

Post Encounter Program – Love Circle Series  
Contents

Jan. 4, 1996

Dear Lovers,

We are proud, finally, to provide to United Methodist Encounter this electronic library containing a substantial library of excellent Love Circle material. Flames should feel free to use this information, print it and copy it as desired for Marriage Encounter Flame use and other Encounter use.

This library should be considered a living, growing entity. But it will only grow as new material is provided. If you have any resource materials which would benefit these libraries, please send them to us for the benefit of MEUM couples and Flames everywhere.

This disk was generated in Word for Windows but it is formatted as RTF (Rich Text Format) meaning it is Text format including document format information. It should be readable by most of the popular modern personal word processing software. If you have any trouble accessing this library in a readable form and need a different format, please call us.

Please use this library for the benefit of couples and Flames. We have put a great deal of time into compiling this resource and need only its use to make it a Joy.

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## **LOVE CIRCLE SERIES I**

### **PRECIS**

#### **PURPOSE:**

This program was designed to keep couples active in M.E. on a continuing basis. The small group of six couples allows closeness in sharing that larger groups do not. The Love Circle purpose will encourage very close relationship between these few couples. This closed circle has a specific duration. It serves a different purpose from the Encounter Evening program, which seeks to build couple communication by feelings, dialogue and understanding of couple struggles. The planned progressive program builds from one session to the next much as the original weekend does. The program is broken down into six sessions approximately two weeks apart. The entire circle takes about three and one-half months. Each cycle can be started by a core group meeting, dessert night and leader's training night. The re-organization of circles allows all couples in the community to form closer feelings for each other and the community.

#### **CITY COORDINATORS:**

Each geographical area needs a Love Circle coordinator couple to look after the program. This couple will set nights for the initial programs, such as Leader Training and Dessert nights. They will organize the leaders and follow each circle's progress. This couple will advise the national resource couple of any problems or ideas for improvement. It is also necessary to have a report forwarded on the participation in each area. Formats are available for your organization.

#### **DESSERT NIGHT:** (optional)

This night will be held about two to three weeks prior to the desired beginning date of the Love Circle cycle. The coordinating couple will arrange for lead couples for each new circle. Each lead couple will send a love note of invitation to five or six couples as their "secret couples" delivering a token gift to the prospective couple about two weeks prior to the dessert night. (This is done without the couple being seen). The evening begins with a revealing of the secret couples followed by mini-love circles conducted by new leaders. After the mini-circles, all couples are encouraged to sign up for a love circle on the night most convenient with an available lead couple. The mini-circles give each couple the experience and will minimize drop-out of the circles. In a new area, couples for future leaders may be organized into a beginning circle as a training ground.

#### **TRAINING NIGHT FOR LEADERS:** (optional)

This night is held just after, or in some cases just before the dessert night. The program is intended to orient couples for leading circles that have already been through a cycle. The evening contains the session themes and guidelines for sharing. It also contains sample ceremonies for use at the sessions. In new areas this can be used for a group of couples who have not yet experienced a circle. When a new area is forming, it is better to have a couple experienced in love circles to act as training night leaders.

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES I - PRECIS (cont'd)**

**GENERAL SESSION OUTLINE:**

The key to a successful Love Circle is creating a feeling of warmth and trust in the leader's home. This can best be started with a warm couple hug as each couple enters. The chairs should be formed in a circle around a table with a candle. Start each circle with a circle prayer while all couples are holding hands. The lead couple starts and each person has a chance to participate if they wish. The guidelines are repeated at each circle session by the Leaders. **NO COMMENTS WHILE OTHERS SHARE -SHARE OPENLY IN TRUST -- STRESS CONFIDENTIALITY WITHIN THE GROUP.** Explain the purpose of Love Circles and the theme of the evening at the first session. The lead couple starts the sharing on the first question. The tone of the evening will be set at this time so sharing should be as deep and as honest as possible. The lead couple will choose a different couple to start each question's sharing. Be very conscious of any couple's tender spots. There will normally be five or six questions of their own related to the evening's theme. It is always good to have an extra question or two available in case the sharing is short that evening. Half way through the questions, a break is welcome with some socializing. Close each session with a circle prayer just as it was begun. Be sure to set the date for the next session (and subsequent sessions) and which couple is bringing the treat next time. The lead couple should say good-bye to each couple with a couple hug.

## **LOVE CIRCLE SERIES I – SESSION 1, SELF**

This session is for getting to know one another and to focus on the sharing format. Welcome each couple at the door with a hug by the Lead Couple. Have a candle on a coffee table or dining room table set up with the correct number of seats around it. Soft music helps to set a warm mood. While everyone holds hands, start the evening with a circle prayer, beginning with the Lead Couple. Each person should have an opportunity to participate in the prayer, if they feel comfortable doing so. Lead Couple lights the candle to create the atmosphere and reminds each of us to let our light shine. Read a scripture selection, such as Matt. 18:18-20 (or a poem).

### **PURPOSE:**

1. Develop trust.
2. Bring the community closer together.
3. Strengthen the couple's oneness.

### **FORMAT:**

1. Six sessions two weeks apart.
2. All sessions will be at the Lead Couple's home.
3. Snack rotates with one couple supplying the snack each time, but the Lead Couple having coffee and/or punch each time.

### **GUIDELINES:**

1. The first couple to share will rotate for each question. (Lead Couple will start on very difficult questions).
2. Share openly, and share yourself only.
3. Listen carefully.
4. Do not interrupt (not even your spouse)
5. A couple or person may "pass" on a question and may share after everyone else is through, if they desire.
6. Confidentiality within the group is a must of sharing.

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES I – SESSION 1, SELF (cont'd)**

**SELF - OUTLINE**

**I. MOOD SETTING QUOTE:** Read by Lead Couple.

- A. "I can help you to accept and open yourself mostly by accepting and revealing myself to you." *From "Why Am I Afraid To Tell You Who I Am" by John S. Powell*
- B. Have each couple introduce their spouse and tell a little about each other.

**II. QUESTIONS:** Choose three or four as time permits.

- A. What is your favorite time of day and why?
- B. What is your ideal vacation and why?
- C. How do you feel about yourself?
- D. What is your favorite spot in the house and why?
- E. What things are most important to your life right now?
- F. What is your favorite sport?

**III. BREAK:** (15 to 20 minutes)

**IV. MOOD SETTING QUOTE**

"Whatever my secrets are, remember, and I entrust them to you, they are part of me." *From "Why Am I Afraid To Tell You Who I Am" by John S. Powell*

**V. QUESTIONS:** Choose three or four as time permits.

- A. What is your favorite food?
- B. What I need more than anything else from this group is
- C. What is the most important thing that I can give to this circle?
- D. What is your favorite time of year and why?
- E. How do you feel about starting this Love Circle?
- F. What is your greatest strength?
- G. What is your greatest weakness?

**VI. CLOSING:**

- A. Close with a circle prayer and big circle hug (or sing together, "There's A New World Somewhere")
- B. Choose the next date and time or all of the following dates if possible.
- C. Arrange for one of the couples to bring the snack for the next session.
- D. Lead Couple says good-bye to each couple with a hug.

Before the next get-together, the Lead Couple should fill out the roster form and send it to the area coordinator of Love Circle and they in turn will compile all circles in progress and send to the appropriate persons.

## **LOVE CIRCLE SERIES I – SESSION 2, WE**

This session is the transition to deeper sharing. Warmth and putting each couple at ease is important. Welcome each couple with a hug. The chairs should be set in a circle around a table holding a candle. Music should be playing softly in the background. Open with a circle prayer with the Lead Couple starting.

**GUIDELINES:** Review before each session and at breaks if needed.

1. The first couple to share will rotate for each question. (Lead Couple will start on very difficult questions.)
2. Share openly.
3. Listen carefully.
4. Do not interrupt (even your spouse).
5. A couple or person may pass on a question and may share after everyone else is through, if they desire.
6. Confidentiality within the group is a must of sharing.

**I. MOOD SETTING QUOTE:** Read by Lead Couple

"Sharing my feelings will provide you with the opportunity to know me in a new way, to know yourself in a new way and be changed." *From "Secret of Staying in Love" by John S. Powell.*

**II. QUESTIONS:** Choose three or four as time permits

- A. If you could give one thing to your spouse, what would it be?
- B. When do you feel the most loved?
- C. What qualities do you look for in a friend?
- D. Describe what you would like your life to be like in five years.
- E. What is the one thing that your spouse does that makes you feel the most loved?
- F. What does "being open" mean to you?

**III. BREAK TIME:** 15 to 30 minutes

**IV. MOOD SETTING QUOTE**

"The genius of communication is the ability to be both totally honest and totally kind at the same time." *From "Secret of Staying in Love" by John S. Powell.*

**V. QUESTIONS:** Choose three or four as time permits

- A. What quality do you admire most in your spouse?
- B. What does "trust" mean to you?
- C. How do you think your spouse sees you?
- D. How do you see your spouse?
- E. How does your spouse most help you?
- F. What do you think your spouse adds most to your couple life?
- G. How does your family life reflect your coupleness?

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES I – SESSION 2, WE (cont'd)**

**VI. CLOSING:**

- A. Close with a circle prayer. A circle hug after the prayer is always a good idea. Arrange for the next session's snack in rotation. Lead Couple should say good-bye to each couple with a hug.
- B. **OPTIONAL:** Lead Couple arrange for each couple to bring to the next session part of the ingredients to make a loaf of bread (yeast bread, banana bread or other). Lead Couple will combine all ingredients and provide for fourth meeting. This is separate from the snack.

## **LOVE CIRCLE SERIES I – SESSION 3, GOD**

This session continues deeper sharing with development of greater trust within the group. Welcome each couple warmly with a hug. Setting of chairs around a table containing a candle and an open bible with passages pre-selected. Open circle with a circle prayer. Review the guidelines of openness, trust, confidentiality and no interruptions.

### **I. MOOD SETTING QUOTE:**

"If I expose my nakedness as a person to you, do not make me feel shame." *From "Why Am I Afraid To Tell You Who I Am" by John S. Powell*

### **II. QUESTIONS:** Use these questions or substitute a poem or Bible passage for one or two questions. At least one should be expressions of feelings on a Bible passage. (Please note suggestions at the end of the session)

- A. Has your experience taught you anything about God, His love, His acceptance, His forgiveness?
- B. What is your spouse's most God-like or Christ-like quality?
- C. What do you think is God's plan for you? HDMAMMF?

### **III. BREAK TIME:** 15 to 30 minutes

### **IV. MOOD SETTING QUOTE:**

"It is a law of human life as certain as gravity: To live life fully, we must learn to use things and love people, not love things and use people." *From "Why Am I Afraid To Tell You Who I Am" by John S. Powell*

### **V. QUESTIONS:** Use questions or substitute a poem or Bible passage.

- A. Where are you in your relationship with god right now?
- B. Share a time in your life when God changed your direction to that of his own.
- C. When have you felt most loved by God?
- D. Or replace two or three questions with:
  1. Poem (such as: "If Jesus Came to Your House", copy attached)
    - a. What was my first reaction when I heard the poem?
    - b. What would be your first question or comment as you opened the door?  
HDMAMMF?
  2. Read Bible selections such as: Mark 2:1-12, James 5:13-16, Mk. 8:22-26, Acts 11:1-17.
    - a. What feelings are strongest within you after hearing this passage?
    - b. How does this passage relate to your life?

### **VI. CLOSING**

- A. Closing circle prayer.
- B. Arrange for next session's snack.
- C. Hand each couple the same type of paper to bring back to the next session. The paper should include their name, address, phone number, children's names and ages, birth dates, one neighbor's name and possibly a map to their home.

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES I – SESSION 3, GOD (cont'd)**

**IF JESUS CAME TO YOUR HOUSE**

*Lois Blanchard Eades*

If Jesus came to your house to spend a day or two -  
If He came unexpectedly, I wonder what you'd do.  
Oh, I know you'd give your nicest room to such an honored Guest,  
And all the food you'd serve to Him would be the very best,  
And you would keep assuring Him you're glad to have him there -  
That serving Him in your own home is joy beyond compare.

But when you saw Him coming, would you meet Him at the door  
With arms outstretched in welcome to your heavenly Visitor?  
Or would you have to change your clothes before you let Him in?  
Or hide some magazines and put the Bible where they'd been?  
Would you turn off the radio and hope He hadn't heard?  
And wish you hadn't uttered that last, loud, hasty word?

Would you hide your worldly music and put some hymn books out?  
Could you let Jesus walk right in, or would you rush about?  
And I wonder - if the Savior spent a day or two with you,  
Would you go right on doing the things you always do?  
Would you go right on saying the things you always say?  
Would life for you continue as it does from day to day?

Would your family conversation keep up it's usual pace?  
And would you find it hard each meal to say a table grace?  
Would you sing the songs you always sing, and read the books you read,  
And let Him know the things on which your mind and spirit feed?  
Would you take Jesus with you everywhere you'd planned to go?  
Or would you, maybe, change your plans for just a day or so?

Would you be glad to have Him meet your very closest friends?  
Or would you hope they'd stay away until His visit ends?  
Would you be glad to have Him stay forever on and on?  
Or would you sigh with great relief when He at last was gone?  
It might be interesting to know the things that you would do  
If Jesus Christ in person came to spend some time with you.

## **LOVE CIRCLE SERIES I – SESSION 4, COMMUNITY**

This session is when Secret Couples are chosen for a two-week period of special thought and gift giving. This broadens the closeness in the circle and should help involve other family members.

Welcome all couples with a hug. Have a bag or bowl ready for them to put their maps in when they come in the door.

### **I. MOOD SETTING QUOTE**

"Friendship is like a creeping vine always looking for something to embrace is seeing the good qualities in those around you is always a sweet responsibility, never a duty."

### **II. AGAPE FEAST**

Table should be pre-set with the home-baked loaf or other loaf and a glass of juice for each person around the candle.

- A. Explain that this night begins a very special time of sharing your love thus the Agape feast.
- B. Read John 15:12-17.
- C. Prayer by host on sharing, friendship, community and closeness.
- D. Each couple takes a piece of the loaf and passes the loaf to the next couple. Each couple shares with their mate.
- E. Circle prayer.

**NOTE:** Feast may be used in this session or in session #5)

### **III. REVIEW GUIDELINES:**

No comments, share openly in trust, etc.

### **IV. MOOD SETTING QUOTE:** Read Acts 2:42-47.

### **V. QUESTIONS:**

- A. What I need more than anything else from this group is (This question may have been used in Session #1, but answers may be different at this point).
- B. What were my feelings as we drove here this evening?

### **VI. MOOD SETTING QUOTE**

"Love is an activity not a passive effect; it is a standing in, not a falling out. In general, the active character of love can be described by stating that love is primarily giving not receiving."

### **VII. SECRET COUPLES:**

Each couple draws one of the papers from the bowl or bag. If a couple gets their own name, everyone must draw again.

- A. Share in some way each day with your Secret Couple.
- B. Involve the whole family -- children love it!

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES I – SESSION 4, COMMUNITY (cont'd)**

**C. Gift Ideas:**

1. Give them a candle and tell them to light it at a certain time and that you will be praying for them at that time.
2. Have another family call and sing our song.
3. Send them a card in the mail.
4. Baked goods - bread, candy, cake, cookies, etc.
5. Fruit - a bunch of bananas with a note, "We love you a whole bunch."
6. Tape a large banner on their garage door - "We love you!" or "You are Special!"
7. Make dinner and have another couple deliver it.
8. **BE SIMPLE AND BE YOURSELF!**
9. Bring the last gift to the 5th session.

**VIII. HAVE EACH COUPLE BRING TO SESSION #5 TWO LOVE LETTERS** written on the day before or the day of the session. One letter written to the couple leaving gifts for them and one for the couple to whom they have been giving gifts. The love letter should express the feelings developed in this experience. Length is not important but your feelings are.

**IX. CLOSING PRAYER**

- A. Close with a circle prayer for each couple's secret couple without revealing names. A circle hug shows warmth after the prayer.
- B. Confirm the snack couple and time for the next session.
- C. Lead Couple hugs each couple as they leave.

## **LOVE CIRCLE SERIES I – SESSION 5, SHARING OF SELF**

The two questions for this session are very deep but important for closeness. Tissue should be available. Caution all couples not to reveal the Secret Couple until asked to. Provide a place for the last night's gifts to be deposited. Welcome all couples with a hug. Circle Prayer.

Comments during revealing of secret couples are O.K. but no comments when sharing on the questions. Couples describe what their Secret Couple did for them without revealing their identity. When all have shared, one couple at a time take their last gift and love letter and gives it to their Secret Couple. The receiving couple then shares their letter with the giving couple. Each should have a chance to share their feelings.

### **I. MOOD SETTING QUOTE**

"To reveal myself openly and honestly takes the rawest kind of courage -- to tell you my thoughts is to locate myself in a category. To tell you about my feelings is to tell you about me." *From "Why Am I Afraid to Tell You Who I Am" by John S. Powell*

### **II. QUESTION #1: (Lead Couple must share deeply)**

What was the most sorrowful moment of your life?

### **III. BREAK TIME: 15-30 minutes. Refreshments (Minister to each other from the first question's sharing.)**

### **IV. AGAPE FEAST (Optional: If Agape Feast is used in this session, insert here as described in Session #4)**

### **V. QUESTION #2: What was the most joyful moment of your life?**

### **VI. READ: "SORROW AND JOY"**

Sorrow and Joy are yoked together not for contract but because they are different expressions of the same physiological condition -- excessive emotional tension! They are twin foci around which emotions revolve. It is a fallacy to assume that sorrow implies evil and that joy is happiness, for even in laughter the heart is sad and the end of joy is heaviness. Love, which is part of joy, is so wrapped up with grief that we would not want our grief taken from us, even if it could be. Legend tells of the woman who came to the river Styx to be ferried across to the land of departed spirits. Charon, the ferryman, offers her a certain potion which can cause her to forget the life she is leaving and all of its sorrows. In the end, the woman leaves the draught untasted, choosing to remember life's pains and sorrows and failures rather than to forget its joys, its triumphs and its love. Sorrow and joy belong together. They are precious experiences which deepen understanding and give meaning to life.

Paul S. McElro --Quiet Thoughts

### **VII. CIRCLE PRAYER:**

- A. Each couple should pray for their Secret Couple.
- B. Plan a pot luck dinner for the 6th session.
- C. Have each couple bring the names of couples they think would be interested in Love Circles with them to next session.
- D. Say good-bye with a couple hug.

## **LOVE CIRCLE SERIES I – SESSION 6, REACHING OUT**

This session and pot luck dinner is more open and tries to encourage couples to be leaders and to attend the next love Circle as well as working for M.E. on weekends, renewals, Encounter Evenings, and recruiting.

### **I. OPENING**

- A. Welcome all couples with a hug.
- B. Prayer before dinner.
- C. Have the pot luck dinner but save dessert for later.
- D. Circle prayer starts the sharing.

### **II. MOOD SETTING QUOTE**

"To be loved is to know happiness and contentment. To give love is to know the joy of sharing oneself. For it is through the miracle of love that we discover the fullness of life." *by Robin St. John.*

### **III. QUESTIONS**

- A. What have you gained from this love circle?
- B. Go around the circle and tell each person individually what quality you love most in them.
- C. What can I do to help spread the closeness we have felt in this circle?

### **IV. DESSERT TIME: 15 minutes.**

### **V. CLOSING**

- A. Have all lights out except the center Love Circle candle.
- B. Have a candle ceremony with individual candles -- one for each couple.
- C. The Lead Couple lights their candle from the Love Circle candle used at each session. Then the Lead Couple lights each couple's candle with their candle to signify the spreading of closeness and love from this circle to the community.
- D. End with a circle prayer.

### **VI. BEFORE THE COUPLES LEAVE:**

- A. Set a renewal social for about one month later.
- B. Pass out a list of names and addresses to each couple of those in the circle.
- C. Ask for those willing to lead a circle.

### **VII. GOODNIGHT**

- A. Say good-bye with a warm hug.
- B. Lead Couple fill in forms appropriate to your community and send them to the city coordinating couple.

**NOTE:** This series may appear to be exceedingly structured to some who consider using the Love Circle. Please consider your group, their previous experiences with M.E., and modify the ceremonies and questions to be appropriate to your group.

## **LOVE CIRCLE SERIES II**

### **THE LOVE CIRCLE**

#### **GENERAL NOTES FOR COMMUNITY LEADERS:**

For effective sharings, some of the discussions questions must be converted into dialogue questions. We recommend giving two or three dialogue questions in advance of the meeting. (Tell the couples to be sure to focus on FEELINGS.) Couples can prepare these ahead of time. Use one of these to share as the last item in the lover letters part of the meeting. This should be a full sharing of feelings. The other questions can be used as discussion questions without any preparation during the meeting.

Try to make the sharing question the heaviest question of the evening ... the other questions lead up to it. Try to use as much of the program as time permits. It has a special cumulative impact. Sharings for 5 - 6 couples should take about 11 hours if side comments are kept to a minimum.

**WE RECOMMEND THAT YOU DO NOT PASS OUT THE ENTIRE PROGRAM TO THE GROUP!**

We have found it to be more fun, and more effective if an element of surprise is maintained.

**ENJOY!**

## **LOVE CIRCLE SERIES II – THE LOVE CIRCLE, SESSION 1**

### **I. EXPLAIN TO THE GROUP THE PURPOSE OF THE LOVE CIRCLE, AND GENERAL COMMENTS:**

- A. To develop trust and to show the beauty within each of us, (Leaders can explain what they gained from their Love Circle if done before.)
- B. We will meet about 6 times. We could decide to meet one or 2 times more, but in general, it's 6 times... usually every 2 weeks.
- C. Love Circle is a COMMITMENT. Each session is as a link in a chain, and it is very important to make every effort to attend each session to receive the full benefit of the Love Circle. (If more than one couple is not able to attend on a particular night, it is advisable to cancel for that night.)
- D. It is important to really listen to each other. Therefore, we will answer each question individually without interruption. After everyone has had a turn, anyone who wishes may add another of their feelings,
- E. Some questions will have great meaning for some people. If they are finding it difficult to express their feelings, we ask that you just wait for them to finish.
- F. Nothing anyone says in a Love Circle is to be repeated by anyone in the group outside of the Circles

### **II. INTRODUCTIONS**

Please introduce your spouse to us, tell us how long you've been married and tell us your spouse's most endearing quality.

