

Guillermín Library
Liberty University
Lynchburg, VA 24502

REFERENCE
DO NOT CIRCULATE

LIBERTY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

**A STRATEGY FOR UNDERSTANDING AND MINISTERING
TO TROUBLED VIETNAMESE FAMILIES
IN THE UNITED STATES**

**A Thesis Project Submitted to
Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary
in partial fulfillment of the Requirements
for the degree**

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

By

Minh Van Lam


Lynchburg, Virginia

April, 1998

LIBERTY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

THESIS PROJECT APPROVAL SHEET

A-
GRADE


MENTOR

William R. Scott
READER

ABSTRACT

**A STRATEGY FOR UNDERSTANDING AND MINISTERING
TO TROUBLED VIETNAMESE FAMILIES
IN THE UNITED STATES**

Minh Van Lam

Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 1997

Advisor: Dr. James A. Freerksen

Mentor: Dr. Timothy E. Clinton

Reader: Dr. William Scott

Very little literature regarding troubled families is available for the Vietnamese Christians in the United States to use. This project is written to review the biblical principles, the cross-cultural perspectives, and the practical methods to contributing to the Vietnamese pastors' work for reducing family troubles in this country. It presents a brief background of Vietnam geography and history with the reasons for the Vietnamese presence in the United States. It reviews the causes, diagnoses, remedies, and ways of preventing the troubles, based on questionnaires, the writer's experience in his fifteen-year pastorate in Vietnamese Baptist churches and personal studies and perspectives. Abstract length: 98 words.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter

INTRODUCTION	1
Statement for Solution	3
Review of the Literature	4
Statement of Purpose	4
Statement of Methodology.....	6
Statement of Limitations.....	9
1. BIBLICAL TEACHINGS ABOUT FAMILY	11
The Significant Marriage in the Garden of Eden.....	13
Highlights of Some Troubled Families in the Bible.....	21
Marriage.....	21
Parenting	28
The Lord's Teachings and Commands About Marriage.....	32
The Lord's Teachings About Parenting	33
2. REASONS FOR VIETNAMESE PRESENCE IN THE UNITED STATES	37
Geography of Vietnam.....	37
History of Vietnam	39
Communist Persecution and South Vietnamese Re-education.....	45
The Flights of the Southerners for Freedom	52
The Orderly Departure Program (ODP).....	54
3. FAMILY TROUBLES CAUSED BY THE DIFFERENCES.....	58
Depression Caused by Environmental Differences	58
Disruption in the Traditional Family Authority Structure.....	62
The Argument of Freedom by Differences in Education.....	68
Problems Due to Differences in Beliefs.....	73

4.	TROUBLES IN THE VIETNAMESE CHRISTIAN HOMES	77
	Quarrels	77
	Broken Relationships	81
	Trial at Court	84
	Vietnamese Christian Families with Separation and Divorce	87
	Rebellious and Runaway Children	93
5.	MINISTERING TO TROUBLED VIETNAMESE CHRISTIAN FAMILIES.....	99
	Pastor's Recognition of Family Trouble	99
	Christian Counseling to each Member of the Family	103
	First Session	105
	Second Session - Remedial Counseling	110
	Personality Test for Each Family Member	112
	Reconciliation Performed by the Pastor	115
	Follow-up Procedures After the Reconciliation	121
6.	PREVENTING TROUBLES IN THE VIETNAMESE CHRISTIAN HOMES	124
	Sermons Focused on Family	124
	Family Seminars for Church Members	129
	Prayer Time in Vietnamese Christian Homes	132
	Christian Literature About Family Displayed at Church	134
	CONCLUSION	136
Appendices		
1.	INSTITUTIONAL LETTER	138
2.	QUESTIONNAIRE	139
	a. Questionnaire for the Pastor About Marriage & Parenting	139
	b. Questionnaire for Adults About Troubled Marriages	141
	c. Questionnaire for Parent & Child About Parenting	143

3.	QUESTIONNAIRE SUMMARY.....	145
4.	BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	148
5.	VITA.....	154

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writer is always thankful to the Lord Jesus Christ for saving his soul in 1947, setting him free from the imprisonment in the Communist re-education camps in Vietnam in 1977, rescuing him from the danger in the Pacific Ocean in 1980, bringing him to the United States in 1981, and calling him into the Christian ministry in Arkansas in 1982.

