of treatment after all I've done to provide for my family," is how it was put by one man in his late forties. New wrongs seem to be heaped upon old ones as a new adversarial relationship develops in legal matters in which bargaining is required. Sometimes a person who is feeling extreme guilt will agree to unwise settlements and financial conditions. A man, unfaithful through a series of extramarital affairs may leave the home when asked to do so and take with him only his personal belonging, and even sign a settlement extremely generous to his wife. Guilt drives him to make a poor bargain for himself, which at a later date becomes a new source of anger

at the spouse who has "cheated" him out of what was rightfully his.

Bargaining

When people see a valued part of life in marriage slipping from their grasp, bargaining attempts to salvage that which is being lost will usually occur. For instance, a person interested in restoring the marriage may make promises to see a counselor for the first time, seek a new job, or move to a new home. There may be negotiation or an unspoken agreement about which partner will sleep in the bedroom and which on the sofa bed in the basement, while both are sorting out their future. Bargaining may go on through each step of dissolution, dividing up the furniture, children, bank accounts, and even a decision about which of them will continue to attend their family church.

A person may simply be buying time to achieve enough financial strength to leave the marriage. The goal is to find an arrangement which will salvage some part of the marriage's value: a home, custody of the children, or some other component threatened with loss. At each step there is potential loss and risk in making agreements. The prominent feelings associated with bargaining are those we might expect to accompany the threat of loss: anxiety, vulnerability, vigilance, and a feeling of being trapped within an untenable situation. Very often one of the main issues of the marriage difficulty has been the issue of control. This invests the whole bargaining process with

meaning and intensity, because it becomes a new arena for working out the dynamics of control in the relationship.

Bargaining within the process of reaching a legal settlement is more apparent, but it goes on in dozens of other ways and can feel like a series of traps and restraints which prevent autonomy. People often grow to hate the last vestiges of dependence. Many problems appear to have no desirable solution, where both people would get what they want. Thus, most people eventually report a time of depression.

Depression

When it becomes clear that things are not going to work out as hoped, that something terribly important is going to be lost, that the marriage and its specific components are irretrievably slipping away, depression occurs. Feelings of despair, impotency and resignation are the accompaniments of this emotional stage. One feels adrift and occasionally panic arises unexpectedly. A handsome and talented man in his late forties stated:

Do you realize that I am a nothing--a zero? I have no place to call my own. She and the court have taken away my home and family. If I were to die today, who would care?

Acceptance

A person eventually needs to accept the past and the consequences that flow from it. Usually this involves acceptance of some responsibility for the failure of the marriage. For many, it is marked by the religious or

psychological process of confession, repentance and the realization of forgiveness. A feeling that the future is at least in part amenable to one's control brings some hope and satisfaction into life for perhaps the first time in a long while. Accepting the past, integrating it into the self and moving on to develop one's life in another chapter open one to a new joy and self respect.

The variations in mood often thought to be simply "instability" need to be seen as part of the dialectical process. Each component of the marriage is recognized anew as it is being threatened with loss, and this raises a new awareness of how much is really involved. So a controversy grows within each person about the nature of their own self and identity. "I don't know who I am, anymore!" may be the most common expression of all during a divorce. There slowly grows a resolution about the nature of one's self, the limits of one's future and a fresh appreciation of one's own value. Forgiveness from God, from friends, even from the former spouse, helps create a healing atmosphere in which a person can forgive oneself and move on with a positive attitude toward the future.

A Succession of Losses

Divorce brings the dissolution of a marriage in a series of events, or experiences. These events can be recognized as the losses of the important psycho-social elements that together have made up the meaning and content of a marriage. We can also view each loss as a crisis the

person has to resolve in order to go on to new health and wholeness. Bohannon's six stations of divorce, the emotional, legal, economic, co-parental, community, and psychic, I believe, need to be expressed as losses. To these I would add the loss of the dream and the loss of physical accessibility. They are described in the order that often occurs, although it must be emphasized that the pattern can vary from case to case.

Loss of the Dream

Marriage most often includes some idealization of the spouse and unrealistic expectations about the happiness and fulfillment marriage will bring. Giving up this fancied ideal is a loss of innocence that Barnett¹³ refers to as the "Fall." The person chosen for marriage was expected to bring happiness, sexual fulfillment, security, or any number of other things. These expectations are eventually disappointed, to some degree. With the disappointment of this dream--the loss of the ideal partner or relationship that was hoped for--depression frequently occurs in one or both of the partners. This loss will likely occur in all marriages at some time, and the partners may go on to develop a more mature and better relationship built upon more realistic expectations, goals, and negotiated commitments. However, if not resolved, the loss frequently brings on other manifestations of marital difficulties.

¹³ John E. Barnett, Jr., "The Natural History of a Marriage," Pilgrimage 9 (Spring 1981):5-19.

During this period questions arise that cluster around whether or not to be satisfied with life as it is. The fading of expectations challenges one's sense of meaning and purpose in life. One's sense of ideals, hopes and aspirations is diminished. One facet of our self concept and identity is our attachment to certain dreams. Since these dreams are being disappointed, cynicism may arise. Despair may creep into almost every day's events. Frustration may turn one to other pursuits. Some struggle to gain satisfaction and identity through other means. Jobs, children or interests outside the home become more important. These can provide some satisfaction, while deeper within oneself a cloud of disappointment swirls restlessly.

Loss of Intimacy

The loss of openness and trust, Bohannon's "Emotional Divorce," develops when one or both partners begin to make commitments that take precedence over the marriage partner. This experience is the opposite of the courting process, where in preparation for marriage one was lifted out of the rest of humanity and selected for extra attention, appreciation, and given the highest value. Now a marriage partner experiences being "de-selected." Emotional distance develops as partners find other interests and commitments. Children, jobs, friends, or even sexual affairs focus the emotional energies away from the unfulfilling relationship. An attitude of trust and commitment to one another is

replaced by mistrust and a concern for self-protection. Constant criticism, even in the presence of friends, may occur in place of appreciation and compliments. Intimacy, vulnerability, honesty, and trust shrink to specific, recognized areas. These two partners know more clearly what they share and what they do not. In a marriage that appears to be well on the surface, devastating grief and loneliness may be carefully hidden from the outside observer. Reflecting on the tension of sharing his partner's home but having no physical contact or emotional satisfaction, one man stated sadly, "I feel such a terrible loneliness when I am in her presence." The loss of emotional intimacy is often signalled by loss of sexual satisfaction, decreased emotional involvement in the sex act, or in some cases, the complete absence of sexual activity.

Identity questions arising from this experience would be expected to cluster around one's personal worth, or sexual adequacy. The partner who seems to have less and less time for his or her spouse automatically conveys a message of devaluation. Frustration and a sense of incompleteness characterize the interaction with such a partner. The expectations which one has for an intimate relationship will largely determine the depth of that frustration. One may feel pulled in one of two directions. One person may move away from all intimacy, choosing instead to protect the inner self through isolation. This would be seen in a reluctance to share deep inner feelings and

aspirations with anyone else, but not necessarily withdrawal from social involvement. The other alternative is simply to find other people with whom to be intimate, either friends who share common values, or a lover who becomes the intimate partner. The choice between intimacy and isolation raises dramatic and crucial questions to the surface once again, as it did in the teen years.¹⁴

Loss of Physical Accessibility

Gradually, partners spend less time together in day-to-day activities. Separate lives are lived through jobs, friends, clubs, and children. Interests developed during the loss of intimacy take up more and more of their time. Fewer meals are shared together. During this period, there is often a seething anger in at least one of the pair at the deep disappointment in the marriage. This may be demonstrated by a harping criticism, which is met by defensiveness and criticism in return. As the rift widens, both partners find more appreciation and satisfaction away from each other and go on to develop those relationships. As an alternate pattern, however, the couple might be together regularly at social events, while at home, separate bedrooms signal a loss of accessibility. A couple may persist in living together when all hope for a relationship appears to be gone. Nevertheless, the physical

¹⁴Laura S. Smart, "An Application of Erikson's Theory to the Recovery-from-divorce Process," Journal of Divorce 1 (Fall 1977):76.

accessibility that remains can still seem comforting to some. In this case, ambivalent love/hate feelings are often close to the surface. A way of life may develop and last for years with no real marriage beneath the surface. The couple may have accepted their identity in that marriage with its clear limitations, comforts, and benefits. Finally, they may crystallize the loss by obtaining separate living quarters. A publicly recognizable separation emerges. However, the emotional separation of two people and loss of accessibility may have been developing for years. Thus the private events that really constitute the process of divorce do not necessarily coincide with publicly observable events such as filing for divorce or the final decree in court.

For most people separation is a time marked by severe loneliness, unless a new partner has been waiting in the wings for immediate companionship. The emotional isolation experienced before, within the home, is now confirmed by the physical isolation from one another. Thereby, the loss of accessibility is nearly complete. The world seems desolate of potential attachment, barren, silent, dead.¹⁵

Questions about one's personal worth, and in particular, one's physical adequacy, appearance and sexuality now clamor for attention. The lack of a partner's presence raises questions about that part of one's identity

¹⁵ Robert S. Weiss, Marital Separation (New York: Basic Books, 1975), p. 32.

mosaic which is made up of family. One who has a close identity with being a "family" person will suffer more intensely. Emotions like shame and embarrassment are common. A struggle will often ensue within as this person works up the courage to make decisions alone, or shop and eat in public without a partner. Those who have had very few areas of personal responsibility will be assailed by the terrors of trying out their own autonomy. For such persons the fear of failure in decision making can grow out of proportion to reality.

Loss of Parenting Role

Separate living quarters open up the question of custody and parenting roles for those with children still at home. For a few, relief from the burden of parenting is welcomed. Most, however, experience a deep sense of loss. Visitation times may be strictly limited. For the non-custodial parent, a sense of loss and grief can well up again and again at the end of each visit, as the reality of being only a part-time parent settles in. Knowing that one's children are not within one's daily control hurts. One misses out on the numerous and varied experiences at school or play. The little things that make up the interchange of parent and child are now compacted into visits that feel "unnatural."

The same feeling of loss is often experienced by the parent with custody, who must release the children to the other for weekends or other brief visits. Relinquishing

young children even for these visits can be very difficult, for example, when they must be handed over to a former spouse who is perceived as immoral, devious, or irresponsible. The emotional turmoil of one weekend of waiting for their return can be an intense drama, with all of the stages of denial, anger, guilt, and depression rising up to high tide.

Identity questions regarding parenting are profound. When children are deeply loved, their absence, for either partner, brings a sense of isolation and abandonment. For many of us, parenting is the fulfillment of a role that is deep in our core of self worth. One's adequacy as a valued family member now comes into question. Can they do just as well without me? Will they be beyond my influence? Whether children are young or old, even adult, there is likely to be a subtle competition for their affection and respect. The fulfillment of seeing one's self in your children may be eroded as influence upon them wanes, or is cut off abruptly. Even when this is not true, the parent may perceive it as so. The outcome of the succeeding years seems all the more uncertain, and threatens to decay one's sense of fulfillment. A number of people seem to turn inward, avoiding their attachment to the children. It may seem to be too painful. Some turn away in a renewed adolescence, sometimes a stagnating self-centeredness that appears to be part of a mid-life crisis. Some busily seek a new identity, trying out new sports, new friends, new

partners, and lifestyles.

Loss of Money and Property

For the majority, divorce brings a drop in income. Two households cannot live as cheaply as one.¹⁶ Temporary arrangements for the partner leaving the family domicile are often at a lower standard of living, and for the person staying in the family home, the income level drops. Severe losses in the areas of family savings, property, and accompanying lowered status can bring a sense of bitterness. It seems there is no justice. Most often, both parties feel wronged and cheated by the legal system. Even when attempts at a fair division are carried out, the loss of furnishings and items of sentimental value leaves a sense of diminished identity. One man in his fifties reported, "Our divorce is almost over, but I moved back in to take care of the house for a while. She had let so many things go to pot, I just couldn't stand it. The place was becoming a wreck." The last part of a marriage, in his case, was the joint property.

For some people, the loss of control of property and possessions challenges their power and autonomy. An identity built with strong components of success in the business world may be challenged by surprises. "This is the first thing I've ever come across in life that I could not manage, or control," reported one such man in his mid-

¹⁶Arlic Press, et al, "Divorce American Style," Newsweek, January 10, 1983, pp. 42-48.

thirties. His autonomy was challenged, limited, and needed to be reassessed. Likewise, our society's materialistic values raise questions about our worth when we find our living standard severely reduced. The necessity, even temporarily, of living in a cheap apartment, or driving a poorer automobile raise questions about our value and place in the world. Identity questions about our ability to "make it" in life, be industrious and successful, that had been settled earlier in life, now come around to challenge one again.

Loss of Legal Standing

The initial hearings which precede divorce and the final decree that conclude it might be important ceremonial turning points in the dissolution of a marriage. The symbolic potential of these experiences is great. It may signal the loss of some social standing among friends or business associates. For some the final day carries little weight, but again, for others it is a day of intense grief, even though it has been long sought. For others, the event may set off a celebration, with the euphoria of release from a prison. When the day of court action comes, for very few does it pass without a deep sense of this being an important turning point in one's life.

Frequently there are delays in attaining a final settlement and disposition of money and property. These cause much frustration and seem to prolong artificially the life of a dead relationship. Progress toward individual

autonomy is delayed by continuing responsibilities, or dependency upon financial support after the final settlement. For many, the legal turning points of filing, hearings, and eventually a decree serve to punctuate their progress through the series of losses which we describe. Emotions differ widely. The values and point of view taken by one's friends, family and social or business circle upon the situation will probably have considerable impact.

Loss of Community

Friends usually take on a changed view of the individual experiencing divorce. Chronologically, this loss is likely to begin as soon as visible separation occurs, and maybe before. Some social circles, especially couples, may exclude one altogether, in part because of their own uncomfortable feelings rather than outright disapproval. Likewise, a change in attitude by the faith community is often unintentional, but nevertheless experienced as ostracism and disapproval. The extended family, a network of brothers and sisters, nephews, nieces, and parents-in-law are frequently divided by deeper loyalties. The fabric of our associations with people is tested and torn in several places. For many, the divorce from community may make it seem that nothing in the world is stable.¹⁷ The time between separation and the eventual legal divorce is a limbo that for most people is a singular period of highest

¹⁷ Bohannon, "The Six Stations of Divorce," p. 31.

stress.¹⁸

If during this time one's normal social supports are found lacking, the stress of alienation is compounded by those friends, family or associates who have withdrawn. Some of them may feel they need to be neutral, but their actions are perceived as negative and critical. Anger may focus on those who have turned their backs, as loneliness and alienation are magnified. On the other hand, the more contacts that can be maintained, relationships with people on the job or in other routines, the easier it is to hold on to some sense of stability. This loss begins to take place at any point in the sequence when people drift away.

Identity questions that appear to be more appropriate for adolescents and young adults frequently rise to the surface for attention again. Many separated and divorced report that they feel like they are entering a second adolescence. All the common fears of inadequate social acceptance or lack of belonging contribute to a diffuse identity that seeks a shape, unsure of itself. Separations from familiar family settings may require exploration into new and unfamiliar social worlds. On the other hand some are tempted to withdraw from society. Some retreat into ever greater devotion to children. To them it seems safer to isolate themselves from social challenges or intimate

¹⁸ Sharon P. Bonham and Jack O. Balswick, "The Non-institutions: Divorce, Desertion, and Remarriage," Journal of Marriage & Family 42 (November 1980):962. In this broad survey of divorce literature of the 1970's, the authors refer to dozens of research efforts in that literature.

ties. The struggle to clarify a new identity is intensely related to our last focus of loss, the attachment to one's spouse.

Loss of Attachment

The last loss to be described is perhaps the most mysterious, one Bohannon referred to as the "psychic divorce." As Weiss¹⁹ most clearly describes, the attachment bond can persist long after all other aspects of the marriage have disappeared. A feeling of "belonging" to one another can persist in the absence of love over a long period of time. The most difficult work of the divorce appears to revolve around the rebuilding of a separate identity, without the former spouse as a key reference point. Often a person involved in a marriage believed to be hopeless will recognize the attachment and curse himself or herself for weakness and dependence.²⁰

Attachment can even continue in a negative form and become a way of life. The lost partner can become the focus of repeated tantrums, confrontations, or harassment. Games may be played again and again to settle old scores, or to express the anger, loss, and perceived injustice of the divorce. Even with no contact, the former spouse can be used and blamed for all one's current troubles. This is particularly true when financial support obligations

¹⁹Weiss, Marital Separation, p. 45.

²⁰Ibid.

continue, or actual disposition of property is delayed. Occasionally, spying on one another will persist because there is an insatiable curiosity about what the other person is doing and how it reflects upon oneself. As this attachment ebbs away, the former spouse is no longer seen as a reference point for one's daily experiences. For some, that reference point may never disappear completely.

The business at hand is to rebuild the identity.²¹ Perhaps for years a relationship has nourished one's sense of identity. Although the connectedness has turned sour, it does not quickly dissolve the bond. It can be very difficult for people to think of themselves apart from a partner. The bonds of love persist transformed to bonds of woe. No decision, purchase, job change, or choice seems to be sorted out without an almost automatic reference to the absent spouse. It may be with anger, or with spite, but the bond influences the decision. Love and genuine caring may persist for some. For others, the connection has slowly ebbed away, while for their partner, this loss seems sudden and frightening.

There are those for whom it is so difficult to work through these disentanglements in positive ways that they take the radical choice of giving up most or all contact with children as well as the spouse. Some intentionally move great distances. Finding no easy way to achieve a new

²¹ Bruce Fisher, Rebuilding When Your Relationship Ends (San Luis Obispo, CA: Impact Publishers, 1981), pp. 10-49.

integration of both the good and bad in their own history, it seems they choose to break off all contact with the past. Consequently, the learning and personal growth that could occur sometimes does not.

Again, we recognize the tasks common to adolescence. New territory is frequently explored. There may be an insatiable desire for positive reflections of self worth in the eyes of others. A few fall into patterns of frequently making and breaking new relationships. One mother said of her divorced daughter, "She became like a gypsy for ten years." For some, casual sexual encounters become the prime medium for seeking affirmation. For some otherwise confident people, dating is still a frightening although exhilarating challenge. For still others it is primarily a scary adventure with little satisfaction. Many take lessons in ballroom dancing, scuba diving or whatever their income allows. For those men or women who want to date but find they have few opportunities, this disappointment may compound their sense of failure. The possibility becomes painfully clear that they may be alone for the rest of their lives. Others look to quiet hobbies away from the challenges of the world outside the walls of an apartment. Some are devoted to a new mechanical mistress, a shiny vehicle, or a new academic pursuit. "Finding out who you are" is the agenda of the day for thousands of adults who feel like adolescents all over again.

Losses and Grief Before Divorce

In early research, Goode²² reported that only two-thirds of the sample studies experienced significant separation distress. Similarly, Spanier and Casto²³ found that for a substantial minority of people, the loss of attachment after divorce does not present significant difficulty. These reports raise the question as to whether this distress is really such a universal phenomenon as Weiss indicated. Using our framework, however, we see that for some people the grief process may have been in motion long before a word about divorce was uttered. Therefore, it is not surprising that for a large minority of people, the time for grieving is nearly over when the divorce arrives. We might compare it to the death of a loved one following a lengthy illness during which the life has ebbed away. Grief in response to losses that occurred months or years before has already been accomplished.

Interaction of Losses with Emotional Stages

The integration of the two types of analysis which we are proposing is this: that the loss of each component of the marriage has the potential for setting in motion the emotional stages described earlier. Thus, during the marriage, the early perception that the intimacy and trust

²²W. Goode, Women in Divorce (New York: Free Press, 1956).

²³G.B. Spanier and R.F. Casto, "Adjustment to Separation and Divorce: An Analysis of 50 Case Studies," Journal of Divorce 2 (Spring 1979):241-53.

of the marriage have disappeared can set off the succession of stages, shock/denial, anger/guilt, bargaining, and so on. "What do I have to do to get you to love me?" After despair/depression occurs, a new time of resignation or acceptance may arrive. At a later time, when separation and single parenting roles occur, each event can deliver an impact which may re-start the process, distort or enhance parts of the recognizable pattern of grief. Thus, each wave of emotions set off may reinforce waves already in motion, enhancing their depth, or adding new ripples to an already confusing pattern of "disturbance." Just as one pebble after another is dropped into a pool, the events create new circles of reverberating waves. The illustration below shows how the waves of emotional progress may be restarted and overlap in complex patterns.