### **III. QUESTIONS #1**

- A. What is your favorite month and why?
- B. What is your favorite time of the day and why?
- C. Describe the best variation you ever have had.
- D. If you could take a trip anywhere, where would you go and why?
- E. If your house was on fire and all humans and animals were safely out, what three things would you rescue?

### **IV. BREAK**

### **V. QUESTIONS #2**

- A. What was the highest point in your life during this past year?
- B. What 3 things are the most important in your life right now?
- C. How do you see yourself?
- D. How do you think others see you?
- E. If you could change one thing about yourself, what would you change?

### **VI. CLOSING PRAYER**

## **LOVE CIRCLE SERIES II – THE LOVE CIRCLE, SESSION 2**

### **I. OPENING**

Review Love Circle guidelines and purpose from Session 1.

### **II. QUESTIONS #1**

- A. What is the most peaceful setting you can imagine?
- B. What color would best describe you? What color would you like to be?
- C. What qualities do you look for in a friend?
- D. Describe what you would like your life to be like 5 years from now.

### **III. BREAK**

### **IV. QUESTIONS #2**

- A. What is the ONE thing your spouse does that makes you feel especially loved?
- B. What special gift can you give your spouse right now?
- C. What was the loveliest time of your life?
- D. The person I have the greatest difficulty accepting is:
  - 1. myself
  - 2. my spouse
  - 3. my child/children
  - 4. my friends
  - 5. my enemies

### **V. CLOSING PRAYER:** Pray for your spouse.

## **LOVE CIRCLE SERIES II – THE LOVE CIRCLE, SESSION 3**

### **I. OPENING**

Welcome couples and review process.

### **II. QUESTIONS #1**

- A. Where are you with your relationship with God right now?
- B. How could you make your relationship with God closer and more personal?
- C. Read James 5:13-16. How do you respond to this passage?
- D. In what ways can your prayer life be improved?

### **III. BREAK**

### **IV. QUESTIONS #2**

- A. When have you felt most loved by Christ?
- B. When has Christ felt most loved by you?
- C. You're sitting at home alone, and there's a knock on the door. You answer the knock and Jesus is standing there. What would you do and what would your conversation be?

**NOTE:** Question C is a MUST for a really good dialogue and sharing question!

### **V. CLOSING PRAYER:** Pray for the person beside you, NOT your spouse.

## **LOVE CIRCLE SERIES II – THE LOVE CIRCLE, SESSION 4**

### **I. OPENING PRAYER**

### **II. QUESTIONS**

- A. What is your favorite verse in the Bible, and why?
- B. What part do you think God is playing in our Love Circle?
- C. Read Acts 2:42-47. If you lived in those days, what would have impressed you most about that community?
- D. How do you think that passage relates to our community today?
- E. Where in your life have you most experienced the love of a Christian community?
- F. Read Corinthians 13:1-13. Treat as Scripture Dialogue. What are my feelings after hearing this scripture?

### **III. SECRET LOVERS**

Now each couple draws the name of another couple without revealing which name they have drawn. For the next two weeks, they will "live" for this couple" You will be their "secret lovers!" Find ways to show your love for them. Examples are: cards, small gift, invitation to dinner to be set when names are revealed, offer of future babysitting, flowers, prayers, dialogue questions, etc. Use your imagination. Have fun!

### **IV. CLOSING PRAYER.**

(A break may be fit in where it feels right, or no break may be necessary.)

## **LOVE CIRCLE SERIES II – THE LOVE CIRCLE, SESSION 5**

### **I. OPENING PRAYER**

### **II. QUESTIONS**

- A. Each couple share what their secret lov6rs did for them over the past two weeks.
- B. Describe the most recent time I consciously and deliberately made a decision to love.
- C. Describe the change in our relationship as a result of making a decision to love.
- D. Which is easier for me -- to love -- or to let myself be loved? HDMAMMF?
- E. Whose feelings do we usually dialogue on -- yours or mine? HDIFAT?

#### **Alternate Questions:**

- A. What was the most sorrowful moment in my life?
- B. What was the most joyful moment in my life?
- C. Which is easier for me in dialogue -- to listen or to be the first to reach out to my spouse?  
HDIFAT?

### **III. SECRET LOVERS**

At this time, "Secret Lovers" are revealed (if they have not been already figured out).

### **IV. SECRET LOVERS #2**

Each couple draws the name of another couple (different from their previous couple) without revealing which name they have drawn. Before the next meeting, they will write a love letter to this couple and bring it to the next meeting.

### **V. CLOSING PRAYER.** Pray for your Secret Lovers.

## **LOVE CIRCLE SERIES II – THE LOVE CIRCLE, SESSION 6**

### **I. OPENING PRAYER**

### **II. QUESTIONS**

- A. Read the Love Letter you have received. They may be shared if the couples agree to share them.
- B. What is my greatest strength?
- C. What is my greatest weakness?
- D. What good qualities do you see in each person in our Love Circle? (Start with one person and have that person tell each person in the Love Circle their good qualities. Then continue with the next person, etc.)

### **III. BREAK**

### **IV. CLOSING**

- A. Draw a cross on a large piece of butcher paper. On another sheet, draw a figure of Christ which will fit onto the cross. Color as desired. Cut the figure of Christ into as many pieces as there are people or couples in the group. Assemble the figure on the cross, and explain to the group that this is an illustration showing that we are ALL a part of Christ's body, and that we are each important in completing that body. When you realize you are a part of Christ's body, how does this make you feel?
- B. Darken the room. Place a lighted candle in the middle of the group. Have enough candles so that each person or couple has one.
- C. The Lead Couple lights theirs from the center candle. The lighting is passed on.
- D. The center candle represents God's love. Indicate how God's love can be smothered by covering the light, but we must let it shine and not hide it under a bushel basket.
- E. Now the entire room is lit -- ceilings, walls, faces -- but God's light is still strong. **HOW MANY OTHER CANDLES IN OUR COMMUNITY ARE WAITING TO BE LIT?**

### **V. CLOSING PRAYER**

## **LOVE CIRCLE SERIES III – SESSION 1, DIALOGUE**

### **I. OPENING**

- A. Opening prayer
- B. Explain Love Circles - focus on each other and God, not continuation (6 meeting).
  - 1. Talk about commitment to 6 sessions.
  - 2. Importance of building trust.
  - 3. Focus on relationship with God and with spouse.
  - 4. Stress that they are sharing just their relationship and how Marriage Encounter has helped them grow as a couple.
  - 5. Not trying to tell them that this is the way it should be for all. Each couple is unique.

### **II. INTRODUCTIONS**

### **III. RULES FOR SHARING:**

- A. Only share self.
- B. No comments made on other sharings.
- C. Sharing doesn't go outside circle (gossip).
- D. It's harder to share the longer you wait.
- E. Not sharing is sharing, too.

### **IV. PRESENTATION**

- A. Share yourself -- how dialogue has helped your ups and downs.
  - 1. Is it easier to reach out to each other?
  - 2. Do you notice more respect, sensitivity, awareness of each other?
  - 3. How has dialogue affected your relationship to your family? To others?
  - 4. Do you seem to have more confidence and self-acceptance because of your spouse's openness and acceptance and support of you?
- B. Have you ever stopped and started again?
  - 1. How do you feel when you miss dialogue?
  - 2. Difficulties making the decision to write, prime time, technique (describe your loveletter and dialogue technique, stressing that everyone develops their own pattern).
  - 3. Have you had dry periods? How do you overcome them?
- C. Share what you have gained through dialogue (closeness to each other & God)
  - 1. Are your downs shorter, ups longer?
  - 2. How do you feel closer?
  - 3. Are you more supportive and trusting of each other?
  - 4. Do you find it easier to forgive?
  - 5. Are your arguments or disagreements different since dialogue?
  - 6. How are you more open to God?
  - 7. How have your feelings changed towards church?

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES III – SESSION 1, DIALOGUE (cont'd)**

**V. BRIEFLY EXPLAIN SCRIPTURE DIALOGUE.**

- A. Take one line or phrase from scripture and ask how Christ's words make me feel.
- B. The Bible is like a loveletter from God to each of us personally.
- C. We don't need to analyze the passage; just respond and experience the feeling we get from it.
- D. The Bible reveals God's love for us.

**VI. REFRESHMENTS**

**VII. OPTIONAL: 10&10**

- A. Stress that no one is required to share.
- B. Mention that when you feel uncomfortable you are growing.
- C. Dialogue Questions:
  - 1. Why did I come to Love Circles and what do I expect to gain? HDMAMMF?
  - 2. What changes have we experienced since our weekend? HDMAMMF?

**VIII. GROUP SHARING:**

If a couple doesn't want to share letters, don't force. Exchange feelings verbally. No one is required to share!!!

**IX. HOMEWORK**

Re-read your self-evaluation from your weekend notebook. How does your present self-image compare and HDTMMF?

**X. ARRANGE NEXT MEETING (who will bring refreshments, etc. )**

**XI. CLOSING PRAYER AND SONG.**

## **LOVE CIRCLE SERIES III – SESSION 2, SELF-IMAGE**

### **I. OPENING PRAYER**

### **II. GROUP SHARING:**

What kind of person did I bring tonight? (nervous, anxious, excited, depressed, etc.)

### **III. MINI SHARING - Share letters**

How does my present self-image compare to that evaluation from my weekend notebook?

### **IV. MAJOR SHARING: Share your ideas and personal experience on:**

A. Difficulties in discovering my true self. (This means on your weekend.)

1. Was I being open and honest in my self-description?
2. How did writing it make me feel?
3. Was my description short? Negative?
4. Was it about what I do (talents and capabilities) rather than who I am?
5. Was it a general description that could apply to almost anyone?
6. Did I judge myself according to worldly standards?

B. How I keep others from knowing me.

1. Stress that we want to feel accepted so will act accordingly with masks, but masks are not wrong, just how I want others to see me.
2. What kind of masks do you wear? (self-confident person, the man, happy go lucky and humorous, nice guy, good mother, professional person, organized man, caring person, creative person, etc.)
3. How do I act out my masks?
4. How do these masks keep others from seeing the real me? (name times when your mask covered your feelings of inadequacy, your Aldonza feeling, etc.)

C. Good qualities I have discovered about me.

1. What good qualities have you discovered about yourself?
2. How did you feel when you heard “God does not make junk”?
3. Did that change your self-image in any way?
4. How is dialogue bringing out your Dulcinea image more? (Trust, acceptance, support, closeness to spouse increases confidence with others.)

**V. READ:** "I am afraid to tell you who I am because if I tell you who I am, you may not like who I am, and it's all that I have."

### **VI. REFRESHMENTS:**

### **VII. READ POEM:** The Wall

**VIII. DIALOGUE QUESTION:** HDIFA revealing my inner feelings to my spouse?

### **IX. OPEN SHARING**

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES III – SESSION 2, SELF-IMAGE (cont'd)**

**X. GIVE HOMEWORK**

- A. Read Ephesians 5:22-33
- B. Dialogue on, "A man shall leave his father and mother and shall cling to his wife and the two shall become one." HDTMMF?

**XI. ARRANGE NEXT MEETING** (who will bring refreshments, etc. )

**XII. CLOSING PRAYER AND SONG.**

**POEM "THE WALL"**

Their wedding picture mocked them from the table.

    These two, whose minds no longer touched each other.

They lived with such a heavy barricade between them that

    neither battering ram of words nor artilleries of touch could break it down.

Somewhere, between the oldest child's first tooth and the youngest daughter's graduation,  
they lost each other.

Throughout the years, each slowly unravelled that tangled ball of string called self,

    and as they tugged at stubborn knots, each hid their searching from the other.

Sometimes she cried at night and begged the whispering darkness to tell her who she was.

    He lay beside her, snoring like a hibernating bear, unaware of her winter.

Once, after they had made love, he wanted to tell her how afraid he was of dying,

    but, fearing to show his naked soul, he spoke instead about the beauty of her breasts.

She took a course in modern art, trying to find herself on colors splashed upon a canvas,

    and complained to other women about men who are insensitive.

He climbed into a tomb called "the office". Wrapped his mind in a shroud of paper figures  
and buried himself in customers.

Slowly, the wall between them rose,

    cemented by the mortar of indifference.

One day, reaching out to each other, they found a barrier they could not penetrate,

    and recoiling from the coldness of the stone,

each retreated from the stranger on the other side.

    For when love dies, it is not in a moment of angry battle,  
not when fiery bodies lose their heat.

    It lies panting, exhausted, expiring at the bottom of a wall it could not scale.

## **LOVE CIRCLE SERIES III – SESSION 3, MARRIAGE**

### **I. OPENING PRAYER**

### **II. GROUP SHARING** (from Homework)

- A. Scripture Reading: Ephesians 5: 22-33
- B. Share letter and or dialogue.
- C. Share with us the qualities of the wonderful person you married.

### **III. MAJOR SHARING:** Stress that marriage goes through continual stages of romance, disillusionment, and joy.

- A. Our Courtship (Romance). How you met, dating, thoughts and feelings.
  1. Describe your courtship and special feelings you had towards each other.
  2. Idealistic attitudes about marriage; what your marriage was going to be like in your minds.
- B. Early Marriage (Disillusionment). Struggles and triumphs. Share joys.
  1. First share joys of early marriage, closeness of activities in early marriage.
  2. When did you first feel disillusioned with each other?
  3. In what ways were you not who you thought you were?
  4. In what ways was your spouse not who you thought?
  5. Did you have any petty annoyances? (e.g. Squeezed toothpaste wrong, left toilet seat up, pantyhose in the shower, etc.)
- C. Settled years of marriage. Modern world enters. Crises and difficulties.
  1. How did your individual involvements begin to pull you apart?
  2. Did children affect your closeness?
  3. Did you ever have lonely feelings or ask yourself, "Is this all there is" or "Where are we going?"
  4. Were there any really difficult times in your relationship? HDYFAT?
- D. Our marriage now. Changes and why. What are we doing to keep it that way or to change it.
  1. Now think of your renewed awareness of the importance of your marriage (since the weekend).
  2. Describe warmth and joy of your 70&70, being a couple.
  3. Tell how you didn't want to lose that feeling.
  4. How did you feel when you heard "To love is a daily decision"?
  5. What changes did you make to place each other first?
  6. What kinds of distractions interfered with this change?
  7. Why do you dialogue daily? (closeness)
  8. Describe your feelings about living in daily awareness of your decision to love. (Living the mark of oneness – God's desire.)
  9. Why do you choose to stay in contact with other dialoguing couples? (no one dialogues alone; strength and motivation to grow; we have a stake in each other's marriage)
- E. How do you feel about it?

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES III – SESSION 3, MARRIAGE (cont'd)**

**IV. REFRESHMENTS**

**V. DIALOGUE QUESTION** (choice of A or B)

- A. Corinthians 13: 4-8. HDTMMF?
- B. How does our marriage differ from the modern world? HDTMMF?

**VI. OPEN SHARING**

**VII. POEM: I Love You**

**VIII. HOMEWORK:** Dialogue on:

- A. "Thy will be done." HDTMMF?
- B. HDIF about prayer?

**IX. ARRANGE NEXT MEETING** (who will bring refreshments, etc. )

**X. CLOSING PRAYER AND SONG**

**POEM "I LOVE YOU"**

Roy Croft

I love you not only for what you are,  
but for what I am when I am with you.  
I love you not only for what you have made of yourself,  
but for what you are making of me.  
I love you, for the part of me that you are bringing out.  
I love you, for putting your hand into my heaped up heart,  
and passing over all the foolish weak things that you can't help dimly seeing there;  
and drawing out into the light all the beautiful belongings  
that no one else had looked quite far enough to find.

I love you because you are helping me to make of the lumber of my life,  
not a tavern, but a temple:  
Out of my works, of my every day,  
not a reproach, but a song.

I love you, because you have done more than any creed could have done,  
to make me feel my goodness.  
You have done it with your touch, with your words,  
with yourself.

## **LOVE CIRCLE SERIES III – SESSION 4, PRAYER**

### **I. OPENING PRAYER**

### **II. GROUP SHARING (from Homework)**

Share letters and or dialogue.

### **III. MAJOR SHARING**

Share where you were, where you are, and where you would like to be in your prayer life. Has prayer entered into your dialogue? Times your prayers have been answered or rewarding to you. "PRAYER" relates to the weekend talk, "God's Desire for Marriage". The focus is on openness to receive and openness to give, and when you are open to your spouse you are open to God.

#### **A. Where you were:**

1. How open to your spouse were you before your weekend?
2. How well did you listen to each other before your weekend?
3. How open were you with God?
4. Did you seek God outside of yourself or did you look inward?
5. Was yours a giving relationship with God or more a taking or receiving kind of relationship?
6. How was your pre-weekend relationship with God and with your spouse similar?

#### **B. Where you are:**

1. How has your openness with your spouse changed your openness to God?
2. Do you trust God more?
3. Have you found your dialogue with God becoming more of a two-way exchange rather than just you doing all the talking?
4. Has your dialogue with God become more conversational?
5. Are you more aware of God listening to you when you pray; of God's acceptance of you just as you are?
6. Do you get more out of reading the Bible since your weekend?
7. Do you attend church now more to give than to receive?
8. How has Holy Communion become more meaningful to you?
9. How is your relationship with God and with your spouse similar in growth since your weekend?

#### **C. Where you would like to be:**

1. The more we give of ourselves, the more in union we are with God and with our spouse.
2. Has prayer entered into your dialogue?
3. Do you pray together out loud before you exchange letters?
4. Do you pray before writing your letter?
5. Have you ever written your prayer in your loveletter?
6. Do you scripture dialogue?
7. Share times your prayers have been answered or rewarding to you.

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES III – SESSION 4, PRAYER (cont'd)**

**IV. READ POEM: PRAYER (Anonymous)**

I asked for health, that I might do greater things.  
I was given infirmity, that I might do better things.

I asked for riches, that I might be happy.  
I was given poverty, that I might be wise.

I asked for power, that I might have the praise of all.  
I was given weariness, that I might feel the need of God.

I asked for all things, that I might enjoy life.  
I was given life, that I might enjoy all things.

I got nothing that I asked for, but everything I hoped for.  
Almost despite myself, my unspoken prayers were answered.

I am among all people most richly blessed.

**V. REFRESHMENTS:**

**VI. OPEN SHARING:**

A. Read scripture Luke 11:5-13

<sup>5</sup> And he said to them, “Suppose one of you has a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; <sup>6</sup> for a friend of mine has arrived, and I have nothing to set before him.’ <sup>7</sup> And he answers from within, ‘Do not bother me; the door has already been locked, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.’ <sup>8</sup> I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, at least because of his persistence he will get up and give him whatever he needs. <sup>9</sup> “So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. <sup>10</sup> For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. <sup>11</sup> Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish? <sup>12</sup> Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion? <sup>13</sup> If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

B. Open Sharing Question: What does that mean to me and HDTMMF?

C. Any questions on dialogue?

**VII. HOMEWORK: (Dialogue Questions)**

A. Have we drawn closer to God since our weekend and HDIFAT?

B. How do I feel about living and trusting in God's plan?

**VIII. ARRANGE NEXT MEETING (who will bring refreshments, etc.)**

**IX. CLOSING PRAYER AND SONG.**

## **LOVE CIRCLE SERIES III – SESSION 5, SPIRITUALITY – GOD’S PLAN**

### **I. OPENING PRAYER**

### **II. GROUP SHARING (from Homework)**

Share letters and or dialogue.

### **III. MAJOR SHARING: HOW WE RELATE TO GOD**

#### **A. Your relationship with God**

1. Share your relationship with God since the weekend (closeness and awareness).
2. Point out parallels in your relationship with God and your relationship with your spouse since your weekend.
3. Share any outstanding changes since your weekend in your relationship with God.
4. How was that related to your relationship with your spouse and vice-versa (you reveal God's love to each other)?

#### **B. Prayers God has answered**

#### **C. How M.E. has increased your awareness of God in your relationship**

1. How did you feel about hearing, "Just as the trinity is 3 persons in one God, so we as a couple are 2 persons in one love relationship"? (as a couple we mirror the love relationship of the trinity)
2. HDYFA being "called" to be a couple?
3. HDYFA God's plan (unity, closeness, die to self) versus world's plan (love for self-fulfillment)?
4. HDYF hearing on the weekend that God wants us to have unity and that he planned it that way from the beginning?
5. Have there been any dialogues when you have shared total oneness of feeling? How do I feel about my answer?

### **IV. READ: WE ARE GOD'S PLAN**

Because of our love for each other, our love for God and His love for us, our marriage is special. We are chosen, unique in God's plan. The two of us are a community in itself, a love community that is the closest thing to heaven we will have on earth, our coupleness is our vocation, our gift from God.

God's stake in our marriage is very real. God created us so that others can know what His love is like. A reflection of God's love – the love of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. As the three persons of the trinity are one, so we are two in one love relationship.

Every day, through our dialogue, we bring the awareness of our unique beauty and the urgency of our relationship to each other. Our dialogue is the key that gives life to our coupleness. It is our way of deciding to love, to reveal our specialness to each other in our own loving community. Just striving to live our vocation to the fullest is a thanksgiving to God for the gift of each other. This is God's plan for us!

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES III – SESSION 5, SPIRITUALITY – GOD’S PLAN (cont’d)**

**V. REFRESHMENTS:**

**VI. DIALOGUE (choose one scripture)**

- A. Read Scripture: Luke 12:15-30 or Matthew 6:25-34.
- B. What do those words mean to me and HDTMMF?

**VII. OPEN SHARING** (Read scripture passage if time permits.)

**VIII. HOMEWORK (Dialogue Questions)**

- A. HDIF about the M. E. dream of changing the world and what am I doing about it?
- B. HDIF about getting involved with my neighbors?
- C. How can we work to serve God in our everyday life and HDIFAT?