He would like to take this opportunity to extend his deep gratitude to the Washington Bible College, Capital Bible Seminary, and Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary for teaching him God's Word and equipping him for his pastoral duties.

He would also like to give thanks to Pastor Michael Bradley of the Sunset Hills Baptist Church in Alexandria, Virginia for helping him to establish his Vietnamese Hope Baptist Church in Alexandria in 1995. He could not forget his four children and three sons-in-law who have given him financial support for his education beginning this project in 1989 while he was in his 50s.

One of his benefactors, who endured hardships in visiting him during his imprisonment from 1975 to 1977 and has comforted him in his difficult pastorates since 1982 and encouraged him in his education since 1989, is his beloved wife, Khanh Minh Lam. He owes a lot of debts from this sweet and humble woman.

And this thesis project is completed thanks to much advice from Dr. James A. Freerksen, Dr. David L. Barnett, Dr. Timothy E. Clinton, and Dr. William Scott. The writer is grateful to these scholars who have guided him in performing the toughest project of his educational life.

May the Lord Jesus Christ bless you all.

INTRODUCTION

There is a truth which everyone has to face. It comes to almost every family, not only for non-Christians, but also for believers of Christ, as Landorf wrote in her little book, “For Me And My Family”:

The sad, overwhelming truth confronts us on every level of our lives, and in all the media. There is hardly a home anywhere that has escaped it. The American family, including the Christian family, is in deep, devastating trouble.”¹

She raised a good question, “So why do we have troubled families?” mentioning that the Americans have neither dictatorial decrees, Communist rules, nor State-enforced programs. The Americans see their families breaking up, one-third of marriages end in divorce, juvenile crime is up, and suicide is climbing.²

Joyce Landorf, an American, wrote about devastating troubles in the American families in the United States. Nobody affirms trouble happens just to the Americans. Andrew Cornes, a British writer, wrote about the dramatic acceleration of the divorce rate in England as follows:

In the period 1901-10, the average number of divorces per year in England and Wales was 593. By the 1930s this had risen almost ninefold to 5,096 per year. By the 1960s that figure in turn had increased almost eight times to 39,654, and the 1970s saw an increase of over threefold on the previous

¹Joyce Landorf, For Me And My Family (Santa Ana: Vision House Publishers, 1977), 8.

²Ibid., 9.

decade to an average of 121,991. By 1980 the figure had reached 148,301 and it has not varied much during the '80s (1989: 150,872); but there are few, if any grounds to be confident that the rise will not continue.³

In his book *Divorce And Remarriage*, Cornes mentions that not only in England, but also in Europe the rate of divorce has been increasing:

England has, of course, not been alone in seeing this rise in divorce. Within the 12 EEC countries, there were 125,300 divorces in 1960, a figure which has risen over 4 times to 354,200 by 1988. But the figures for the UK have increased much more rapidly than those of its European partners. In 1960, the UK total was 25,900, half that of West Germany (48,878) and less than that of France (30,200). By 1988 the UK figure had risen to 165,700, considerably more than any other EEC country. More important by the UK divorce rate per thousand of the average (0.4) and far surpassed by West Germany (0.9) and Denmark (1.5). By 1988, this figure had risen to 2.9 for the UK, only equaled by Denmark, with other countries far behind and the ECC average at 1.6.⁴

The people in the western hemisphere have troubles in families. How about the Vietnamese who have come from the eastern hemisphere to settle in the United States? Do they also have troubled families? The tragedies that have frequently occurred in Vietnamese homes around this country give a positive response to that question. They have invaded into many families, not only the unbelievers, but also the Christians. The writer has been viewing his Vietnamese people with tears rolling down their cheeks, and hearing their cries through the telephone during the personal talks with them. He has traveled to preach to the Vietnamese churches in this country, and in some other

³Andrew Cornes, *Divorce And Remarriage* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1993), 9.