As we have indicated, the losses may not all occur separately and not necessarily in the order described. Losses can occur more or less simultaneously, with a shocking element of surprise, thus enhancing the sense of trauma and the depth of emotional spiral experienced. One woman reported that her husband brought her to a hospital for surgery and at the time of leaving explained that the marriage was over. He would move out of the home that week, was planning to marry a different woman, and would not be coming to visit her at the hospital. She had no previous intimation that the marriage was in trouble.

For some individuals, there may be one or two such intense experiences. However, others may, instead, experience a slow recognition of the numerous losses over a period of years, with emotional reverberations going on almost endlessly. Little wonder, then, that therapists report a bewildering array of stages, emotional journeys, or steps toward healing. Most likely the timing of an emotional response will be determined by the time the loss is perceived as threatening or actually occurring, regardless of how it is seen by others. Illustration #1 portrays the way in which a sense of spiralling motion within the stages could occur. At any one time a person could have reason to be experiencing a number of different feelings, each adding to or being confused with the others. .

The losses need not be irreversible. Early recognition of problems, the loss of the dream, the loss of intimacy and

trust, can lead to healthy and productive bargaining to create a new and realistic contract for the marriage. Destructive patterns can be reworked if the losses energize a couple into creative negotiation and love building.

Tools for Assessment

For most people, becoming married is a major attempt at gaining a certain part of one's identity. Becoming separated is a process of losing that part of the identity. Many liken it to losing a limb. Each specific loss is like the loss of another part of their identity. Letting go of parenting, or driving the favorite car, gardening in the familiar back yard, eating with the family, enjoying the home and property, being seen by others together with the spouse and family--each slice diminishes the person and brings on a form of crisis in identity. The emotional response will be determined in part by the lost item's value in one's psychic makeup, or the value placed upon it by a cognitive belief system.

The loss becomes even more profoundly disturbing when one's identity is unknown outside the marriage. This is most often seen in the woman who has been married for many years and has invested everything in the husband's career and the family needs. If she has not pursued her own autonomous identity, the impact will be more intense. For others, property, children, or even one's church may be bartered away with a sense of bitter loss.

Erikson's Thematic Theory of Development

Erikson' thematic theory of development²⁴ is a helpful framework for understanding the likely impact of the losses of divorce. This theory describes human development as a series of crises which must be resolved one after the other, such as trust versus mistrust, intimacy versus isolation, and the like. (See Illustration #2.) Seen from within this system the basic psycho-social crises of a person's life may be reopened by a marriage breakdown. Each needs to be resolved anew. The adequacy of previous resolution of crises will be tested, and unresolved parts reactivated.²⁵ Divorced or separated people often experience a sense of return to adolescence. At the same time, themes typically met with in later stages of life come rushing forward early, demanding attention. The crisis of generativity versus stagnation, for instance, presents itself early to the parent without custody who questions whether he or she will have any further opportunity to give something important to the children, or have any lasting influence on them.

Instead of progress as expected through the course of life, the divorced person is busied with a dialectical pattern in which he or she must find new forms of clarity

²⁴ E.H. Erikson, Childhood and Society (New York: Norton, 1950), and Identity and the Life Cycle (New York: International University Press, 1959).

²⁵ Smart, "Application of Erikson's Theory," p. 71.

and meaning.²⁶ A great deal of work must be done within. People often affirm the value of intensive journaling for this purpose. Meditation may be another means of active internal dialogue valuable to them. Small group meetings with supportive people provide another opportunity to stimulate the process.

This theory suggests that people usually have one major theme in their life, such as trust versus mistrust, or industry versus inferiority, which needs fresh resolution. The discovery of that theme can be a helpful guide to predict which losses will likely produce the most profound disturbance in the individual. The struggle to hold on to or to replace that which is being lost will likely bring up the same themes. For instance, the losses of intimacy and community, will be met by attempts to find new friends. Reaching out to new people will bring up the theme of intimacy versus isolation, and the previous resolution of this theme will be tested again. Smart has applied Erikson themes to divorce recovery with some success.²⁷ To her basic conception I have added details to create a suggested list of the Erikson themes corresponding to losses which is shown in Illustration #2. I offer it as a starting point for those familiar with the theory, and as a stimulant to further research.

²⁶ Donald Capps, Pastoral Care: A Thematic Approach (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1979), p. 139.

²⁷ Smart, "Application of Erikson's Theory," pp. 67-79.

ILLUSTRATION 2

LOSSES IDENTIFIED	RELATED TO ERIKSON THEMES
The dream; ideal	Trust/mistrust Integrity/despair
Intimacy	Trust/mistrust Intimacy/isolation
Physical Accessibility	Autonomy/shame, doubt
Money and Property	Autonomy/shame, doubt Industry, inferiority
Parental Role	Generativity/stagnation
Community; Legal Standing	Initiative/guilt Intimacy/isolation Identity/diffusion
Attachment	Identity/diffusion Integrity/despair

The Tennessee Self Concept Scale

As an instrument for measuring self-esteem, the Tennessee Self Concept Scale (TSCS) measures the clarity of the self-concept in several major component areas.²⁸ The fundamental principle involved is that self-esteem is derived from a mosaic of different components or perspectives which each contribute to the clarity of one's self-concept. I have already pointed out that the losses occurring in divorce are experienced often as losses of

²⁸ William H. Fitts, Manual: Tennessee Self Concept Scale (Nashville, TN: Counselor Recordings and Tests, 1965). All TSCS materials are now distributed by Western Psychological Services, 12031 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90025.

component parts of a person's identity. For these reasons the TSCS has previously been applied by Fisher²⁹ and Salts and Zongker³⁰ to measure results of divorce adjustment seminars and groups.

The TSCS theoretical dimensions and subscales offer an attractive framework for assessing divorce recovery needs since certain subscales correspond quite closely to the losses which I have identified within the divorce process. The counseling form of the TSCS report is readily understandable and interpretable to the average client, and so may be a useful tool in this regard. The chart, Illustration #3, shows the subscales corresponding to the losses I have identified. Low scores among these subscales will point to areas most in need of rebuilding and the probable cause of the most intense emotional distress. In addition, the Total Conflict, Total Variability, and General Maladjustment subscales would provide some information relating to the adequacy of coping skills, and thus the ability to manage the confusion and stress encountered.

²⁹ B.F. Fisher, "Identifying and Meeting Needs of Formerly Married People Through a Divorce Adjustment Seminar," Ed.D. dissertation, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, Colorado, 1976), pp. 31-40.

³⁰ C.J. Salts and C.E. Zongker, "Effects of Divorce Counseling Groups on Adjustment and Self Concept," Journal of Divorce 6 (Summer 1983):55-67.

ILLUSTRATION 3

Losses During Divorce

Related to Subscales within

The Tennessee Self Concept Scale

<i>LOSSES</i>	<i>TSCS SUBSCALES CORRESPONDING</i>
The dream; ideal	Self Satisfaction - Row 2 (the judging self)
Intimacy	Personal Self - Column C (personal worth, adequacy)
Physical Accessibility	Physical Self - Column A (bodily worth, sexuality, appearance) and Family Self - Column D (adequacy as a family member)
Money and Property	Personal Self - Column C (personal worth, adequacy)
Parenting Role	Family Self - Column D (adequacy as a family member)
Community and Legal Standing	Moral-Ethical Self- Column B (ethical and religious aspects) and Social Self - Column E (adequacy or worth in relation- ships beyond the primary group)
Attachment	Identity Self - Row 1 (what the individual is) and Personal Self - Column C (personal worth, adequacy)

Opportunities for Spiritual Growth
and Personal Renewal

Powerful questions are introduced by the experiences we have described. The list would vary for individuals, but we suggest it would include many of the following:

- Who am I?
- Who will care about me?
- Does God care?
- Am I basically a "good" person or not?
- How can I ever forgive myself?
- Will God forgive me for what has happened?
- How can I find acceptance from others?
- Am I really worth anything?
- How can I rebuild my life?
- How can I avoid making the same mistakes again?
- How can I make new friends?
- Is there no justice?
- How can I recapture a sense of hope?

All of these, rightly interpreted, are questions of great spiritual import. The good news which the people of God are called to embody is relevant, to say the least. The opportunity for affecting decisions that will change the patterns of a lifetime are ripe for the wise harvest team. But there will be many competitors who also wish to answer these questions differently in the pluralistic moral and social milieu of our society. However, if the good news is embodied in a community of people who care, it will have a great attraction to the hurting individual. A loving fellowship which accepts without conditions and offers the power of resurrection faith seems most suited to the task.

Faith Development as it is described by Fowler³¹ provides some insight, as well, into the spiritual growth that may occur. Many people involved in divorce feel that they have been wronged. Questions about whether God does indeed rule the world with justice will frequently arise. An essentially simple faith insists that there must be an explanation. Justice demands that logical consequences are tied to our actions. This is a prominent need in what Fowler refers to as Intuitive-Projective Faith and Synthetic-Conventional Faith.³² While recognizing there are other causes, individuals must come to grips with personal responsibility for their situations. Sometimes a very painful situation can turn a person toward real repentance for their actions and attitudes. This painful time can become an opening to fresh spiritual growth.

Forgiveness is needed. The potential for renewal is largely measured by the adequacy of forgiveness that occurs. People will usually need to forgive their partner for wrongs which occurred during the marriage. They will very likely also need to put behind them the bruising experiences of negotiation and withdrawal from the marriage. Even if people are proceeding with an "amicable divorce" they are often surprised at the amount of hurt that occurs in the process.

³¹ James Fowler and Sam Keen, Life Maps (Waco, Texas: Word Books, Publishers, 1978), pp.42-100.

³² Ibid., pp. 30-33, and 99.

People often need to forgive God for acting or failing to act on their behalf. God is seen as having "let me down." Friends, relatives, pastors, and counselors frequently are perceived as exacerbating the divorced person's pain due to their ineptitude or self-righteous attitudes. Whether actual or perceived, it matters little. These wrongs need to be put behind one, as well. In many cases, the people involved are not cooperative enough to allow a face to face transaction, so the forgiveness is hard to accomplish. But it can still happen in an internal, perhaps symbolic way. It can happen with a counselor, dramatized in conversation with a friend, or simply written into a journal. Somehow, it needs to be expressed, at least once, so that person can actualize the experience.

Finally, for genuine renewal of the self, forgiveness needs to occur within. "I need to forgive myself for being such a dope," is how one young mother put it. "I was too quiet too long." Another person might say, "I was too eager to run both our lives." When a person can identify one's personal contributions to the divorce this is a crucial learning. But it may still be hard to assimilate. The key to such assimilation will be a healthy self-love. When people care about themselves they can grow to absorb and accept their own limitations and faults which have been exposed. Hopefully, this process will be encouraged by the accepting attitudes of others. Acceptance comes to fruition when a person is able to accept himself or herself honestly

and openly, and say, "Yes that was me." Then, believing that one is loved by God, and valued by one's friends or children, the individual can forgive oneself for being inadequate, and having failed at the marriage. This is spiritual healing and growth.

For some, the enforced asceticism that comes from losing money, property, friends, and family create a test of identity. Divorce removes many familiar crutches. People may be forced to ask, "Without a husband or wife, without these familiar possessions, without these family friends, who am I?" But people can grow beyond their narrow definitions. Some find that in divorce, with their crutches of dependence and identity swept away, a new, deeper identity emerges. God may be found working in the desert with fresh brilliance. A spiritual experience may illuminate the soul of the divorced person in ways similar to that which monks seek in solitude and poverty. Emptiness can lead to openness. Thus, for some, the doors open to redemptive renewal and resurrection.

People often emerge from divorce with greater sensitivity for other people with problems. Frequently they become more tolerant and hesitate to judge others or draw quick conclusions. In addition, people can be challenged to care about other persons in a divorce ministry. Sharing in another person's sufferings has the salutary effect of getting people off their own set of problems. The experience of involvement in healing as a wounded healer

gives people a glimpse of a more profound faith that does not so much demand justice from God, but rather rejoices in the opportunity to suffer with others for a good purpose. The sacrifice of one's time and effort to work with the hurting, the experience of feeling their hurts, and receiving their appreciation for the concern shown can create a transcendent moment. For some, this is an introduction to the sacrificial way of life Fowler associates with a Paradoxical-Consolidative Faith.³³ It gives some people a new insight into the ways of God. Narrow faith questions are overshadowed by a new experience of the sacrificial love of God, and the power of the resurrection. These are some of the surprises awaiting the faith community that enters into a need-focused ministry to the divorced.

The faith community must earn the right to minister by being attentive to the needs of the divorced. These needs must be understood and treated with empathy. This ministry will need special planning and attention. We take up the key elements of such a ministry in the next chapter.

³³ Fowler and Keen, Life Maps, pp. 96-99.

CHAPTER II

COMPONENTS FOR EFFECTIVE MINISTRY

An effective ministry is one addressed to needs which are felt and expressed by those being served. This chapter presents the elements of a ministry that is designed to meet the needs of the divorced. We have already illuminated those needs in the previous chapter. The elements are discussed here apart from overall program design because they can be combined in a wide variety of forms. Chapter III discusses program design in terms of specific forms which such a ministry may take. The elements are considered in this chapter under four major divisions.

First, I look at how to meet special needs with an individualized ministry. This approach may be carried out by informed lay persons one-to-one, with a modest amount of supervision.

Second, I focus on essential elements for programs to serve the divorced as a group. Some of these elements, such as informational resources and small groups, are present in programs evaluated in a previous study.³⁴ Criteria for

³⁴ Stanley Hagemeyer, An Evaluation of Selected Programs for Separated and Divorced Persons, (Grand Rapids: Good News Community, 1984), 48 pp., published with the assistance of Steelcase Inc.

evaluation were developed from research in the field of teaching coping skills.

Third, strategic methods for helping people overcome loss or personal inadequacies are identified which seem most suited to programs for divorce recovery. These are gleaned from research in therapeutic methods of dealing with phobias as well as recovery from loss and grief. Objections and limitations are discussed, and preventive guidelines offered. Suggestions for evaluation and empirical measurement of results are offered.

Finally, I present comparable approaches drawn from New Testament models of ministry. Biblical principles are developed which indicate sound theological foundations for our program methods. Objections which might arise from some differing theological and religious points of view are discussed.

Responding with Individualized Ministry

We often hear well-intentioned people say, "Call me if there's anything I can do." Attention to the person's experience will result in a more helpful offer. We can anticipate needs which are connected to what is being lost. The faith community can anticipate the problems a separated or divorced person might face. With some guidance, lay people can carry out effective ministry through concrete efforts to address these concerns. Lay persons need to be taught to recognize common problems and to meet the needs identified. Technical information can be easily translated

to every-day experience language.

Meeting Specific Needs

Examples listed below point to efforts most likely to be helpful. They should not be understood as strictly chronological. Rather, volunteers may use this framework as a reference tool. Some people have little need in one area, while being desperately in need of aid in another. The following are suggestions for individualized ministry.

ILLUSTRATION 4

Examples of Individualized Ministry Response

LOSS	SUGGESTED RESPONSE
Dream	Hope & reassurance from trustworthy people
Intimacy	Intimate supportive friends
Accessible Companionship	Social Companions
Parenting	Involvement with children of relatives or friends
Money/property	Material assistance
Legal standing as a married person	People who accept one's changing status
Community/friends	Both old and new friends who fit into a new social network
Identity	Opportunities to fulfill useful roles in community

The following paragraphs explain more fully some of the ways volunteers can carry out effective ministry tuned to respond to the special losses involved in divorce.

The lost dream

When any of us experience the destruction of a dream or ideal, it shakes our faith in other ideals and hopes. The dreams and expectations of marriage involve our trust, and some of our greatest leaps of faith. The more these hopes have been nourished and refined, the greater the loss when a divorce occurs. When the dream comes to an end, nothing else makes much sense. The faith and trust that was placed in a partner is broken. Despite what may be an amicable divorce, faith and hope are broken down. The Eriksonian theme of trust versus mistrust must be resolved anew for many.³⁵ Is it possible to ever trust someone again? Likewise, the inner controversy between a positive sense of integrity over against despairing disintegration erupts repeatedly. An individual often reviews his or her life experience repeatedly to see if it makes any sense.

Such damage calls for restoration and for reaffirmation of faith, a primary concern of the faith community. A time of despair and drift calls for the reassurance of faith and hope. You need people around you who do love, who are honorable, who are faithful, and who really do care. Ideals need to be nourished. Good words are valuable, whether from the pulpit or in a more personal way. To be most effective, however, these must be confirmed in acts of love.

³⁵ Smart, "Application of Erikson's Theory," p. 71.

Lost intimacy

Loss of intimacy brings loneliness and alienation. The clearest prescription is to have a few people with whom one can share experiences openly. A person needs people for deep fellowship, people who can share in one's suffering. Such friends listen, avoid judgmental conclusions, and seek solutions with the sufferer. These intimate contacts can become lifesaving for one's sanity. The choice between intimacy and isolation shows itself clearly. Some people choose isolation, thus avoiding the pain of contact with familiar people. If attentive people can provide lifelines to the depths of the inner person, then the hunger for intimacy will not go unsatisfied. Otherwise desperate attempts to appease this hunger may draw the person into the world of the singles bar and casual sexual encounters. Friends who really care will listen for the intimate layers of fear and rejection, even in casual conversation.

Lost companionship

The loss of accessibility to companionship can be met by more casual means. People need someone to associate with in less intense ways. A low-key invitation to come for popcorn and a movie on TV can be a wonderful act of grace. Someone may offer the opportunity to go shopping for groceries together, or to spend a casual afternoon window shopping.

Dinner on a Sunday is one of the times when the divided family is most conscious of its difference from "normal"

church families. Regardless of the fact that statistics tell us there are thousands of divorced persons everywhere, those who are in the midst of divorce often feel peculiar and alien. An invitation to Sunday dinner can be a powerful message of inclusion and acceptance. People need to feel that their current status is accepted; that during a time of separation, their fellowship is desired. When friends offer to help rake leaves for a young mom, this small bit of neighborly sharing can speak volumes of love and caring. Many without companionship experience shame and self-doubt. If someone does not want to be with you, perhaps there is something deeply wrong with you. At the same time, people often say they feel good about taking charge of their own lives, for a change (autonomy). When caring people reach out to someone, their sense of shame and isolation is being disarmed, and their new efforts at autonomy are affirmed.

Lost parenting

The loss of full-time parenting often brings similar needs for companionship and affirmation to the fore. The parent of minor children who loses custody often feels severed from an important role in life. Most people have a desire to express themselves in shaping a new generation. The parent without custody may enjoy the opportunity to be around other families with children. Or perhaps this individual will gain some satisfaction by helping with a little league team, or the church cadets.

When the children are present for a weekend visit, an

invitation to go along with another family on a picnic, or to a movie can help make life seem more normal. During the first few months of separation single parents often doubt the adequacy of the parenting they provide. They may doubt whether they have a meaningful effect on their children. Casual involvement with others provides a real-world affirmation of a new lifestyle which feels odd or alien.

At the same time, parents with custody of younger children will be tested to the limits of their love. As a general rule, this parent often feels overloaded while the one without regular custody feels deprived. When emotional resources run low, the parent with custody may well doubt whether the parenting being provided is adequate. Some relief is needed. Someone can offer to help by baby sitting while that parent gets an opportunity to go shopping or attend a Bible study. Familiar family occasions such as Sunday afternoons or holidays are times of keenly felt pain. Invitations to spend time with other families are always in order. Older adults can also function as surrogate grandparents, to enrich the life of a young family with a less than ideal lifestyle. The strategy is to simply include people in shared family experiences in order to break down the walls of alienation and self-doubt.

Lost money and property

The reduction in income which a divorced family commonly has brings more easily recognizable opportunities for helping. Although I may refer most often to the young

parent with children, similar questions must be applied to examine the needs of the older divorced person. Typically, the mother with children in her custody will be struggling to adjust to a lower income, and many cases the change is drastic. Likewise, when a man sets out to live apart from the family, even temporarily, it will often be at a lower standard of living. He may need some furniture or a place to stay. Lending a TV set or a sofa may really help. These simple things, offered without embarrassment, speak profound messages of caring and encouragement. Sensitive inquiries should be made about whether all the appliances are functioning. Perhaps the roof leaks. Many of the usual maintenance needs that go with a home can be met by volunteers. Financial aid may also be needed.