**IX. ARRANGE NEXT MEETING** (who will bring refreshments, etc)

**X. CLOSING PRAYER AND SONG**

## **LOVE CIRCLE SERIES III – SESSION 6, COMMUNITY**

### **I. OPENING PRAYER**

### **II. GROUP SHARING (from Homework)**

Share letters and or dialogue.

### **III. MAJOR SHARING:**

- A. Our relationship with each other and God.
  - 1. We are a trinity: you, your spouse, and God. How do you reflect each other's goodness back and forth?
  - 2. How do we show God's love to each other?
  - 3. How has the tool of dialogue affected your coupleness? Stress that any reaching out to others has to begin in our reaching out to each other first. And where there is love there is God because God is love,
- B. Our children are a special gift from God (our first community).
  - 1. Children are an extension of our love rather than the center of our love. The best thing we can do for them is to love each other.
  - 2. List suggestions for reaching out to our families: e.g.
    - a. Loveletters to our parents.
    - b. Accept children as persons with feelings.
    - c. Give them attention when they need it rather than putting them aside.
    - d. Listen for the person behind their words.
    - e. Share your dialogue with your children (family dialogue).
    - f. Read scripture together.
    - g. Write a letter to each child about their special qualities.
    - h. Schedule a regular "family" night; go on a family encounter.
    - i. Take an "evening for parents" class.

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES III – SESSION 6, COMMUNITY (cont'd)**

3. Read Essay: The Art Of Parenthood, by Wilfred A. Peterson  
"Of all the commentaries on the Scriptures," wrote John Donne, "good examples are the best."  
In practicing the art of parenthood, an ounce of example is worth a ton of preachment.  
Our children are watching us live, and what we ARE shouts louder than anything we can SAY.  
When we set an example of honesty, our children will be honest.  
When we practice tolerance, they will be tolerant.  
When we demonstrate good sportsmanship, they will be good sports.  
When we meet life with laughter and a twinkle in our eye, they will develop a sense of humor.  
When we are thankful for life's blessings, they will be thankful.  
When we express friendliness, they will be friendly.  
When we speak words of praise, they will praise others.  
When we confront failure, defeat and misfortune with a gallant spirit, they will learn to live bravely.  
When our lives affirm our faith in the enduring values of life, they will rise above doubt and skepticism.  
When we surround them with the love and goodness of God, they will discover life's meaning.  
When we set an example of heroic living, they will be heroes.  
Don't just stand there pointing your finger to the heights you want your children to scale. Start climbing, and they will follow!
- C. Reaching out to others is our second community.
  1. Our task is to let others know love and want love.
    - a. We are called to reach beyond our immediate family.
    - b. Called to help Jesus fulfill his dream of a loving world.
    - c. Called to reach out of ourselves, to love unconditionally as He loves us.
    - d. Called to be the hope for the world. HDIFAT?
  2. Couple power –
    - a. Showing others the joy and peace we have gained through our love for each other and God's love for us.
    - b. Through the love we receive in our marriage we are better able to bring love to the world!
    - c. We need the support of the M. E. Community
      - 1) How has your involvement in M. E. Community helped you?
      - 2) Affected your growth?
      - 3) Affected your awareness of others, the church, God, your dialogue?

**IV. REFRESHMENTS**

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES III – SESSION 6, COMMUNITY (cont'd)**

**V. DIALOGUE QUESTION:** HDIF about becoming involved with my church?

**VI. OPEN SHARING**

**VII. BRIEFLY EXPLAIN THE STRUCTURE OF OUR M. E. COMMUNITY.**

Explain structure of Methodist Expression of M. E. National, Jurisdictional, State/Area Flame Coordinators. The Flame Coordinators receive input from the community through the Flame representatives and eventually to National; in this way we are assured that each couple plays a part in the true function of the United Methodist Expression of Marriage Encounter.

**VIII. INVITE ALL TO JOIN A FLAME:**

- A. Share the joy of giving of your substance and your love.
- B. How has Flame enhanced your life (in giving do we receive)?
- C. Explain the purpose and function of a Flame and what evenings they are meeting.
- D. Explain the different FLAMES that are active in the community and encourage their joining one.
- E. Try to get couples to make their decision as to which one they would like to join before the evening comes to an end.
- F. Thank them for sharing these past weeks with you and let them know they are loved.
- G. Formula to change the world:
  - BEGINS WITH COUPLE
  - TO FAMILY
  - TO FAITH COMMUNITY
  - TO WORLD!!

**IX. CLOSING PRAYER AND SONG (A New World Somewhere)**

## **LOVE CIRCLE SERIES IV – COUPLENESS: SESSION 1, SELF**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of the Love Circle is to show us our real beauty as individuals and as couples and to build a loving, trusting relationship between us.

We will meet five times (recommend you meet once a week for five weeks). If two or more couples cannot come on a particular night, we will cancel the Love Circle that night so it is important to call the host couple if you cannot make it.

### **II. RULES FOR SHARING:**

- A. It is important to really listen to each other. No comments will be made on another's sharing as it is important we accept one another and not inhibit anyone.
- B. We will each answer individually, without interruption, in order around the circle. The host couple will indicate which person is to begin on each question.
- C. You may pass if you wish. After everyone has shared on the question, you may add to your own sharing if you wish, or share at that time if you passed,
- D. No one's sharing but your own may be repeated outside of the Love Circle.
- E. Sharings are to be short and confined to the question to help maintain the focus,

### **III. FOCUS:**

- Session 1: Self
- Session 2: Our Marriage
- Session 3: Spouse
- Session 4: God in Marriage
- Session 5: God, Us and Couple Power

### **IV. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this evening is to put the couples at ease and have each person share about themselves. It is a light evening and focused on "Self".

### **V. OPEN WITH A BRIEF PRAYER BY THE HOST COUPLE OR A SONG.**

### **VII. SHARING QUESTIONS:**

Choose 3-4 questions and go around the room, allowing each person to share if they choose. Take a snack break and return to do 3-4 more questions.

- A. Where were you born and what size family do you come from?
- B. What do you like to do in your spare time?
- C. If you could live anywhere in the world, where would it be?
- D. What one quality do you look for most in friends?
- E. If you received \$10,000 as a gift, how would you spend it?
- F. Of all the material possessions you have, what gives you the most pleasure?

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES IV – COUPLENESS: SESSION 1, SELF (cont'd)**

- G. If someone were to write a book about you, what would they call it and why?
- H. If you were to write a book about your spouse, what would the title be?
- I. How would the last chapter read?
- J. Complete the statement: One thing I missed during my child-hood was
- K. What would you like to be remembered for after you die?
- L. During your engagement period, what expectations did you have of marriage?
- M. At what point in your relationship did you personally make a commitment to marriage?

**VIII. CIRCLE PRAYER AND SONG (There's a New World Somewhere)**

## **LOVE CIRCLE SERIES IV – COUPLENESS: SESSION 2, OUR MARRIAGE**

### **I. FOCUS**

The focus this evening is on the couple's marriage. The questions are designed to build more confidence and trust between the couples and to get each person to think about their coupleness in their marriage.

### **II. COMMUNITY PRAYER OR SONG**

### **III. REVIEW RULES FOR SHARING:**

- A. It is important to really listen to each other. No comments on another's sharing.
- B. We will each answer individually, without interruption, in order around the circle.
- C. You may pass if you wish.
- D. No one's sharing but your own may be repeated outside of the Love Circle.
- E. Sharings are to be short and confined to the question to help maintain the focus,

### **IV. SHARING QUESTIONS:**

Choose 3-4 questions and go around the room, allowing each person to share if they choose. Take a snack break and return to do 3-4 more questions.

- A. When were you married and what are the ages of your children'
- B. Describe your marriage in one word,
- C. Recall the earliest impression you had when you first met your spouse.
- D. Tell the funniest thing that happened to the two of you during your courtship.
- E. What did you do when you were first married that you no longer do?
- F. Choose one:
  - 1. How do you like to spend your time alone together?
  - 2. What do you as a couple enjoy doing the most together?
- G. Agree or disagree: Marriage is a 50/50 partnership. Explain.
- H. How has your marriage matured since you were first married?
- I. What are your goals in your marriage?
- J. What does trust mean to you in regard to your marriage?
- K. Describe the area of your marriage you would like to see improved.
- L. Complete the statement: Our marriage is happiest when...!

### **V. SECRET COUPLES**

If the host couple would like, secret couples could be drawn at this time and revealed next sessions. You draw names and for one week do "nice and loving" things for each other. The idea is to not be seen or discovered!

### **VI. CIRCLE PRAYER AND SONG (There's a New World Somewhere)**

## **LOVE CIRCLE SERIES IV – COUPLENESS: SESSION 3, SPOUSE**

### **I. FOCUS**

The focus is on **spouses** tonight. It is hoped the couples will not only share their stages of disillusionment and joy, but also be challenged to romance. The questions are aimed at thinking about how we relate to our spouses and becoming aware of the needs of our spouse from us and vice versa.

### **II. OPENING PRAYER**

Open by going around the group with a one-word prayer.

### **III. SHARING QUESTIONS:**

Choose 3-4 questions and go around the room, allowing each person to share if they choose. Take a snack break and return to do 3-4 more questions.

- A. How would you define joy?
- B. Share a period of joy in your marriage.
- C. What quality does your spouse have that you wish you had?
- D. In what ways could you improve communication between you and your spouse?
- E. In what ways do you take your spouse for granted?
- F. Name one thing you wish your spouse would do more often.
- G. Share a disillusionment in your marriage.
- H. Choose one or two:
  - 1. My mate and I differ over...
  - 2. How can you tell when your spouse is upset?
  - 3. How does your spouse react when you "speak your mind"?
- I. In what way does your spouse let you know he/she loves you?
- J. Tell your mate "I love you" without using words,
- K. Look at your spouse and tell him/her "If I could give you any gift in the world...!"
- L. Say something about romance\*

### **IV. CLOSING**

Mention that everyone has shared on the three stages of marriage this evening: romance, disillusionment and joy. Then challenge them all to romance their spouses during the following week. Explain that romance is a decision and a vehicle to joy.

### **V. CIRCLE PRAYER AND SONG (There's a New World Somewhere)**

## **LOVE CIRCLE SERIES IV – COUPLENESS: SESSION 4, GOD IN MARRIAGE**

### **I. FOCUS**

This week the focus is on **God in Marriage**. Hopefully, the couples will feel comfortable and accepted by the others so that the sharings will be meaningful. The scripture reading is from Ephesians 5 about Christian Marriages.

### **II. OPEN WITH A COMMUNITY PRAYER OR SONG.**

"Thank you God for (**each couple's last name**)" is a good one.

### **III. SHARING QUESTIONS:**

Choose 2-4 questions and go around the room, allowing each person to share if they choose. Take a snack break and return to do 2-4 more questions.

- A. Share how you romanced each other this past week.
- B. Share something you laughed about together this past week,
- C. How do you experience God's love through your spouse?
- D. Share one of Christ's qualities you see in your spouse.
- E. Read Ephesians 5:21-33.
  - 1. What does this passage mean to you?
  - 2. How can you better live out this passage?

### **IV. WRAP-UP**

Challenge the couples to live out Ephesians 5 in their relationship during the next week.

### **V. CLOSE WITH A PRAYER BY EACH PERSON FOR THEIR SPOUSE.**

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES IV – COUPLENESS: SESSION 5,**  
**GOD, US AND COUPLE POWER**

**I. FOCUS**

The focus is on **God in Marriage** and the **Couple Power** it generates.

**II. OPEN WITH A PRAYER OR SONG (Lord's Prayer).**

**III. SHARING QUESTIONS:**

Choose 3-4 questions and go around the room, allowing each person to share if they choose.  
Take a snack break and return to do 3-4 more questions.

- A. How have you lived out Ephesians 5 this past week?
- B. What good things happened from it?
- C. Do you see your spouse as a gift from God? If so, why?
- D. What does couple power mean to you?
- E. Is God a part of your couple power and if so, how?
- F. Share an instance when your coupleness has shown.
- G. Share a quality you see in each couple.

**IV. CLOSING**

Close with a prayer, couple by couple, for the couple in the circle on their right.

**V. OPTIONAL**

At the end of the evening, you may ask if the couples care to meet one final time for a potluck dinner or whatever.

## **LOVE CIRCLE SERIES V – A TIME TO GROW: SESSION 1,** **COMMUNICATION**

*(Note from Gary & Lisa Morris: This series originally stated that it requires a copy of John Powell's "The Secret of Staying in Love". John Powell was a Jesuit Priest who was subsequently charged with numerous counts of sexual abuse. While his books may still have very valid and helpful information, the references to them have been removed from this series.)*

### **I. OPENING PRAYER**

### **II. INTRODUCTIONS**

Each couple should introduce themselves, including:

- A. Name.
- B. Number of years married.
- C. Number of children and their ages and names.
- D. The nicest thing that their spouse did for them today.

(Postpone until later the date and experience of their weekend. Avoid references to job or status-oriented activities.)

### **III. PURPOSE OF THE SERIES**

- A. Explain the purpose of the Five Week Series
  - 1. It is a continuation of the Weekend;
  - 2. It is an effort to reinforce some of the wonderful things learned on the Weekend;
  - 3. It is a chance to introduce the couple to the continuing ME Community;
  - 4. It is a way to renew their communication.
- B. Introduce the five topics that will be covered, and give a short description of each one.
  - 1. Communication
  - 2. The Many Faces of Me (Encounter With Self)
  - 3. Marriage
  - 4. Community
  - 5. God Spirituality
- C. In the general case of this series being used by an existing Flame and ESPECIALLY when presented by Flame Leaders, get each couple to volunteer to give one of the presentations. THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT.
- D. Explain that they have made a commitment for five weeks (or five sessions), and that everyone is depending on them to show up on time. Explain that we will budget our time efficiently, and that they can expect to be finished within two hours.
- E. Outline the sequence of events as described in the first topic which begins on the next page. Give a brief description of the homework, mini-sharings, readings, and the major presentation.

**BEGIN ACTUAL PROGRAM: THE FIRST SESSION IS ON COMMUNICATION.**

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES V – A TIME TO GROW: SESSION 1, COMMUNICATION (cont'd)**

**IV. PURPOSE OF THIS SESSION**

The lead couple should talk briefly to the group about the purpose of the evening.

- A. To see the value of communication.
- B. To stress the joy and goodness of communication.
- C. Motto of the evening: "Aren't you glad you use close communication? Don't you wish everyone did?"

**V. OPEN SHARING:**

Ask each couple to share when they went on their weekend, its value to them, etc.

**VI. MAJOR PRESENTATION:**

- A. Concentrate on the general condition of your marriage before this new communications and how this new approach has helped your marriage.
- B. Have there been any crisis situations which communication has helped you to get through?
- C. How have you reached when you quit communicating regularly for a time, and then took it up again?
- D. Stress the joy and goodness of communicating, rather than any guilt or sinfulness if you miss this regular communication.

**Recommendation:** Feel free to add to the above mini-outline whatever you are comfortable with. The main thing is to share your own experiences rather than an intellectual dissertation on communication.

**VII. DIALOGUE QUESTION:**

"How has the warmth of our home increased since Marriage Encounter and how do I feel about that?"

**VIII. OPEN SHARING:**

This might start out a little slow since it is the first meeting. Don't rush it. It may be helpful for the Presenting Couple to read their letters. Give people time to respond, but make it clear that this is optional and no one is required to share. Some might read their letters, others might talk about what they have written, others might only comment on what was said.

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES V – A TIME TO GROW: SESSION 1, COMMUNICATION (cont'd)**

**IX. HOMEWORK**

- A. Suggested communication questions for the following week.
- B. Read the poem, "THE WALL", and share how you feel after reading it.
- C. Bring a school picture of yourself, and share with the group what kind of person is in the picture.
- D. Read the 23rd Psalm, and share with the group.

**NOTE:** See the next 2 pages for additional details regarding the homework. Each couple is to complete assignment A; assignments B-D are to be evenly distributed, i.e. if six couples are involved, each assignment is done by two couples. Use volunteers. All couples are to have an assignment.

**X. WRAP-UP**

Arrange where and when to meet the next week, or for the next session.

**XI. CLOSING PRAYER AND SING "THERE'S A NEW WORLD SOMEWHERE"**

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES V – A TIME TO GROW: SESSION 1, COMMUNICATION (cont'd)**

**HOMEWORK A:** Suggested communication questions for the following week:

- A. Read over your notebook from your Initial Weekend and talk about the question, "How do I feel after reading it?"
- B. "What are the qualities, skills, and talents I like about myself and how do they make me feel?"

**HOMEWORK B:** Read the poem, "THE WALL", and share how you feel after reading it.

**THE WALL**

Their wedding picture mocked them from the table, these two, whose minds no longer touched each other.

They lived with such a heavy barricade between them that neither battering ram of words nor artilleries of touch could break it down.

Somewhere, between the oldest child's first tooth and the youngest daughter's graduation, they lost each other.

Throughout the years each slowly unraveled that tangled ball of string called self, and as they tugged at stubborn knots each hid his searching from the other.

Sometimes she cried at night and begged the whispering darkness to tell her who she was.

He lay beside her, snoring like a hibernating bear, unaware of her winter.

Once, after they had made love, he wanted to tell her how afraid he was of dying but, fearing to show his naked soul, he spoke instead about the beauty of her breasts.

She took a course in modern art, trying to find herself in colors splashed upon a canvas, and complained to other women about men who were insensitive.

He climbed into a tomb called "the office", wrapped his mind in a shroud of paper figures and buried himself in customers.

Slowly, the wall between them rose, cemented by the mortar of indifference.

One day, reaching out to touch each other, they found a barrier they could not penetrate, and recoiling from the coldness of the stone, each retreated from the stranger on the other side.

For when love dies, it is not in a moment of angry battle, nor when fiery bodies lose their heat.

It lies panting, exhausted, expiring at the bottom of a wall it could not scale.

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES V – A TIME TO GROW: SESSION 1, COMMUNICATION (cont'd)**

**HOMEWORK C: School Picture**

Each of you:

- A. Find a picture of yourself in elementary or high school. Think of that person in the picture as you would your own child - with affection, humor, well aware of the strengths and weaknesses.
- B. Write about that child. Describe his/her feelings as a student, athlete, leader, friend, member of groups and clubs. Tell about hobbies and interests, religious values, personality traits, and self-confidence. (This description is for your own interest and not to be shared with the groups so write freely and honestly).
- C. Bring your picture to share. Explain your assignment. Tell about any similarities or changes you noticed about your self-image then and now - for instance, your patterns of reacting to new situations, accepting compliments, enjoying free time, etc.

**HOMEWORK D: Psalm 23 – The Good Shepherd**

- A. Read and ponder the Psalm.
- B. How does the psalm relate to the idea, "God does not make junk"?, and to the idea that we already have all the goodness within us and the help from God and others that we need?
- C. Read the psalm to the group. Share your thoughts, and one or two personal examples of a strength or quality you recently discovered about yourself or some unexpected help that came to you just at the right time.

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES V – A TIME TO GROW: SESSION 2,**  
**THE MANY FACES OF ME**

**I. OPENING PRAYER**

**II. PURPOSE:**

To increase my awareness of:

- A. Who I am.
- B. Who I can be.
- C. Getting to know myself better and feeling more comfortable with who I am.

**III. MINI SHARING:** (sharing of homework assignments – 5 minutes maximum for each sharing)

- A. "The Wall"
- B. School picture
- C. Psalm 23 – The Good Shepherd

**IV. MAJOR SHARING**

**Recommendation:** Do all the mini-sharing assignments as a couple as an aid to preparation. Do not share them during the mini-sharing time.

- A. Play song, "The Other Side of Me". (lyrics are on following page)  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CbbhN1H\\_WGY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CbbhN1H_WGY)
- B. Share your ideas and personal experiences of these key points
  - 1. Difficulties in discovering my true self.
  - 2. How I keep others from knowing me.
  - 3. Good qualities I've discovered about me.

**V. DIALOGUE**

Read the following quote from John Powell's "Why Am I Afraid to Tell You Who I Am?":  
*"I am afraid to tell you who I am because if I tell you who I am, you may not like who I am, and it's all that I have."*

**Dialogue Question:** "I am afraid to tell you who I am, but what gives me the confidence to do it? How does my answer make me feel?"

**VI. OPEN SHARING:**

Optional discussion questions (if there is time or there is minimal sharing).

- A. What are some likeable qualities about a person you know?
- B. What have you done recently that made you feel good?
- C. How do you feel about your qualities and about sharing them?
- D. How can we support the good in each other?
- E. Are you comfortable accepting compliments?

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES V – A TIME TO GROW: SESSION 2,  
THE MANY FACES OF ME (cont'd)**

**VI. ASSIGN HOMEWORK**

- A. Watch a TV program that depicts modern married life and tell how this relates to your married life.
- B. Read the poem, "Why Do I Love You?", and share how it made you feel.
- C. Bring a picture of your wedding day, and share the qualities of this wonderful person you just married.

**VI. CLOSING**

- A. Arrange where to meet the next week, or for the next session.
- B. Closing Prayer

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES V – A TIME TO GROW: SESSION 2,  
THE MANY FACES OF ME (cont'd)**

**THE OTHER SIDE OF ME**

You think you know me pretty well  
But how can you tell?  
You never get inside my head  
The times we talk.  
We never speak.  
We play hide and seek.  
So many things are left unsaid.

Why can't you see  
What's on the other side of me...  
The side of me that reaches out to you  
Sweet thoughts and dreams  
Like drops of rain on rippling streams  
That wind and bend...  
Rivers with no end  
Flowering on the other side of me.

It seems I always get unstrung.  
I trip on my tongue  
With words that come out something else.  
I'm so afraid the things I say  
Might chase you away.  
I have to hide behind myself.