⁴*Ibid.*, 10-11.

continents such as Europe, Australia and Canada. After these services, his people have often come to talk to him, asking him for some counsel which might help solve their family problems between spouses, parents and children. There are two reasons they came to this guest speaker. First, they did not like to see secular counselors or psychologists. Secondly, they said their pastors were unable to satisfy them in the area of troubled families due to their young age and inexperience.

Statement for Solution to the Problem

The writer attended the course of Christian Marriage Counseling taught by Dr. George M. Harton in 1995 at the Capital Bible Seminary in Lanham, Maryland, and the course of Ministering to Troubled Families taught by Dr. Ronald E. Hawkins in 1997 at the Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary in Lynchburg, Virginia. In addition, a survey has been made among the Vietnamese pastors and Christians for a confirmation of the causes of the troubles. The prompt responses to the questionnaires mailed to 25 Vietnamese on the east coast of the United States have obviously and necessarily become a very important source for the writer to determine the issues and needs. He has also read many books about counseling on family, marriage, and parenting. The courses he attended, the books he read, and the needs of his people have really sparked his interest in the topic of the troubled family. The survey contains the questions for Vietnamese pastors and church members to get their opinions by which the writer can use as a help in understanding and ministering to troubled Vietnamese Christian families.

Review of the Literature

The literature used in this thesis consists of three categories. The first category is the Bible, the basic foundation of biblical teachings regarding the family. The Bible gives true stories with good examples, as well as bad ones which can be employed as illustrations. Besides, it also gives precious guidance for family problems. The biblical quotations found in this thesis are from the New American Standard Bible. The second category is composed of secular books of Vietnamese history, geography, economy, war, religion, education, occupation and culture. They might be published in English and in Vietnamese in this country. This category is very helpful in the provision of the Vietnamese traditional culture which is very different from the Westerner's. This is one of the causes for the troubles in the Vietnamese families in the United States. The third category consists of Christian books, periodicals, class notes, videos, films and tapes on Christian family counseling available in Bible college and seminary libraries. More than one hundred books, secular and Christian, are being used for the writing of this project.

Statement of Purpose

The people of Vietnam have suffered significantly over the last few decades with a wide-ranging war, the Vietnamese Communist dictatorship, and poverty all contributing. Transition, loss, and change in leadership has dramatically impacted family life. Many sought relief and left their homeland for refuge in the USA. Unfortunately, the many difficult transitions have also led to many problems in relationships between

husbands and wives as well as parents and children. Most of these problems can be traced to differences between the American and Vietnamese cultures. The American culture, with its emphasis on personal freedom, is in direct contrast with the Confucius ethical system in the traditional Vietnamese culture, which imposes a strict family authority structure. This loss of moral anchor of the Vietnamese unbelievers and believers is alike. For the Vietnamese Christians, the prospect is not much better due to a lack of understanding of the Biblical teaching on the issue of marriage and family.

In addition to the cultural barriers, there are other differences in the working environment, lifestyle, and education. These also adversely affect families and can result in spousal separation, divorce, and children's rebellion. In a sense, the crisis in the Vietnamese families in America is more different and more severe than the crisis in the American families. No assistance is available for addressing these unique problems of the Vietnamese community at large and the Vietnamese Christian community in particular. The purpose of this thesis is to provide a comprehensive understanding of and biblical strategies for equipping the Vietnamese Christians to build their families on the solid and unchanging foundation of God's Word amid the changing tides of the new American culture.

In this thesis, the author seeks to achieve three goals. The first goal is to provide biblical framework for helping Vietnamese Christian families. Since there is not much Christian literature about troubled families available for the Vietnamese believers to consult, this thesis may be helpful in their current situations and as a handbook on

biblical family counseling. The second goal is to provide Vietnamese pastors and counselors a strategy for ministering to the Vietnamese troubled families. The third goal is to reach the Vietnamese unbelievers with the reconciling message of God's Word in Jesus Christ, who alone has the power to bring healing and harmony to their troubled families. This is the ultimate goal of this thesis for the glory of God and the salvation of these unbelievers.