Since our society puts so much stock in the material, we are all prone to measure ourselves by things. A person who is suddenly short of cash, driving a poorer car or living in a run-down apartment, may feel the question of industry versus inferiority come to the fore again, although this crisis had been resolved earlier in life. Their ability to manage for themselves may be in doubt.

In such situations, the recipient may not take the initiative to ask for help. When someone's respectability and adequacy is being tested, it is all the harder to ask for help. Those who are alert and sensitive will notice the needs, or pick up hints of need and inquire for other needs before a crisis hits.

Lost legal standing in marriage

The loss of legal standing perhaps calls for the least attention. From a needs point of view it may raise questions about respectability, integrity, guilt, and identity confusion (or diffusion). An understanding faith community will seek new ways to show its interest and respect for a person whose identity is changing. This is especially challenging, because we ourselves are uncomfortable being around someone whose identity is not certain. Our anxiety must be overcome to prevent it from creating new barriers that would sabotage our ministry.

Lost community

Loss of community has been addressed by actions described above. These practical demonstrations of love will foster a stronger sense of community. Just like anyone else, the divorced person needs to be given opportunity to serve in useful ways in order to feel a genuine part of the body. In situations where church leaders feel the integrity of the faith community calls for confrontation and admonishment, these must be given with a deep respect for the value of the person.

At the same time, the faith community should not be upset by the possibility that the newly divorced person may seek the special friendship of others who are newly single. The support and fellowship available from such friends can be particularly valuable. More will be said about "knowing companions" in a later section of this chapter.

Lost attachment/identity

As I have described in the previous chapter, the loss of attachment will likely be the deepest loss. It may also be the most difficult to address adequately. It is the arena of testing and crisis Erikson has called Identity versus Diffusion. Some are struggling to overcome the "amputation" of an important part of their life. In other cases, where years of grief preceded a divorce, perhaps someone has chosen to leave the marriage and to forge a new identity. This new acquisition of autonomy is a dynamic step toward wholeness and it should be affirmed by respected and valued people.

In the search to define and renew the identity, people often benefit from exploring and developing new abilities or interests. Some return to school to develop needed job skills. For others, volunteer work in service organizations helps them discover their value and identity. In the faith community divorced people need to be encouraged to develop and to use their personal gifts for the benefit of others. Some church leaders may feel that the divorced must not serve in a visible role for an extended period of time. If thus left out, however, a person is all the more likely to feel useless and lacking identity. On the other hand, when a person is encouraged to take on responsibilities and make a useful contribution he or she will gain a fresh sense of belonging. In the process, more building blocks of identity are collected and fit together.

Responding to Emotions

One more general need should be recognized here. We have already given considerable space to describing emotional stages in the previous chapter. The faith community needs to accept a person's expression of emotions with sensitivity and calm. Occasionally, the outpouring of waves of emotion will even be misdirected. However, expression of emotions can be instrumental in healing and progress. A stable and supportive faith community will be tried and found equal to the challenge. Helpful persons will avoid adopting judgmental attitudes toward either of the persons being divorced. The stability of a loving faith community in a time of turmoil is a vital element of ministry. Acceptance of the state of affairs and the sweep of emotions is one clear expression of grace.

Individual Differences Expected

It needs to be reaffirmed that the losses and emotions experienced will vary greatly from one individual to another. For instance, the woman who has a stable career and a good income, and whose children are grown up, may not be troubled by questions about her ability to manage for herself and make a living. On the other hand, her very strength and independence may make it difficult for her to manage the challenge of intimacy versus isolation. She may find it hard to admit needs to even her closest friends. Strength in one area does not mean that all areas of need

are taken care of adequately. A multitude of combinations can occur. Within the general pattern, the wise community looks for the opportunity to meet important needs.

Certain dangers and problems which come with the territory of helping people must not be overlooked and will be discussed in Chapter Three. Among these are the potential for unhealthy dependency, and transference of emotions. Helping distressed people is sometimes difficult for professionals, but harder still for the untrained. It is no surprise that professionals urge caution.³⁶ Nevertheless, profound ministry can be carried out by the lay persons who are aware of needs and dare to minister in the name of Christ. Chapter Three will provide training guidelines. Suggestions are made to help people recognize their own limits and avoid some of these pitfalls.

Essential Elements for Programs

While the previous section looks at the needs on an individual basis, this section will identify elements to help for an appropriate response in the form of a group program. These elements can be combined into programs in a variety of forms discussed in Chapter Three.

Enhancing Coping Skills

Developing improved coping skills is central to the value of programs for the separated or divorced. During

³⁶ Dan Hurley, "Getting Help from Helping," Psychology Today, January, 1988, p. 67, quoting Linda W. Scheffler, author of Help Thy Neighbor.

divorce, episodes of unusually high stress will occur. The adversity that accompanies most divorces presents a painful challenge. Helping people by enhancing their ability to cope with this adversity represents the "cup of cold water" we are enjoined to provide.

Although the process of coping is related to most of the material in this project, the subject of coping deserves more acute scrutiny. What is the process of coping? How do we enhance someone's ability to cope? Coping is frequently described as a process by which persons evaluate their personal resources and apply them to their personal situations. Coping is a process which is enhanced by developing certain attitudes and by making use of appropriate resources in taking action. Roskies and Lazarus summarize developments in the field of teaching coping skills by noting that both theorists and stress clinicians agree that "coping involves both what people *think and do* in stressful transactions, rather than merely what they do."³⁷ (Italics are mine.) What people "say to themselves" is an essential component of the way they manage stressful situations. These researchers indicate that coping skills involve not only a thinking process based upon learning and rational choices, but also involve social interaction and personal confidence building experiences. Relevant

³⁷ E. Roskies and R.S. Lazarus, "Coping Theory and the Teaching of Coping Skills," in Behavioral Medicine: Changing Health Life Styles, ed. P. Davidson (New York: Brunner/Mazell, 1980), pp. 38-61.

information will most often change how a person thinks and responds to a situation. In addition, experiences such as being involved in small groups led by trained persons are very important. A group meeting becomes a training ground for coping. Our assistance, then, begins to take shape by including: relevant information specific to divorce recovery, and experiences that enhance the internal process of coping.

Cognitive Resources

Information about divorce and separation

Accurate information is naturally one of the basic parts of any educational self-help program. Any program for the divorced will be enhanced if it provides well-founded ideas concerning the emotions and tasks which accompany divorce. The opportunity to compare one's experience and see it within a meaningful pattern can provide increased confidence. Even though the road may be unpleasant, we can better travel on if we recognize landmarks along the way, and have hints of better circumstances to come.

Information about community resources

Information about local resources, and a wide range of practical information that might enhance single adult living are valuable. In many communities there are dozens of groups and agencies that can be helpful to single parents and any single adults. Social services, employment, child-care, and counseling resources are just a few examples.

Positive coping behavior models

Persons previously divorced have a lot of information to share. Speakers, small groups leaders and the like can share experiences about a multitude of practical subjects. In addition, members in a group may pool their knowledge about how to get a house painted, child care arranged, or how to deal with an irate spouse. Even though the specific solution will not be the same for each given situation, the process of sharing contributes to a cognitive confidence building.

The experience of leaning on others for support may also teach some people one of the most important coping mechanisms, namely the ability to ask for help when appropriate. Paradoxically, the ability to seek help contributes to a more secure sense of self determination and confidence in one's ability to cope.

Self-care skills for single adult living

Stephen M. Johnson has provided an insightful chapter titled, "Autonomous Adulthood: A Job Description for the Single Adult."³⁸ He points out that a large proportion of adults have little training or experience in living independently until it is forced upon them by circumstances. His outline is intended to help individuals evaluate their personal resources for living alone. It includes three major areas:

³⁸ Stephen M. Johnson, First Person Singular (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1977), pp. 117-142.

1. Autonomous functioning skills, such as: cooking, housekeeping, transportation, money management, child care, wardrobe management, tolerating/enjoying aloneness, career and hobbies;
2. Social and friendship skills such as: making and keeping friends of the same sex, and opposite sex, ability to communicate, initiate outside activities, entertain guests;
3. Social attributes and skills for amative relationships, such as: initiating conversation with other sex, ease in asking for dates, ease in refusing dates, knowledge and comfort with dating etiquette, ease in being affectionate, both receiving and reciprocating affection, both to advance or decline sexual behavior.

The individual needs to decide which skills are of the highest priority. Then the person can go about gaining increased skills in those areas.

Resources for introspection and personal renewal

Crisis theory and the nature of faith itself call upon us to look for growth through adversity. Research findings show that for many people the experience of divorce does bring about personal growth.³⁹ People often report increased personal autonomy and a clearer sense of values. For many, the precious nature of relationships becomes clear in a way that was never seen before. Biblical and spiritual nourishment can play a vital role in the search of a renewed identity. Resources may be provided in the form of Bible study outlines related to the experiences such as loneliness, or a concern to find God's will. There is an

³⁹ Sharon Kraus, "The Crisis of Divorce: Growth Promoting of Pathogenic?" Journal of Divorce 3 (Winter, 1979):111.

abundance of good material written by Christian singles available. The time-honored methods of meditation and spiritual growth are no different for the newly single person. Perhaps, however, they become more acutely needed during the rebuilding process.

The "Stress Test" devised by Holmes and Rahe⁴⁰ gives a numerical value to different stressful events. This exercise helps reframe one's circumstances and feelings. It helps people under stress to realize why it is perfectly normal for them to feel depleted when a series of draining experiences have occurred in a few months' time.

Since what people "say to themselves" will often determine how they cope with stressful situations,⁴¹ writing a personal journal can be very helpful. Journaling is now widely taught as an effective method of promoting an internal dialogue. These resources can contribute immensely to one's faith and help to develop positive attitudes to better cope with the stressful situations.

Experiences to Support the Process

Information and resources such as those mentioned above are valuable, but much more than information is needed. There are important elements of experiential learning that are crucial to the success of a program for the divorced.

⁴⁰Revised and published in Keith W. Sehnert, Stress/Unstress (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1981), pp. 67-69.

⁴¹Roskies and Lazarus, "Teaching Coping Skills," p. 62.

People need to be supported in distress and to be challenged into action. The following chart outlines experiential elements essential to addressing the needs of the divorced.

ILLUSTRATION 5

Experiential Program Elements

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Program Element</u>	<u>Helps Avoid</u>
Emotions	Emotional Support	Fixation with a particular stage
Will or Autonomy	Encouragement to take full Responsibility	Victimization and debilitation
Relationships	Companions within small groups	Withdrawal and isolation
Guilt and Spiritual Growth	Self Examination & Expectation of Personal Growth	Lack of Integration

Emotional Support

Having a safe place to express and deal with emotions is widely recognized as one of the important needs.⁴² The emotional tides and intense loneliness often cause a person to wonder if they are "going crazy." Having opportunity to look at emotions within an accepting atmosphere often can unlock the barriers to further progress. This may occur in the home of a dear friend. It can occur within a professional counseling setting. Many, however, do not find

⁴² W.H. Berman and D.C. Turk, "Adaptation to Divorce: Problems and Coping Strategies," Journal of Marriage and Family 43 (February 1981):187.

such opportunities.

What if emotions are not dealt with appropriately, and given a hearing? In some cases, a person may become fixated on one stage or another. Divorced persons may be observed in a seemingly permanent state of denial, living in the past. Others choose to be angry and resentful toward their former partner, letting an oppositional stance continue to define them for years. Many times this will block opportunities for new healthy relationships. Destructive ingredients may transfer directly from one relationship to the next.

Having a class, or intentional support group which encourages honest expression of emotions can make a big difference. The crucial qualitative factor is acceptance on the part of leadership of whatever emotions are present. Value judgments about those emotions, or eagerness to help someone "get over it" too quickly are likely to hinder the healing process from being completed. Leaders set an appropriate standard for acceptance by others within the group. This accepting, supportive environment can stimulate the process of individual healing.

Some people who normally resist self-disclosure find that in a divorce support group this is the norm. Thus they can risk such self-disclosure. Often this opens the door to more rapid progress than would otherwise occur. In an intentional support group people often finally identify and resolve some debilitating attitudes that had been accepted

as permanent. "The Beginning Experience" is a Catholic sponsored weekend program which has provided just such a turning point for hundreds of single adults, both divorced and widowed.⁴³

A Challenge to Take Responsibility

Some groups have been known to degenerate into "pity parties" and never get beyond immediate emotional support. However, the process of divorce recovery includes taking action, and accepting responsibility for the past and present choices. Divorced persons face the task of replacing many of the things they have lost and rebuilding their lives. They need some new friends, perhaps a place to live, an auto to drive, or even a new church. People often feel as if all the different parts of life are encumbered with the scaffolding of repair.

However, at the same time, events may appear to move out of control. Court hearings and negotiations are delayed, or property settlements require cooperation we cannot obtain, or a home buyer who is not to be found. Agencies, judges, and other decision-makers may be involved, to say nothing of a spouse who may purposely derail plans. Divorce losses and problems often surprise even the most confident people. Things are often simply beyond control.

One of the risks, then, especially for anyone who tends to feel inadequate, is that they may settle into being a

⁴³ The Beginning Experience, Fr. Guy Gau, Director, Central Office, 3100 W. 41st St., Sioux Falls, SD 57105.

victim of circumstances. Rather than taking responsibility for problems which arise, it may be much easier to blame one's spouse, or the court system. By not taking charge of his or her bills, or home, a person can avoid feeling responsible for problems which arise. A person can slip into an attitude of despair and acquiescence to whatever circumstances dictate. Passive-aggressive behavior is common.

What is needed is encouragement to accommodate unwelcome circumstances, and make decisions. Divorce requires that each party take responsibility for one's own needs. Some find the responsibilities of living single terrifying at first. There is much unfamiliar territory to be explored when a person enters single life anew. Experiments with the risks of living can be peculiarly daunting while one's ego is at a low point. Therefore, for some people, assertiveness training may be called for.

A program needs to encourage goal setting and action. A sheet of paper that presents a personal goal-setting process can help a person move from a confusing set of problems to a concrete course of action. Small groups can bring accountability into the learning process. If a session includes setting financial or career goals, during the following weeks the group can call its members to account for whether action was taken or not. In another instance, an attorney might be unintentionally intimidating. The frustrated client can review the situation with the

support group to get some new ideas, and then try out some new ways to get results with that attorney. When a few such accomplishments have been achieved, a new sense of autonomy and freedom arise.

Positive social experiences

Relationships are a large portion of what is lost or damaged in a divorce. When a marriage dissolves, our own ability to have relationships is challenged. People may feel it is simply not worth the trouble to love someone, or to trust anyone again. One's faith in the ability to relate, to socialize, and to care is at stake. That is why social gatherings are an essential element in any effective program.

Simply bringing people together to deal with divorce is a step in resocializing. There will be different levels of need for resocializing. For some, their church or job will remain intact. For others, it may seem that everything in their social life needs to be rebuilt. Many people form important new permanent friendships through their group. Discussion groups and spontaneous social activities provide opportunities for people to practice social skills rusty from disuse.

Some singles groups or churches provide social opportunities but little else. Distressed people often react negatively to social events at first. If the groups or activities leave no room for the deep, painful agenda of such persons, they will likely drift off, or learn to bury

their feelings. One research project concluded that social and personal interest activities become effective only after the emotional distress is reduced to a manageable level.⁴⁴ This does not necessarily mean that groups must be intensive or cathartic for everyone, nor have this goal at every meeting. A well-balanced program will allow opportunity for both deep personal sharing and lighter social engagement.

Spiritual renewal

People frequently have trouble accepting the reality of their own divorce. Not surprisingly, they may find it even more difficult to accept responsibility for its cause.

"Whose fault is it?" Even when both marriage partners acknowledge intellectually that they share the blame for a breakdown, accepting such responsibility is not easy. We readily identify the ways a marriage partner has let us down. But in order to grow in spirit, rather than stagnate, we need to look at unpleasant truths about ourselves.

People must learn from their mistakes if there is to be improvement in their relationship-ability. We need to find our enemy within.

If the process of divorce brings a person's worst faults to light, the recovery period is the time for them to be dealt with. When people discover what went wrong and how their own failings contributed to it, they can grow socially as well as spiritually. The interaction of a small group

⁴⁴ Berman and Turk, "Adaptation to Divorce," p. 187.

may parallel the classic activity of confession, repentance, and forgiveness. In such a supportive atmosphere people may take responsibility for past mistakes, and decide on a better course for their future.

Depending on the nature of the sponsoring agency, the Christian gospel may be a prominent part of the information presented. In more eclectic settings persons may be encouraged to complete the process of renewal within their own faith community. One of the most important resources for coping skills is an adequate belief system. A healthy belief system including a positive faith in God, and a good sense of one's own value, will provide much of the strength needed to bounce back from jarring defeats.

Programs Imply Progress Is Expected

Clearly, many of the elements discussed have an action orientation. Programs which include the elements described will be goal-oriented, and have clear, published agendas. Any plan needs to include room for personal agendas, and personal needs which arise. In order to encourage change, an agenda with time limits will hasten progress.

Presenting a list of topics and discussions of progress through the stages of grief and rebuilding implies action. If help is offered while an attitude of hope is displayed, a powerful experiential message is being given. Programs need to present an expectation of personal growth.

Coping is a process which is enhanced by developing attitudes and making use of resources in taking action. In

sum, a program which provides resources, lends strength to a person's positive attitudes, and encourages action will be effective in furthering the process of coping with divorce.

Strategic Program Methods

The goal of helping people has attracted thousands into the helping professions. There are therapists of many varieties. Despite their numbers, there is not enough help to go around. Referring to the shortage of professional help and the surprisingly effective work done by amateurs, Gartner and Reissman conclude, "The human service strategy ought to be to devise ways of creating more [such] helpers."^{4 5} Two such strategies have risen to prominence in recent decades both in professionally guided settings, and in independent self-help groups like Alcoholics Anonymous. The first is the small group. The second is the use of the "wounded healer" or "the knowing companion." These are attractive tools for use in assisting persons coping with divorce.

Small Groups

The formation of small groups of people in programs for the divorced now parallels groups that have sprung up nationwide for all sorts of special needs. Groups exist for diabetics, alcoholics, cancer patients, recovering

^{4 5} Alan Gartner & Frank Riessman, Self-Help in the Human Services (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1977), p. 106.

psychiatric patients, and unemployed executives. The list could go on. For the divorcing person, the small group begins the resocializing function. It also helps the learning process, becomes a safe place for the expression of emotions, and provides a supportive atmosphere for the development of coping skills.

Sharing personal experiences in this way also helps renew or enhance participants' abilities for intimacy. The experience of sharing deep feelings, areas of vulnerability and weakness helps overcome alienation. A precious sense of intimacy with certain special people brings a renewed appreciation for good companions and the closeness which was lost as the marriage dissolved.

There are key ingredients, however, which will go a long way to determine the effectiveness of the small group. There are at least three to be mentioned here. The first is an attitude of acceptance. The second is that these groups should be homogenous. The third is the use of carefully selected volunteer leaders for the groups. These are trained in accordance with the specific goals and guidelines indicated above. More detail on training is provided in Chapter Three. These factors will shape the groups' character and function and also help us avoid some of the identified dangers that come with such ministry.

Acceptance and trust

If the small group can establish a high level of trust and self-disclosure, it becomes an encounter group which

stimulates personal reflection and self examination. This is a potent resource when skillfully handled. By sharing some of their mutual experiences of distress, people are brought close to one another and begin to care for each other. In a sense "the memory itself is transformed."⁴⁶ The present and the future are recast in the light of new reflection.

Homogenous makeup

Many small group participants have echoed the sentiments reported from people who met to discuss their difficult parenting problems. "Parents find talking about their problems to a sympathetic audience cathartic, and hearing about problems they don't have reassuring." There is "the exhilarating feeling that one is no longer alone--that all parents are in the same boat, whether they can row it or not."⁴⁷ Strong group acceptance and shared understanding is easiest to generate when those present have had similar experiences. "Homogeneity among the members seems to be one of the critical and distinguishing factors in what makes many self-help groups powerful." reports Marion Jacobs, co-director of the California Self-Help Center.⁴⁸ The healthy support group is often a most

⁴⁶ Terry O'Banion and April O'Connell, The Shared Journey, An Introduction to Encounter Groups (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1970), p. 138.