Why can't you see  
What's on the other side of me?  
The side of me that reaches out to you.  
Why must I hide  
These feelings that have been denied?  
Only you can set me free.  
See what's on the other side of me.  
La La La La La La La La  
La La La La La La  
La La La La La La La

Why can't you see  
What's on the other side of me...  
The side of me that reaches out to you?  
Why must I hide  
These feelings that have been denied?  
Only you can set me free.  
See what's on the other side of me.

On the other side of me...  
On the other side of me ...

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES V – A TIME TO GROW: SESSION 2,  
THE MANY FACES OF ME (cont'd)**

**HOMEWORK B:**

**"WHY DO I LOVE YOU"**

by Roy Croft

I love you not only for what you are,  
But for what I am when I am with you.

I love you not only for what you have made of yourself,  
But for what you are making of me.

I love you for the part of me that you bring out.

I love you for putting your hand into my heaped-up heart  
And passing over all the foolish weak things  
That you can't help dimly seeing there,  
And for drawing out into the light all the beautiful belongings  
That no one else had looked quite far enough to find.

I love you because you are helping to make of the lumber of my life,  
Not a tavern, but a temple;  
Out of the works of my every day,  
Not a reproach but a song.

I love you because you have done  
More than any creed could have done to make me good,  
And more than any fate could have done to make me happy.

You have done it without a word, without a sign, without a touch,  
You have done it by being yourself.  
Perhaps that is what being a friend means after all.

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES V – A TIME TO GROW: SESSION 3,**  
**MARRIAGE**

**I. OPENING PRAYER**

**II. PURPOSE**

- A. To look at our marriage and see how it is affected by current attitudes and ideas of today's world.
- B. We would like for you to share your attitudes about marriage and contrast them with the values of the modern world, and with our understanding of God's Plan.

**III. MINI SHARING:** (sharing of homework assignments – 5 min. maximum for each sharing)

- A. TV Program.
- B. Poem, "Why Do I Love You".
- C. Wedding Picture.

**IV. MAJOR SHARING: OUR MARRIAGE**

- A. Play song, "The Song of Ruth" (optional)  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yGn3uENUeEc>
- B. Our courtship: Slowly introduce yourselves by telling how you met your spouse. Share interesting stories about your beliefs and attitudes about marriage. For instance: Were you a teenager or an adult? Let them in on the real you during this very important time in your life.
- C. Early marriage: They know a little about your thoughts about marriage. Tell them what happened during these early years when you were young and full of love.
- D. Settled years of Marriage: Why were these years different from the early years? What changed you? Were there any crises? Were there difficulties? Now is the time to open up !!!
- E. Our Marriage Now: Has your marriage changed? how? What is different? What are you doing to keep it that way or to change it? How do you feel about it?
- F. Closing Scripture: Corinthians 13: 4-8.

**V. DIALOGUE QUESTION:** "How does our marriage differ from the modern world and how does that make me feel?"

**VI. OPEN SHARING**

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES V – A TIME TO GROW: SESSION 3, MARRIAGE (cont'd)**

**VII. ASSIGN HOMEWORK**

- A. Take a picture of your children, and share the special qualities of each child,
- B. Plan for one night of the coming week to be a family night where you will do an activity together as a family (games, reading, Scripture readings, crafts, music, etc.). Share with the group how this night turned out. Is it something you would like to do on a regular basis?
- C. Plan a special dinner – perhaps with candles or a special dessert. Tell each child what you see as their special qualities. Share with the group how this evening turned out.

**VI. CLOSING**

- C. Arrange where to meet the next week, or for the next session.
- D. Closing Prayer

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES V – A TIME TO GROW: SESSION 4,**  
**COMMUNITY**

**I. OPENING PRAYER**

**II. PURPOSE**

- A. Identify the topic by showing the natural progression from self, to couple, to the immediate family, and finally to a larger group - your community.
- B. Trace the progress of the series through these same topics.
- C. You might try to define community as a sense of belonging based on love or giving – not self-interest. Explain it in terms of the groups or people you interact with out of support for one another. Perhaps you can even carry out this theme to the hope of renewing the world through more concern – for one another.

**III. MINI SHARING:** (sharing of homework assignments – 5 min. maximum for each sharing)

- A. Picture of your children.
- B. Family night
- A. Special Dinner
- B. Read, "Love is All", Chapter 39 (on following page).
  - 1. Share an instance when someone reached out to you.
  - 2. Share an instance when you reached out to someone.

**IV. MAJOR SHARING**

- A. Talk about how you have progressed from identifying yourself, to living as a couple, to encompassing your immediate family. Finally, tell how you are progressing to embrace or accept a larger family.
- B. Discuss what your particular "community" includes. For examples, church, fellow workers, school, associates, Marriage Encounter family, etc.
- C. Give examples of what this community has done for you. Possibly include some humor in your stories about the community.
- D. Give some examples of why we need the support of those around us.
  - a. Practical ways such as baby sitting, house repair, etc.
  - b. Personal ways such as being concerned when I'm on a downer; or giving us a one-ringer to help our communication.
  - c. Family ways such as outings.
  - d. Learning to feel a part of the Marriage Encounter community.
- E. Tell your feelings about having a stake in other's marriage.

**V. OPEN SHARING QUESTION:** "The greatest good we can do for others is not to give them our wealth, but to show them theirs. How does this make me feel?"

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES V – A TIME TO GROW: SESSION 4, COMMUNITY (cont'd)**

**VI. BARRINGTON BUNNY**

- A. “The Story of Barrington Bunny” from “The Way of the Wolf” by Martin Bell  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mq4HPVHX7TI>  
Read the story (on following pages) or play the recording after the refreshments instead of having sharing time, or after a minimum sharing time.
- B. Announce that we are all going to be Barrington Bunnies.
- C. First, draw names (by couple). Only thing that is important is that no couple draws their own name and that no one knows who has whose names.
- D. For the next two weeks (approximately), we are going to give gifts with no strings attached to the couple whose name we have. These gifts can be letters signed by "Barrington", phone calls made by "assistant" Barringtons (friends, relatives), or gifts delivered to the door. If you do take gifts to the door, simply ring the bell and run like hell! Let your imagination run and let your creativity have a day.
- E. There will be one more meeting after the last scheduled formal meeting. This is usually on a night when all can come and it is simply a pot luck meal followed by an agape or eucharist. The pot luck supper should be held as soon as possible after the last session.
- F. The Barrington experience continues up until the night of the pot luck and only then are the names revealed as to who was whose Barrington. We prefer to hold the pot luck on the following Sunday night.

**VI. HOMEWORK:**

- A. Share your thoughts and feelings about a time when you as a couple felt closest to God.
- B. Find a passage from the Bible that makes you feel especially close to God, or read from the 1st Epistle of John 4:7-12 and 19-1. Share your thoughts and feelings.
- C. Study a picture that relates you to God. Share how you relate and how it makes you feel.

**VII. CLOSING**

- A. Arrange where to meet next week or for the next session and arrange for a POT LUCK SUPPER (if appropriate).
- B. Closing Prayer

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES V – A TIME TO GROW: SESSION 4, COMMUNITY (cont'd)**

**LOVE IS ALL - CONVERSATIONS OF A HUSBAND AND WIFE WITH GOD, #39**

by Joseph and Lois Bird

The phone rings or I receive a letter of another request for commitment and involvement, Christian involvements, they say, outside my home.

Each time, Lord, I must go through it all against all the questions, all the answers, all the sorting of duties and desires, all the reasoning and rationalizing.

Each time, all over again, every time I am told of Your need for me out there.

Where is my place, Lord? How am I to best serve YOU?

What am I to answer to these involvements, these organizations, these activities, outside?

Each time I am challenged, I face the same questions. Is it loving or lack of loving?

Is it responsible or irresponsible? Am I a good parent or an indifferent parent? Is it my selfishness or my convictions which keep me in my home or draw me outside? Each time, the same questions. And each time, I must listen for Your answers.

Perhaps this time, Lord, the answers will be different. Perhaps this time I am wiser or stronger or the need greater or my responsibilities less.

Perhaps this time I can justify (or rationalize) this outside involvement. Perhaps this time it isn't an escape and a shirking of responsibility. Perhaps this time it's a Mothers' Club or a parish group and I can feel that I'm a better parent, and that my family will truly benefit. But it's not this time, is it Lord? Not this time.

Dear Lord, why do you let me glimpse a family that expands and reaches out to include the whole world when my world seems so small and my part so minor? There's so little that's grand and important in my life. I won't receive any medals or applause for diapering a baby or loving my husband. But that isn't important to me. I enjoy my world. I'm not seeking for anything else. But perhaps that's part of the conflict. Am I being honest? My enjoyment, the joy I find in my home and family, makes me feel somehow slightly guilty when I am told I should become involved outside.

Each time, Lord, I have to find the answers all over again. Perhaps next time the answers will be different. But not now. I know what You've given me, Lord, and what You've asked of me. I have but one vocation, one life to which You've called me. And I can bring the world to You only with, and through, my husband. Through our marriage, our oneness, we speak for You.

You've shown us the way. You've let us see that a Christian world is given birth in a Christian home. Help me to remember this, Lord, when that phone rings or that letter arrives. Sometimes it's hard; and I forget.

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES V – A TIME TO GROW: SESSION 4, COMMUNITY (cont'd)**

**BARRINGTON BUNNY**

Once upon a time in a large forest there lived a very furry bunny. He had one lop ear, a tiny black nose, and unusually shiny- eyes. His name was Barrington.

Barrington was not really a very handsome bunny. He was brown and speckled and his ears didn't stand up right. But he could hop, and he was, as I have said, very furry.

In a ways winter is fun for bunnies. After all, it gives them an opportunity to hop in the snow and then turn around to see where they have hopped. So, in a way, winter was fun for Barrington.

But in another way winter made Barrington sad. For, you see, winter marked the time when all of the animal families got together in their cozy homes to celebrate Christmas. He could hop, and he was very furry. But as far as Barrington knew, he was the only bunny in the forest.

When Christmas Eve finally came, Barrington did not feel like going home all by himself. So he decided that he would hop for a while in the clearing in the center of the forest.

Hop. Hop. Hippety-hop. Barrington made tracks in the fresh snow.

Hop. Hop. Hippety-hop. Then he cocked his head and looked back at the wonderful designs he had made.

"Bunnies" he thought to himself, "Can hop. And they are very warm, too, because of how furry they are."

(But Barrington didn't really know whether or not this was true of all bunnies, since he had never met another bunny.)

When it got too dark to see the tracks he was making, Barrington made up his mind to go home.

On his ways however, he passed a large oak tree. High in the branches there was a great deal of excited chattering going on. Barrington looked up. It was a squirrel family! What a marvelous time they seemed to be having.

"Hello, up there," called Barrington.

"Hello down there," came the reply.

"Having a Christmas party?" asked Barrington.

"Oh, yes" answered the squirrels. "It's Christmas Eve. Everybody is having a Christmas party!"

"May I come to your party?" said Barrington softly.

"Are you a squirrel?"

"No."

"What are you, then?"

"A bunny."

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES V – A TIME TO GROW: SESSION 4, COMMUNITY (cont'd)**

**BARRINGTON BUNNY (cont'd)**

"A bunny?"

Yes.

"Well, how can you come to the party if you are a bunny? Bunnies can't climb trees."

"That's true," said Barrington thoughtfully. "But I can hop and I am very furry and warm."

"We're sorry", called the squirrels. "We don't know anything about hopping and being furry, but we do know that in order to come to our house you have to be able to climb trees."

"Oh well" said Barrington. "Merry Christmas."

"Merry Christmas," chattered the squirrels.

And the unfortunate bunny hopped off toward his tiny house.

It was beginning to snow when Barrington reached the river. Near the river bank was a wonderfully constructed house of sticks and mud. Inside there was singing.

"It's the beavers!" thought Barrington. "Maybe they will let me come to their party."

And so he knocked on the door.

"Who's out there?" called a voice.

"Barrington Bunny," he replied.

There was a long pause and then a shiny beaver head broke the water.

"Hello, Barrington," said the beaver.

"May I come to your Christmas party?" asked Barrington.

The beaver thought for a while and then he said, "I suppose so. Do you know how to swim?"

"No," said Barrington, "but I can hop and I am very furry and warm."

"Sorry," said the beaver. "I don't know anything about hopping and being furry, but I do know that in order to come to our house you have to be able to swim."

"Oh well," Barrington muttered, his eyes filling with tears. "I suppose that's true. Merry Christmas."

"Merry Christmas," called the beaver. And he disappeared beneath the surface of the water.

Even being furry as he was, Barrington was beginning to get cold. And the snow was falling so hard that his tiny bunny eyes could scarcely see what was ahead of him.

He was almost home, however, when he heard the excited squeaking of field mice beneath the ground.

"It's a party," thought Barrington. And suddenly he blurted out through his tears, "Hello, field mice. This is Barrington Bunny. May I come to your party?"

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES V – A TIME TO GROW: SESSION 4, COMMUNITY (cont'd)**

**BARRINGTON BUNNY (cont'd)**

But the wind was howling so loudly and Barrington was sobbing so much that no one heard him. And when there was no response at all, Barrington just sat down in the snow and began to cry with all his might.

"Bunnies," he thought, "aren't any good to anyone. What good is it to be furry and to be able to hop if you don't have any family on Christmas Eve?"

Barrington cried and cried. When he stopped crying he began to bite on his bunny's foot, but he did not move from where he was sitting in the snow.

Suddenly, Barrington was aware that he was not alone. He looked up and strained his shiny eyes to see who was there.

To his surprise he saw a great silver wolf. The wolf was large and strong and his eyes flashed fire. He was the most beautiful animal Barrington had ever seen,

For a long time the silver wolf didn't say anything at all. He just stood there and looked at Barrington with those terrible eyes.

Then slowly and deliberately the wolf spoke. "Barrington," he asked in a gentle voice, "why are you sitting in the snow?"

"Because it's Christmas Eve," said Barrington, "and I don't have any family, and bunnies aren't any good to anyone."

"Bunnies are too, good," said the wolf. "Bunnies can hop and they are very warm."

"What good is that?" Barrington sniffed.

"It is very good indeed," the wolf went on, "because it is a gift that bunnies are given, a free gift with no strings attached. And every gift that is given to anyone is given for a reason. Someday you will see why it is good to hop and to be warm and furry."

"But, it's Christmas," moaned Barrington, "and I'm all alone. I don't have any family at all."

"Of course you do," replied the great silver wolf. "All of the animals in the forest are your family."

And then the wolf disappeared. He simply wasn't there. Barrington had only blinked his eyes and when he looked - the wolf was gone.

"All of the animals in the forest are my family," thought Barrington. "It's good to be a bunny. Bunnies can hop. That's a gift." And then he said it again. "A gift. A free gift."

On into the night Barrington worked. First he found the best stick that he could. (And that was difficult because of the snow.)

Then hop. Hop. Hippity-hop. To beaver's house. He left the stick just outside the door. With a note on it that read: "Here is a good stick for your house. It is a gift. A free gift. No strings attached. Signed, a member of your family."

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES V – A TIME TO GROW: SESSION 4, COMMUNITY (cont'd)**

**BARRINGTON BUNNY (cont'd)**

"It is a good thing that I can hop," he thought "because the snow is very deep."

Then Barrington dug and dug. Soon he had gathered together enough dead leaves and grass to make the squirrel\*s nest warmer. Hop. Hop. Hippity-hop.

He laid the grass and leaves just under the large oak tree and attached this messages "A gift. A free gift. From a member of your family."

It was late when Barrington finally started home. And what made things worse was that he knew a blizzard was beginning.

Hop. Hop. Hippity-hop.

Soon poor Barrington was lost. The wind howled furiously and it was very, very cold. "It certainly is cold," he said out loud. "It's a good thing I'm so furry. But if I don't find my way home pretty soon even I might freeze!"

Squeak. Squeak....

And then he saw it - a baby field mouse lost in the snow. And the little mouse was crying.

"Hello, little mouse," Barrington called.

"Don't cry. I'll be right there." Hippity-hop and Barrington was beside the tiny mouse.

"I'm lost," sobbed the little fellow. "I'll never find my way home, and I know I'm going to freeze."

"You won't freeze," said Barrington. "I'm a bunny and bunnies are very furry and warm. You stay right where you are and I'll cover you up."

Barrington lay on top of the little mouse and hugged him tight. The tiny fellow felt himself surrounded by warm fur. He cried for a while but soon, snug and warm, he fell asleep.

Barrington had only two thoughts that long, cold night. First, he thought, "It's good to be a bunny. Bunnies are very furry and warm." And then, when he felt the heart of the tiny mouse beneath him beating regularly, he thought, "All of the animals in the forest are my family."

Next morning, the field mice found their little boy, asleep in the snow, warm and snug beneath the furry carcass of a dead bunny. Their relief and excitement was so great that they didn't think to question where the bunny had come from.

And as for the beavers and the squirrels, they still wonder which member of their family left the little gifts for them that Christmas Eve.

After the field mice had left, Barrington's frozen body simply lay in the snow. There was no sound except that of the howling wind. And no one anywhere in the forest noticed the great silver wolf who came to stand beside that brown, lop-eared carcass.

But the wolf did come. And he stood there...without moving or saying a word.

All Christmas Day...until it was night...and then he disappeared into the forest.

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES V – A TIME TO GROW: SESSION 5,**  
**SPIRITUALITY**

**I. OPENING PRAYER:**

**II. PURPOSE:**

- A. This is the last session and a very important one. We have talked about dialogue self, marriage, family, and community. A theme of all these talks was love and unity. We said that communication was the art of love - to love someone you must know them, and that dialogue was one way to communicate your deepest self.
- B. We discussed knowing and accepting ourselves. A person's idea of himself or herself is said to determine how he or she tends to see the environment, one's relationships with other people, and even God.
- C. We talked about marriage in the modern world, and the focus of what our marriage can be in light of God's plan.
- D. We discussed the intimate community of our family, and ways to communicate with our children. We discussed reaching out to the community, getting involved with others like we have gotten involved with each other in this short six weeks by sharing our love, fears, hopes, accomplishments, failures, and sorrows.
- E. Tonight we talk about God, and His place in our lives.

**III. MINI SHARING:** (sharing of homework assignments – 5 min. maximum for each sharing)

- A. When you felt closest to God.
- B. Bible passage that brings you close to God.
- C. Picture that relates to God.

**IV. MAJOR SHARING**

- A. Tell about your overall relationship with God - as a child and now. Share any doubts, examples, feelings.
- B. When have you felt closest to God? There may have been some instances in your life when you felt close to God. Tell about it.
- C. How do you relate to the word of God? Are you turned off by God's word? Consider the bible or sermons you have heard.
- D. How do you communicate with God? How do you pray to Him? Think back to your childhood. Does God hear you? Do you listen to God? How?
- E. How has your marriage brought you closer to God? Do you think you are closer to God now that you are married? Has marriage encounter changed your relationship with God?
- F. Dialogue and share on the question: "How has my idea of God changed as a result of our relationship and how does that make me feel?"

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES V – A TIME TO GROW: SESSION 5, SPIRITUALITY (cont'd)**

**V. OPEN SHARING.**

- A. Read prayer below and discuss how we have been blessed by God and how that makes me feel.
- B. Read, "Rag-Tag Army" from The Way of the Wolf" by Martin Bell (on following page). Discuss.

**VI. CLOSING**

- A. Firm up the pot luck dinner arrangements.
- B. Closing prayer
- C. Sing, "There's a New World Somewhere".

**PRAYER OF AN UNKNOWN CONFEDERATE SOLDIER**

I asked God for strength that I might achieve.  
I was made weak that I might learn humbly to obey.

I asked for health, that I might do greater things.  
I was given infirmity that I might do better things.

I asked for riches, that I might be happy.  
I was given poverty, that I might be wise.

I asked for power, that I might have the praise of men.  
I was given weakness that I might feel the need of God.

I asked for all things, that I might enjoy life.  
I was given life, that I might enjoy all things.

I got nothing that I asked for, but everything I hoped for.  
Almost despite myself, my unspoken prayers were answered.  
I am, among all men, most richly blessed.

Anonymous

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES V – A TIME TO GROW: SESSION 5, SPIRITUALITY (cont'd)**

**RAG-TAG ARMY**

I think God must be very old and very tired. Maybe He used to look splendid and fine in his generals uniform, but no more. He's been on the March a long time, you know. And look at his rag-tag little army. All he has for soldiers are you and me. Dumb little army. Listen! The drum beat is not even regular. Everyone is out of step. And there, you see? God keeps stopping along the way to pick up one of his tinier soldiers who decided to wander off and play with a frog, or run in a field, or whose foot got tangled in the underbrush. He'll never get anywhere that way. And yet, the march goes on.

Do you see how the marchers have broken up into little groups? Look at that group up near the front. Now there's a snappy outfit. They all look pretty much alike - at least they're in step with each other. That's something. Only they're not wearing their shoes. They're carrying them in their hands. Silly little band. They won't get far before God will have to stop again.

Or how about that other group over there? They're all holding hands as they march. The only trouble with this is the men on each end of the line. Pretty soon they realize that one of their hands isn't holding onto anything - one hand is reaching, empty, alone. And so they hold hands with each other, and everyone marches around in circles. The more people that hold hands, the bigger the circle. And, of course, a bigger circle is deceptive because as we march along it looks like we are going someplace, but we're not. And so God must stop again. You see what I mean? He'll never get anywhere that way.

If God were sensible he'd take his little army and shape them up. Why, whoever heard of a soldier stopping to romp in a field? It's ridiculous. But even more absurd is a general who will stop the march of eternity to go and bring him back. But that's God for you. His is no endless, empty marching. He is going somewhere. His steps are deliberate and purposive. He may be old, and he may be tired. But he knows where he's going. And he means to take every last one of his tiny soldiers with him. Only there are not going to be any forced marches. And after all, there are frogs and flowers and thorns and underbrush along the way. And even though our foreheads have been signed with the sign of the cross, we are only human. And most of us are afraid and lonely and would like to hold hands or cry or run away. And we don't know where we are going, and we can't seem to trust God, especially when it's dark out and we can't see him! And he won't go on without us. And that's why it's taking so long.