Statement of Methodology

The project presents an introduction to the family problems among the Vietnamese Christians who have had troubles between the members since their arrivals and resettlements in the United States of America. The introduction identifies the problem, the solution to the problem, the review of the literature, the purpose, the methodology and the limitations of the thesis. The troubles in the Vietnamese families in the churches where the writer has often preached, and has occasionally heard of the tragedies is evidence of the problem. He has been equipped to help solve problems for the Vietnamese Christians by attending some courses of family counseling, and reading books on the family. But the most useful source for this project must be the responses to the survey questionnaires. The survey is about troubled marriages and rebellious children. There are three kinds of questionnaires: 1) For the pastor regarding marriage and parenting, 2) For adults about troubled marriages and 3) For parents and children regarding parenting. Each questionnaire has three parts: 1) Demographic questions, 2)

Questions regarding the causes of troubles between spouses, or between parents and children, and 3) The solutions.

The survey was sent to 25 Vietnamese Baptist churches as a basis for the project. This thesis has been mostly based on this survey according to the majority. Eighty-six percent of the pastors agreed the cultural conflicts are the causes of most of the troubles, and 100% of them agreed the real need is for pastoral counseling.

This part of the introduction includes a statement for a solution to the problem. In the review of the literature, the writer gives three different kinds of books used as the materials for the basic foundation which strongly supports the thesis. They are the Holy Bible, books about Vietnamese cultures, and Christian books on family counseling. The statement of purpose is threefold: 1) solving the problems for the Vietnamese Christians; 2) helping the pastors to minister to the troubled families in their churches; 3) introducing Christ to unbelievers through the seminars by using this thesis as a handbook. The last part of the introduction is the statement of limitations which presents the boundaries of the project which does not cover a broad area, but is focused on “A Comprehensive Analysis for an Effective Ministry to Troubled Christian Vietnamese Families in the United States.”

The first chapter focuses on the biblical accounts of the original marriage between Adam and Eve, some troubled families in the Old Testament, and God’s commands to family members. It gives the key of how the Bible shows a way to rightly handle a family for harmonious living in the case of trouble. This is the foundation for the entire

project. The cause of each specific trouble may be identified in the Bible which in turn gives a solution to each problem, and shows a way for prevention.

The second chapter tells the reasons why the Vietnamese have come and settled in the United States. This may help the reader to understand the difficult situations of the refugees from which the conflict between cultures and family problems may be analyzed and explained. Thus, the solutions, with effective counsel, can be dependent upon the way and the reasons of their resettlements in the States. For instance, a wife whose husband came here a long time before her might not understand him because of an influence of a different culture. Or a wife, who escaped by boat to come here while her husband was still imprisoned in a Communist camp, might not get along with him because of her mental illness caused by some horrible events at sea and difficulties in some Southeast Asia camps.

Chapter three defines some of the differences that cause the problems and troubles. They are conflicts in the environment, culture, education, and even beliefs. These differences lead to arguments, quarreling between the family members and may even lead to separation or divorce. The differences and misunderstandings described in chapter four may sometimes create rebellious children.

For example, it is just like following the steps of medical treatment. The methods of healing must be applied after some diagnoses and tests. The pastor's realization of his church members' troubles should make him want to find a way to help. His counseling in

these troubles is very important, necessary and must be skillful. It is the major part of this project which will be presented in chapter five.

And last of all, chapter six gives some suggestions for the prevention of these troubles. The Vietnamese churches were established 1975 and are still very immature in many aspects. But if they are willing to focus on family teaching, the troubles may decrease, and the church growth rate may increase. Some appendices are included to illustrate the types of questions used in a survey in Vietnamese churches to identify some of the troubled families in the United States.

Statement of Limitations

The writer does not have the ambition of writing a book on family counseling for general distribution. The title states exactly what he intends to do in this thesis. The major limitation is a focus on just the ministry to Vietnamese troubled families. Not all Indochinese are discussed, although they have come here as refugees. Another limitation is a ministry to just Christians, not all Vietnamese in the communities. The third limitation is just in the United States, not everywhere in the world. The survey data is limited to the east coast pastors in the United States for three reasons. The writer has been invited to preach in the east coast Vietnamese churches and is acquainted with them. The way of life for these Vietnamese is very similar. Also, most of the Vietnamese Christians are new believers. In addition, the writer does not want to present anything

with political, cultural, racial or religious prejudices. He does not aim to demonstrate the secret of family happiness in large scale settings.