⁴⁷ Gartner and Riessman, Self-Help, p. 108.

⁴⁸ Hurley, "Getting Help from Helping," p. 66.

compelling display of effective healing.

Self-help groups show that people need not be passive, that they have power-particularly in a group that demands they do something for each other; a group that, while permitting dependence, demands autonomy and independence; a group that, while giving support, demands action and work; a group that is not leader or professional centered, but peer centered. In essence, one of the most significant characteristics of mutual aid groups is the fact that they are empowering and thus potentially de-alienating. They enable their members to feel and use their own strengths and their own power and to have control over their own lives.⁴⁹

Trained Leaders.

The particular style of leadership needed is quite different from that in some much publicized "encounter groups." First, the strongest emphasis must be placed on genuine acceptance. Second, leaders need to facilitate the groups in a way that encourages maximum give and take by participants in dialogue with each other rather than just with the leader. The more the participants take ownership of the group's progress, the more each benefits. Third, since people come to a group or ministry with wide variations of attitudes, confusion, or motivation, they must be made to feel that they have permission to be where they are, and to participate at their own pace.

One additional way of understanding the crucial role of the leaders is that which has been defined as the "knowing companion." But this concept deserves more extended discussion since it illuminates other aspects of what makes

⁴⁹Gartner and Reissman, Self-Help, pp. 98-99.

a specialized ministry for the divorced effective.

Knowledgeable Companions

Knowledgeable companions are people who have already experienced the trauma or problem the new client faces.⁵⁰ They can provide the special kind of companionship of someone who knows the road you travel, the crisis you face. This helps disarm and reduce its threat, and encourages participants that they, too, can manage this crisis. This unique kind of help is widely recognized as most valuable in dealing with many different kinds of trauma, and as part of therapeutic treatment for numerous phobias.

In a ministry for the divorced, the knowing companion can fulfill many different roles. As a speaker or as a small group leader, the previously divorced companion describes the journey through divorce in terms of his or her own experience. Some of these special companions can be available for one-to-one support, as sponsors assigned in some pairing system. Others may fulfill organizational and administrative roles. In every case, the more divorced persons that the newly separated person meets, the wider the variety of role models there are to observe and from which to take encouragement.

Another descriptive term for this role is that of the

⁵⁰ John Bowlby, Separation: Anxiety and Anger (New York: Basic Books, 1973), pp. 193-195.

"wounded healer," apparently coined by Henri Nouwen.⁵¹

Although Nouwen's book is aimed at describing the role of the professional clergy, his principle applies directly to anyone attempting to do ministry. Describing someone who intends to help heal others, he says:

...like Jesus, he who proclaims liberation is called not only to care for his own wounds and the wounds of others, but also to make his wounds into a major source of his healing power.⁵²

The group leaders, or enablers, serve as the primary "knowing companions" and "wounded healers." It is crucial to recruit caring, healthy people, who know their abilities and limits. These attitudes are more important than having an air of "pseudo professionalism," or having all the answers. Because these volunteers are willing to walk with the participants through a painful period in life, they often have a profound impact on them. They help provide a comfort and a strengthening influence that cannot easily be fulfilled by a weekly visit with the professional therapist. They simply demonstrate that there is "life after divorce."

In addition, they serve as role models for the group, in demonstrating how to be helpful. After a time, many of the persons in the small group become a significant encouragement to each other. In their own unique ways, wounded though they may be, each can be a further

⁵¹ Henri J.M. Nouwen, The Wounded Healer (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1972).

⁵² Ibid, p. 83.

demonstration that it is possible to not only survive divorce but also to develop a meaningful life.

When participants find themselves becoming instrumental in helping others, this creates an exponential increase in their own progress and that of the group. When people feel they are useful it furthers the process of healing. As they begin to recognize once again their own value to other human beings it helps improve their own self concept. The healing process enters a spiral of accelerating progress, as the little circle of people in the group generates enthusiasm. "... it feels good to be the helper. It increases our sense of control, of being valued, of being capable."⁵³ The greater and more intimate involvement people have in the helping process, the more likely that there will be a positive effect on their own self concept.⁵⁴

Problems, Objections and Limitations

There are criticisms of the self-help movement that deserve attention here, as they apply to divorce ministry that uses such means. We need to be acquainted with these concerns, lest we assume the ministry described is easy and automatic.

One major criticism is that groups simply promise too

⁵³ T. Dewar, "Professionalized Clients as Self-Helpers," Self-Help and Health: A Report (New York: City University of New York, Queens College, New Human Service Institute, 1976), p. 81, quoted in Gartner & Reissman, p. 100.

⁵⁴ Gartner and Reissman, Self-Help, p. 100.

much. Some promoters and leaders of groups become ideologues who promote their particular way of helping people. Sometimes this occurs because they have had a positive result from the experience. In other cases, their own ego need is fed by the experience of being in control of a group. There are at least two kinds of negative consequences from such situations.

First, people who need professional help may not seek it, because they depend on the group to solve all their problems. Sometimes this occurs because the social support of the group seems to salve their pain and prevent them from dealing with problems. Sometimes it can result from domination by a leader who appears to be an authority figure, who provides too much direct advice. Participants may also give premature advice to each other. Although some advice may be helpful, an unhealthy dependence decreases the chances for developing healthy autonomy.

Second, there may be healthy, but vulnerable people who take this premature advice too readily and are unduly influenced by these amateur therapists. They may find themselves bombarded with unwelcome prodding which drives them even further into discouragement and dependency. Crucially, each of these dangers must be addressed by guidelines for both selection and training of leaders. These guidelines must be emphasized repeatedly in training and maintenance sessions. Volunteers must be quite aware of their own emotional needs and their personal limitations to

best fulfill the role of a wounded healer.

One common criticism of Alcoholics Anonymous is that it promotes a particular ideology which is set over against all other forms of help.⁵⁵ Whether such criticism is justified, it is one which we must give careful consideration in a program which is sponsored by a religious group. Ministry leaders need to be sensitive to the fact that they do not have all the resources that individuals need. Therefore an eclectic approach would seem appropriate. Such an approach will also serve to make the ministry one which will be open to serving people with a variety of beliefs and lack of beliefs. Participants should be presented with the widest variety of information about community resources to which they may wish to turn. They must be encouraged to seek solutions using their own choice of personal and public resources.

Some critics argue that short-term strategies are not enough. Persons who appear to make great progress during a short but intensive support group situation may find it hard to sustain their progress when returning to the usual routine. However, there are advantages to short, intensive times for personal reflection. Sometimes remarkable turning points in life can be negotiated as a result. On the other hand, "time separated" schedules encourage people to practice new behavior between sessions. Then they have the opportunity to review their new experiences with their small

⁵⁵Hurley, "Getting Help from Helping," pp. 66-67.

group from week to week.

We can conclude that a variety of styles and resources must be at hand. A weekend retreat ministry needs to be followed by ongoing support group meetings. Likewise, a multi-week seminar, such as I often used, needs to be followed by supplemental events to continue the process. For some people, a few weeks is too short a time to make major life changes. Finally, participants should be presented with alternative therapeutic choices. Lists of therapists, agencies, and support groups need to be made available.

Inappropriate bonding or dependency is one of the most severe risks that needs to be recognized. Thus: psychologist Linda W. Scheffler, "There is a real danger in the intimate pairing and counseling that goes on. I found it a malevolent influence in some patients' lives."⁵⁶ She was referring to experience with Overeaters Anonymous, but the same problems are even more intensively present in a divorce ministry support group. Much damage can result when people become too dependent upon the support of one person early in their separation and divorce process. This can lead to any number of problems including what is commonly known as a "rebound marriage." The newly separated person is uniquely vulnerable. Counseling is difficult for professionals under these circumstances, and even more risky for the untrained group leader or participant.

⁵⁶Hurley, "Getting Help from Helping," p. 67.

Consequently, training and ongoing supervision must be provided taking these problems into account.

Finally, research into self-help groups indicates that when the "self directed" factor is removed, effectiveness depreciates. When people are compelled to attend, the likelihood of real progress resulting is severely decreased. In one study, people who were court ordered to attend Alcoholics Anonymous made little or no more progress than those not ordered to attend.⁵⁷ Evidently, "self-help" cannot be forced upon people.

In the case of a divorce ministry, such attendance is not likely to be ordered. Participation can be recommended, suggested, and urged upon someone. However, pastors and others must avoid both direct or more subtle ways in which they may seek to compel participation. Programs that allow people to "self-select" their own level of participation are likely to be the most successful. Designing the ministry by attending to "felt needs" as they are discerned by separated and divorced persons will do the most to help them. When we offer our aid with humility and grace, we will have the greatest potential for effective ministry.

Preventive Guidelines

In summary, here are some of the guidelines we need to keep in mind to prevent the problems that have been raised, as we plan and carry out a ministry:

⁵⁷Hurley, "Getting Help from Helping," p. 67.

Do not assume the "program" is the right thing for everybody who needs help.

Always offer information about other resources.

Offer supplemental follow up options.

Create an atmosphere where people self-select the help most appropriate for them.

Select leaders carefully: seek those who genuinely care about people and are secure, content persons; avoid over zealous activists, who "want to help" too badly.

Train thoroughly: acquaint volunteers with risks to themselves and participants.

Have group leaders work in teams of 2 persons, balance their qualifications, and require them to give each other constructive criticism.

Evaluation and Empirical Measurement

If we are serious about the effectiveness of our programs, we must be ready to measure our efforts. There are two means which I have used in several years of programs. The first is a set of participant and leader evaluations integrated into the plans for a seminar, as described in Chapter III. The second is the Tennessee Self Concept Scale (TSCS), already discussed in Chapter I.

Evaluation Questionnaires

One of the simplest evaluations is the old rule, "If they keep coming, they must be getting something out of it." Addictive behavior gets high ratings, if this is our only measurement. In the seminars under my direction, written evaluations were a regular part of the seminar process. Approximately 2,000 participants in the "Coping With

Divorce" seminars provided a continual flow of feedback. Here are a few of the procedures used.

In a typical seminar of eight weeks' duration, the group leaders are called together for a preliminary troubleshooting meeting between the first and second sessions. Both positive and negative reactions are requested. Dissatisfied or specially troubled participants are noted to be addressed.

At the fourth session, participants are asked to fill out a short questionnaire to rate the performance of their small group leaders. The form inquires in the specific terms indicated by research.⁵⁸ Participants are asked whether they see the leaders as providing too little, too much, adequate, or good degrees of:

- control, taking charge of the group
- a caring attitude
- listening attention
- sharing personal experience
- helping participants understand ideas presented.

The results are reviewed by that seminar's leaders, communicated to group leaders where appropriate, and then passed on to the program director for review.

At the conclusion of the eight weeks, each participant fills out a full page to describe how they valued each topic

⁵⁸ Morton A. Lieberman, Irvin D. Yalom and Matthew B. Miles, Encounter Groups: First Facts (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 240. See page 137 of this report for a fuller discussion of research referred to here.

presented, and to make suggestions about what they needed but did not find. They comment on general operations of the seminar, and how well the seminar met their needs. The results are tabulated and comments compiled for study. After the eighth week of a seminar the enablers and leaders gather for an evaluation dinner. At that time, the sheets filled out by participants are passed around. The tabulated results are also announced. Group leaders are also shown their fourth-week participant evaluations. Further, the leaders' own evaluation of the current seminar's speakers and operation are solicited. Specific new ideas and suggestions receive an immediate review before being passed on to a governing committee.

Dozens of meetings, and hundreds of written comments have continued to enlighten and inform our ministry. Numerous refinements and new follow-up programs flowed from this generous supply of information.

Empirical Measures

The TSCS is discussed in Chapter I because it relates to the specific losses and coping challenges identified in my analysis of divorce. In the field of divorce recovery research, the TSCS has previously been used by Fisher (1976) at University of Northern Colorado, Boulder,⁵⁹ and in the Salts and Zongker study (1983) at Florida State

⁵⁹ B.F. Fisher, "Identifying and Meeting Needs of Formerly Married People," pp. 29-46.

University.⁶⁰ For those reasons, it was chosen to be used as an empirical instrument to measure the results attained in several eight-week seminars under my direction. The TSCS was administered at the first session of the seminar, and then again at the last session.

The results were used in two different ways. First, the scores of the Total Positive (primary scale) and selected subscales were given to participants and enablers after the conclusion of the seminar. Results were plotted on a specially designed form, with brief explanatory paragraphs to assist the subjects in interpreting their scores. The subscales chosen were those considered to be the easiest to understand. However, open meetings were held to answer questions. Individual counseling sessions were offered for those who desired them. Many participants expressed appreciation for this graphic expression of the changes which they felt were going on during the seminar.

The second purpose of the TSCS procedure was to test one of the basic assumptions of this project, namely that results in the Total Positive and other related subscales would show significant improvement in self-esteem and clarity of the self-concept. Other subscales were studied to look for a decrease in inner conflict, variability, and general maladjustment that would indicate improved coping ability. The results showed quite large improvements across

⁶⁰ Salts and Zongker, "Effects of Divorce Counseling Groups," pp. 55-67.

the board, indicating major changes in the lives of participants in only eight weeks' time.

The specific scales involved in Table 1 are briefly interpreted as follows.

Total Positive, the primary scale, is used as a measure of the clarity of self concept, the amount of self-actualization, or in common usage, self-esteem.

Row 2- Self Satisfaction, what the individual feels about him/her self, in judging self.

Column B- Moral-Ethical Self, relating to moral, ethical and religious aspects of self.

Column C- Personal Self, referring to personal worth, self-respect and perceived confidence.

Column D- Family Self, describing an individual's relationship with his primary group, and sense of adequacy as a family member.

Column E- Social Self, dealing with the sense of adequacy or worth in social relationships.

Total Variability- Measures how much answers vary within each set of topics. Higher scores may mean less integration of identity components.

Net Conflict- A measure of how much inner conflict the individual is experiencing.

General Maladjustment- An empirically developed scale indicating problems but without specificity.

Virtually all changes indicated by the group from pretest to posttest exceed the probability of .05 which was proposed to measure significance. In all subscales except that of Total Variability and General Maladjustment, the probability is zero. In other words, the changes indicated by the testing program are most improbable to occur by chance, and were most likely affected by the seminar.

Evidently the seminar enabled participants to make rapid progress to a more satisfying and healthy level of coping with their circumstances. Results are reported in Table 1. A more detailed statistical picture of the results appears in the Appendix, Table A-1, together with further analyses.^{6 1}

Another part of the experiment sought to compare improvement in the experimental group with a control group. For the purpose of fulfilling this last step, thirty persons were recruited who were facing separation and divorce, but were not enrolled in the seminar being studied. These were tested, then contacted and retested eight weeks later. The results are not as conclusive as had been hoped, perhaps partly due to the fact that many in the control group did have some involvement in other meetings and discussion groups within the total ministry. Others were counseling clients, as well. Complete details of this aspect of the experiment, together with analysis of other variables, such as age, education, and number of meetings attended are included in the Appendix.

^{6 1}Material in Table 1 is reproduced, together with standard deviation and standard error factors, in Table A-1 on page 160.

Table 1

Comparison of Pretest and Posttest Results

TSCS Subscales	Experimental Group (n=219)	Probability
Total Positive		
pre	333.30	
post	344.81	
difference	11.51	.000
Row 2 (Self-Acceptance)		
pre	102.24	
post	107.70	
difference	5.46	.000
Column B (Moral-Ethical)		
pre	70.50	
post	72.41	
difference	1.91	.000
Column C (Personal Self)		
pre	62.15	
post	65.96	
difference	3.81	.000
Column D (Family Self)		
pre	68.43	
post	70.55	
difference	2.12	.000
Column E (Social Self)		
pre	66.30	
post	68.65	
difference	2.35	.000
Total Variability		
pre	45.82	
post	48.64	
difference	2.82	.28
Net Conflict (continuous neg. through pos.)		
pre	- .58	
post	-3.94	
difference	-3.36	.000
General Maladjustment ^{6 2}		
pre	97.32	
post	103.84	
difference	6.52	.06

^{6 2} Higher numerical values in General Maladjustment subscale indicate lower levels of difficulty, and generally higher levels of healthy coping with circumstances.

Biblical Principles of Ministry

Having described needs, methods and strategies for a ministry to the divorced from a social scientific perspective, it is appropriate now to identify some biblical principles of ministry that support and encourage a ministry such as this. There are four important New Testament concepts that manifest themselves in the guiding principles described in the previous pages. I refer to these concepts as biblical principles of ministry.

These theological themes come into focus because they resonate well with the manner and means which have already been described. There are, no doubt, other principles for ministry which are part of the total New Testament panorama of ministry, which will not be mentioned. However, it will be clear that these are not concepts found at the edges, or disputed boundaries of Christian faith and practice. Instead, they represent what I take to be some of the most profound and challenging centers of that faith and practice.

The principles to be described below include the following four. First, the principle of grace calls us to acceptance of, and support for, the individual in spite of circumstances which may not be in harmony with God's will, or comfortable for the caregiver. Second, the principle of incarnation challenges us to go where needs exist and to enter into the experiences of persons in need. In this case, we enter into a deeper understanding of both the pains and joys of the divorced. Third, the principle of the

priesthood of believers delivers us from professionalism or clericalism and frees the church to use the rich variety of resources which we have in our people. Finally, the principle of redemptive suffering encourages us to believe that the most trying of circumstances can be an occasion for God's gracious renewal of his creation and the lost or struggling individual. The biblical and spiritual realities are here, whether described in clinical terms or in those of our biblical heritage.

The Principle of Grace

The grace of God, extended to us and through us is the most precious commodity that we in the faith community have to share. There is nothing more essential to the Christian Faith. By grace we are saved and accepted by God, not because of any qualifying virtues (Ephesians 2:8-9, I Corinthians 1:26-31). We are considered worthy in a special way, "by his grace," which is the way God has opened for us to enter into a good relationship (Romans 3:21-24).

Further, this concept is richly illustrated by Jesus' frequent demonstration of grace in his ministry. He accepted the friendship of sinners and people of bad reputation who appear often in the Gospels. They include the woman at the well (John 4:1-38), the sinful woman who perfumed his feet (Luke 7:38) as well as tax collectors like Matthew and Zachaeus. He conveyed a profound acceptance and forgiveness to the adulterous woman (John 8:1-11) and the criminal on the cross next to him (Luke 23:42-43).

The Good News is that our sins, mistakes, are taken care of, our struggles, doubt and confusion are accepted by God through grace. Grace works remarkable miracles in people, acting as a catalyst for change. Professional counselors are taught that they need to express unconditional positive regard in order to initiate a healing relationship. In carrying out a ministry for the divorced we must communicate acceptance before anything else can happen. The intended recipients of our ministry need to know they do not have to meet any standards to earn this acceptance.⁶³ Such acceptance has a powerful effect, reducing anxiety, and opening up channels for both cognitive and emotional progress.

In the first chapter, I have shown that guilt and other extremes of self-deprecation are common among the separated and divorced. In order for them to open up to our attempts at ministry, they must feel our acceptance is genuine, and not a superficial tolerance. Any condescending or moralistic attitude is destructive, and out of harmony with the message of forgiveness as we experience it in Christianity.⁶⁴

In order to convey adequately such acceptance and in order to understand the persons we minister to, it is essential that we listen more than we talk. Listening is

⁶³ Kenneth C. Haugk, Christian Caregiving-a Way of Life (Minneapolis, Augsburg Publishing House, 1984), pp. 82-83.

⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 84.

one of the most effective ways to communicate positive regard. If we do not listen long enough, we automatically communicate a message that depreciates the feelings and thoughts of the other person. When we listen adequately, we automatically contribute to feelings of self-worth, because the listener was "worth" listening to. The experiences of separation and divorce are confusing. The patient listener tries to understand, knowing that feelings are hard to put into words. The care-giver gropes, together with the care-receiver for an understanding of what is going on. This leads us to a fresh appreciation of incarnation, which is discussed below.

The very idea of aiming a special ministry effort at the needs of the separated and divorced may convey acceptance and grace to a whole class of people. Grace would dictate that we also trust the recipients to know a great deal about their own needs. As much as possible, separated and divorced persons must determine the needs which such a ministry will address. Grace conveys value, and renewed self-regard to the recipient of ministry. It demands humility and patience on the part of the care-giver. We need to invite "untried" lay ministers into the work, extending the grace of confidence in their gifts, while at the same time providing adequate training. The priesthood of believers takes on fresh dimensions of risk and reward as we do so.