Listen! The drum beat isn't even regular. Everyone is out of step, and there, you see? God keeps stopping along the way to pick up one of his tinier soldiers who decided to wander off and play with a frog or run in a field, or whose feet got tangled in the underbrush. He'll never get anywhere that way!

And yet, the march goes on

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES VI – CONTINUE TO GROW: SESSION 1,**  
**FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILIATION**

**I. INTRODUCTION (1-2 min.)**

In tonight's session, we are going to look at the subject of forgiveness. Forgiveness is my decision to heal a relationship. Forgiveness does not mean that I agree with, condone, or support your actions, but rather that I decide to love you as you are. Forgiveness cannot be assumed . . . it must be spoken. Feelings of embarrassment and shame indicate a need to ask forgiveness. Feelings of resentment, bitterness and anger indicate a need to be forgiving. Forgiveness is the sacrament of reconciliation when-it is administered by a minister. In the first part of tonight's presentation, we are going to examine forgiveness of self and in the second part, the forgiveness of others.

**II. FORGIVE YOURSELF (6 min.)**

Forgiving myself is the essence of accepting myself. It is not that I approve of everything that I am or I do, but rather that I accept myself with my strengths and my weaknesses. When I can forgive myself and accept myself, I actually free myself to be me. I give myself permission to be who I am. (Share a time when you found it difficult to forgive yourself and the reason for it. Emphasize the feelings you had during your struggle.)

**III. OPEN SHARING QUESTION (15 min.)**

When did you have a hard time forgiving yourself and why do you think this happened?

**IV. FORGIVING OTHERS (1 min.)**

Forgiveness is a key for staying in relationship. When we forgive someone, we release that person and ourselves from our own grudge. When true forgiveness takes place, peace is established in the relationship. The goal of forgiveness is to put us back in relationship with one another. Don't ask for forgiveness for feelings. Ask forgiveness for the behavior that flows out of the feelings. Forgiveness is a gift of love. It cannot be earned. (Share a time (6 min.) when the healing power of forgiveness allowed a loving relationship to be re-established and how that made you feel.)

**V. DIALOGUE QUESTION (25 min.)**

My decision to forgive you is an act of love for you. HDTMMF?

**VI. OPEN SHARING QUESTION (15 min.)**

Have you been able to make the decision to forgive and heal a relationship?

**VII. SCRIPTURE READING: Matthew 18:21-22**

**VIII. CLOSING PRAYER**

**Some dialogue questions to help in preparation:**

1. When am I afraid to ask forgiveness? HDIFSTVY?
2. When do I accept forgiveness from others? HDTMMF?
3. Do I accept God's forgiveness? HDIFAT?

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES VI – CONTINUE TO GROW: SESSION 2,**  
**GIFT OF HEALING**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

This month's presentation is on the Gift of Healing and what effect it has on our daily lives. Healing is a gift from God. It's not easy to make ourselves vulnerable. The Gift of Healing helps us to love more freely and affects our relationship with each other and those around us.

**II. PRESENTATION** (Husband and wife share. Give specific examples.)

- A. How does the way I see myself prevent me from being healed?
- B. How does dialogue keep us open to be healed?
- C. In what specific ways (either in dialogue or as a result of dialogue) have we reached beyond our hurt to each other? (Husband/wife each give specific examples.)
  - 1. Non-verbal (touch, look, body language, etc.)
  - 2. Verbal
- D. Share closeness achieved as a result of healing.
- E. How does the closeness make us aware of God in our lives? Give everyday examples.

**III. DIALOGUE QUESTION:**

Dialogue keeps us open to healing each other. How does this statement make me feel?

**IV. OPEN SHARING QUESTION:**

Share with us ways you try to reach out to one another.

**V. SCRIPTURE READING: Matthew 5:21-25.**

**VI. CLOSING PRAYER**

**Suggested Questions to be given after sharing has ended:**

- 1. Which one of us usually takes the initiative in keeping the peace and HDMAMMF?
- 2. HDIF after we have made-up?
- 3. HDIF when I make you laugh?

**PLEASE SHARE YOUR JOYS AND STRUGGLES OF GIVING A PRESENTATION.  
BE YOURSELVES**

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES VI – CONTINUE TO GROW: SESSION 3,**  
**TRUST – THE KEY TO MARRIED LIFE**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

The opposite of trust is fear I don't trust you, therefore, I say "no" -- in sex, in sharing feelings, and in listening to you. When I'm not trusting, I stay uninvolved with you because I fear your reaction.

**II. PRESENTATION**

**A. Parallels Between Sex and Conversation**

1. In general, women will engage in conversation for the satisfaction of talking -- just to talk. A woman's approach to sex on the other hand is that sex should be meaningful - it should be a deep, more purposeful experience.
2. In general, a man will engage in sex just for the pleasure of sex -- just to enjoy. However, to them, conversation should be important -- have some meaning or a purpose.

**B. Must trust be earned by your husband/wife?**

1. Wife -- Do I trust you with my body? If I did, then I wouldn't say no.
2. Husband -- Do I trust that what you have to say is important? If I did, then I would listen to you.

**C. There are other areas where our relationship lacks trust. Some of these areas could include:**

1. Raising children
2. Finances
3. God
4. Death

**D. To Trust is a Decision.**

1. How do you plan to enrich your relationship by trusting more?
2. How will this affect our relationship with God?

**III. DIALOGUE QUESTION: HDIF when I doubt your trust?**

**IV. SHARING QUESTION: Share a time when you were able to trust your spouse.**

**V. SCRIPTURE READING: Matthew 6:25-34.**

**SHARE THE JOYS OF PREPARING THIS PRESENTATION!!!!!!  
BE YOURSELVES**

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES VI – CONTINUE TO GROW: SESSION 4,**  
**SACRIFICE**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

At this time of year, we are especially aware of the supreme sacrifice the Jesus Christ made for all of us. This presentation is meant to help us focus on what sacrifices we are willing to take for the sake of our relationship.

**II. PRESENTATION** (Husband/Wife share. Give specific examples.)

- A. What does sacrifice mean to me?
- B. Sacrifice is a part of our relationship. Share specific examples of times when we've experienced this to be true.
  - 1. Times when I've been able to sacrifice myself for my spouse.
  - 2. Times when I haven't been able to sacrifice myself for my spouses
- C. How does our dialogue strengthen our desire to sacrifice for the sake of our relationship? Give specific instances.
- D. How does our dialogue enable us to give more of ourselves to others?
  - 1. Family
  - 2. Friends
  - 3. Community
  - 4. Church

**III. DIALOGUE QUESTION:** HDIF when I know you've given up something for the sake of our relationship?

**IV. OPEN SHARING QUESTION:** Would you share with us what sacrifice means to you in your relationship?

**V. SCRIPTURE READING:** Matthew 19:16-22.

**Suggested Questions For Dialogue:**

- 1. What is the meaning of Lent to me? HDIFAT?
- 2. HDIF when I am asked to sacrifice something for our relationship?
- 3. HDIF when you make a sacrifice for me?

**BE YOURSELVES**

## **LOVE CIRCLE SERIES VII – MORE GROWTH:** **INTRODUCTION**

### **I. PRAYER CIRCLE:**

Hold hands and ask the Father's blessing on us tonight. We ask for an openness tonight and for us to make judgments about the Flame Sharing only when the five sessions are completed. Just like the weekend, we are asked to trust.

### **II. PURPOSE OF THE FLAME SHARING:**

To strengthen the coupleness between couples, to help build a complete beautiful trust in one another, to accept other's feelings and not judge them, and to show us how very beautiful each and every one of us really are and how much we have to give.

### **III. THINGS TO REMEMBER ABOUT SHARING BEFORE WE BEGIN**

- A. The lead couple will share in a Scripture reading or poem of their choice at the start of each session, after the prayer.
- B. The lead couple will start by asking the question, then sharing on the question. The couple on the left will share next and continue around the room clockwise. The second couple will start the sharing on the second question and so on for each question.
- C. Wait for each person to finish.
- D. Do not interrupt or answer during a sharing. The word of "why" is louder than a door slamming in your face. It is a total rejection of the person's sharing. In a sense, we are saying, "I don't believe you." Be courteous and don't speak until it is your turn to share; some sharings are hard enough without hearing some whisperings in the background.
- E. Stick to the original question as much as possible. Share your feelings as much as possible, but this doesn't mean we can't share thoughts or opinions. It is sometimes necessary to bring out thoughts and judgments, but share how these make you feel.
- F. Don't listen with your answer ready. Really listen to what the person is saying. **TRY TO LOOK BEYOND THE WORDS TO THE PERSON**, like in your couple communication. Your time will come to share and it is better to wait your turn to think about what you're going to say. So while someone is sharing listen as hard as you can. That is really loving the person.
- G. If someone is having a hard time sharing, wait. Give them all the time and love they need. We can wait until they are ready. If anyone can't answer the question, just "pass" and we will love you where you are and trust. But not everyone can relate to every question.
- H. **REMEMBER:** When it hurts the most to speak up, that's when to share because it is the real you wanting to come out. Don't discuss what is shared outside the Flame Sharing group. Whatever is shared in the room is to stay in the room. **DON'T** advise or console.
- I. The Flame Sharing is scheduled for five sessions, if at any session one couple cannot attend, it is better to postpone that particular night's session.

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES VII – MORE GROWTH: INTRODUCTION (cont'd)**

- J. Each Sharing will consist of open-sharing questions and a time for couple communication (dialogue), privately done by each couple. Activities during the weeks between meetings will be done to help us become more aware of each topic, and of our growth. A final activity, which occurs after the fourth session, and that truly enables us to share in our oneness and growth will be revealed on the fourth session. We will then have two weeks in which to prepare.
- K. After each session we will receive a communication question related to each topic. This reinforces our dialogue, which will bloom by the end of the Flame-Sharing.
- L. Closing prayer

**IV. OVERVIEW OF SESSIONS**

- Session 1, Self, Spouse and Coupleness
- Session 2, God and Death
- Session 3, Sex, Children and Possessions
- Session 4, Circle (Flame Sharing Group)
- Session 5, Candlelight Ceremony

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES VII – MORE GROWTH: SESSION 1,**  
**SELF, SPOUSE, AND COUPLENESS**

**I. OPENING PRAYER**

**II. SCRIPTURE READING (OR POEM)**

**III. OPEN SHARING QUESTIONS:**

- A. How do I feel about today?
- B. What do I like best about myself?
- C. How do I see us as a couple?
- D. What makes my spouse so unique?
- E. What makes us such a special couple?
- F. Why are my spouse's feelings important to me?
- G. In what ways am I least open to listen to my spouse?
- H. What has been our deepest sadness?
- I. What has been our greatest joy?

**IV. DIALOGUE QUESTION:** What do I need most from you? WAMFAT?

**V. ACTIVITY BETWEEN MEETINGS**

Select the name of another couple out of a hat. Both persons from each couple will plant a seed or start a cutting of a plant. The plants will symbolize the gradual growth we will experience during the Flame Sharing. They will be a gift on the final evening. Our love will bloom and grow!

**VI. COMMUNICATION BETWEEN MEETINGS**

How do I feel about us when others notice how much we love each other?

**VII. CLOSING PRAYER**

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES VII – MORE GROWTH: SESSION 2,**  
**GOD AND DEATH**

**I. OPENING PRAYER**

**II. SCRIPTURE READING (OR POEM)**

**III. OPEN SHARING QUESTIONS:**

A. God

1. What I need most from God is \_\_\_?
2. Describe how Jesus Christ has touched me.
3. Do I relate to others as I relate to God?
4. You are God's gift to me. How am I using it?

B. Death

1. What frightens me most about death that only you can understand?
2. What will I have to remember you by after you've died?
3. HDIF thinking of you looking down at me in a coffin?
4. How do I judge our children will remember me after I'm dead?

**IV. DIALOGUE QUESTION:** Is our marriage living God's plan? WAMFAT?

**V. ACTIVITY BETWEEN MEETINGS:**

Select the name of another couple. you are their Guardian angels for the next two weeks. Using your own creativity, support them, care for them in any imaginative way you can invent. Keep a record of what happens to you from your Angel and share at the next meeting.

**VI. COMMUNICATION BETWEEN MEETINGS:**

How do I feel about the possibility of our not growing old together?

**VII. CLOSING PRAYER**

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES VII – MORE GROWTH: SESSION 3,**  
**SEX, CHILDREN, AND POSSESSIONS**

**I. OPENING PRAYER**

**II. SCRIPTURE READING (OR POEM)**

**III. OPEN SHARING QUESTIONS:**

A. Sex

1. HDIF when you ask me to make love?
2. HDIFA being a man/woman?
3. WAMF when I'm aware of God's presence in our lovemaking?
4. What about you attracts me sexually?

B. Children

1. What more do I want for our children?
2. HDIF when our children show their love for us?

C. Possessions

1. Do I sometimes put my self-worth in my possessions? HDMAMMF?
2. What are my feelings about money?
3. What material possessions of ours do I attach the most value to? HDMAMMF?

**IV. DIALOGUE QUESTION:**

What are my hopes for our sexual relationship? HDIF about sharing this with you?

**V. ACTIVITY BETWEEN MEETINGS:**

Say something to, or do something for, your spouse each day to make him/her feel good.  
Bring out the goodness.

**VI. COMMUNICATION BETWEEN MEETINGS**

Our children are God's gift to us! HDMAMMF?

**VII. BRING YOUR PLANTS TO THE NEXT MEETING!!!!**

**VIII. CLOSING PRAYER**

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES VII – MORE GROWTH: SESSION 4,**  
**CIRCLE (FLAME SHARING GROUP)**

**I. OPENING PRAYER**

**II. SCRIPTURE READING (OR POEM)**

**III. OPEN SHARING QUESTIONS:** Share on how we bring out one another's goodness.

- A. What are my true feelings when a couple asks us if we are dialoguing?
- B. WAMF when you are eager to experience my through my feelings?
- C. What does the Flame Sharing Group mean to me?
- D. Am I truly open at the Flame Sharing Group?
- E. Knowing that God is here in our Flame Sharing, what do I want to say to Him?
- F. Tell each member of the group what you think their most endearing quality is.
- G. Do I feel deprived when I don't get a love letter from my spouse?
- H. What is it about my spouse that makes me want him/her for the rest of my life?
- I. Three words that describe how I feel right now are \_\_\_\_\_. Describe lovingly.

**IV. DIALOGUE QUESTION:**

How important is other's dialogue in the group to us? HDMAMMF?

**VI. PRESENTATION OF PLANTS**

Now we present one another with the plants we have grown. A part of the person will remain alive and growing, and notice how much growth we have experienced!

**VII. ACTIVITY TO PREPARE FOR POT-LUCK DINNER**

Select the food category for which you will be responsible for bringing to the Concluding Evening pot-luck dinner. The meeting (dinner) will begin 30 minutes prior to normal. Bring a candle also.

**VIII. COMMUNICATION BETWEEN MEETINGS:**

How have I grown from participating in the Flame Sharing? DFILD. (open letter)

**IX. CLOSING PRAYER**

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES VII – MORE GROWTH: SESSION 5,**  
**CANDLELIGHT DINNER CEREMONY**

**I. BEGIN EVENING WITH CANDLE CEREMONY**

Each couple will light their candle, which is on the dinner table, and which represents God's love for us, and say: "He is the Light of the World, and We are His Light for the World to see." Then play, "You Light Up My Life" (or other appropriate song).

**II. DINNER PRAYER FOLLOWED BY DINNER**

Share this special meal together! ENJOY!!

**III. OPEN SHARING QUESTIONS:**

- A. HDIF right now?
- B. How is our communication and our relationship?
- C. Share the open letter from last week (only those who want to do so).

**IV. DIALOGUE QUESTION:** Flame Sharing Group is the food and light for our growth as a couple. HDTMMF?

**V. OPEN SHARING**

**VI. CLOSING PRAYER**

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES VIII – LOVE SPIRAL,**  
**DIRECTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

- I. Commitment of at least half of a couple to attend every session.
- II. Have music prepared and ready with songs in the proper order.
- III. Attach ENVELOPE DIRECTIONS to six separate envelopes.
- IV. Attach each numbered section to a 3 x 5 inch note card.
- V. Place the corresponding numbers in the appropriate envelopes, in the correct sequence.
- VI. Seal the six envelopes,
- VII. Every person must answer every question. They may pass when their turn comes, but must respond at the end.
- VIII. Last session could last 3 - 4 hours. Suggested start is with an early evening meal at one of the couples' home to give an earlier start for this session.
- IX. Six sessions are now ready for the Love Spiral to begin.

**HAPPY LOVING !!!!**

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES VIII – LOVE SPIRAL, DIRECTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION  
(cont'd)**

**ENVELOPE LABELS FOR LOVE SPIRAL**

**ENVELOPE #1, Have Ready:**

Couples' names on slips of paper

Candle

Tape recorder

Tape of "We've Only Just Begun" [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8JgEptmz\\_eE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8JgEptmz_eE)

**ENVELOPE #2, Have Ready:**

Couples' names on slips of paper

Candle

Bible

Unsealed labeled envelopes (1 per couple)

**ENVELOPE #3, Have Ready:**

Couples' names on slips of paper

Candle

Empty bag for the letters the couples bring

Equipment and record or tape of "You Fill Up My Senses" (Annie's Song) By John Denver <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3091MHksLM4> and "Evergreen"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X-Ro7baEa6w> by Barbara Streisand

Unsealed labelled envelopes (1 per couple), each with 2 sheets of paper, 1 with Husband at the top, the other with Wife at the top.

**ENVELOPE #4, Have Ready:**

Couples' names on slips of paper

Candle

Equipment and record or tape of "Wedding Song" (There Is Love)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WOF8ZXzgpL0> by the Captain & Tennille

**ENVELOPE #5, Have Ready:**

Couples' names on slips of paper

Candle

Bible

Empty bag for Secret Couple identity envelopes

Equipment and record or tape of "Sometimes" by The Carpenters

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3-0v4Pn5WKU>

**ENVELOPE #6, Have Ready:**

Main Candle; plus 1 candle for each couple

Equipment and record or tape of "You Light Up My Life"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j3ssmH8vjf4> and "The Impossible Dream"

from Man of La Mancha <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RfHnzYEHAow>

## **LOVE CIRCLE SERIES VIII – LOVE SPIRAL, SESSION 1**

### **I. PRAYER**

Our Father, be with us as we begin our Love Spiral. Help us to be compassionate listeners. Guide us as we grow in friendship and love. Amen

### **II. READ AS IS**

The purpose of our Love Spiral is to experience something new and beautiful that will leave all of us forever changed, forever aware of the power and beauty of community love and acceptance. The Love Spiral experience is another gift from God to deepen our relationship with each other, with the community, and with Him,

### **III. GUIDELINES FOR SHARING**

- A. Allow each person as much time as he wants for sharing, even if there are long pauses. Pass the cards when finished.
- B. Simply pass the cards to the next person if you don't wish to share on a particular question. When all have shared on that question, you may take your turn, if you wish.
- C. Don't interrupt or add to the sharing of another.
- D. During refreshments and outside the group, never discuss what was shared.
- E. Do not advise or console when another is sharing. Just be an open, non-judgmental listener. The developing of trust and understanding is the key to this special experience.

### **IV. READ ALOUD: REFLECTIONS ON RISK**

To laugh is to risk appearing the fool,  
To weep is to risk appearing sentimental,  
To reach out for another is to risk involvement,  
To expose feelings is to risk exposing your true self,  
To place your ideas, your dreams before the crowd is to risk their loss,  
To love is to risk not being loved in return,  
To live is to risk dying,  
To try is to risk failure---

But risk must be taken because the greatest hazard in life is to risk nothing. The person who risks nothing, does nothing and is nothing. He may avoid suffering and sorrow, but he simply cannot learn, feel, change, grow, love and live.

### **V. OPEN SHARING QUESTIONS**

- A. Describe your family background --where you were born where you grew up size of family (sisters, brothers, etc.) both parents living? Near by?
- B. What is your favorite... and why?
  - 1. Time of the day
  - 2. Place in the house
  - 3. Pastime
- C. What 3 things are most important in your life right now? Why? Be specific,

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES VIII – LOVE SPIRAL, SESSION 1 (cont'd)**

**V. "WE'VE ONLY JUST BEGUN"**

Read the lyrics below. During a 10 minute break, play the record or tape. Sung by The Carpenters, lyrics by Paul Williams.

We've only just begun to live  
White lace and promises  
A kiss for luck and we're on our way.

Before the rising sun we fly  
So many roads to choose  
We start out walking and learn to run  
And, yes, we've just begun

Sharing horizons that are new to us  
Watching the signs along the way  
Talking it over, just the two of us  
Working together day to day, together.

And when the evening comes, we smile  
So much of life ahead  
We'll find a place where there's room to grow  
And, yes, we've just begun to live  
We've only just begun... to live.

**VI. TEN MINUTE BREAK**

Play "We've Only Just Begun" during break. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8JgEptmz\\_eE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8JgEptmz_eE)

**VII. OPEN SHARING QUESTIONS**

- A. What kind of a person lets me come out of a shell and be myself?
- B. What was the most joyful moment in my life before I met my spouse?
- C. The times I feel most uneasy are ...

**VIII. CLOSING PRAYER**

Our Father, hear our thoughts as our first Love Circle session comes to a close. We are coming to know each other better and to know where we have been. Each one of us is the result of our past and present. May this Love Circle time help us to grow and expand our horizons as we go into the future with new friends. Amen

## **LOVE CIRCLE SERIES VIII – LOVE SPIRAL, SESSION 2**

### **I. PRAYER**

Our Father, we start this second Love Spiral with the friends we came to know better last time. Before we can become a close group, we need to dig deeper into who we are individually. Help us be open with our own insights and understanding of what others share. Amen

### **II. REVIEW GUIDELINES FOR SHARING**

### **III. OPEN SHARING QUESTIONS**

- A. Who was the most significant person in my life outside of my parents and my spouse?
- B. How do I see myself? What are my strengths and my weaknesses?
- C. What was the most sorrowful moment of my life?