His wish is just to help the troubled families of the Vietnamese Christians to reconcile and to restore relationships for living harmoniously in this country.

Chapter 1

BIBLICAL TEACHINGS ABOUT FAMILY

The Bible reveals God's plan with important principles for a strong marriage and family. However, there is considerable lack of understanding this important biblical teaching in the Vietnamese Christian community. This problem is the root cause for many troubled Vietnamese Christian families. These problems were not apparent in Vietnam because of the strong influence of Confucianism on the general population and in the Vietnamese Christian community. The traditional Confucius ethical system imposes a strict family authority structure. Many Christian families in Vietnam tend to adopt this family structure even though many aspects of the Confucius structure are not compatible with the Bible. However, this rigid external family structure helps maintain stability for the family and masks deeper problems. The loss of this external structure in the United States exposes the fundamental problem of lack of a biblical foundation for the Vietnamese Christian family. Therefore, it is the goal of this chapter to provide a review of the biblical teachings about family.

The Holy Bible is the most trustworthy, important, necessary and helpful resource for marriage and parental counseling. It provides its readers with accounts of an original marriage with commands for compatible families. Richards wrote, "The foundation for the biblical view of family is laid in Genesis 2. There God instituted marriage as a

permanent union between one man and one woman.”⁵ God as the Creator of marriage and family gives a command as spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ, “For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh” (Matt. 19:5). This is the significance of marriage ordained by God as

Delitzsch’s comments,

Marriage itself, notwithstanding the fact that it demands the leaving of father and mother, is a holy anointment of God; hence celibacy is not a higher or holier state, and the relation of the sexes for a pure and holy man is a pure and holy relation.⁶

God’s creation of man and woman, and His establishment of marriage are absolutely holy, according to His will. Anderson confirmed her thinking about God’s desire for children and family with her statement:

Married happiness is on God’s agenda for us. He wants it. He designed it. Our God isn’t out to take away our toys. Rather, He stands, arms extended, to assist us, love us, help us. But we have choices to make. His way or ours. Rebellion or obedience. Self-centeredness or other-centeredness. Let’s give God the authority that’s rightfully His to replenish and renew our hearts to stimulate and encourage us.⁷

⁵Lawrence O. Richards, Expository Dictionary of Bible Words (Grand Rapids: Regency, 1985), 162.

⁶C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament, vol. 1 (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996), 57.

⁷Linda Andersen, Irresistible Wifetypes (Denver: Accent Books, 1990), 16-17.

The Significant Marriage in the Garden of Eden

The marriage of the first couple, Adam and Eve, in the Garden of Eden, which the Bible describes, gives basic and significant directions for a happy family designed by God, based on three terms: A helper (Gen. 2:18), the rib (Gen. 2:22), and one flesh (Gen. 2:24).

A Helper

God created everything before the creation of Adam. Adam was placed by God's order in the Garden of Eden to keep and cultivate it (Gen. 2:8). God had watched and looked after the first man on the earth, and He Himself realized, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him" Gen. 2:18). There are two things necessary to be discussed in God's Word:

- A. "It is not good for the man to be alone." It is important and necessary to raise the question, "Why is it not good for the man to be alone?", because God had seen some real needs in Adam. The first need was for his comfort. Henry pointed out the needs of the first man in the world like this, "It is a pleasure to him to exchange knowledge and affection with those of his own kind, to inform and to be informed, to love and to be loved."⁸ It fits with another biblical reference that counsels people not to be alone, "Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor" (Eccl. 4:9). A popular Vietnamese saying also

⁸Matthew Henry, A Commentary on the Whole Bible, vol. 1 (Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell Company, nd.), 18.

mentions the union, “One tree cannot make a hill, three trees which unite altogether make a high mountain.” Another need is for an increase and continuance of his kind, as Henry continued to write:

God could have made a world of men at first, to replenish the earth as He replenished heaven with a world of angels; but the place would have been too strait for the designed number of men to live together at once; therefore God saw fit to make up that number by a succession of generations, which, as God had formed man, must be from two, and those male and female; one will be ever one.”⁹