We are inspired by God's grace to bend our own

attitudes and accept persons seeking help, regardless of their guilt or apparent failure. Our expression of acceptance is the fleshly door by which some begin to receive God's grace. They can then respond with new found faith and self-respect.

Incarnational Ministry

The second concept which goes hand in hand with the first, is incarnation. God chose to communicate his love and grace to the world through an incarnate Christ. The Logos entered into flesh and lived with us for a time (John 3:14). More than that, he entered into those parts of the world he might have avoided. He frequented the company of sinners, he ate and slept with smelly fishermen, he touched lepers, and he allowed a seeming prostitute to wash and perfume his feet. He made no allowances for protecting his personal reputation, and consequently his stature was damaged in the eyes of some (Matthew 9:10-11). He did this because it was effective. The physician needs to be among the sick (Matthew 9:12). The New Testament identifies Jesus' followers as his "body" and calls us to fulfill a similar incarnational ministry. Eduard Schweizer concludes that "the church can be the body of Christ only if it is willing to suffer and thereby to be the body of its Lord who, in his body, goes into the world, serving all mankind."^{6 5}

^{6 5} Eduard Schweizer, The Church as the Body of Christ (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1964), p.78.

The world of the divorced is not a neat world. It is one with all of the negative experiences of loss we have already described. It is one of strong emotional tides and uncomfortable moral dilemmas. Many church groups readily choose to ignore the need. It is a messy marketplace in which we will stand to convey the good news and grace of God. However, if we ignore and refuse these opportunities, we are depreciating the grace and strength of the Gospel, and most often sabotaging its effectiveness. Joseph Aldrich puts it well when he says,

It is important to think like a naturalized citizen of the [recipient's] world. He does things for his reasons, not yours.... Felt needs are the starting point for communication.^{6 6}

Extensive research reveals that people will not listen to the gospel message unless the message-giver has paid attention to their felt needs.^{6 7}

Consequently, our concern for an incarnational ministry calls us to study and understand the needs presented by the divorced as a group. This is why so much effort has been extended in the first sections of this project, to lay out a clear understanding of the experiences of the separated and divorced. Anyone who wishes to do ministry for the divorced needs some of this kind of understanding, so they can *enter into* the world of the divorced.

When ministry volunteers spend time listening to the

^{6 6} Joseph C. Aldrich, Life-Style Evangelism (Portland, OR: Multnomah Pres, 1981), p.89.

^{6 7} Ibid.

confusing stories of disappointment and grief, they experience pain they had not expected. Walking with someone through the most devastating times of a person's life is a costly experience. It will be mentally or emotionally draining at times. The experience of facing moral dilemmas and life-changing decisions with someone in need is taxing for the professional and lay person alike. A multitude of uncomfortable questions arise with regard to settlements, custody, and occasionally a desire for revenge. Also, we take the risk of being misunderstood as approving moral choices or life-styles not consistent with our beliefs by not immediately speaking up about moral standards.

Incarnational ministry also calls us to look for the most likely way by which to carry out ministry for this group. Paul went wherever he seemed to think the most likely audience would be, debating in the agora and public debating halls (Acts 17:16-23). For us, this may mean renting public meeting rooms because we recognize the barrier which a church edifice may represent to the non-churched or to someone with unresolved guilt. Even if the institution has excellent facilities free and available, the target audience must determine our evaluation of suitability. Newspaper and other media that advertise the events need to be seen from the potential recipient's angle. Perhaps the sports page rather than the church section is the best place for announcements.

Incarnational ministry may take representatives of a

divorce ministry into social occasions that include questionable elements. Perhaps the intended recipients of ministry frequent a local pub. We may need to be there to build relationships. Perhaps participants plan social events that include some alcoholic beverages or dancing. If we are eager to "protect them" or our own reputation, we may be losing the authentic incarnational stance our Lord demonstrated. Jesus' attendance at the wedding feast and his first miracle, making water into wine (John 2:1-11) probably contributed to his reputation among some critics as being a drunkard, and friend of sinners (Matthew 11:19, Luke 7:34).

Each of these decisions must be made with due regard to the local situation and I do not presume the answers are always the same. However, I insist that these questions must be answered in the context of incarnational ministry. Incarnation takes us into unfamiliar territory. That is exactly why it works. Even as God chose to enter human flesh and the human experience, we bring our ministry of love in touch with the human need where it is. We respect the reality of emotions, mistakes, and confusion. We must start with people where they are. Then they will know we care.

Priesthood of Believers

The early history of the church that we find in the New Testament is an account of ordinary people doing extraordinary things. Lay ministry is happening on

practically every page of the Book of Acts. Peter wrote that the people of God are a chosen people, a royal priesthood (I Peter 2:9-10). James encourages believers to be priests to each other, saying, "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed" (James 5:16). Jesus sent out seventy disciples with little training who seemed amazed at the results of their initial ministry endeavors (Luke 10:1-18). He did not mind the Good News being represented by someone only recently released from possession (Mark 5:18-20). He encouraged the man to go home and tell what God had done for him rather than accompany him, where the man could presumably have gained more spiritual depth. We cannot ignore the effectiveness of the woman at the well, who tells the villagers she has found the Christ, "who told me everything I ever did" (John 4:28-29). This woman, of tawdry repute, was all the more effective because she did not avoid mentioning her own failures (v.39).

There is abundant biblical precedent for the use of lay persons with little previous experience or training. In the context of divorce ministry, we need to recognize the crucial value of divorced people who are now able to participate in a healing ministry on behalf of others experiencing the end of marriage. I have already described the important role that "knowing companions" play in the overall design of this ministry. In my view, we have adequate warrant for taking the risks described.

Using new volunteers with a minimum of training also seems to me to be advisable, rather than putting them off for an extended period of months. It is better that we take the risk of involving the newcomers who have not completed their journey of healing than to avoid risk by insisting on long-term experience and training. Training for these newcomers is essential, to minimize the risks. However, to deny them the opportunity to get involved is a greater risk, in my view. Working together in the process of helping others is a potent method by which their own healing is often completed. Besides, we risk losing their early motivation and heart-felt commitment to the task. The "incomplete" nature of these lay ministers, exactly what we fear may cause problems, is their great asset. They bring a fresh level of modeling and sharing that enlivens the ministry.

Faithful volunteers can carry on an effective ministry. But their effectiveness will be due to more than good training. It comes from dedicating their life experiences through good training, so that their troubles are transformed by God's grace into a powerful tool of ministry.

Redemptive Suffering

Painful experiences are often seen in the Bible as useful to God's purposes in building our character and refining our spirit. The writer to the Hebrews enjoins us to endure hardship as discipline, as an indication of God's parental interest in our well-being. Although unpleasant at

the time, ". . . later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it" (Hebrews 12:11). Suffering may be seen as redemptive in at least two ways: first, that it brings about a good effect in us, and second, that it may produce some good effect in others. Many biblical passages express the profound faith that painful experiences, even those inflicted upon us by the evil of others can be used by God for some good effect. Psalm 66:10-12 is perhaps the most bold among these.

Through suffering, we also identify with a wider world of suffering people. People often testify that they gain wisdom and feel compassion for others because of their trying experiences. Pain in the lives of the volunteer leaders has often been the tool which has reshaped their values and character. In part, Jesus' power to heal comes from our knowledge that he has plumbed the depths of agony. "With his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5). People who relate to others some of their suffering become conduits through which this mystery comes to reality for others. When this is combined with a genuine demonstration of love, it has profound potential. Some people resist healing because they are strong in some ways, and they have formidable defenses to avoid other areas. How does one trigger the transformation that would enable a person to let go of all the defenses that prevent wholeness? Commenting on Dostoyevsky's illustrations of such transformation, Paul

Fries writes, "Each [individual thus transformed] encounters a powerful love which transcends comprehension and, perhaps for that reason, becomes a catalyst for transformation."^{6 8}

To put this concept more concretely: we may expect that suffering can bring about good things in people who are experiencing divorce. First, we can be optimistic that good results in character development and spiritual growth will occur, if properly nurtured. Second, the dedicated efforts of both professional and lay persons *to enter into suffering with love* for the participants, can be powerfully redemptive. Finally, divorced volunteers often come to see a meaningful redemption of their life experience because sharing their own failures and pain has helped others.

We can respect the discord and heartache within all participants. We can expect that God is able to use these things to their benefit and to his glory. By God's grace, nothing in our experience is useless or lost. Consequently, this is a ministry of great optimism, constantly fed with new experiences of transformation that contribute to spiritual growth and a robust faith in both volunteers and participants.

Objections Anticipated

Since we are proposing a ministry that calls for programs, training and risk-taking beyond the norm in most Christian bodies, we can anticipate objections from a number

^{6 8} Paul R. Fries, "Suffering and Salvation in the Novels of Dostoevsky," Perspectives 2 (March, 1987):11-13.

of perspectives. There are good questions that deserve to be raised and answered.

Objections to specialized ministries

We need to ask, do specialized ministries detract from the wholeness of the church? Do such ministries further splinter the church? People should be united in fellowship and purpose with the whole church to express unity and contribute to the well-being of the whole. Perhaps people in need of ministry to promote their healing ought to receive it through the conventional services of worship and education combined with good pastoral ministry. Having special groups for singles and divorced persons may create more divisiveness and increase their sense of alienation.

In response, I believe we need to consider the full meaning of the Body of Christ, as described in I Corinthians chapter twelve. Unity prevails in the body which maintains special functions, unique roles, and is unified by love, not uniformity. In fact, if there is a desire for all to be a hand or an eye, then the body is weakened. The same imperatives need to be addressed to the divorced and single adults, who may form a special group ministry. Care must be taken that they do not shun the other parts of the church's life, but rather encourage each other to accept and to be involved in worship and serving as others do. All will benefit from this integration.

Objections to lay ministry

Again, we need to ask, can such a demanding and complex ministry be delegated to the amateur? Some may say that such a delicate need cannot be entrusted to divorced lay persons since it has too many potential risks. People in divorce need special help, but it should come primarily from the clergy, or professional therapist. There is also much potential for damage and further unhealthy romantic involvement. Perhaps the newly separated or divorced are too vulnerable to allow such risks to be taken with their lives. From an even more acerbic view, one might ask whether divorced lay ministers can do the work. Perhaps the failures evidenced in their own lives cannot be expected to present any comfort or inspiration to others.

In response to this concern, first, I remind the reader of the remarkable risks recorded in the biblical references already cited. Secondly, every defense against the problems put forth creates its own weakness. If only professionals deal with the divorced, there will not be enough help to go around. In addition, many divorced persons do not seek this kind of help, but are attracted to a more social setting for ministry. Finally, the lack of availability or lack of prominence given to the help only isolates the divorced from the church even more. The risks must be managed by requiring careful selection of leaders and by providing adequate training and supervision.

Disagreements about the practical
demonstration of grace

Further, we need to ask, does forgiveness and renewal come if grace is offered immediately? Does this not avoid the issue of sin? Some might argue that healing that does not begin with an accounting for sin and failure is cheapening grace. Sin, they would argue, causes divorce in the first place, and it must be faced squarely. Consequently, some might propose that a pastoral visit must first "call to account" the individuals involved. Then, if repentance is acknowledged on the part of one or both, a "state of grace" is renewed. Grace that is offered too soon by "accepting" divorced persons is inadequate and a distortion of the integrity of the Gospel and the church.

Certainly, a wide variety of circumstances call for pastoral action with varied combinations of grace and truth. In a significant number of marriage breakdowns, one of the pair does not want a divorce. Nevertheless, both partners must be expected to shoulder some part of the responsibility for a marriage failure. The question remains, how does one call those persons to new life?

When we compare the most brief summary statements of the preaching of John the Baptist and that of Jesus (Mark 1:4-5, and 1:14-15), there appears the remarkable addition of the words, "Good News." It would appear that Jesus' message was immediately intended to be one of welcome and optimism, although not devoid of repentance. We see in the

gospels a ministry that often touched people first and brought conversion later.

Objections to incarnational ministry

Finally, we need to ask, does the church not make a mistake when it attempts to speak the language of the world and use the tools of social sciences to deal with the needs of the divorced. Some might say that incarnational ministry is to be carried out by understanding the divorced person's experience, but not by offering help in humanistic ways. The Gospel is unique above all sciences. Besides, when we enter into social settings where there is "no health" (the singles bars, or other settings where there seem to be questionable moral standards), we are encouraging the weak and vulnerable to find their solace outside the church. We may be encouraging the lambs to lie down with the wolves. With this plan of action, the Christian identity is diluted and no longer means anything worthy of the name of Christ.

This is an important and weighty concern. The purity of the Gospel is worth fighting for. However, once again, it seems to me that we need to trust Jesus' example and practice more than our own institutional logic. He did not hesitate to enter situations where his actions might be misinterpreted. His own integrity was at risk when he dared to say, "Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more" (John 8:11). Somehow, he communicated both grace and truth. We need to make a similar effort. We need to make sure that genuine love characterizes our witness in such a way that it

overcomes the circumstances in which it occurs.

Incarnation is, above all, a risky business. We must choose to err on the side of "entering in" rather than avoiding problems by "staying apart." There is no need to defend God from being wholly involved in the Christ, as Arius would have it.⁶⁹ God is vulnerable and God is simultaneously strong because God dares to be vulnerable. "He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross," and equality with God was not something to be tightly grasped, but let go! (Philippians 2:8 & 6.) In the crisis of involvement versus identity, God chooses to take the risk of involvement, even at the loss of identity, in the eyes of some who beheld him. So must we.

⁶⁹Ralph McGill, Suffering: A Test of Theological Method (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1982), p. 36.

CHAPTER III

A VARIETY OF FORMS FOR MINISTRY WITH GUIDELINES FOR ACTION

The particular form a ministry needs to take will depend upon local resources and needs. The program components need to be shaped to fit those circumstances. In Good News Community, we developed a city-wide organization, with support from both denominational and ecumenical sources. In addition, members of our organization were called upon for consultation and training of others setting up ministries in a variety of different situations. Some of these were in individual churches, while others represented eclectic singles organizations. Some were in small towns. Some were Catholic ministries; most were protestant related. From these experiences it has become clear that many forms are available for effective ministry. Certain guidelines I hold essential for good results are discussed in the present chapter.

First, a variety of forms for lay ministry are described from which concerned people can choose, according to their assessment of local needs. Second, specific learning objectives are suggested for use in building a program in a wide number of the forms mentioned. These

provide concrete measurements of what one might accomplish in a ministry, and likewise set wider goals for different stages of program development. Third, guidelines for selection and training of volunteer lay ministers are presented. Fourth, some of the limitations and potential for failure that accompany this ministry are examined. Finally, suggestions for promotion and follow-up are presented.

A Variety of Forms for Lay Ministry

A wide variety of options already in use can accommodate the theoretical needs and strategies developed in earlier chapters. Among the many available choices, the following forms are described in some detail in the following pages:

- a ministry support team
- a short term small group
- a multi-week seminar for a large group
- a weekend retreat
- seminars initiated at local agencies
- an autonomous singles organization
- a single-adult class in Sunday school.

The presentation includes some benefits and liabilities of each as well as the necessary resources for conducting each form of ministry.

Ministry Support Team

To create a ministry support team those persons specially suited for the task are recruited from among those who have some special experience of divorce or loss. In addition to divorced individuals, others to consider are mature single adults who may have had close relationships that ended before marriage. Widowed persons can serve well, in some instances, depending on how well they can empathize with a different kind of loss. Parents with adult children who are divorced, or other close relatives may be able to serve well. Announcements and invitations can be carefully worded seeking volunteers who desire to learn how to minister to others during such losses.

In spite of what may be an informally structured program, training is important. Premature action without training can have unpredictable and deleterious effects. Training includes opportunity to share experiences as well as gain enhanced attending and helping skills, as indicated in a later section.⁷⁰ When the ministry support team has been trained, their existence and purpose should be announced to the church's members and leaders.

Coordination is vital in making full use of this new resource. The coordinator calls upon the members of the team to assign them to visit or befriend individuals in need. The coordinator exercises sensitive judgment in

⁷⁰ Training is mentioned frequently on the following pages, but details are reserved for the section on that subject. Please refer to pages 131-138.

matching lay ministers to meet with individuals one-to-one. These may be home visits, or in a quiet, secure "counseling" setting at the church or wherever they are comfortable meeting. As a rule, individuals of the same sex would be a first choice to provide better empathy and limit potential romantic dependency from developing. In a small to medium size church it will often be the pastor who provides coordination, since he or she will be the most likely to be aware of the needs. However, in larger churches, one of the lay ministers may be given this responsibility, along with other lay ministry coordination efforts.

The members of the team should be called together regularly for support and encouragement. They can keep their ministry in perspective and learn from sharing their successes and failures together as a team. The pastor or another qualified person needs to be available for the team members to consult if a situation should arise that is beyond their level of competence. This could be a professional therapist who is involved in training the team, or someone serving in a more limited way as a consultant. With a certain amount of turnover to be expected, training should be repeated regularly for the whole group.

The congregation should be made sensitive to the need and the opportunity for ministry to the divorced. Referrals may be coordinated between this work and other service units of the church such as an emergency food pantry, or an AA group. Thereby, the combined efforts come closer to being a

ministry to the total human being. The purpose of the support team should also be interpreted to those of the church concerned about evangelism so they can understand this effort as an integral part of the total ministry.

The ministry support team option has the advantage of being viable in virtually any size congregation. It requires very little formal structure, and can be put into use with only a few volunteers. The disadvantages are few. Sometimes the coordination of a lay ministry team may seem to unnecessarily complicate ministry. However, this extra effort makes it possible to use all the human resources available and thereby to multiply the results.

Short Term Small Group

A short term small group is best offered at a time outside the Sunday morning schedule. Also, a neutral location, such as a YMCA, will help attract people from different churches. Those with no church affiliation will feel more comfortable attending, too. Some large churches can successfully use their own facilities and attract enough individuals to make a viable group. However, cooperation with other pastors and churches is likely to yield better results. Outreach to the unchurched is easier to accomplish if the group has a wider community identity, and it will be enriched by the variety of individuals who attend.

Church leaders from across the spectrum of the community's churches should be included in planning the start of this effort. Unless this is done, they will be

less likely to help publicize the activity. For example, if two people from each of six churches work together to start this group, it is likely to be a fruitful ministry. Their network of contacts is much more comprehensive than a few people who are all from one or two churches. If the group does use church facilities, rotating locations from one church to another during different seasons will decrease any sense of competition.

Trained leadership is essential. To serve a group of eight to twelve individuals, it is still wise to have a leadership team of three or four who are trained according to the provisions set forth later. Rather than all of them attempting to be discussion leaders, they may share responsibilities for publicity, refreshments, and administration. Professional leadership may be helpful, but as soon as possible, the lay ministers and participants should take charge by setting the agenda for further development.

The content and procedure should be planned with the help of volunteer leaders. Select goals for the group and specific topics to start with. Set a limited time span, such as six to ten weeks of meetings. People are more likely to respond and attend if the topics and limits of time commitment are quite clear. After the initial series, those attending can help determine the next steps. Most of the learning objectives envisioned for a large seminar are applicable, whatever the size of the group. From the

beginning, create expectations that the group will care about individual needs.

A suitable textbook may be selected from the wide variety available.⁷¹ Formal presentations by speakers are not necessary. Group leaders may take turns summarizing the chapters of the book being read, using their own life experiences to illustrate their short talks. If the group is larger than ten persons it will be beneficial to have smaller groups formed for discussion periods, always led by trained volunteers. Occasionally, films can be used to provide a focus for discussion. Some groups have successfully integrated selections of recorded music to enhance the mood for intimate conversation.

The advantages of this form of ministry include simplicity, low cost, and low investment of staff time. When even a few individuals can be recruited to take ownership of such ministry it becomes a vital resource to all the churches which choose to cooperate. A financial investment should be considered for adequate publicity. Disadvantages again are few. However, success may be short-lived. The ministry can become debilitated in a short time if leaders are unwilling to share ownership with participants by encouraging them to take part in decision making. Also, since the group may not be closely identified

⁷¹ Many suitable titles are arranged by subject in the annotated bibliography in my book. See pages pp. 103-109 of Stanley Hagemeyer and Sue Poorman Richards, Ministry to the Divorced (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986).

with the congregation that initiates its existence, some may feel that results in terms of church participation are not very visible. However, this is a concern which church leaders need to address by clearly relating the ministry to their congregation's total program of ministry.