### **IV. READING FROM KAHLIL GIBRAN THEN TAKE A 10 MIN. BREAK.**

*"If I accept the sunshine and warmth,  
I also accept the thunder and the lightning."*

*"When the hand of Life is heavy and night songless,  
it is the time for love and trust.  
And how light the hand of life becomes and how songful the night,  
when one is loving and trusting all."*

### **V. TEN MINUTE BREAK**

### **VI. OPEN SHARING QUESTIONS**

- A. Of all my obligations and activities which three would I like to give more of my time?
- B. Read Mark 4:35-41  
*<sup>35</sup>On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, 'Let us go across to the other side.' <sup>36</sup>And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. <sup>37</sup>A great gale arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. <sup>38</sup>But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, 'Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?' <sup>39</sup>He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, 'Peace! Be still!' Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. <sup>40</sup>He said to them, 'Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?' <sup>41</sup>And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, 'Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?'*  
Question: In what sense am I going through a storm now?
- C. What would I like to be doing in 5 years?

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES VIII – LOVE SPIRAL, SESSION 2 (cont'd)**

**VI. HOMEWORK – NO! FUN WORK!!!!**

Each couple draws an addressed envelope with another couple's names. Before the next session, together, write a loveletter to that couple. Add comments about the husband and wife as individuals, besides as a couple. Bring the loveletter to the next session. Your couple will read it to themselves; NOT ALOUD. Keep author identity a secret when you arrive. Sign the letter!!!!

**VII. CLOSING PRAYER**

Our Father, we've come to another closing of our Love Spiral. Be with us as we go our separate ways, while holding thoughts of our special times together. With your help we are reaching out to each other, opening our arms and hearts in love. Amen

## **LOVE CIRCLE SERIES VIII – LOVE SPIRAL, SESSION 3**

### **I. PRAYER**

Our Father, as we start our third Love Spiral together, we ask for oneness and trust, We are seeking more and more ways to improve our couple relationships, so that we may go into the world together and spread the love we feel from you. Amen

### **II. LOVELETTER ACTIVITY**

- A. Deliver the loveletters, DON'T REVEAL THE AUTHORS,
- B. Each couple reads their letter silently --- NO discussion between the spouses.
- C. The couple who delivered the letters starts the sharing --- Do not read the letter to the group, nor tell who wrote the letter.

### **III. OPEN SHARING QUESTIONS**

- A. What is your reaction to the loveletter you received?
- B. What is the one thing your spouse does that makes you feel most loved?
- C. What is one thing you would give your spouse now... if you could give anything?

### **IV. YOU FILL UP MY SENSES**

Read the lyrics.

You fill up my senses  
Like a night in a forest  
Like the mountains in spring time  
Like a walk in the rain  
Like a storm in the desert  
Like a sleepy blue ocean  
You fill up my senses  
Come to me again.

Come let me love you  
Let me give my life to you  
Let me drown in your laughter  
Let me die in your arms  
Let me lay down beside you  
Let me always be with you  
Come let me love you  
Come love me again.

### **V. TEN MINUTE BREAK**

Play “You Fill Up My Senses” by John Denver during break.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3091MHksLM4>

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES VIII – LOVE SPIRAL, SESSION 3 (cont'd)**

**VI. OPEN SHARING QUESTIONS**

- A. How has your relationship changed since your Marriage Encounter Weekend?
- B. Read Aloud:  
*Kahlil Gibran: "Among intelligent people the surest basis for marriage is friendship--the sharing of-real interests--the ability to fight out ideas together and understand each other's thoughts and dreams."*  
*Peter McWilliams: "Missing you could turn from pain to pleasure if only I knew you were missing me too."*  
Question: Have I experienced disillusionment since our Weekend? How did I react?
- C. What future happy times do I see for us as a couple? Describe in loving detail.

**VII. EVERGREEN**

Read the Lyrics.

Ah, Love, soft as an easy chair;  
Love, fresh as the morning air.  
One love that is shared by two,  
I have found with you.

Like a rose under the April snow,  
I was always certain love would grow.  
Love, ageless and evergreen,  
Seldom seen by two.

You and I will make each night a first.  
Every day a beginning.  
Spirits rise and their dance is unrehearsed.  
They warm and excite us  
'Cause we have the brightest love,  
Two lights that shine as one,  
Morning glory and the midnight sun.

Time, we've learned to sail above;  
Time won't change the meaning of  
One love, ageless and ever--evergreen.

**VIII. 10 MINUTE BREAK**

Play "Evergreen", lyrics by Paul Williams, sung by Barbara Streisand

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X-Ro7baEa6w>

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES VIII – LOVE SPIRAL, SESSION 3 (cont'd)**

**IX. ACTIVITY**

- A. Each couple draws an envelope that has on it the names of another couple. In the envelope there are 2 sheets of paper.
- B. Without any discussion, each wife writes a list for the Husband, while each husband writes a list for the wife.
- C. DELIGHTFUL DOZEN--12 free or very inexpensive "building romance" treat ideas to give to a spouse, 2 a week, for 6 weeks.
- D. Don't sign your name to the list you write.
  - 1. The list won't be read aloud!
  - 2. Put both lists in the addressed envelope.
  - 3. Deposit in an empty bag or mail to them as soon as possible.
  - 4. If delivered that evening read after the prayer.

**X. PRAYER**

Our Father, thank you for giving each of us our spouse. Thank you for giving us each other so that we may come together to build a strong, lasting, and giving, couple relationship. Amen

## **LOVE CIRCLE SERIES VIII – LOVE SPIRAL, SESSION 4**

### **I. PRAYER**

Our Father, we pray for growth in our relationship with You, not only to trust and accept Your will, but also to come to know You as our friend and confidant. Help us to understand that each member of this Love Spiral comes to it with a different awareness and set of beliefs. Help us to accept these differences as You do. Amen

### **II. OPEN SHARING QUESTIONS**

- A. Without revealing the identity of the author of the list you got last session...  
What did you think about receiving the Delightful Dozen (building romance) treat ideas to use on your spouse? If you tried some of the ideas, how did you feel about the activity?
- B. What I like most about our Love Circle is...
- C. In what way have I become more aware of God since our Weekend?

### **IV. THE WEDDING SONG (THERE IS LOVE)**

Read the lyrics.

He is now to be among you at the calling of your hearts.  
Rest assured this troubadour is acting on his part.

The union of your spirits here has caused him to remain,  
For whenever two or more of you are gathered in his name,  
There is love/there is love.

Well a man shall leave his mother and a woman leave her home.  
They shall travel on to where the two shall be as one.  
As it was in the beginning, is now until the end, Woman draws her life from man and gives it back again.  
And there's love. There is love.

Well then what's to be the reason for becoming man and wife?  
Is it love that brings you here, or love that gives you life?

For if loving is the answer, then who's the giving for?  
Do you believe in something that you've never seen before?  
Oh, there's love. There is love.

### **V. 10 MINUTE BREAK**

Play "The Wedding Song" (There is Love), by The Captain & Tennille  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WOF8ZXzgpL0>

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES VIII – LOVE SPIRAL, SESSION 4 (cont'd)**

**VI. OPEN SHARING QUESTIONS**

- A. What Christ-like quality would you like to have that would help you deal with other people?
- B. The Spirit was in Christ to give Him His powers; the Spirit lives in all of us. If you had the power to give or do one thing to the world, what would it be?
- C. We have a stake in each other's marriage. What does that mean to you? What can you do about it?

**XI. ACTIVITY**

- A. Each couple draws the names of another couple.
- B. For two weeks you will be a Secret Couple.
- C. Do special (free or inexpensive) treats or give gifts to your couple.
- D. KEEP YOUR IDENTITY SECRET!
- E. At the next session, have a unique way to reveal your identity, sealed in an envelope. Please do not bring a gift for your couple at that time. (OK to give privately after the Love Circle.)

**XII. CLOSING PRAYER**

Our Father, thank you for being present and listening as we share our thoughts and reach out to each other in understanding and love. Amen.

## **LOVE CIRCLE SERIES VIII – LOVE SPIRAL, SESSION 5**

### **I. PRAYER**

Our Father, be with us tonight as we seek continual growth in our relationship with each other and with You. Help us understand the full meaning of Marriage Encounter as we reach out and experience the love of one another in our Community. Amen

### **II. OPEN SHARING QUESTIONS**

A. How did you feel receiving special reminders of love? You don't need to tell exactly what was done for you... just describe your reaction. **IDENTITIES ARE STILL A SECRET!!!!**

B. **After all have shared, bring out the Secret Couple identity revealers. Guess Who?!!!!**

C. What is your favorite verse in the Bible or your favorite inspirational saying? Why?

D. Read Acts 2:44-46.

*<sup>44</sup>All who believed were together and had all things in common; <sup>45</sup>they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need.*

*<sup>46</sup>Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts,*

Question: The closest I have come to experiencing this kind of a community with a group of people where we really cared for each other was when\_\_\_\_\_.

### **III. SOMETIMES**

Read the lyrics.

Sometimes, not often enough,  
We reflect upon the good things.  
And those thoughts always center  
Around those we love.

And I think about those people  
Who mean so much to me,  
And for so many years have made me  
So very happy.

And I count the times  
I have forgotten to say  
Thank you and just how much I love them.

### **IV. 10 MINUTE BREAK**

Play "Sometimes" by The Carpenters.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3-0v4Pn5WKU>

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES VIII – LOVE SPIRAL, SESSION 5 (cont'd)**

**V. OPEN SHARING QUESTIONS**

- A. Tell about an incident that gave you special pleasure – for which you think you did not give enough thanks to the person or people involved.
- B. Which part of your Weekend gave you the strongest feeling of support and/or love from couples you didn't know?
- C. In what ways would you like to help carry on the Marriage Encounter movement?

**VI. ACTIVITY**

- A. On a lighter scale, plan to Secret Couple a Marriage Encounter couple who is not very involved in our Community (but who you think would like to be). **KEEP IDENTITIES SECRET!!!**
- B. Tell each other who you will secret couple, so that 2 Love Spiral couples don't choose the same couple.
- C. To reveal identities, you may want to have a Love Spiral - "Loved Couples" picnic or party soon after the Love Spiral is over.

**VII. CLOSING PRAYER**

Our Father, tonight we worked on going beyond our special Love Spiral. Help us as we set out to spread our love. Guide us as we strive toward a future filled with worldwide love and concern for all mankind. Amen

**VIII. DISCUSSION DURING REFRESHMENTS**

A very special treat for the 6th session is to have a candle-light pot-luck dinner...Want to? ....

## **LOVE CIRCLE SERIES VIII – LOVE SPIRAL, SESSION 6**

### **I. PRAYER** (after dinner, if you were together)

Our Father, be with us tonight as we share our stories about spreading our Love Spiral love to other Marriage Encounter couples. It is good to feel our Love Spiral radiate out. May our love spread warmth just as Your sun spreads warmth throughout our world. Be with us on this last night. Thank you for the growth we have experienced and the love we have felt from you and from each other. Amen

### **II. OPEN SHARING QUESTIONS**

- A. How did you feel Secret Coupling an unsuspecting couple?
- B. What is your wish right now for all married couples? .
- C. What are your feelings when you offer the gift of a Weekend to friends, and they reject the invitation?

### **III. YOU LIGHT UP MY LIFE**

Read the lyrics.

So many nights I'd sit by my window.  
Waiting for someone to sing me his song.  
So many dreams I kept deep inside me  
Alone in the dark, but now you've come along.  
And you light up my life.  
You give me hope to carry on.  
You light up my days  
And fill my nights with song.

Rolling at sea, adrift on the waters,  
Could it be finally I'm turning for home?  
Finally a chance to say, "Hey! I love you."  
Never again to be all alone.  
And you light up my life.  
You give me hope, to carry on.  
You light up my days  
And fill my nights with song.  
It can't be wrong when it feels so right,  
"Cause you – you light up my life."

### **IV. 10 MINUTE BREAK**

Play "You Light Up My Life" by Debbie Boone  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j3ssmH8vjf4>

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES VIII – LOVE SPIRAL, SESSION 6 (cont'd)**

**V. OPEN SHARING QUESTIONS**

- A. What strongest quality do you, as a couple, have to offer others?
- B. What Marriage Encounter activities would you like to see added or increased in your district?
- C. What do you think this Love Spiral accomplished?

**VI. ACTIVITY**

- A. In a circle. Standing or sitting. Dim the lights.
- B. Each person, in turn, turns to every other person in the circle and tells him or her what "gift" he got from that person or what special quality that person has shown or developed during the last several weeks.

**VII. THE IMPOSSIBLE DREAM**

Read the lyrics. Play the music later. "The Impossible Dream" Lyrics: Joe Darion

To dream the impossible dream,  
To fight the unbeatable foe,  
To bear with unbearable sorrow,  
To run where the brave dare not go.

To right the unrightable wrong,  
To love pure and chaste from a far,  
To try when your arms are too weary,  
To reach the unreachable star!

**VIII. CLOSING ACTIVITY**

- A. Stand in circle and dim the lights.
- B. Give each couple a candle which both partners hold with one hand.
- C. One couple lights -their candle from the flame of main candle. The couple to their left lights their candle from the flame of the first couple's candle, and so on around till all the candles are lighted.
- D. LEAD COUPLE SAYS: Let God's light shine. (pause) How many other candles in our Community are waiting to be lighted?
- E. Keep all candles lit.
- F. Play "The Impossible Dream" from Man of La Mancha.  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RfHnzYEHAow>

**IX. CLOSING PRAYER**

Our Father, while this is the end of our Love Circle, it can be the beginning of other Love Circles or other activities during which we can spread Your light and love. Give us the strength and drive to bring "Our New World" to everyone.... though it seems now like "The Impossible Dream". Amen

## **LOVE CIRCLE SERIES IX – REEVALUATION: SETUP**

### **I. FORWARD**

We would like to briefly describe the format of this Love Circle. The evenings begin with our hands joined, forming a circle for our open prayer. We usually have a burning candle on our coffee table. This candle reminds us of the presence of Christ among us, as well as keeping us aware of our Marriage Encounter community.

At the first meeting of the Love Circle group, we review the basic guidelines that are followed for the sharings. We make an agreement that anything shared in a Love Circle will never be shared outside of the group. We can share our own relationship with others, but not the relationship of anyone else. This helps to establish a bond of trust and confidence among everyone there.

In addition, we review the format we follow in the course of the sharing. We try to make everyone feel comfortable about sharing. We mention that if they cannot relate to the sharing question they can pass when it comes their turn. We will not judge them and they will be accepted with love. It has been our experience that this option is seldom used.

We point out that it is not a requirement for each couple to be dialoguing daily; however, we will ask them to dialogue on the questions given to them during this Love Circle. We also point out that the sharing questions may bring up topics that they have never discussed before. As a result, new areas for dialogue may be uncovered.

Keeping in mind our purpose of this Love Circle, we think it is very important that the Love Circle be limited to six meetings. This prevents the outcome from becoming only an inward experience where we focus on creating relationships with the Love Circle group. Instead, its focus is on strengthening one another so that they can reach out to the community.

### **II. THE PURPOSE OF THE LOVE CIRCLE**

The purpose of this Love Circle is to help couples to recognize that reevaluation is a continual commitment that helps us to understand and strive to live God's plan - to achieve unity.

The guidelines presented next are in summary form to help Love Circle leaders in their preparation and are important elements that we believe are the central concepts that have produced the success that we have enjoyed.

#### **A. General Guidelines**

The following guidelines are provided here as a quick reference or checklist for Love Circle preparation.

1. Prayer: Each session begins with a prayer by holding hands in a circle. The group leader asks for God's guidance and adds any additional prayers.
2. Trust: Trust in each other is gained through prayer, listening, acceptance, and confidentiality. Commenting on other's sharing or making value judgments can quickly destroy trust.

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES IX – REEVALUATION: SETUP (cont'd)**

3. Theme: Each session has a theme which is emphasized by the questions. The themes are:
  - a. Self
  - b. What is God's Plan for us as a couple?
  - c. What to Reevaluate - An Ongoing Process
  - d. How to Reevaluate; It's Ongoing
  - e. Why do we reevaluate? Why do we change?
  - f. Apostolate (Reaching out)

*(The Sequence of the themes should be followed in order shown for best results.)*
4. Openness: The leader couple participates in the sharing at the same level as the others in the group. In fact, the leaders' sharing and openness set the tone of the group and are very important. If the leaders are the first to risk and participate at a mutual level, others in the group are more willing to adopt that attitude. The leadership role involves the scheduling of the meetings, giving presentations, and directing the meetings. The preparation of the presentations for Sessions 2, 3, 4 and 5 may require considerable time and effort.
5. Attendance Guidelines: Continuity in Love Circles is essential if the most effective results are to be achieved. Each session builds on the previous session and interaction of the total group is necessary. Because of these constraints, it is important that the couples commit to attending all sessions. As a guideline, a session is postponed if more than one couple cannot attend. Preplanning meeting dates at the first session and resolving any conflicts at that time simplifies matters. It is sometimes possible but often difficult to change a meeting night for a session if all other members can arrange it.
6. Sharing Format: The sharing format for Love Circles is somewhat different than for other discussion-type groups. This Love Circle format is one of the main reasons for Love Circle success. The emphasis in the sharing format there is listening and acceptance. Persons sharing respond to the questions without interruption or comment. Here is how it works.

At the beginning of the first meeting the leader couple explains the format. The leader couple states the sharing question and is the first to share. During the responses, the group has responded. When one of the leader couple has finished, he or she turns to his spouse silently signaling he is done. The next member of the group around the circle then responds to the question. This continues around the circle until all have responded.

No one is required to respond to a question, and this is made clear by the leader couple. If someone does not care to answer, they merely say "pass" and turn to the person next in order. It is very important that group members realize they can pass if they desire without any consequence. After the whole group has responded to the question, the leader couple may offer another opportunity to share to the person who passed.

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES IX – REEVALUATION: SETUP (cont'd)**

The sharing on the next question begins with the couple next to the leaders and responses follow around the circle. Thereafter, a different couple is first to answer. This procedure permits everyone the opportunity to hear others share before his turn, thus balancing the information flow.

At no time during the sharing should members enter into discussion about the topic or about what someone has stated. If there is a need for discussion, the leader will indicate that a discussion can be held during the break or after the Love Circle meeting.

7. **Selecting Questions:** Selecting questions for the first and sixth meetings can be a challenging experience. The questions are the tools for bringing out the feelings of the group and highlighting the theme. Handouts and several dialogue questions are to be given for further dialogue. It would be more convenient if they could be written out ahead of time for distribution by the leaders.
  - a. **Feelings or Attitudes:** Select questions that have feeling responses or can be answered factually as an attitude statements No answer will be judged as being right or wrong.
  - b. **Consider Where People Are:** A feeling for the group makeup helps in selecting questions. Some groups prefer spiritual and scriptural questions rather than the personal type.
  - c. **Consider Religious Background:** Honor the religious differences in the group. Avoid questions that require a response on an issue of dogma.
8. **Start on time.** If you establish this precedent, you will have little difficulty with it on the subsequent evenings. You should finish no later than 10:00 p.m. so they can go home and dialogue early.
9. **As preparation for Session 5,** find out statistics on divorce abortions, unwed mothers, child beating, decrease in vocations, the number of unchurched, catholic schools closing, etc., and share in that Session.
10. **It's important that you do the homework each week so that you will be sharing in the same experiences as the couples.**

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES IX – REEVALUATION: SESSION 1,**  
**SELF**

**I. BEGIN WITH PRAYER ASKING FOR GOD'S BLESSING.**

**II. PURPOSE**

- A. The purpose of Session 1 is to get to know each other on a feeling level and to build a spirit of trust and acceptance in each other. Its purpose is to show how beautiful we are as a couple and as individuals.
- B. The atmosphere should be relaxed with a candle burning in the middle of the group. Each one has a turn answering questions pertaining to himself. Simple questions stressing topics that help each to know the others are asked. After four or five questions, whatever time permits, a break for coffee is taken. After the break, some leaders ask deeper questions depending on whether or not they feel their particular group is ready to respond. Usually three more questions are adequate. All groups will be different; some will be ready to share easily, while others may find it difficult to share themselves with others. The selected questions for the first night should be light and easy, progressing to deeper ones if you wish. The following is a list of sample questions or topics that may be used. Compose your own questions if none satisfy the need.
- C. Give couples five dialogue questions to take home and share before the next session. Sharing questions on the next page may be used, and add: HDMAMMF?, etc.

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES IX – REEVALUATION: SESSION 1, SELF (cont'd)**

**SAMPLE QUESTIONS - SELF**

1. What is your favorite month of the year and why?
2. What is your favorite time of the year and why?
3. What is your favorite spot in the house and why?
4. What was the highest point in your life this past year?
5. What three things are most important in your life right now?
6. How do you think others see you?
7. How do you see yourself?
8. If you could change one thing about yourself, what would you change?
9. Describe the best vacation you've ever had.
10. If your house caught on fire and you could take only three things, what would they be?
11. Introduce yourself and spouse and tell a little of your back-ground.
12. What is your favorite sport?
13. What is your favorite music?
14. What is your favorite food?
15. Where would you go on a trip if money and time were no problem? What do you like to do most on a night out?
16. If you could live anywhere, where would you choose?
17. If you could live in any time period, when would you choose to live?
18. Who was the most significant person (outside of your parents) to you as a child?
19. How do you like others to see you?
20. When do you feel the loneliest?
21. In the book of Genesis we read that after each of the Father's creations He said, "It is good, I am very pleased." What have I done in my life that I can say, "It is good and I am very pleased."?
22. In many ways we can recognize that we are the creators. We can create our own atmosphere of peace, dissention, love and joy. How do I want others to see me? How do I see myself?
23. What qualities in your spouse make you know that he/she is your gift from God?
24. What I need more than anything else from this group is ...
25. When do you feel most alone and when do you feel most loved?
26. When was the loneliest time of your life?
27. Where do you feel you excel or have strength?
28. What do you feel is your weakness or an area you can improve on as a person?
29. What would you like to gain from this group?
30. The person I have most difficulty accepting is: myself, my spouse, my children, my friends, my enemies.
31. The most significant person in my life, outside of my spouse, is...?
32. Our greatest strength and weakness is ...?