Adam’s jobs in Eden kept him very busy. He had the animals and trees as his friends, and everything for living in a place “where there is gold” (Gen. 2:11b). He was the landlord, and more than that, the ruler of things and animals. Yet, it was not good for him to be alone. There was something missing in his heart. Maybe God saw some melancholy in his solitariness. It was an empty feeling. It was a type of love from a different sex of his same human kind. The Maces, the founders of Association of Couples for Marriage Enrichment, wrote:

There is evidence, indeed, that truly happy marriages occurred in Hebrew society. The creation story leaves us with no doubt that one of God’s original purposes in creating Eve was because Adam was lonely and unable to find kinship with the lower forms of creation. His immediate response to Eve was, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh (Gen. 2:23), and we can sense the enthusiasm and excitement in his utterance. Now he had someone to talk with, someone he would understand his thoughts and feelings, his joys and sorrows, his hopes and fears.”¹⁰

⁹Ibid.

B. “I will make him a helper suitable for him”: God had definitely realized the first man’s loneliness. Therefore, He created man and woman as the Bible says, “And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Gen. 1:27). The narrative of the creation of woman described in chapter two is connected with the creation of Adam, as Delitzsch explained the reason, “In chapter 1:27 the creation of the woman is linked with that of the man; but here the order of sequence is given, because the creation of the woman formed a chronological incident in the history of the human race, which comments with the creation of Adam.”¹¹

The Almighty God created the woman as a helper for the man. The term “helpmeet” interpreted by Poole in his using of three different adjectives pointed out at least three significant meanings. They are “correspondent”, “like” and “near”, as he wrote:

Meet for him; a most emphatical phrase, signifying thus much, one correspondent to him, suitable both to his nature and necessity, one altogether like to him in shape and constitution, deposition and affection; a second self; or one to be at hand and near to him, to stand continually before him, familiarly to converse with him, to be always ready to succor, serve, and comfort him; or one whose eye, respect,

¹⁰David and Vera Mace, The Sacred Fire (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987), 36.

¹¹C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament, vol. 1, (Peabody: Henricson, 1996), 54.

and care, as well as desire, Gen. 3:16, should be to him, whose business it shall be to please and help him.”¹²

A helper, according to Poole, was a person who was close to him and would help in many ways. More specifically, Sailhamer pointed out some practical jobs in detail which Adam’s helper had done,

In what sense was the woman created to be a helper? Augustine suggested that she was to help in the task of bringing forth children. According to Delitzsch, she was to help “till and keep” the garden.¹³

Meanwhile, Hawkins, in his book Strengthening Marital Intimacy explains the two Hebrew terms of ezer (help or helper) and neged (correspondent to or fit for) and the role of woman as the woman’s helper like this:

The combined sense of ezer and neged (Hebrew terms) is that Eve was an appropriate, suitable partner for Adam. Rather than being proof of subordinate position for Eve, these words support her position as Adam’s complement. She was designed to be a real help. Woman was, like Adam, suitable in every way. Each brought to the team unique strengths and attributes without which humanity would have been impoverished and with which humanity was greatly enriched to serve as a fuller revelation of God’s image.”¹⁴

¹²Matthew Poole, Matthew Poole’s Commentary on the Holy Bible, vol. 2 (Macclean: MacDonald, nd.), 7.

¹³John H. Sailhamer, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 46.

¹⁴Ronald E. Hawkins, Strengthening Marital Intimacy (Kearney: Morris Publishing, 1991), 15.

The Rib

The Bible describes God's way of creating the first woman on the earth quite differently from the way of forming the man. For the man, God used the dust of the earth with His breath of life (Gen. 2:7). The woman was made from the man's rib during his deep sleep (Gen. 2:21). This creation of the woman was very strange, but very significant in the sense of marriage as Delitzsch wrote, "If the fact that the woman was formed from a rib, and not from any other part of the man is significant."¹⁵

Its significance is identified by many Bible commentators as follows:

A. An Inseparable Unity - Delitzsch wrote:

The woman was created, not of dust of the earth, but from a rib of Adam, because she was formed for an inseparable unity and fellowship of life with the man, and the mode of her creation was to lay the actual foundation for the moral ordinance of marriage.¹⁶

If both the man and the woman were created in the same method by the dust of the ground, they might have separation, disunity, and no fellowship at all. On the contrary, the first woman was made from one part of the first man's body. They had inseparable unity.