Multi-week Seminar for a Large Group

Launching a seminar for a large group calls for more complex planning and a larger investment of time, energy and money to ensure its success. It involves recruiting and training group leaders, scheduling speakers, obtaining facilities, and considerable attention to publicity in order to attract the numbers necessary to make it a viable event. In spite of the cost in energy and money, this method has demonstrated itself to be a very effective way of outreach in a variety of cities. Seminars have been used for several years in the Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo and Detroit areas in Michigan. Others have been successfully done in Boulder (Colorado), Bloomington (Illinois), Wayne (Pennsylvania) and in the Los Angeles area.

Since the operation of such a seminar is more complex, a description follows under these subheadings:

- a sample meeting
- speakers and topics
- discussion groups
- the facility
- organization
- advantages and disadvantages.

Other important components such as training of volunteers and sample learning objectives are covered later in this chapter.

A sample meeting

The atmosphere of a large seminar, with between 35 and 100 participants, can be, for some, much more stimulating than a small group meeting quietly in an obscure location. It is immediately both an educational and a social event. The fact that most of the participants have never been together with so many divorced people creates an air of expectation with no little surprise, for some. Many times people will arrive expecting to find a tiny circle of people responding to the advertisements, and are amazed to discover that they need to stand in line to register.

The location is likely to be in a neutral meeting hall of some kind, perhaps a school, or a social hall with a warm atmosphere. There are signs pointing the way. There are volunteers at the doors to welcome hesitant newcomers. Cheerful volunteers check people in, handing out name tags and a set of materials. These may include a book, a course schedule of topics and speakers, and discussion questions. Ten or fifteen volunteers are scattered about the room, getting acquainted with the participants.

When everyone has been seated, a chairperson/MC welcomes the group, makes announcements and introduces the main speaker for the evening. The speaker presents a talk on a topic which includes references to both personal

experience and clinical information, with practical application. People hear their own experiences echoed in the comments of the speaker.

After perhaps a half-hour to forty five minutes, there is a break time with refreshments. The time is brief. Participants are told to join their pre-assigned groups in five to ten minutes. Groups of seven or eight participants plus two leaders are arranged in circles about the large room or in adjacent rooms. Each circle includes two group leaders, a man and a woman, one of whom takes the leadership for the evening.

Discussion begins around a set of questions designed to help participants share experiences and concerns. Careful attention is paid to those who seem to need greater emotional support, but efforts are made to include all participants in the discussion. By the time the evening is over, many participants are surprised at how quickly they have felt a kinship with the rest of the group.

Speakers and topics

Speakers can be recruited from among professionals in the human services, or others who have personal experience with divorce. The more one can speak from direct personal experience, the more credible is the message. Although most confident speakers come from a professional background, it is frequently possible for a talented "amateur" to present a very effective message. For instance, if one speaker is a young mother, some in the group will readily identify with

her. There is some advantage to having the first several talks presented by the same person. This provides a sense of continuity and identity for the program.

Some groups have successfully used a panel of former participants, or several of the group leaders during one session. As role models these people provide encouragement because they can tell of ways that they successfully met some of the personal challenges in divorce.

Vulnerability should be a hallmark of the speakers' presentations, in any case. It is important that each talk present a personal and experiential message. People who are attending the seminars are often feeling defeated and inadequate. Speakers should let them know that they, too, have struggled with the same problems. Otherwise the hearers may conclude that either their own troubles are greater, or else they are less capable.

Speakers need to know clearly what is expected of them. They should know what topics are being treated by others to avoid overlap. A statement of learning objectives, such as appear on later pages, can be used to communicate to speakers the content and progression expected in a seminar program.

Discussion groups

Groups need to be formed within the seminar for the purposes of emotional support, opportunity to discuss the information speakers present, and to begin the process of re-socialization in a setting with the least threatening

circumstances. Some members of a group frequently open up to the group at the first meeting and share honestly and vulnerably. The fact that everyone present is divorced or separated seems to remove barriers and to encourage honesty which does not occur easily elsewhere.

Managing a small group in which the majority of the participants have deep emotional hurts that need tending is no small undertaking. In addition to listening and tending skills, group leaders need management skills to help groups function well. The leaders keep the general progress of discussion related to the subject matter of the seminar. However, they also make it a priority to allow sufficient time for the group to deal with personal problems and concerns most important to the members. Common problems will be discussed in the training section later. Many successful small groups gain a sense of camaraderie and set up extra occasions for socializing.

The facility

If the program is going to reach out into the community and attract those who need it most, it is best if the seminar is located in "neutral" territory. Those who have a feeling of alienation from the institutional church will be much more likely to attend if it occurs outside a church building. They need to see this seminar as a community education event, rather than a church event. Therefore, it is important to secure a community meeting hall such as at a school or business. There should be enough room for both a

large group to meet and for the small groups to spread out to allow comfortable discussions. The room should have movable chairs, preferably a carpeted floor, and a warm atmosphere.

Organization

Someone needs to take the leadership to initiate a program such as this. It soon becomes a management process, as well. As community leaders and pastors are contacted, they can point to church members or other people in the community who may be interested in helping. Those initially interested may come together to plan the program or be assigned some of the tasks. In addition to the organizing chairperson, others are needed for a number of vital leadership roles.

Publicity people develop promotional materials and arrange for interviews and advertising. Someone needs to arrange for meeting facilities. Others may seek financial support and cooperation from employers. People are needed to handle phone inquiries, registration, and to prepare materials to hand out. Hospitality workers welcome participants, staff the registration table, and prepare refreshments.

Volunteers need to be recruited, selected and trained for a period of weeks prior to the seminar. The trainer or other seminar leaders must set up teams of two persons for each discussion group, matching people with complementing characteristics as much as possible. Speakers must be found

who can handle the material in ways that are consistent with both the cognitive and the emotive purposes of the seminar. Meetings will need to be run by a chairperson/MC, if not by the organizing chairperson. This person welcomes the group, introduces speakers and handles problems that arise. Although all of this may seem to call for more professional staff, many capable lay persons are eager to carry responsibilities when they find they can be a vital part of a program of ministry.⁷²

Advantages and disadvantages

There are considerable advantages to launching a program of this magnitude. One advantage is the prospect of serving a larger number of people, many of whom will not notice or be attracted to a smaller program. Many who are unchurched may be reached through this avenue of ministry as it meets their need and opens up important faith questions for them. In addition, a good program produces its own crop of eager volunteers who feel it was valuable. Consequently, the program gains energy and momentum each time it is successfully presented.

A greater opportunity exists within the large group for re-socialization than in some of the other designs. People have a wider variety of persons from which to develop the supportive friendships by the conclusion of a series of

⁷²Detailed job descriptions, checklists, schedules, and all materials needed are found in the following manual. Stanley Hagemeyer, A Manual for Coping With Divorce Seminars, (Grand Rapids, MI: Good News Community, 1985).

meetings.

Disadvantages include the higher risks in terms of money and energy. Some of the funds expended can be recouped from registration fees. (Programs that charge nothing are readily perceived by participants to have less value, and loyalty and attendance suffer.) There is a risk that the volunteers will be disillusioned if few people attend. Volunteers who were trained but cannot be used need special encouragement to be available for the next time.

One other inherent disadvantage is that for some hurting people, the prospect of going to a large group meeting is simply too frightening. For some, a small group meeting quietly away from the notice of others is more comfortable. For some whose wounds are too tender, this difficult time soon passes and after a few weeks they find it possible to attend a larger function.

Weekend Retreat

A weekend retreat can be executed in much the same fashion as the seminar above. On a smaller scale, it can also follow the dimensions and content of the small group described first. Community cooperation among churches may be more crucial, since some advance financial commitment for facilities is often necessary.

There are two basic choices for the planners to consider. The first would be to use a nearby retreat facility. A large private residence would be a good alternative. If meals cannot be supplied by the facility

itself, a few volunteers can be put in charge of the task, keeping the menu simple.

The second choice is to operate the retreat at a location without overnight accommodations, so participants go home each evening and return the next day. This is definitely not as good a choice, since it is harder for participants to fully disconnect themselves from responsibilities, and attendance will be more irregular. Individual progress is less dramatic and life-changing results less likely to occur.

The content and procedures are very similar to what have been described in the previous section, but are modified to include some relaxation and social opportunities. Suggested learning objectives provided later in this chapter could be used, including a party or celebration at the end to mark the conclusion of the retreat. If the retreat is planned for a small number such as ten to twenty, the teaching and group time can be very similar to the small group operations described above. In an urban area, however, a well-publicized retreat may be envisioned to attract fifty to a hundred participants, or more. In this case, its operation will probably include professional or semi-professional speakers, and follow a pattern similar to a multi-week seminar.

A retreat is an excellent way to begin a ministry. Follow-up meetings can be planned and announced at the conclusion of the retreat. Participants can be invited to

take part in setting up a schedule of meetings, topics and locations. If the retreat is successful in reaching into the deep needs which exist in its participants, many of them will have formed vital bonds of support with one another and will look forward to working together further. Another advantage of a retreat is that an intensive period of time such as this frequently enables people to accomplish an important transition of attitude or feeling and to receive significant healing.

Among the disadvantages is the possibility that without follow-up meetings, decisions and emotional changes begun at the retreat may be hard to sustain in the real world. The support and encouragement of fellow-participants over a period of weeks following will often be vital to their personal success. Therefore, if follow-up meetings are not envisioned, the long term results may be very limited.

Another disadvantage is that the financial cost for participants will be a barrier for some with reduced income. It would be helpful for the sponsoring church groups to subsidize the costs to a high degree, in the range of 75%, for instance. However, it is valuable for participants to pay an advance registration fee to help insure their attendance. Making a personal investment is important to raise expectations and to increase loyalty to the event.

There is a corresponding disadvantage, however, to the requirement for advance commitment of time and money. Some potential participants will not consider attending, because

they hesitate to commit a weekend and the money to attend a retreat with people they do not know, or with whom they have yet established very little trust. For some, making commitments has become much harder during separation and divorce. Making arrangements for a baby sitter for a weekend may be a big problem. With these problems in mind, the group should plan accordingly. If follow-up events are provided, those who could not attend the retreat will be prime candidates to invite to the follow up meetings.

Seminars Initiated at Local Agencies

Community education departments and community colleges are often willing to sponsor classes which are aimed at practical needs such as divorce recovery. Non-profit groups like YWCA, YMCA, Family Service associations, even government units like Friend of the Court frequently are eager to respond to offer a seminar if people ask for it. Promoters should do some preliminary spade work so they can offer concrete suggestions. Then a receptive agency may respond by sponsoring the seminar and doing the publicity as part of their normal business.

For some Christian groups this way might not seem to be much of a ministry. But it does represent a way to provide help, even though the program is not within the control of the faith community. A negative analysis may simply be short-sighted. Usually there are many committed Christians within local agencies who can thus be given a chance to do "ministry" within their work area. In addition, volunteers

can offer to help make such a program function. Encouraging our Christian singles to get involved provides them the avenue to carry out an incarnational ministry and instill their values into an otherwise secular program.

An Autonomous Singles Organization

If a large seminar is successfully executed as suggested in either of the above ways, an opportunity will arise for a second stage of development. Although some churches will want to keep the singles organization firmly within their specific congregation's circle of identity, there are good reasons for considering a broader-based community organization. When a seminar has been offered which involved volunteers recruited from a variety of faith communities and has attracted an equally wide or wider range of participants, the logic of the next step is often apparent to these participants.

An eclectic, or ecumenically based Christian singles organization may be organized which can perpetuate the ministry to the newly divorced in the community. If churches provide some financial aid or support services a group can function with a low budget. Giving divorced and single adults full responsibility for operating an organization and choosing strategies has many advantages.

First, these people are most able to identify the felt needs which the divorce experience in the community. They will be sensitive to what costs, schedules, locations, and topics really connect effectively. Follow-up plans can be

best executed by an organization which has constant touch with the constituency of the divorced. Social events can also further the fellowship and provide opportunities for healing. At the same time the momentum and energy is channelled to prepare for subsequent seminars rather than being dissipated through lack of activity.

Second, an organization with little visible connection to the organized church has the advantage of carrying the mission of the church to those most alienated from the institution. In an age when public polls indicate a large portion of the population reluctant to identify themselves with the institutional church, strategies such as this become all the more worthwhile. This generation, when alienated through the breakdown of marriage, is all the less likely to expect or want help connected with the church.

Third, an organization which presents an eclectic identity to the public and has constituents in many churches will more easily be welcomed and gain the cooperation of public agencies, employers and the media. Businesses who perceive it as non-sectarian will more likely offer financial support, facilities without cost or other in-kind services since they see it as a service to the public and their employees.⁷³

⁷³ By 1985, after seven years of ministry, Good News Community, Inc. in Grand Rapids, MI, was receiving support from dozens of businesses, public schools, churches of several denominations, and philanthropic foundations. Assistance was in the form of financial support, free use of facilities, and other gifts of equipment and supplies.

Disadvantages parallel these advantages. The direct relationship to the church is submerged by a more eclectic vision. Such a group can slowly grow away from its Christian roots if new leaders are drawn into place who have no faith commitment. It may be hard for an autonomous organization to raise the finances to maintain professional leadership staff for coordination and training purposes, as well as clerical support. Training, coordination, record keeping, newsletters and publicity may suffer from irregular quality, when volunteers cannot provide what is needed.

Sunday School Class for Single-Adults

Although this option for ministry may seem the most obvious, the Sunday school class is being treated last, because it has very few advantages and considerable disadvantages. Where it is a viable option, the following guidelines might help it to be successful.

The class would be best if offered for a limited number of weeks, with specific topics announced for an initial period of study. Topics such as the following can be examined and enriched with biblical resources:

- Living Single as A Christian
- Wholeness as a Single Person
- Divorce and Remarriage in the Light of the Bible
- Self Esteem
- Healing for memories and emotions
- How faith relates to healthy relationships.

These can be addressed with the help of popular Christian

literature which is on the market. When completing the first series of meetings it is imperative, once more, that the divorced and single adults are asked to identify those areas of study they wish to pursue. This would be the opportune time, as well, to ask them to decide whether the class should run continuously or only occasionally as an adult elective. They may wish to be involved in other adult options.

If the class runs continuously, one important disadvantage may be that this program could hamper single or divorced persons' attempts to be integrated into the church's total fellowship. Sunday morning is one time when this is likely to occur if they are involved in choir, adult classes, and worship. Having this special interest group meet at another time would seem to be the better choice. Another handicap of this form of ministry is that it is most likely to reach only those who are already inclined to attend a church school class.

Advantages may be argued from almost the exact opposite vantage; that is, the existence of a Sunday morning class for singles or divorced persons legitimizes their status as a part of the congregation. This kind of program can be offered with little expenditure of funds. In the largest metropolitan churches, where there are many divorced and younger single adults present, this could present a viable option for serving their needs. Training for the teacher and leaders is not to be neglected. As a class designed to

serve the separated and divorced, its goals are different from the usual adult electives.

A Suggested Statement of Learning Objectives

It is important to set forth a clear statement of purpose and specific learning objectives before we begin a program which has an educational or behavioral change as its general purpose. The learning objectives will help guide our steps of preparation and also provide standards by which to evaluate the results. This section provides a detailed series of objectives which can be adapted for most of the circumstances and forms of ministry described.

An overall purpose statement for the ministry should be debated and developed such as the following:

We intend to assist people who are dealing with the personal problems of becoming single again. We intend to help participants gain an increased level of coping skills by providing educational experiences and assisting them through a personal support system. We intend to enhance their spiritual growth and self esteem, while encouraging healthy autonomy and renewed identity.

The following learning objectives are a suggested pattern of action. They describe in chronological fashion a way in which the components described in Chapter Two can come together in meaningful steps. The sections build upon one another in portions which can be adapted to a series of weekly meetings, or into a weekend retreat time frame.

*Session I**Facing Reality*

- A. Participants gain an understanding of the emotional stages that accompany the process of divorce.
- B. Small groups are initiated, under the guidance of trained enablers who are divorced or separated. Enablers provide modeling behaviors of openness, trust and support to characterize the group experience.
- C. By talking about their experiences with the group, members are assisted in recognizing emotional stages in their lives and in others'. Enablers encourage all to talk, but particularly avoid any overt or subtle means of compelling participation.
- D. To help the group learn to give emotional support to its members, they are each asked to telephone one person in their group during the intervening week (if program is weekly). Guidelines are provided to ensure the purposes are fulfilled.

*Session II**Letting Go of the Past*

- A. Participants gain an understanding of the psychosocial elements of loss involved in divorce.
- B. They are helped to recognize where they are in the progression of losses, and their emotional responses to them.
- C. They gain increased understanding of the dynamics of power, dependency, and autonomy in letting go of elements of a marriage.
- D. They are encouraged to realistically assess their marriage and, if appropriate, give up attachment to the spouse in order to move on in life.
- E. Involvement in the small group support system is deepened, as enablers model vulnerability and encourage this kind of risk-taking in the discussion process.

*Session III**Understanding What Really Happened*

- A. Participants gain an understanding of common causes of relationship breakdown, with specific examples presented.
- B. They are asked to examine why they got married, and gain recognition of the needs and dynamics involved in their marriage relationship.
- C. Group members discuss the meaning of real love, comparing the definitions presented by the speaker and their own experience and beliefs.
- D. They begin the process of self-examination, identifying causes of their relationship ending. Feelings of guilt are examined by understanding their past, the influence of parents, media, peer groups, their faith community and the like.
- E. Members are asked to write down, during the time between sessions, at least two reasons for their relationship breakdown.

*Session IV**Assuming Responsibility for Yourself*

- A. Participants are given tools to assist them in goal setting, gaining or enhancing self care skills, and learn methods of self-assessment.
- B. They are encouraged to take full responsibility for their past, present, and future, both their emotions and actions. They are provided concrete examples of how to reduce dependencies on spouse, parents or others, and realize increased autonomy.
- C. They begin to eliminate and overcome bitterness and anger, or blaming, through a clearer sense of personal responsibility. Expression of anger or other strong feelings in the group is not criticized, however.
- D. Participants are asked to evaluate their enablers' functioning (anonymously) as one expression of their taking responsibility for self.

- E. Participants are asked to do one thing between sessions particularly for personal satisfaction; improve their home environment, or enjoy some simple pleasure such as eating out, for example.

Session V

Reaching Out from Loneliness

- A. Participants gain an understanding of how social support networks function as well as a practical application of this concept in the small groups.
- B. They are helped to recognize their own need for social contacts and a personal support network of family, friends, work associates, and church or volunteer groups.
- C. They gain renewed confidence and a sense of self-worth through participation in the small groups.
- D. In addition, they gain understanding of positive uses of being alone, contrasted with negative experiences of loneliness.
- E. Participants grow in readiness for re-socializing, by their acquisition of new friendships, and participation in after-hours social events.
(A volunteer social committee is formed to make plans for a party to celebrate the conclusion of the seminar.)

Session VI

Growing Through Your Divorce

- A. Participants learn to accept their personal past, single and married, as a foundation for growth and new self-regard as single individuals.
- B. They learn forgiveness as a process for self-improvement, and are encouraged to pursue resolution of guilt or blockages by applying the resources of their own faith community, or the Biblical resources recommended.
- C. They are encouraged to offer forgiveness to their spouse as well as themselves, and learn to be civil and fair for the benefit of all involved.
- D. They learn that change can be positive, are encouraged to use the opportunity to reassess

their values. They are encouraged to widen their parameters, and attitudes and improve their skills in nourishing relationships.

- E. Participants are asked to make a list in the time between sessions to include "ten things I like about myself" or complete a similar positive self-awareness tool.

Session VII

Friending and Dating

- A. Participants learn about the commonality of fears, anxieties and joys that accompany dating experiences, after divorce.
- B. Alternatives to "romantic" dating are explained with examples of friendships with both sexes, as well as mature forms of love and commitment.
- C. Participants learn to recognize different types of intimacy, and their own needs for them.
- D. They learn practical methods of handling dating situations. Recognize signs of emotional attachment or dependency. Real life vignettes are presented for discussion.
- E. Participants gain further skill and personal confidence in building or rebuilding friendships through continuing weekly phone calls to each other and socializing following each session.