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES IX – REEVALUATION: SESSION 1, SELF (cont'd)**

33. 'What are your feelings on starting our second evening?
34. If you could ask for one thing from God, what would it be?
35. What do you hope to gain from the Love Circle?
36. What do you have to give to this Love Circle?
37. Read Mark 4:35-41. Picture yourself in the setting at the Sea of Galilee with the disciples and experience their feelings. How would they feel:
  - a. Before the storm?
  - b. At the beginning of the storm?
  - c. At the height of the storm?
  - d. After the storm?
38. Ask yourself: In what sense am I now going through a storm?
39. Read Matthew 11:28-29. What burden is heaviest for you right now?
40. What are the three most important things in your life?
41. Are you the kind of person that affirms the best in other people, especially those who are closest to you? Explain.
42. If I knew I could not fail, what is one thing I would like to do in my life?
43. Do you find it hard to see the strengths that you possess in yourself?
44. Who builds you up and makes you feel that you have special worth as an individual and how?

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES IX – REEVALUATION: SESSION 2,**  
**WHAT IS GOD'S PLAN FOR US AS A COUPLE?**

(For this Session, you will need pens, paper, homework handouts, Bible and exercise handouts.)

**I. OPENING REMARKS (2 min.)**

- A. Give warm welcome to the group. The leader couple introduces themselves and then asks the couples to introduce themselves: names and when they made their weekend.
- B. Be warm and encouraging as you remind the couples of the discipline: why promptness is important; to focus on their spouses as they did on the weekend; that there will be time to share with each other later; set aside the busys and find each other; and why we are here.

**II. SHARED PRAYER (7 min.)**

Read Scripture passage I Cor. 13:4-8 (end with "love goes on forever"). Without comment on the passage, join hands and begin prayer.

**III. PURPOSE OF THIS SERIES OF SESSIONS**

Begin the presentations by stating the purpose of the series:

This series of evenings is for all of you and us - beautiful couples who dare to be different - couples who dare to live God's plan for us in the midst of a world that is pulling at us to live the world's plan. If we want to continue to live our vocation in life as a couple, loving each other as completely as is humanly possible, then we need to renew our decision to reevaluate and change the things that prevents us from achieving God's plan.

This evening, and in the three following, together we will be hearing about God's plan for us and what it is. What to reevaluate - those large and small things which prevent us from the closeness we experienced on our weekend. How to reevaluate and to keep it an ongoing process and the tools we use to reevaluate and, finally, why reevaluate. Why do we need to change to make one another our top priority? This is the purpose of these sessions, to give us a renewed urgency to change and to say yes to God's plan. We want to continually work for the unity and the closeness we experience in striving for it.

**IV. PRESENTATION OUTLINE (In preparation, the leader couple should read their 70/70.)**

- A. Give title of the session: What Is God's Plan For Us As A Couple?"
- B. Give the purpose of this presentation.  
"We want to explore God's plan for us. Is it very different than what we wanted for us when we began our life together? Doesn't God want for us the reality of being one we experienced on our wedding day and in the months that followed that special day? Isn't He asking us to experience every facet of each other so that we can grow closer and closer? God's plan for us is unity. In those first years together, that unity was foremost in our minds and hearts and seemed to happen with very little effort, but as the distractions and pressures of our day to day life emerged, we gradually began to lose touch with the closeness we had, the unity we wanted, and we began to live the World's plan. Then we made our weekend...."

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES IX – REEVALUATION: SESSION 2,  
WHAT IS GOD'S PLAN FOR US AS A COUPLE? (cont'd)**

- C. Describe the lived experience of your 70/70. Bring alive the renewed excitement of being a couple. Share the warmth, joy, tears, laughter, and closeness. (This closeness is God's plan for us.) "On Sunday morning of our weekend..."
1. How you wanted to hold on to this closeness"
  2. How you were willing and eager to make changes for one another to have this closeness forever."
- D. Changes to live God's plan. Share some of the changes you wrote in your loveletters (daily dialogue, more time for each other, placing each other before kids, housework, job, hobbies, and any other changes that apply to you).
1. How anxious you were to start living this new way
  2. Did these changes affect your coupleness when you got home?
  3. Did others notice the change in you as a couple? (kids, friends, relatives)
- E. Excuses for not continuing reevaluation and change. Explain how you began to settle down and were satisfied with what you had. Mention a few of the excuses we have for not changing more. Make this personal.
1. "We're so different than before."
  2. "We want to keep what we have now."
- F. Motivation for living God's Plan. Explain why you decided to continue to reevaluate and change. (We need to continue changing to grow closer, to live God's plan and this is what God wants and we want.) Make this warm and personal.
1. The joy we experience when we reevaluate and change
  2. Our life is different and more exciting living God's plan.
  3. We begin to dialogue for dialogue's sake. Without reevaluation, our dialogue becomes hum-drum and those who fail to reevaluate stop dialoguing. Reevaluation is as necessary as dialogue in living God's plan for us.
- G. Conclusion. (Be enthusiastic) Give a brief wrap up statement explaining why you made the decision to live God's plan.
1. Why settle for less when you can strive for so much more in your relationship
  2. We want to be different
  3. We need to live our lives really believing in the way we live and to live the way we believe.
  4. We want our love and closeness to grow.

**V. OPEN SHARING QUESTIONS:**

Did others notice the change in you as a couple after your weekend? HDTMMF?  
How has the Modern World begun to distract me from making you my #1 priority?  
HDTMMF?

**VI. DIALOGUE QUESTION:**

In what way can I show you how interested I am in you? HDIF sharing this with you?  
(Give them 10 min. to write. Encourage them to have an open-ended dialogue at home.  
After the writing period, have them come back to receive their homework assignments.)

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES IX – REEVALUATION: SESSION 2,  
WHAT IS GOD'S PLAN FOR US AS A COUPLE? (cont'd)**

**VII. HOMEWORK HANDOUT:** Explain what they are to do and the value of the assignment.

**VIII. QUESTIONS & ANSWERS AND CLOSING PRAYER (1 min.)**

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES IX – REEVALUATION: SESSION 2,  
WHAT IS GOD'S PLAN FOR US AS A COUPLE? (cont'd)**

**HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT**

- 1<sup>st</sup> Night: Read your 70/70 loveletter from your weekend and enjoy!
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Night: Make a list of the reevaluations in your 70/70 and discuss how you have or have not made those changes. Put your list on the refrigerator to remind you of them.
- 5<sup>th</sup> Night: Take the time to have a special dinner with candles, soft lights and music.
- 7<sup>th</sup> Night: Read the scripture John 15:9-13 to each other. Select the words, "Love one another as I have loved you" and write your loveletter on this question: When Jesus says these words to me, HDIF about us?
- 9<sup>th</sup> Night: Have a loving discussion on what God's Plan means to you.
- 11<sup>th</sup> Night: Have a good evening just being together in God's love.
- 13<sup>th</sup> Night: Discussion - Do you see the value of reevaluation to keep your dialogue fresh and exciting?

**Note: These exercises are meant to be a supplement to your daily dialogue.**

## **LOVE CIRCLE SERIES IX – REEVALUATION: LEADERS GUIDELINE FOR SESSIONS 3, 4 & 5**

The second session's format is self-explanatory. It is the scene-setter for the remaining sessions and touches on the context of the entire program. The following is to help you prepare for and more fully understand the presentations for the third, fourth and fifth evenings. The format is consistent on each of these nights. The variables are the time allotted for each section, the placement of the scripture reading(s), the exercises which do not appear in each presentation, and the homework assignments.

### **I. RE-CAP OF PREVIOUS MEETING:**

This is to assist them in putting aside the distractions of the day and to refocus them on each other and why they are here.

### **II. SHARING QUESTION**

The purpose of the open sharing is to have them look at the results of their homework this past two weeks and what effects, if any, these dialogues and exercises have had on their relationship. We are trying to help them see that it is possible to create at home an intense absorption period with each other similar to their weekend. The rules for sharing should be explained:

- A. Share yourselves only - feelings, thoughts, attitudes, or judgments.
- B. Do not comment on others' sharings
- C. Sharing is voluntary. Avoid going around the circle. This puts pressure on someone who may not be ready yet.
- D. Sharing is done with trust. No one's sharing will be revealed outside the group.
- E. Make sure everyone has had the opportunity to share before you speak a second time.
- F. Stress openness and honesty to the couples and the value of participating in the sharing period.

### **III. BREAK**

The coffee break follows here rather than at the end of the evening. This will leave them free to discuss where they are now, and there will be a minimal break in continuity between the presentation and their open-ended dialogue at home.

### **IV. PRESENTATION**

The talk can be written or delivered from the outline. All items must be covered, either from personal experience or as it would apply to others, so don't be afraid to pointedly say, "Have you done this?" or "It's important that you look at that", etc. The presentation should be motivational but not unachievable; challenging but not threatening. The idea is to shake them out of complacency and help them to recognize that we are still encountering each other. And to do this, continual reevaluation is just as important to our relationship as daily dialogue. Why we are reevaluating should be stated clearly and with impact during each of the four evenings. The presentation may contain an exercise to be done in place. You won't ask them to separate or exchange these exercises during the evening,

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES IX – REEVALUATION:  
LEADERS GUIDELINE FOR SESSIONS 3, 4 & 5 (cont'd)**

**V. DIALOGUE QUESTION:**

Briefly explain the importance of honesty, feelings and trust, and that we are not dialoguing to answer a question but to experience each other more deeply. On each succeeding evening there should be a mini-motivation on dialogue, mentioning some of the key concepts of the weekend such as feelings are neither right nor wrong, listening, to love is a decision, WEDS, and confidence (not in what my spouse does or how he acts, but in his/her goodness he will accept my feelings).

**VI. HOMEWORK HANDOUTS:**

Explain homework clearly, but also tell them you are available for questions. Give your phone number and when you can or cannot be reached during the week. It's important that they feel the stake that you have in them just as the team on their week-end did.

**VII. CLOSING PRAYER (AND SCRIPTURE)**

A spontaneous prayer by the leader couple and attending couples if they respond. Encourage the couples to go right home so that they will have prime time for their dialogue.

**VIII. GENERAL NOTES:**

- A. A commitment to all remaining sessions should be made by the couples wishing to attend. Dates should be published well in advance so that this will be possible.
- B. Ninth night: Read the scripture I Peter 3:1-15 to each other. Select a passage or line that has meaning to you and write your love letter on: When Jesus says these words to me, HDIF about us?
- C. Eleventh night: Free night:  
Select a dialogue question on anything that is important to your relationship right now. Spend some time in shared prayer before you go to sleep.
- D. Thirteenth night: Review the commitments to change that you made on the first night. Talk about the progress you have or have not made and why. Develop a dialogue question on those commitments.

**NOTE:** A dialogue question has not been suggested as part of each of these homework exercises. That does not mean to imply that we don't want you to dialogue; we just want to free you to select a question that is meaningful to you in these areas of reevaluation. These exercises should be a supplement to your daily dialogue.

**ENJOY**

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES IX – REEVALUATION: SESSION 3,**  
**WHAT TO REEVALUATE – AN ONGOING PROCESS**

(For this Session, you will need pens, paper, homework handouts, Bible and exercise handouts.)

**I. OPENING REMARKS (2 min.)**

- A. Give a warm welcome to the couples.
- B. Be warm and encouraging as you remind them of the discipline, why promptness is important; to focus on their spouses as they did on the weekend; that there will be time to share with each other later; set aside the busys and find each other; and why we are here,

**II. SHARED PRAYER (7 min.)**

Read Scripture passage I Peter 3:1-15. Without comment on the passage, join hands and begin prayer.

**III. RE-CAP (2-3 min.)**

Give a brief summary review of Session 2, "What is God's Plan for us?" Discuss how our homework helped us toward achieving that goal. As a lead-in to the sharing question, mention the barriers that you discovered this week that prevented you from putting each other totally #1.

**IV. OPEN SHARING QUESTIONS (15-20 min.)**

- A. Briefly review rules for sharing.
- B. Give the question with a brief explanation:  
"What barriers to living God's plan have I discovered this week that are still present in our relationship and HDTMMF?  
Is there a difference in the excitement we had for each other after our 70/70 on our weekend and the excitement we have for each other now? HDTMMF?"  
**NOTE:** You may give this question in two parts, using the second part if there is time. Without pointing it out, you are trying to have them name some of the things now that they will later discover need some reevaluation.

**V. 10 MINUTE BREAK**

**VI. PRESENTATION (30 min.)**

Give the title: What do we need to reevaluate - an ongoing process.

- A. Give the purpose of this presentation  
We will be looking into those things large and small which prevent us from having the closeness that we experienced on our weekend. If we truly want to strive for unity, we must first recognize the importance of daily dialogue. The next step is to understand that frequent reevaluation is just as important to our continued growth, and that it is not just a onetime thing. All too often we find ourselves shirking the responsibility that we have to change for each other. We can't be satisfied with the reevaluations and changes that we've already made.

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES IX – REEVALUATION: SESSION 3,  
WHAT TO REEVALUATE – AN ONGOING PROCESS (cont'd)**

VI.A. (cont'd)

To do that is to settle for our "good marriage" (mediocrity) and that is what we were doing before dialogue. Even our reevaluations have to be scrutinized from time to time to see if our oneness is still the purpose of what we are doing.

B. Barriers

Before we can look at what to reevaluate, we need to look at the barriers that still exist in us that prevent ongoing reevaluation. (Name the categories that you will be covering and ask them to take notes. Explain that there will be a time to reflect on each barrier as we go along. Writing-will be done in place, without separation. They will not be exchanging at this time, nor be asked to share what they wrote with the group.)

1. Masks - give definition. My mask is the way I behave. It's not something I take off and put on, nor is it something I hide behind. It's how I act, the way I want others to see me. Yet my mask can prevent the very thing I want most - close relationships and acceptance - because it's not the whole me, the me that God knows.

- a. "I wear the mask of \_\_\_\_".
- b. "The negative effects are..."

NOTE: in sharing a and b, just name your mask and give 3 or 4 descriptions of how you act this out. Keep it short and simple. For example: I wear the mask of Goody Two Shoes. I'm so concerned about keeping everything pleasant between us that I give up and give in any time it appears that we may be headed for a conflict. Consequently, I stifle open, honest communication between us, etc.

- c. Exercise (2 min.)

On paper, name your mask and describe ways that it interferes with your relationship.

2. Attitudes - explain how we hide behind them and that they can be our justification for what we don't want to do. Personalize the following and add any additional attitudes that you can think of from your own experience or those you've come in contact with (do not use names).

- a. We're encountered and now we have it all together.
- b. We already reevaluated. That's like saying we've always communicated or he/she is always #1.
- c. Why do I have to change when he/she won't? Give a personal example of how you keep score and its effects.
- d. Exercise (2 min.)

Make a list of the attitudes that you have about reevaluation; i.e., thoughts you've had or excuses you've made that prevented you from changing your actions, lifestyle, etc.

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES IX – REEVALUATION: SESSION 3,  
WHAT TO REEVALUATE – AN ONGOING PROCESS (cont'd)**

3. Fears - explain how real these fears are and the difficulty in overcoming them. Also the difficulty in recognizing them and admitting ownership of them.
  - a. I know what I have now, but what will I have if I/we change?
  - b. Reevaluation means change, change can make waves, and I don't like waves.
  - c. Will I lose my identity?
  - d. How will our lifestyle be affected?
  - e. How will this affect my job, our family, our friends?
  - f. What will reevaluation cost me: time, effort, job, friends, bobbies, etc.?
  - g. I'm afraid to be seen as different.
  - h. Exercise (2-3 min.)

Make a list of your fears about making changes. Remind them that changes could be as large as finding different employment and as small as taking time to talk when you'd rather be alone.
  
4. Activities – It's important that the couples understand that it's not so much WHAT I'm doing, but to examine WHY I'm doing the things I'm doing. Personalize how the following activities can be harmful to our relationship.
  - a. Marriage Encounter, parish, scouts, volunteer work they're all worthwhile, but are they couple activities or have we just changed the way we are married singles?
  - b. PTA, etc. - they need us; no one else will do it. Does it cut into our time to be together, our time to dialogue? Have any of these organizations folded because one couple or one individual resigned to find an activity that enhanced their relationship?
  - c. Prayer groups, bridge groups - do I encourage her to go so she will be happy so that I can justify my need to play golf?
  - d. Night out with the guys, TV watching - do I encourage him to relax this way so that I can justify my desire to read a good book or go to bed early?
  - e. We both have hobbies. I build things, she sews, we save a lot of money that way, but does she really want you to be in the workshop all day Saturday? Does he really want you to be sewing in the evenings? Have you asked?
  - f. I'm their mother. it's my responsibility to bathe the kids, teach them to cook and sew, help them with their homework. (Add any other examples you can think of.)
  - g. I'm their father. It's my responsibility to be at all the ball games, to be the disciplinarian, to do manly things with the boys. (Add any other examples you can think of.)
  - h. Do I read the newspaper or talk on the telephone when I could be spending that time with him/her?
  - i. Exercise (3-4 min.)

Make a list of the activities large and small that were NOT chosen on the basis of your coupleness, Explain that this is a time to examine your motives such as activities that are escapes or for self-rewards or self-fulfillment, ones that are privacies, ones that are selfish.

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES IX – REEVALUATION: SESSION 3,  
WHAT TO REEVALUATE – AN ONGOING PROCESS (cont'd)**

5. Pressures - explain that these are the things that we face daily as we try to live God's plan in the Modern World, and that they didn't go away just because we made a weekend. Share personally the turmoil that goes on as we try to reevaluate and still live in this pressured environment.
  - a. Job commitments - overtime, entertainment, etc.
  - b. Financial commitments
  - c. Time commitments - my day is too full now.
  - d. Acceptance by peer group
  - e. Relatives & family commitments and attitudes - they don't understand why we have changed and they criticize.
  - f. Our children - can they accept our new way of life when they seemed secure in the old one? Will they think we are strange? Will they resent the time we're spending with each other?
  - g. Exercise (3-4 min.)  
Make a list of any of the pressures that you have face since your weekend that make reevaluation and change difficult for you.
5. Mention additional items to consider for reevaluation: i.e. possessions, time, friends, our home, my poor self-image, etc (and any additional things you can think of that have not been previously covered).

**C. Motivation To Reevaluate (2-3 min.)**

Personalize the following points:

1. God's plan calls us to live in unity - to put each other #1.
2. Complacency leads to apathy; apathy leads to disillusionment.
3. Change requires trust, confidence, risk, listening, openness, honesty, giving, patience and love.
4. State again WHY we are reevaluating - what we hope to gain.
5. End with this thought: If we could start our life over today, is what we have now what we would have planned for? If not, it's time for reevaluation.

**VII. DIALOGUE QUESTION**

When was the last time we sat down together and planned to reevaluate something for each other? HDIFAMA?

*(Give them 10 min, to write ONLY. Encourage them to have an open-ended dialogue at home. After the writing period, have them come back to receive their homework assignments.)*

**VIII. HOMEWORK HANDOUT**

Explain what they are to do and the value of the assignments.

**IX. QUESTIONS & ANSWERS AND CLOSING PRAYER (10 min.)**

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES IX – REEVALUATION: SESSION 3,  
WHAT TO REEVALUATE – AN ONGOING PROCESS (cont'd)**

**HANDOUT FOR SESSION 4**

**EXERCISE: DISCOVERING BARRIERS**

1. I wear the mask of

2. Attitudes

3. Fears

4. Activities

5. Pressures

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES IX – REEVALUATION: SESSION 3,  
WHAT TO REEVALUATE – AN ONGOING PROCESS (cont'd)**

**HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS FOR SESSION 4**

**I. FIRST NIGHT**

- A. Make a list of each time you could have acted differently today so that your spouse would be #1. (For example, not on the phone when he came home, not turned on the TV while she did the dishes.)
- B. Make a list of each time you think your spouse could have acted differently today so that you would be #1. (For example, call me during the day, get up with me in the morning.) Exchange your lists with your spouse and discuss the contents. Then select one item from your first list and make a commitment to change that action for the remainder of the week. Next, pick one item from your spouse's second list and make a commitment to change that action for the remainder of the week. Write these two commitments on a piece of paper. Sign it and place it on your refrigerator for the remainder of the week as a gift of love to your spouse.

**II. THIRD NIGHT**

Talk about the masks that you have.- Ask your spouse to describe to you your behavior as he/she sees it and how it affects him/her. Ask your spouse how you can change.

**III. FIFTH NIGHT:**

Share your barriers lists on attitudes and fears that you wrote during the presentation on what to reevaluate. Select the attitude that will be the most difficult to change and the fear that is the most difficult to overcome. Talk about them and develop a dialogue question on one of these barriers.

**IV. Seventh night:**

- A. Share your activities list. Select an activity from your spouses list that you would like to see him/her change. Each of you talk about what motivates you to continue with this activity and what would motivate you to discontinue.
- B. Share your pressures list. Name the pressure that is the most difficult to cope with and write a loveletter on the question: How can you help me to remove that pressure?  
HDTMMF?

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES IX – REEVALUATION: SESSION 4,**  
**HOW TO REEVALUATE – IT’S ONGOING**

(For this Session you will need pens, paper, homework handouts Bible, and exercise handouts.)

**I. OPENING REMARKS (2 min.)**

- A. Give a warm welcome to the couples.
- B. Be warm and encouraging as you remind them of the discipline to focus on their spouses as they did on the weekend; that there will be time to share with each other later; set aside the busys and find each other; and why we are here.

**II. SHARED PRAYER (7 min.)**

Read Scripture passage Ecclesiastes 3:1-8. Without comment on the passage, join hands and begin prayer.