Session VIII

Living the Single Life

- A. Participants receive information about a variety of issues presented by a panel of speakers who relate their personal experience of living single since divorce.
- B. They recognize a variety of role-models in the presenters which encourages them to take charge, go on without regrets about the past, and gain increased self-worth and autonomy.
- C. They consider in group time how they can become active in the community, be helpful to others, take on volunteer roles, become involved in interest groups, and participate in single life.

- D. Participants complete a written evaluation of the seminar program.
- E. Each small group plans one or more follow-up activities for their group, and decides whether or not to invite other groups. The group selects one of their members to serve as contact person to remind others of plans made.

Informal Session IX

Post Seminar Party

- A. The social event planned by a volunteer committee formed in Session V is carried out.
- B. Participants celebrate completion of seminar and mark their passage from seminar into active single life as it applies to them.

Selection and Training For Divorce Ministry

Those ministering to the separated and divorced are sometimes called "enablers." I encourage the use of the term "enabler" for this purpose because it so aptly describes the role. It is crucial that people be *enabled* to take charge of their own lives, and it is equally crucial that unwise dependencies be avoided. Thus, the term "enabler" has come into use to provide a constant reminder of these key issues, and is used on the following pages.

The Function of Enablers

Depending on the form of ministry in which they are expected to serve, enablers may be engaged in one-to-one pastoral care, small group or seminar leadership, administrative work, and organizational coordination. In addition to these roles, they will often be expected to be

available for some crisis support by telephone or in person when needed.

Their main purpose is to *enable* the subjects of ministry to discover and exercise their own abilities to cope with the difficult circumstances they face. They assist people in taking responsibility for themselves. Enablers must exercise attending and helping skills that enable participants to discover their own emotions, thoughts and resources for action. They function as encouraging role models who demonstrate that divorce can be overcome, and take a special interest in assisting others reenter single life.

Selection Criteria

Enablers should be people who are separated, divorced, or otherwise intimately acquainted with loss in a relationship. They must be interested in helping others and motivated by genuine love and caring. In addition, the following characteristics are important.

Willing to be trained

Successful enablers are people who are willing to be trained for the purposes of the ministry. Those convinced that they already know all they need to know are likely to be too rigid and inflexible to be much help in personal contact. Candidates need not be highly educated. The enabler must be sensitive and concerned to listen to those in need of help, even when what is being said is unwelcome,

unwise or otherwise disagreeable. Consequently, persons must be willing to be trained to enhance these skills.

Listeners, not talkers

Similarly, enablers should not be people who need to talk more than listen. If someone cannot stay quiet long enough to let others vent feelings and thoughts, they will cause more frustration and shed little light in spite of whatever insights they have.

Wounded but healing

Enablers should be sufficiently recovered from their own divorce that they do not let their own needs dominate their involvement with others. Conversely, they should be close enough to their own experience of divorce to empathize without being driven by their own needs. In regard to their own progress, it is helpful if they have given thought to what factors have most helped or hindered them.

Willing to cooperate

They must be sufficiently in harmony with the faith community that they can represent it's values. We must not overlook those who are willing to help but who are unsure of their faith. There is great potential for bringing into ministry those who might otherwise be at the edges of the faith community and often not considered for service in the church's ministry. People can grow a great deal in the process of carrying out ministry and should not be denied the opportunity for doing so.

Willing to commit time

Trainees must be willing to commit the amount of time and energy required for training and for the program envisioned. Those who are not able to commit as much time as is needed for some key roles can be asked to do other things such as providing refreshments, or some clerical tasks which do not require effort every week.

Applying the Criteria

How are these criteria put into effect? The key leader(s) who are initiating a ministry may gather names from their own church contacts, and sometimes from other local pastors and contacts. These people may be contacted by phone and asked key questions at that time. Some organizers may wish to invite all the candidates to a general meeting at which the ministry is explained. Having potential recruits share their experiences in small groups at this time will also give the organizing leaders insight into their abilities. Some leaders may wish to also use a written application which seeks further information.⁷⁴

People who do not meet all the criteria at once may also be encouraged to attend training and be assigned less sensitive positions where they can still contribute. In a ministry using small groups, it is helpful to match up the less experienced volunteers to work in pairs with others who are more skilled. Newcomers will help balance the groups,

⁷⁴A sample form appears in Hagemeyer, Manual, p. 24.

and add freshness, immediacy, and motivation.

Training Procedures and Content

Training is most productive if sessions are spaced over a period of two or three weeks, rather than compacted into a single event. This allows people to practice some of the skills being taught and to reflect on the results at subsequent sessions. Training may include some lecture presentations, but other activities and tools to sharpen skills are needed. Small groups may be used to simulate the ministry being launched. The experiences should aim at building a team, heightening self-awareness and disclosure, as well as group building, attending and helping skills.⁷⁵

Overview

Training should contain a brief overview of the program or ministry, purposes of each part and the strategies involved. People appreciate the opportunity to ask questions and clarify expectations.

Vulnerable self-disclosure

Participants share their personal experiences with divorce and single life. Some of the same questions used in an initial seminar meeting may be used. They might be asked about the things they have learned in the divorce process. They are asked to think about their motivations for helping in the ministry.

⁷⁵ A detailed outline and sets of materials are found in Hagemeyer, Manual, pp. 26-43.

Group team building

The intimate sharing that is begun in the above step helps bring about a sense of trust and joint purpose for the group. People begin to demonstrate concern for each other as the discussions are shaped to focus on current challenges in their lives.

Attending skills

Skills that focus on the needs of the person are demonstrated and practiced in groups and role-play. These skills include active listening, attention to body language, and empathy. Unconditional acceptance of the subject's emotions, opinions and attitudes deserves special emphasis. This attitude demonstrates grace and frees up people to consider change.

Helping skills

Although people often are eager to make suggestions and "solve" problems for those in need of help, they must be trained to suppress these immediate desires. The most helpful process is one which elicits solutions from the troubled person. Resources may be suggested, but the more that people discover options of their own making, the less likely unhealthy dependencies will develop. The more occasions people have of discovering their own strengths and insights, the more autonomy and self-confidence is built up.

Small group leadership

The success of small groups will depend a great deal

on the adequacy of trained leaders. Enablers in small groups must model sharing of personal experiences, and encourage the same from others. At the same time they must allow people to take part according to their own wishes. Enablers need to be sensitive to those who are shy, and at the same time find ways to keep the eager talkers from dominating. They should allow the group to develop its own agenda, while staying with the general plan. Finally, they are to encourage the participants to share in the healing process by responding to one another with concern.

Research indicates the most effective small groups are led by people who: (1) show a high amount of caring attitude toward participants, (2) offer a moderate amount of sharing of their own experiences, (3) provide a modest but adequate amount of control over the group's process to best achieve its goals, and (4) are capable of helping to interpret the concepts being taught in the program.⁷⁶ In fact, those most eager and convinced that they can help everyone are likely, in their over-zealousness, to actually have the least productive groups.⁷⁷

Enablers in training participate in and take turns leading small groups of the trainees to practice expressing their own experiences and also to exercise their skills in managing groups.

⁷⁶ Lieberman, Yalom and Miles, Encounter Groups, p. 240.

⁷⁷ Ibid, pp. 243-45.

Heightened self-awareness

In the training process enablers gain some additional insight into themselves. They need to increase self-awareness to be alert to their own motivations and their needs for affection, attention, or control. It is not uncommon for volunteers to "need to be needed" and unconsciously seek to demonstrate their own worth in this way. Enablers must be aware of the risks of transference, dependency and counter-dependency. They are trained to watch themselves so that their personal needs do not interfere with helping others.

Successful enablers will also know their own limits and turn to others for help when particularly troubled individuals have needs beyond their scope. Finally, they should be encouraged to look to other members of their ministry team for personal support as they need it. This will help them avoid becoming burned out as they go about helping others.

The Trainer

In many communities professionals will be available to fulfill the job of the trainer. After some initial training experiences, those enablers who are the more successful and competent lay ministers will become apparent. With a small amount of supplemental training and regular supervision, these persons are likely to be quite successful in training for others.

Limitations and Potential for Failure

Some of the descriptions on the preceding pages might sound idealistic. No doubt they are, at points. Despite the best laid plans, the people and circumstances involved will bring unexpected difficulties. Some volunteers will not work well with others. Unexpected disruptions will draw energy away from the clear focus of helping and healing individuals.

There are always risks associated with helping people. There are dangers to both the person whom we attempt to help and to those doing the helping. There are limitations to what we can do, some related to our inherent limits and some due to the limits of the person being helped. Whenever a ministry is intended to help people with the intense problems divorce presents, volunteers must be acquainted with the risks as well as the opportunities.

There are limitations which must be understood by the sponsoring agency or church. With the best preparation and investment of resources, the program or ministry may not seem successful, or it may have unexpected results that are not all pleasing. Here, then are some of the specific limitations and problems to be considered.

Problems with Programs

Not every person's problems will be addressed by a program, no matter how many options are built into it. Some people will not get connected to the right resources for them at the time. Some people may be hurried into

registering for a seminar when they really can only benefit from one-to-one contact for the present time. Some potential recipients of help will have their defenses so well constructed that no form of help will be effective. Some persons will complain that the help they were given has not really been appropriate. All the same problems that accompany pastoral counseling will arise in a situation where a cadre of lay ministers attempts to carry out pastoral care. Misunderstandings will occur.

When a program is as difficult to put into place as a divorce ministry, professional clergy may be all too eager to identify one or two lay persons who can carry on without further attention. However, a ministry is frequently damaged by lay leaders who have not learned to welcome and encourage new leaders to come aboard. The ministry should be monitored carefully. Leaders who become perpetual and permanent and cannot let go of control prevent successful followers from putting new vision and energy into the ministry. At the same time, long term leaders will sometimes reach a point of burnout, because there seems to be no relief for them.

Problems with Intimate Ministry

The second set of limitations and dangers are associated with the intimate and intense nature of divorce recovery. Many people who are going through divorce are very vulnerable. There is a danger of premature intimate pairing and dependency. The risk is generic to this type of

situation. These same risks and limitations challenge the professional therapist and minister, alike.

Transference

Transference can occur whenever someone is struggling with a current or previous relationship. While someone's marriage relationship is running into difficult waters anyone who reaches out to this person may be the recipient of displaced emotions. Whether pastor or lay person, whoever acts to help and offers empathic listening may seem to be the "ideal" person who was lost as the marriage dream dissolved. If the ministering agent is not keenly aware of his/her own needs, this can easily lead to romantic entanglements, or emotional dependency and counter-dependency.

On the other hand, anger as well as affection may be transferred. An acquaintance who ventures to offer a mild criticism of the absent spouse may be surprised to receive an angry response, defending that very spouse. Emotions may seem out of proportion to the reality of the situation. Helping agents must be aware of this possibility and avoid taking attacks or misunderstandings personally.

Ambivalence

When people are experiencing the emotional stages which I identified as anger/guilt or bargaining, they can be observed moving back and forth between opinions frequently. At one instance, anger is expressed. Not long after, guilt

and overburdened expressions of responsibility, regret and self-deprecation may emerge. One day a person may want to save the marriage and achieve a reconciliation, and the next be convinced that such thinking is deluded. These shifting winds represent an inner dialogue. The danger is that helping agents may unknowingly let their own agenda determine how they listen. Consequently such persons may be eager to give full credence to statements that express a desire to be reconciled, while ignoring comments that indicate the marriage is over. On the other hand, the helper may become tired of listening to the same issues repeatedly and urge a resolution by divorce too quickly.

Overzealous or patronizing help

The process of helping has subtle dangers. To offer aid in ways that do not depreciate the person being helped, it is crucial that the enabler avoid taking over responsibility. Efforts which support in a patronizing way are likely to be very counterproductive. It is likely to be harmful to "feel sorry" for someone, since this communicates a judgment that this person is inadequate. Rather, it will be important to nourish the autonomy of that person. Any ways which will encourage that person to make decisions, face the necessary risks of life and live with the consequences will be helpful. This applies both to one-to-one help and to small group work.

Efforts to avoid dependency will awaken feelings of guilt in the helper, when the needy person's immediate

demands or perceived needs are not met. The enabler must keep in mind the individual's long term needs rather than short term satisfaction. As an article of faith, the enabler needs to *believe* that within each individual there are the God-given resources to meet the challenges at hand.

Overcoming Limitations

With these concerns in mind, the value of training and supervision becomes all the more clear. Adequate training and supervision will address these problems and at least prevent them from seriously handicapping the ministry.

The ministry team needs to focus on the particular successes that occur. In most instances, many individuals will be helped, regardless of whether every detail of the plan worked as expected. The healing that occurs in participants will often provide a rich store of reserve energy for the ministry.

The prize is certainly worth the effort. Since I have illuminated the potential risks and limitations it is worth noting that many of these problems arise particularly because we are dealing with people at the intense centers of their lives. Participants will frequently demonstrate that they have made positive life-changing decisions. They will appreciate this ministry with an intensity that reflects the gravity of their experience recovering from divorce.

Strategies for Promotion and Follow-Up

An important theoretical principle guides both promotion and follow-up. The incarnational ministry principle demands that we be concerned with felt needs, and reach people through whatever avenues are open to touch their lives.

Promotion

Looking to meet felt needs, we must describe our help in the terms which are easily understood. Advertising and promotion is the art of telling people that what they want is here. We need to speak the language of the world and promise that we will be in touch with the experiences of love, hate, fear, doubt, hope and the joy of new relationships.

Effective promotion will use media that go where the people are. In addition, since more women tend to seek help through a divorce ministry, men need to be sought with greater zeal. This may require that advertising appear in the sports section, or on the entertainment portion of the newspaper. It may call for posters to appear in unlikely places where men frequent more than women. The language of the world is such that it respects and pays attention to colorful, well designed brochures and literature. Avenues of distribution can be developed which include employers, medical doctors, counselors, attorneys, and many others.^{7 8}

^{7 8}Detailed suggestions and a checklist for publicity are found in Hagemeyer, Manual, p. 9-13.

If quality advertising and promotion is followed by quality in lay ministry, much will be accomplished.

Follow-Up

Following an effective experience of ministry such as a good small group, retreat, or seminar, many participants will feel they have just begun to discover new areas of interest and they will want to continue the group experience. In order to create programs which will be attractive to them, it is important to solicit their ideas and discover their areas of interest. This will enhance the process of understanding their felt needs. While experience may have taught us what to expect, each group of people will respond better if they know the leadership of their organization really cares about what they think. The weeks following a successful program are a crucial time to launch participant directed activities.

Participants will want to contribute their creative energy and fresh thinking to the ongoing ministry. It is vital that these highly motivated people, who have themselves been helped, be included in making plans and decisions about the future of the ministry. They will perpetuate the ministry and lead it into wider effectiveness through their gratitude and genuine love. They felt a need. It was met.

CONCLUSION

Is a specialized ministry for the divorced worth doing? This project brings a positive answer to the question from several different perspectives. The problems of the divorced can be understood. Effective program methods can be found, developed from both humanistic and biblical resources. People are available who can carry out such ministry, even when professional leadership is in short supply. The results are measurable and people show genuine changes. They respond to carry on the ministry after they themselves have been helped.

I began by developing a dynamic theoretical model for understanding the process of divorce. The model ties together the events in divorce with the affective grief cycle, to provide new insight for both the helper and the helped. Divorce ministry is worth doing because understanding is available to bring focus to a confusing area of distress in our society.

A rich supply of program elements are in use around the country. From these I have been able to refine program methods consistent with both the therapeutic sciences and our biblical heritage. Lay ministry teams at Good News Community have used these methods in more than a score of seminars, with hundreds of people over several years' time.

The ministry can be done. Effective, biblically consistent program methods are available in a wide range of choices.

Results have been tested. These are described in Chapter Two and in the Appendix. Seminar participants demonstrate a dramatic short-term gain in self-esteem and clarity of self-concept. My attempt to use a control group was relatively inconclusive because we did not segregate participants adequately. In spite of this problem, some of the measurements used clearly demonstrate the ministry's effectiveness.

Results in the longer term can be described by what has been happening over a period of eight years within Good News Community. The actions of seminar participants support the contention that positive changes have indeed occurred in their lives. After the first two or three seminars, the supply of volunteers became so plentiful that methods of selection had to be revised periodically to deal with the oversupply. For several years running, leaders were faced with the challenge of how to make use of all the volunteers who wanted to help. As many as 200 trained enablers were available for service at one time. This leads me to conclude that human resources are available. Those who have been helped become the helpers, literally the wounded healers of the divorce world. A specialized ministry for the divorced is viable because a considerable supply of people do respond to the call to minister in this way.

This specialized ministry is worth doing, because it

meets a precise point of pain in our society with clearly effective methods. It finds popular support from the constituency in need. People respond by passing on its benefits to others. Such a ministry generates its own momentum and validates itself repeatedly.

Two recommendations would enhance the application of what I have learned. Further research studies with a more precisely segregated control group are called for. I suggest that energy be spent locating such subjects through attorneys and friend of the court offices. Control group participants could be asked to agree to have minimal contact with the ministry events until after the eight weeks of the initial test period. A small amount of compensation might be offered. For some, it could be a reduced-fee seminar registration.

The ministry should be launched with careful preparation of both the supporting bodies and the lay ministers. Our ministry was launched first, and studies for better understanding of our task came second. We made some mistakes. We learned "on the run." The risks must not be minimized. But with these risks clearly in mind, the ministry will most likely become productive in even more ways than expected.

A well-run divorce ministry will produce healing, yes, but more. It will produce graduates of a unique school of ministry who are eager to serve in other ways, as well. These graduates will bring zest and vitality into lay

ministry for other purposes. They will bring a sensitivity to the needs of others. They will bring the faith that God does meet needs through his people. They will be living proof that divorce ministry is worth doing.

APPENDIX:

EMPIRICAL TESTING PROCEDURE AND ANALYSIS

Empirical testing was carried out with participants in "Coping with Divorce" seminars. These seminars were sponsored by Good News Community and conducted in Grand Rapids, Michigan and suburbs between November 1983, and May, 1985. Details are presented under the following headings: (1) Description of the research sample, (2) Treatment of the experimental group, (3) Description of the instrument, (4) Administration of the instrument, (5) Hypotheses tested, (6) Methods of data analysis, (7) Presentation of results, and (8) Comparison with other experiments.

Description of the Research Sample

The experimental group was made up of 219 participants in the five seminars. The control group was made up of 30 persons not involved in the seminar program, but who were facing separation or divorce. Some were counseling clients, and some were involved in other ministry programs. The two groups were largely caucasian, and of the middle social-economic class. A biographical questionnaire was completed at the same time as the first testing. Since some data was incomplete, total numbers shown varies. Some of the information collected is shown on the following chart.

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

<u>Item</u>	<u>Experimental</u>		<u>Control</u>	
Age:	#	%	#	%
20-29	26	12.3	4	16.7
30-39	100	47	12	50
40-49	63	29.7	4	16.7
50-59	21	10	4	16.7
60 or over	<u>2</u>	1		
	212		<u>24</u>	
Length of marriage:	#	%	#	%
under 1 yr	4	1.8	1	4.1
1-2 yrs	11	5	4	16.7
3-5	21	9.6	4	16.7
6-10	45	20.7	5	20.8
11-15	57	26.3	6	25
over 15	<u>79</u>	36.4	<u>4</u>	16.7
	217		24	
Time in months of separation:	#	%	#	%
none	15	7.1	1	4.1
under 1 mo.	6	2.8	5	20.8
1-3	46	21.7	6	25
4-6	47	22.2	1	4.1
7-12	41	19.3	3	12.5
13-20	28	13.2	2	8.3
over 20 mo.	<u>29</u>	13.7	<u>6</u>	25
	212		24	
Level of Education:	#	%	#	%
less than H.S.	5	2.6	1	4.3
High School	54	28.3	4	17.4
Vocational/or some college	68	35.6	9	39.1
College grad.	47	24.6	6	26.1
Advanced degree	<u>17</u>	8.9	<u>3</u>	13
	191		23	
Employment during the past year:	#	%	#	%
none	18	9.3		
pt. time only	41	21.1	9	40.9
full time	128	66	13	59.1
unemployed over 1 yr.	<u>7</u>	3.6		
	194		<u>22</u>	
Sex:	#	%	#	%
Female	148	68.2	19	79.2
Male	<u>69</u>	31.82	<u>5</u>	20.8
	217		24	

From a dispassionate research point of view it would have been more desirable if the test group and the control group were selected at random from a set of individuals who sought help. In the ideal case, one half would have been permitted entrance to the seminar. The second group would have been recruited to take part in the research program, without the seminar meetings or "treatment program." The immediate problems this kind of plan presents are apparent to anyone who does ministry. Our first priority has been to help anyone we could. Neither I, nor the organization with which I worked would consider manipulating our ministry to the detriment of any individuals for the purposes of research.