**III. RECAP SESSION 3 (2-3 min)**

Give a brief summary review of Session 3. “What to reevaluate”. Stress that the small things that keep us from making each other our #1 priority can be the most difficult to reevaluate. (Staying on the telephone while our spouse waits to talk or be greeted, reading the paper when it could wait till later, keeping an eye on the TV while our spouse is trying to share with us, having to finish the chapter in that good book before you take time to visit, etc.) These are very real barriers.

**IV. OPEN SHARING QUESTION (15-20 min)**

*(Briefly review rules for sharing. Give the question with a brief explanation.)*

Do you find the small things in your lifestyle harder to change? If so, discuss some of them."

**V. COFFEE BREAK (10 min)**

**VI. PRESENTATION (30 min.)**

Give the title: How to reevaluate - it's on going.

- A. Give the purpose of this Presentation:

We want to keep in mind that our oneness and unity is what God is calling to and how important it is to share with one another whatever there is that is presently standing in the way of our unity, To remain one and closet it is necessary to keep weeding out what doesn't belong in our lifestyle or changing what exists, or shifting our priorities so that our coupleness is first and family and all else follows. As husband and wife, we want to accept, understand and agree on why we make reevaluations in our marriage. When this is so, then the "how to" of reevaluation makes sense and actually becomes a part of our-life.

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES IX – REEVALUATION: SESSION 4,  
HOW TO REEVALUATE – IT’S ONGOING (cont’d)**

- B. Tools to help us reevaluate (personalize)
1. Dialogue - Explain knowing each other’s feelings is the first step in creating the openness and trust needed to reevaluate.
    - a. Share a reevaluation dialogue that helped you. (Preferably one on a simple and small thing like having dinner 1/2 hour later to make time for sitting and talking together.)
    - b. Include how you had to get to your feelings through your dialogue before you made the change.
    - c. To dialogue for reevaluation, you have to be willing to be submissive for the good of your relationship and unity. (Do I recognize that I'm not giving up or giving in but just giving?)
    - d. Select questions for dialogue that give you that “we can't dialogue on that” feeling. These are most likely areas that need reevaluating.
    - e. Share how reevaluation keeps your dialogue fresh and exciting.
  2. Prayer (not just at dialogue time) –
    - a. Prayer helps build the trust that is necessary for reevaluation.
    - b. Spontaneous prayers:
      - 1) Praying together and aloud makes us vulnerable to one another; it's a great way to let down your mask.
      - 2) Praying alone and silently - take quiet moments during the day to turn your mind and heart over to the Lord. Be aware of our attitude when we pray, to face ourselves honestly and remove obstacles that prevent us from hearing our Father and doing His will for us.
      - 3) Share how prayer has helped your reevaluations. This should be simple, warm and personal.
  3. Scripture dialogue - Scripture is God's loveletters to us. It opens us up to God and to His plan for us to be one. His words are a beautiful source for us to see where we need to reevaluate and change.
  4. Discussion Time - Loving discussions  
Discussions should center around what needs to be changed or removed to keep us one. Our relationship is first. We've been entrusted with children, job, money, apostolate, etc., to care for and we need to be one and in agreement to live out our life according to our calling to love and commitment. Set aside a specific time for discussions.
- C. Planning to put into effect the changes we want to make.
1. Put the change you want to make on the refrigerator door to remind you.
  2. List the changes you decided on according to priority and concentrate on the first one to begin with.
  3. Set aside one day a month for a 60/60 (progress you have made on the changes you selected and further reevaluation.
  4. Share any other ideas you have for planning.

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES IX – REEVALUATION: SESSION 4,  
HOW TO REEVALUATE – IT'S ONGOING (cont'd)**

**D. Listening - Non-verbals:**

1. Do I see impatience in my spouse, edginess, anger, lightheartedness, joy, carefree attitude?
2. The way I respond and get involved in that nonverbal makes the change happen in our life. If I see the nonverbal and do nothing, nothing will happen to us.
3. Reevaluation becomes more a part of us when we're more totally aware of one another.

**E. Encourage the couples to use these tools, to reevaluate, to live God's plan**

**VII. DIALOGUE QUESTION (10-12 min.)**

HDIF challenging us to make changes in our marriage to be more for one another? (Write only, dialogue at home)

**VIII. HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS (explain briefly)**

- A. I Corinthians 13:1-13. Read together and take small verses to dialogue on. Choose an area to be reevaluated and dialogue on feelings. This may take two or more dialogues before all the feelings are shared and explored.
- B. Choose an evening to have a loving discussion; then set goals and most important a length of time in which the reevaluation can be accomplished. This depends on the type of reevaluation. Don't take on more than one major area at a time.
- C. Suggested dialogue question: When we're apart, is our coupleness apparent?  
HDTMMF?
- D. Pray aloud together and petition our Father for His direction Romance one another in special little ways, (flowers, notes lunches, etc.)

**IX. QUESTIONS & ANSWERS AND CLOSING PRAYER (10 min.)**

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES IX – REEVALUATION: SESSION 5,**  
**WHY DO WE REEVALUATE? WHY DO WE MAKE CHANGES?**

**I. OPENING REMARKS (2 min.)**

- A. Give the couples a warm welcome.
- B. Share your excitement about their progress.
- C. Brief motivation to recognize that this is not the final evening of reevaluation but the beginning of a lasting commitment to each other and to living God's plan.

**II. SHARED PRAYER (7 min.)**

Read Scripture passage I Corinthians 1: 26-31. Without comment, join hands and be in prayer.

**III. RECAP SESSION 4, HOW TO REEVALUATE (3-5 min.)**

- A. Use dialogue and loving discussion, scripture and prayer as tools.
- B. Share the importance of planning and how.
- C. Difficulty in locating the small reevaluations (the life-blood of our relationship). Personalize.
- D. Discuss how the homework assignments helped us to achieve that goal.

**IV. OPEN SHARING QUESTION (20 min.)** Give question with brief explanation:

"Specifically share what methods you have used to plan for and implement your reevaluation commitments (i.e. listing and prioritizing, dialoguing on changes, requesting change from each other, using scripture etc.). What effects have your reevaluations had on your relationship and on others?"

**V. COFFEE BREAK (10 min.)**

**VI. PRESENTATION (35-40 min.)**

Give title: Why do we reevaluate? Why do we make changes?

A. Give the Purpose of this Presentation:

Everything we've covered in this series has been leading up to the question, "Why?" The simple answer is that to live God's Plan means to strive for unity. To achieve this we cannot stagnate or stand still and settle for less than greatness. We are imperfect people in an imperfect world with changing times, changing pressures, and changing values. Yet, we're striving to be perfect lovers, to live the eleventh commandment, "love one another as I have loved YOU." This does not seem possible unless we live each day as our first, as a new beginning. It's a time to grow, a time to learn, a time to risk, a time to care, a time to love. It's a time to reevaluate for your sake and the sake of the world.

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES IX – REEVALUATION: SESSION 5,  
WHY DO WE REEVALUATE? WHY DO WE MAKE CHANGES? (cont'd)**

B. Personalize the following:

1. Purpose of the weekend is NOT just to go home, dialogue, and have a nice, close relationship.
2. Purpose is to take their strong relationship into God's world and share their love. This is our goal. (Remind them that it is God's world.)
3. Reasons we need and want to reevaluate. (This is the heart of this presentation.)
  - a. Because dialogue stimulates a desire to be more for each other. (Share a personal example of breaking through a barrier in your relationship and wanting more.)
  - b. To experience our wedding day joy as a way of life.
  - c. To be an example to our children that our Sacrament is living as Christ lived, loving as Christ loved. (Share the Modern World concept of marriage, i.e. self-fulfillment separatism, money and achievements as the marks of a successful life, etc. vs. God's plan and how we want our kids to desire what we have.)
  - d. To stand still is to backslide, (Talk about how this happened in your marriage and how ordinary it became, how disillusioning it was. The same thing can happen now, but it will be more painful because you've experienced real joy and closeness again.)
  - e. I want him/her to know that he/she is why I want to go on living. (Brief 70/70 memories.)
  - f. We need to bring hope to the world. (Share some statistics.)
  - g. To effect change we must change first. (Explain logic in this.)
  - h. Are you satisfied with spirit in your parish, in your schools, community government?
  - i. Are you anxious to leave the world as it is as a legacy to your children, grandchildren?
  - j. (Summary) These are the big dreams, but not impossible ones. If I reevaluate, no matter how small, and affect 10 other couples, and they do the same, I've already touched the lives of 100 families. But it begins with me and in our relationship, (What we want to do here is to emphasize that the dream is not possible without the foundation of a personal commitment to change for each other.)

NOTE: This section is to instill an "Open and Apostolic" mentality in them, but the emphasis needs to be on the importance of putting each other #1 to be effective. Otherwise, we'll just be good people who do good works. This is God's greatest calling, to live the four marks of the church. But remember that the mark of "one" comes first.

**VII. DIALOGUE QUESTION (17 min.)**

If I don't choose to change, who stands to lose the most? HDMAMMF?

Give 15 min. writing time, Come back for wrap up.

**VIII. HOMEWORK/WRAPUP**

Give out homework and explain briefly. Give a personal testimony about what reevaluation has meant to your life. Allow the couples to do the same.

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES IX – REEVALUATION: SESSION 5,  
WHY DO WE REEVALUATE? WHY DO WE MAKE CHANGES? (cont'd)**

**IX. CLOSING PRAYER**

Thank couples for their participation in this series. Reflect back to them the joy you are witnessing in their relationship.

**X. READ SCRIPTURE - JOHN 15:9-21 AND CLOSE WITH A PRAYER.**

**XII. SING "THERE'S A NEW WORLD SOMEWHERE"**

**XIII. ENCOURAGE THEM TO GO HOME AND DIALOGUE.**

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES IX – REEVALUATION: SESSION 5,  
WHY DO WE REEVALUATE? WHY DO WE MAKE CHANGES? (cont'd)**

**HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS FOR SESSION 5**

- I. Read John 15 in its entirety together. Dialogue question: HDIF when I hear Jesus speaking these words to us - "It was not you who chose me, it was I who chose you to go forth and bear fruit?' After dialogue and loving discussion, talk about the message you each received from this scripture,
- II. List the areas of major concern in your relationship that need reevaluation. Select an area and develop a question for a 60/60 to be done on the weekend that follows. Keep your list for future 60/60's, adding to or subtracting from it as applicable.
- III. Stay in touch with the other couples that shared the four evenings of reevaluation with you.
- IV. Contact a team in your area to discuss how to find an apostolate in which to share your couple love.
- V. Make a commitment to scripture dialogue at least once a week,
- VI. Write a letter to the Encounter in your state newsletter about what on going reevaluation means to your relationship.
- VII. Make a commitment to add reevaluation planning to your commitment to dialogue.

**This planning could be done weekly, bimonthly or monthly.**

**ENJOY**

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES IX – REEVALUATION: SESSION 6,**  
**APOSTOLATE (REACHING OUT)**

**I. OPEN WITH A PRAYER**

**II. OPEN SHARING QUESTIONS**

- A. Question #1: What have you gained from this Love Circle?
- B. Question #2: What can you contribute to the community now that you have experienced this Love Circle?

**III. COMMENTS**

- A. Comment on candle that is burning, representing God's love.
- B. Philippians 2:15. You must shine among them like stars lighting up the sky as you offer the message of life.
- C. Luke 8:16: Now no one, when he has lighted a lamp, covers it with a vessel, or puts it under a couch but he puts it upon a lamp stand, that they who enter may see the light.

**IV. EXERCISE**

- A. Turn off all the lights.
- B. Explain and show how when you shelter the candle with your hands, you hide the light just as you can hide God's love by closing your eyes and ears.
- C. Now have enough candles available for each member of the group. Leader lights his candle and then his spouse's and the candles of the others. See how everything is lit up - faces, the walls, the ceiling. But even though we have all taken away light, the single candle still burns strong.
- D. How many other candles in our community are waiting to be lit?

**V. OPEN SHARING**

- A. Explain the apostolates in the Church and Marriage Encounter: for example, Evenings for Couples, Evenings for Parents, etc.
- B. Sample Questions:
  - 1. What is your greatest strength?
  - 2. What is your greatest weakness?
  - 3. What good qualities do you see in each person in our Love Circle? (Start with one person. Have that person tell each person in the Love Circle their good qualities. Then continue with the next person, etc.)
  - 4. What can you contribute to the Community now that you've experienced a Love Circle?
  - 5. What have you gained from this Love Circle?
  - 6. What quality do I see in each of you that I love?

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES IX – REEVALUATION: SESSION 6,  
APOSTOLATE (REACHING OUT) (cont'd)**

**VI. CANDLE CEREMONY:**

The leaders light their candles, then in a clockwise motion let each one light the other's candle, signifying Christ in each of us and the sharing of His love as we pass it on. As each of us light our candles, Christ's original flame (love) never diminishes just burns stronger as it grows to others.

**VII. BREAK**

**VIII. CHOOSE APOSTOLATE**

## **LOVE CIRCLE SERIES X – LOVE CIRCLE, INTRODUCTION**

### **I. FOREWARD**

- A. This is to be read by the Lead Couple before the first session.
- B. Each session has a page to be read before the evening, and a page of the actual presentation that should not be read until that evening.
- C. A Love Circle is a structured series of 6 open-sharing sessions attended by the same couples each session. A session should be re-scheduled if 2 or more couples cannot attend. BE SURE to give an absent couple the questions to discuss at home and include them in between session activities! Couples who must be absent should call the Lead Couple. Of course, it is extra nice if the Presenting Couple can call and remind the couples before each session.
- D. We recommend that the Love Circle try to meet 6 weeks in a row, so that necessary re-scheduled sessions won't cause the Love Circle to be stretched out too long.
- E. All 6 sessions can be held at the same home, or the couples may share in hosting the group.
- F. We recommend having "Doors open at 7:00PM, Love Circle starts at 7: 30 PM". If the time is just too early, set the time for a half hour later.

### **II. PREPARATION**

To be read aloud at the beginning of the Love Circle, and any session that the Lead Couple feels it is necessary.

- A. The purpose of our Love Circle is to experience something new and beautiful that will leave all of us forever changed, forever aware of the power and beauty of community love and acceptance. The Love Circle experience is another gift from God to deepen our relationship with each other, with the community, and with Him.
- B. Discipline of the Love Circle.
  - 1. Allow each person as much time as he wants for sharing, even if there are long pauses.
  - 2. Simply say pass if you do not wish to share on the question. No questions will be asked of you. When all have shared on that question, and you feel comfortable sharing, just say so and you can take your turn, if you wish.
  - 3. Do not interrupt or add to the sharing of another person.
  - 4. During refreshments, and outside the group, never discuss what was shared.
  - 5. Do not advise or console during another's sharing. Just be an open, non-judgmental listener. The developing of trust and understanding is the key to this special experience.

## **LOVE CIRCLE SERIES X – SESSION 1 & 2 QUESTIONS**

These questions may be used to set up different Love Circle structures. They may also be used by the couples who just completed the Love Circle for Dialogue questions to use at home or for an Advanced Love Circle or Flame sessions with these couples.

### **SESSIONS #1 and #2**

1. Describe your married life, as in where and when married? How you met? How many kids? When and where encountered?
2. What do you like to do most on a night out?
3. Where would you go on a trip if time and money were no problem?
4. If I could live in any, time period, when would it be and why?
5. Describe the best vacation I've ever had.
6. If my house caught fire and I could remove only 3 things, what would they be? (other than kids, pets and love letters).
7. What was the highest point in my life in the past year? (besides anniversaries, M.E. activities).
8. Why did I join this Love Circle? (or Flame)
9. What do I hope to gain from this Love Circle?
10. What I need from this Love Circle more than anything else.
11. What do I hope to give this Love Circle?
12. How do I think others see me?
13. If I could change one thing about myself, what would it be?
14. In what areas do I consider I excel or have special strengths?
15. What do I consider is my weakness or an area I can improve?
16. What qualities do I look for in a friend?
17. In Genesis, the Father said, "It is good; I am very pleased." What have I done in my life that I can say the same? (outside of being married or being a parent)
18. How would I like others to see me?
19. When do I feel most loved?
20. When do I feel most lonely?
21. What is my greatest concern?
22. Do I have difficulty accepting myself at times? HDTMMF?
23. What image of myself do I project to others? HDMAMMF?
24. What do I value most about my job? HDMAMMF?
25. What are my feelings when someone reaches out to me?
26. What are my feelings when I do or say something klutzy?
27. How do I feel when I realize I have hurt someone's feelings?

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES X – SESSION 1 & 2 QUESTIONS (cont'd)**

28. How do I measure success?
29. How important is success to me? HDMAKMF?
30. How do I feel about digging deep to reveal my feelings?
31. What is the peaceful setting I can think of?
32. What color would best describe me?
33. How do I feel when I have difficulty accepting myself?
34. My favorite game when I was a child was....
35. Who builds me up and makes me feel that I have special worth as an individual? How does he/she do it?
36. Read Mark 4:35-41. How would you have felt before, at the beginning, during, and after the storm? In what sense am I going through a storm?
37. Read Matthew 7:7-8. When have I experienced the power of prayer?
38. Read Matthew 11:28-29. What burden is heaviest for me right now?
39. What is one thing I would like to receive from God?
40. Turn off the lights with 1 candle burning. Ask everyone to close their eyes and receive whatever God would send them. Emphasize not to worry if nothing comes because this time to develop in some people. Share any messages you were given.

## **LOVE CIRCLE SERIES X – SESSION 3 QUESTIONS**

### **SESSION #3**

1. What does being open to my spouse mean to me?
2. What does trust mean to me?
3. How do I see my spouse?
4. How do I think my spouse sees me?
5. What is the most endearing quality spouse brings to our relationship?
6. How can I be more for you in our relationship? HDTMMF?
7. What are my feelings about learning to accept you are you are?
8. What is the strongest quality my spouse brings to our relationship?
9. We could lose it all tomorrow and mind at all? HDTMMF?
10. How does my spouse's love make me feel more alive? HDMAMMF?
11. How do I feel about making our relationship my #1 priority?
12. WAMF knowing this could be our last day to love one another?
13. The discipline of Dialogue is difficult. Has it improved our relationship? Is it worth the effort?
14. On our Weekend, how did I feel about reading, "Love is a decision"?
15. HDIF when I reach out to you and you reject me?
16. HDIF when you begin to reach out to me and I reject you?
17. What do I value most about your job? HDMAMMF?
18. Lord, help me find my way through the changes in my life. When could I have used more help or support in a change I have experienced?
19. What change is ahead for me that I think I will need extra help?
20. John 13:12-17, The Spirit of the Lord lives in all of us. How could I minister to my spouse at this time?
21. John 13: 1-5 (foot washing); How would I have felt?
22. What qualities in my spouse make me know that he/she is a gift from God?
23. Do I find it hard to see the strengths my spouse says I have?

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES X – SESSION 4 QUESTIONS**

**SESSION #4**

1. How would I describe my spouse to God?
2. What do I think Christ would ask me to do today?
3. How could I make my relationship with God closer and more personal?
4. In what ways can my prayer life be improved?
5. “Where two or more are gathered in My name, I am there.” What do these words of Jesus mean to me?
6. When have I felt most loved by Christ?
7. When has Christ felt most loved by me?
8. James 5:13-16. How do I respond to this passage?
9. I am sitting at home alone and there's a knock on the door. Christ is standing there. What conversation would take place?
10. Where am I in my relationship with God right now?
11. In my relationship with God, do I feel His love and affirmation in a real and personal way?
12. Right now I would like God to forgive me for... (Could be a silent answer for the group at the same time).
13. I see God in my spouse because of his/her quality of...
14. My spouse's most Christ-like quality is...
15. Luke 7:36-50. How would I have viewed the dinner party if I were the apostles? the immoral woman? the Pharisees?
16. In what areas of my life do I need to feel the touch of Jesus?

**LOVE CIRCLE SERIES X – SESSION 5 QUESTIONS**

**SESSION #5**

1. The hang-up I need to overcome before we can be more for others is...
2. We are the Church. How does that make me feel?
3. HDIF when we encourage and help another couple?
4. Love isn't love until you give it away. HDTMMF?
5. HDIF when we give up our leisure time or time just for each other to do something, for others?
6. When was the last time we reached out to love and support someone else? (other than a relative) HDMAMMF?
7. God needs our couple love for the salvation of the world. HDTMMF?
8. I need to feel the healing touch of Jesus in my relationship with myself? my spouse? my family? my friend?
9. If I could bring someone to Jesus at this moment for healing, it would be...
10. In what way would I minister to the outside world like Christ ministered to His disciples?
11. What part do I think God is playing in our Love Circle?

## **LOVE CIRCLE SERIES X – SESSION 6 QUESTIONS**

### **SESSION #6**

1. What function or gift do I need from the others in our Love Circle or Community? (helping, caring, understanding, etc.)
2. HDIF now about sharing my deepest feelings in a Love Circle?
3. HDIF when we meet an Encountered couple we do not yet know?
4. How have we grown in our relationship with other couples in the Love Circle? HDTMMF?
5. What are my feelings when we reach out to a couple and are rejected?
6. HDIF when I consider that we have a very real part in fulfilling "The Impossible Dream"?
7. Are we active or passive members of our ME Community? HDMAMMF?
8. If I could count on the ME Community for support, I would like to do the following about...
9. What are some parts of "The Impossible Dream" that I would especially want to experience?
10. What special resources and/or spiritual gift do I feel I possess?
11. How can I have a more Christ-like compassion for our Community?
12. What do I feel I could offer a Christian Community?
13. What has this Love Circle experience taught me about God's love for me?
14. Matthew 5:14-16. How do the words of Jesus make me feel?
15. John 15:11-17. Does this challenge me to be more?
16. What do I think we have to offer our church as a couple? HDMAMMF?
17. What can I do to make our church a more tender, loving, caring, church? HDMAMMF?
18. What do I think is the gift of the person on my right? on my left? across from me?
19. In what ways do we show others our love as a couple? HDMAMMF?
20. WAMF when I want to reach out and then I don't? Tell a time when that happened?
21. How do I feel knowing that our Love Circle is over?
22. We can change the world. HDTMMF?