Consequently, we had some difficulty locating subjects who met our criteria for the control group and who chose not to be involved in a divorce seminar. The number of thirty was finally achieved. Complete data on only twenty-four of these was available, so that is the number reported on charts below.

However, the value of the Control Group was seriously diminished by the fact that many were beginning to attend other Good News Community activities. Only 44% had no involvement at all. The majority, 46%, reported they attended between one and three meetings per week. Some attended regular "Creative Growth" meetings where divorce issues were discussed. Some were counseling clients. It became clear that the control group sample was contaminated

with "treatment" activities similar to the seminar. Consequently, this group may be considered a "minimum contact" group rather than a "no treatment" group.

Treatment of the Experimental Group

The treatment of the experimental group consisted of their participation in Coping With Divorce seminars under my supervision. There were six such seminars held during the period from November 1983 through May 1985. The procedures, course content, and behavioral learning objectives were those described in detail in Chapter III, under "Suggested Learning Objectives." The seminars lasted eight weeks, with one evening meeting approximately 2 hours long per week. Each seminar included from 35 to 75 participants, plus between 10 and 20 volunteers.

Each evening included an informal lecture presented on the topic prescribed by the learning objectives, followed by approximately one hour of discussion in small groups. Each group consisted of 5 to 10 participants, plus two "enabler" discussion leaders. All enablers had been trained a minimum of six hours over a period of three weeks, in the manner described in Chapter III, under "Selection and Training for Divorce Ministry." In most cases, the enabler team was made up of a man and a woman chosen to balance each other's skills and life experience. Participants remained in the same groups for the full eight weeks.

Description of the Instrument

The Tennessee Self Concept Scale (TSCS) is intended to deal with the self as a core concept, rather than behavior. My research interest is in the repair of the identity following the loss of significant sources of identity in a divorce. I have already shown in Chapter I some of the ways the TSCS subscales appear to correspond with specific losses associated with divorce. In addition, the primary scale, labeled "Total Positive," is used as a measure of the clarity of self concept, the amount of self-actualization, or in common usage, self-esteem. This is quite different from personality traits, behavior patterns, or attitudes. Rather, it is intended to look at the phenomenal self. The phenomenal self is that which the person experiences as being observed by others and also as being the self which is the agent in action and thinking.

The TSCS is also attractive because it is made up of 100 statements and can be administered in about twenty minutes. To each statement the subject responds with one of five possible answers: completely false, mostly false, partly true and partly false, mostly true, or completely true. The scoring design then gives from 1 to 5 points for each answer in an array of rows and columns that feed into a number of subscales. The two basic sets of subscales make up the categories of (1) an internal frame of reference, and

(2) the external frame of reference.⁷⁹

The internal frame of reference includes three subscales referred to as:

- Row 1- Identity Self, what the individual is.
- Row 2- Self Satisfaction, what the individual feels about him/her self, in judging self.
- Row 3- Behavioral Self, what the person does.

The external frame of reference includes five subscales which are referred to as:

- Column A- Physical Self, pertaining to one's body, sexuality, health, appearance.
- Column B- Moral-Ethical Self, relating to moral, ethical and religious aspects of self.
- Column C- Personal Self, referring to personal worth, or adequacy, self-respect and perceived confidence.
- Column D- Family Self, describing an individual's relationship with his primary group, and sense of adequacy as a family member.
- Column E- Social Self, dealing with the sense of adequacy or worth in relationships beyond the above.

The fundamental principle is that the self-esteem of a person is derived from a mosaic of different components or perspectives which each contribute to one's self concept. Each subscale is intended to represent one of the primary aspects by which we view ourselves, or see ourselves through the perceptions of others. Certain subscales were omitted which had the least apparent meaning for our subject matter.

⁷⁹William Fitts, et al., The Self Concept and Self Actualization (Nashville, TN: Counselor Recordings and Tests, 1971), p. 71.

In addition, a number of empirical scales have been developed based upon scores from previously identified groups or types of subjects, such as mental patients. One of these is the General Maladjustment (GM) scale, serving as a general indicator of difficulties, although without providing specific definition. This scale plus the Net Conflict and Total Variability subscales were used to provide information about the subject's ability to manage confusion and stress.

Content validity for the TSCS was originally sought by classifying the ninety items of the scale, leaving aside the ten self-criticism scores, which were adopted from the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI). This classification was carried out by seven clinical psychologists, and any item upon which there was not unanimous agreement was rejected.

Reliability has been measured by the test-retest method, over a two week period. Results range from .60 for Row Total V, to .92 on the Total Positive and GM, and overall a coefficient in the high 80's. An index of .60 to .85 is generally considered effective for clinical research involving groups, while few personality instruments exceed .85 coefficients.⁸⁰

Concurrent validity is reported to include relatively high correlations with the Taylor Anxiety Scale, the MMPI,

⁸⁰ J. William Pfeiffer and Richard Heslin, Instrumentation in Human Relations Training, (Iowa City, IA: University Associated, 1973), p. 25.

and also positive correlations with the Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire.^{8 1}

Administration of the Instrument

The TSCS was administered at the conclusion of the first session of the seminar, and then again at the last, or eighth session, as well. A biographical questionnaire was completed at the same time as the first testing. This questionnaire collects information such as age, length of marriage, number of children, employment, and the like.

The TSCS was also administered to all the enablers serving in the seminar at the same time as it was given to the participants, both at beginning and at the end. All were assigned code numbers which distinguished the regular participants from the volunteer staff, for the purposes of later analysis. The members of the control group were tested at various times, and then each was contacted to schedule a retesting eight weeks later.

Hypotheses Tested

The study seeks to establish the following hypotheses. A probability of .05 is being considered a significant level while a probability of less than .10 is viewed as a trend. The experimental group following treatment, when compared with the control group, will show:

^{8 1} Oscar Buros, The Seventh Mental Measurements Yearbook (Highland Park, NJ: Gryphon Press, 1978), pp. 366-370, includes reviews of the TSCS by Peter M. Bentler, Richard M. Suinn, and John O. Crites.

(A) a significant increase in their self-esteem and clarity of self-concept which will be indicated by increases in:

- (1) the TSCS Total Positive Score
- (2) the TSCS Self Acceptance Score (Row 2)
- (3) the TSCS Moral-Ethical Score (Column B)
- (4) the TSCS Personal Self Score (Column C)
- (5) the TSCS Family Self Score (Column D)
- (6) the TSCS Social Self Score (Column E).

and,

(B) a significant improvement in their adjustment to divorce which will be indicated by decreases in:

- (7) the TSCS Total Variability Score
- (8) the TSCS Net Conflict Score^{8 2}
- (9) the TSCS General Maladjustment Score.
(The positive numerical values of this subscale have an inverse value in the design of the TSCS. In other words, higher numerical values mean decreased levels of maladjustment, and the numbers appear on graphs in inverted order.)

Methods of Data Analysis

Group means, standard deviation, and standard error were computed on the TSCS scores for both pretests and posttests, using a "T-test group" procedure. A "T-test pairs" procedure was then used to analyze the "differences" that occur between pretest and posttest scores, comparing the differences shown by the experimental group with those

^{8 2}Originally, I had proposed to use the Total Conflict subscale, but Net Conflict was later recommended by a consultant as the better indicator.

that occur in the control group scores. The probability of the differences achieved was used to test the above hypotheses.

A simpler analysis of co-variance between pretest and posttest scores of the Experimental Group is reported in the body of the report. In that analysis, virtually all scores indicate a significant increase in subscales related to self-esteem and clarity of self-concept, and significant improvement (decline) in scores related to variability, conflict and general maladjustment.^{8 3}

Finally, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) statistical procedure was followed to show co-variance between group mean scores and a number of variables such as age, amount of time since separation, employment, number of meetings attended, and similar details.

Presentation of Results

Table A-1 shows results for the experimental group, with group means, standard deviation, standard error and the probability of the change (difference) occurring. Table A-2 shows the same material for the control group. Table A-3 shows the amount of probability that the two groups would develop differences in varying amounts as they did. Probabilities were calculated in a T-test of separate variance, thus giving some indication of the significance of the wider changes which occurred in the experimental group.

^{8 3} See pages 84-85 for more on this aspect of the work.

TABLE A-1
Experimental Group: Comparison of Pretest and Posttest

TSCS Subscales	Experimental Group (n=219)			Probability ^{8 4}
	Mean	Std.Deviation	Std.Error	
Total Positive				
pre	333.30	37.6	2.54	
post	344.81	35.3	2.39	
difference	11.51	25.35	1.71	.000
Row 2 (Self-Acceptance)				
pre	102.24	17.28	1.17	
post	107.70	17.51	1.19	
difference	5.46	12.1	.82	.000
Column B (Moral-Ethical)				
pre	70.50	9.41	.64	
post	72.41	8.28	.56	
difference	1.91	6.9	.47	.000
Column C (Personal Self)				
pre	62.15	9.29	.63	
post	65.96	8.51	.58	
difference	3.81	7.0	.48	.000
Column D (Family Self)				
pre	68.43	8.83	.60	
post	70.55	8.60	.58	
difference	2.12	5.67	.38	.000
Column E (Social Self)				
pre	66.31	9.28	.63	
post	68.65	8.37	.57	
difference	2.35	5.74	.39	.000
Total Variability				
pre	45.82	12.94	.87	
post	48.64	69.11	4.67	
difference	2.82	69.69	4.71	.28
Net Conflict (continuous neg.-pos.)				
pre	- .58	11.72	.79	
post	-3.94	12.99	.88	
difference	-3.36	12.49	.84	.000
General Maladjustment ^{8 5}				
pre	97.32	44.64	3.02	
post	103.84	71.03	4.80	
difference	6.52	62.02	4.19	.06

^{8 4}Since direction of change was predicted, probability is one-tailed.

^{8 5}Higher numerical values in General Maladjustment indicate lower levels of difficulty, and better levels of healthy coping ability.

TABLE A-2
Control Group: Comparison of Pretest and Posttest

TSCS Subscales	Control Group (n=24)		Std.Error	Probability
	Mean	Std.Deviation		
Total Positive				
pre	334.46	25.83	5.27	
post	345.75	31.74	6.48	
difference	11.29	26.20	5.35	.023
Row 2 (Self-Acceptance)				
pre	105.04	12.92	2.64	
post	106.63	18.05	3.68	
difference	1.58	14.77	3.02	.303
Column B (Moral-Ethical)				
pre	71.46	8.54	1.74	
post	72.25	7.74	1.58	
difference	.79	6.04	1.23	.264
Column C (Personal Self)				
pre	66.79	6.15	1.26	
post	68.38	7.32	1.49	
difference	1.58	5.47	1.12	.085
Column D (Family Self)				
pre	66.25	8.78	1.79	
post	68.92	9.13	1.86	
difference	2.67	6.40	1.31	.027
Column E (Social Self)				
pre	67.92	7.46	1.52	
post	68.54	6.70	1.37	
difference	.63	4.72	.96	.262
Total Variability				
pre	45.50	10.77	2.20	
post	40.92	10.25	2.09	
difference	4.58	9.61	1.96	.015
Net Conflict (continuous neg.-pos.)				
pre	-1.38	17.03	3.48	
post	1.54	17.16	3.50	
difference	2.92	12.36	2.52	.259 ⁸⁶
General Maladjustment				
pre	95.46	8.71	1.78	
post	95.08	13.42	2.74	
difference	- .38	11.49	2.35	.874 ⁸⁶

⁸⁶Since Net Conflict and General Maladjustment scores in the Control Group moved opposite from the prediction for the Experimental Group (Control Group shows more conflict and maladjustment), the probability shown is two-tailed. All others are one-tailed probability figures.

TABLE A-3
Comparison of Differences: T-test of Separate Variance

TSCS Subscales	Experimental Group	Control Group	Probability ⁸⁷
Total Positive			
pre	333.30	334.46	
post	344.81	345.75	
difference	11.51	11.29	.48
Row 2 (Self-Acceptance)			
pre	102.24	105.04	
post	107.70	106.63	
difference	5.46	1.58	.11
Column B (Moral-Ethical)			
pre	70.50	71.46	
post	72.41	72.25	
difference	1.91	.79	.20
Column C (Personal Self)			
pre	62.15	66.79	
post	65.96	68.38	
difference	3.81	1.58	.038
Column D (Family Self)			
pre	68.43	66.25	
post	70.55	68.92	
difference	2.12	2.67	.347
Column E (Social Self)			
pre	66.31	67.92	
post	68.65	68.54	
difference	2.35	.63	.054
Total Variability			
pre	45.82	45.50	
post	48.64	40.92	
difference	2.82	-4.58	.074
Net Conflict (continuous neg.-pos.)			
pre	- .58	-1.38	
post	-3.94	1.54	
difference	-3.36	2.92	.013
General Maladjustment ⁸⁸			
pre	97.32	95.46	
post	103.84	95.08	
difference	6.52	- .38	.077

⁸⁷Since direction of change was predicted, probability is one-tailed.

⁸⁸Higher numerical values in G.M. indicate better coping ability.

*Resolution of Hypotheses*Hypothesis 1

Participants will show a significant increase in their self-esteem and clarity of self-concept, indicated by increase in the TSCS Total Positive Score.

The experimental group shows remarkable increase in the Total Positive Score, with .000 level of probability. However, the control group also showed a significant difference from pre to post test, with a probability of .023, well within our .05 criteria. Therefore, the analysis of separate variance (Chart A-3) does not assign a significant value to this result (probability of .48), since both groups improved considerably. The hypothesis is not proven.

Hypothesis 2

Participants will show improvement indicated by increase in the Row 2, Self Acceptance subscale.

Once again, the experimental group mean shows considerably more change than the control group, with a probability of .000, whereas the probability of the control group change is not within the criteria, only .303. However, the analysis of separate variance indicates only a final probability of .11, close to a recognizable trend. Therefore, we can only conclude that resolution of the hypothesis is uncertain.

Hypothesis 3

Participants will show improvement indicated by increase in Column B (Moral Ethical) subscale.

The experimental group shows more significant improvement, with a probability of .000, whereas the control group change has a probability of .264. However, once again, the analysis of separate variance indicates only a final probability of .20. Therefore, resolution of this hypothesis is uncertain.

Hypothesis 4

Participants will show improvement indicated by increase in Column C (Personal Self) subscale.

The experimental group shows more significant improvement, with a probability of .000, whereas the control group change has a probability of .085. However, the analysis of separate variance in this case shows a final probability of .038 for this variance of differences to occur. Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis 5

Participants will show improvement indicated by an increase in Column D (Family Self) subscale.

The experimental group shows more significant improvement (probability of .000), than the control group change (probability of .027). However, since the control group's change is within the criteria (.05), the analysis of separate variance shows a final probability of .347 for this

variance of differences to occur. Therefore, the hypothesis is not proven.

Hypothesis 6

Participants will show improvement indicated by increase in Column E (Social Self) subscale.

The experimental group shows considerably more significant improvement (probability of .000), than the control group change (probability of .262). The analysis of separate variance in this case shows a final probability of .054 for this variance to occur. Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis 7

Participants will show significant improvement in their adjustment to divorce, indicated by decrease in the Total Variability subscale.

Both groups show improvements occurring, but the change in the control group is significant (.015), while that of the experimental group is not. Analysis of separate variance shows a final probability of .074 for the differences to occur. Since this is within the range of a significant trend, the hypothesis is tentatively accepted.

Hypothesis 8

Participants will show significant improvement in their adjustment to divorce, indicated by decrease in the Net Conflict subscale.

The experimental group shows quite significant

improvement, with a probability of .000, whereas the control group shows a change in the opposite direction, with increased inner conflict. The analysis of separate variance in this case shows a final probability of .013 for this variance of differences to occur. Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted.

Considering the fact that control group did not receive the stimulation of the seminar to carry out deeper self examination, they may have been handicapped in resolving such inner conflict, although gaining in some other coping skills.

Hypothesis 9

Participants will show significant improvement in their adjustment to divorce, indicated by decline in the General Maladjustment subscale.

The experimental group shows improvement, with a probability of .06, just outside our criteria for proof, but well within what is deemed to be a significant trend. The control group, on the other hand, shows a small change in the opposite direction, with increased General Maladjustment. The analysis of separate variance in this case shows a final probability of .077 for this variance of differences to occur. Therefore, the hypothesis is tentatively accepted.

Concluding Comments on Hypotheses

The results indicate less difference than had been

predicted between the experimental group and the control group. Differences do exist between the groups, but they are clouded by the important similarities. It is quite clear, however, that in every indicator selected, except one (Total Variability), the experimental group made significant gains, when seen by themselves. In a few cases, the control group made no gain at all. I have to conclude that the contamination of the control group with similar program elements had an impact on their considerable progress. A more rigorous segregation of control group participants through some acceptable mechanism may have yielded clearer results.

Supplemental Analysis of Data

When the data is subjected to a complete analysis of variance (ANOVA), a few items of interest come to our attention.

First, age does not appear to be a significant factor in determining one's ability to experience improvement in the coping process. Significance of this variable in its effect is far outside criteria, with a probability of only .44 in relation to Total Positive scores, for instance.

Level of education shows some significance in the analysis, as it comes close to being within a" trend." Higher levels of education improve the Total Positive score with a probability .117. With each level of education in our survey, the Total Positive group mean score moves consistently upward, with 329.60 at the bottom and 349.65 at

the top.

Employment has a similar impact, close to being considered a "trend." Higher levels of consistent employment are related to higher Total Positive score, with the probability of .135. The closer one is to full time employment, or having had a shorter period of unemployment, the Total Positive moves fairly consistently upward, from low group means of 331.11 to the high end at 355.86.

The most clearly significant item that appeared in the supplemental analysis is "the average number of meetings per week, other than the seminar, which you attended during the past two months." The amount of involvement the individual had chosen had a great impact on their progress. The more involvement with supplemental meetings, the higher the Total Positive score, with a probability of .007, well within our criteria. For each of the five groupings of levels of involvement, scores move consistently upward.

Meetings per week	TSCS Total Positive
-0-	337.82
one	349.71
two	355.71
three or more	360.20

These facts support my contention that it is very important for a ministry to develop a range of alternatives and provide supplemental opportunities. The most successful seminar or retreat is strengthened by additional opportunities for social and educational growth.

Comparisons with Other Experiments

Since the Fisher study at University of Northern Colorado, Boulder⁸⁹ and the Salts, Zongker study at Florida State University⁹⁰ both used only the Total Positive scale of the TSCS, the data is relatively easy to display. In the Salts/Zongker study, there were two types of treatment included, that of a "structured" treatment group, and another treatment group termed "unstructured." The comparisons of results are shown in the following table.

TSCS Scores in Other Experiments

	Current Project	Fisher	Salts/Zongker	
			structured	unstructured
TSCS Group Mean				
Total Positive				
pre	333.30	326.3	329	343
post	344.81	354.9	343	348
difference	11.51	28.6	14	5

Although I have no means to do further statistical analyses of these comparisons, a few comments can be made based on the raw group mean scores. The approach I have prescribed and the one Bruce Fisher used in Colorado both approach divorce recovery with step by step guidance. The

⁸⁹B.F. Fisher, "Identifying and Meeting Needs of Formerly Married People," pp. 29-46.

⁹⁰Salts and Zongker, "Effects of Divorce Counseling Groups," pp. 55-67.

process of "rebuilding" the identity is addressed by seminar components. The Salts/Zongker work included two types of treatments.⁹¹ The "structured" group followed a format similar to Kessler's "Beyond Divorce" groups, which focuses on developing personal and social skills within a support group atmosphere.⁹² The "unstructured" group followed a design in which the primary purpose was to provide a supportive environment conducive to sharing of strengths and exploration of concerns, but the leaders of such groups did not initiate topics of consideration.

It is clear that a program produces more favorable results when it has considerable structure and attention is given to specific components of the rebuilding process, than does a program with little or no structure. In my view, the program which addresses specific needs, indicates a direction and raises an expectation of progress from its participants is recommended.

⁹¹ Ibid, pp. 59-60.

⁹² Kessler, Beyond Divorce, pp. 21-23.

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