B. An Equality - Murphy determined the equal roles of both the couple as he wrote, "the selection of a rib to form into a woman constitutes her, in an eminent sense, a

¹⁵C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament, vol. 1, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996), 56.

helpmeet for him, in company with him, on a footing of equality with him.”¹⁷

Hawkins defined the term “helpmeet”:

Wives are referred to as helpmeets for their husbands in Gen. 2:18. The term helpmeet comes from two Hebrew words: ezer and neged. In our culture we tend to think of a helper as someone who is an assistant, of lower status. In the original language that is not the meaning; the woman is not inferior in status.¹⁸

In spite of being created after Adam, the woman was considered as equal as the former, thanks to his rib. It is not difficult to understand this mystery. The reason is that the woman was not made by the man, but by God, as the Bible says, “male and female He created them” (Gen. 1:27). The matter was just chronological events. Adam was created first, and Eve later. Therefore, Hawkins affirmed that, “Male leadership was based solely on the divine prerogative and methodology, not on any implied superiority or inferiority of the sexes.”¹⁹ And Kselman also says, “The creation of woman from man does not imply subordination any more than the creation of the man from the earth implies subordination.”²⁰

¹⁶Ibid., 55-56.

¹⁷James G. Murphy et al., eds., Barnes’ Notes: Genesis (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1873), 105.

¹⁸Ronald E. Hawkins, Strengthening Marital Intimacy (Kearney: Morris Publishing, 1991), 14.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰John S. Kselman, Harper’s Bible Commentary (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1988), 88.

- C. Helper-Counterpart - Delitzsch defined the Hebrew term zeila (the rib), “means the side, and, as a portion of the human body, the rib.”²¹ Because of its meaning “the side”, Sailhamer added his idea:

Just as the rib is found at the side of the man and is attached to him, even so the good wife, the rib of her husband, stands at his side to be his helper counterpart, and her soul is bound up with his.²²

It is God’s will for the wife to be the husband’s helper counterpart. They both should function as a team. Teamwork in a godly family is a sign of success, as a Vietnamese saying, “The compatibility of the spouses can dry up the eastern sea.”

- D. A Lover - Henry analyzed Adam’s rib as the man’s closest person for him to love as this statement,

That woman was made of a rib out of the side of Adam; not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved.²³

²¹C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament, vol. 1 (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996), 55.

²²John H. Sailhamer et al., ed., The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, vol. 1, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 47.

²³Matthew Henry, A Commentary on the Whole Bible, vol. 1 (Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell Company, nd.), 20.

The woman was neither the man's head nor his feet. She was not his ruler or slave. She was the middle-part body of the man where his heart was near, and his arms were available to hold for a tender care full of love.

One Flesh

The origin of marriage was from this verse, "For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh" (Gen. 2:24). The term "one flesh" describes a significantly close relationship of the couple. Adam and Eve were not the two separate persons, but one flesh which was Adam's. One flesh determines a relationship, a fellowship, unity, and a love between the man and the woman, the husband and the wife.

Therefore, once they cleave to each other, they have to leave any other relatives, even their parents. This is very sacred according to God's desire. Later on, the Lord Jesus Christ commanded, "Consequently they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together let no man separate" (Matt 19:6). If husband and wife become one flesh joined by God, how can they be divided into two?

The first marriage was performed by God's intention and plan. In spite of their fall (trapped by Satan) and a lot of sufferings afterwards by being driven out of the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were never separated. They received penalties, brought forth offspring, and stayed faithful together until their deaths.

Marriage in God's will must be the best, happiest, and longest. Otherwise, marriage in man's will only could cause problems, troubles and sufferings as in the case of Samson.

Highlights of Some Troubled Families in the Bible

The Bible gives many accounts concerning marriage and parenting. Each category is composed of examples of both good and bad marriages and parenting situations. These accounts may be used as illustrations for family counseling. The accounts of bad marriage are listed first with the causes and the consequences, in which some lessons should be taken as the teaching of marriage.

Marriage

- A. **One's Own Scheme** - The first story is about Abraham's family in which there was trouble between his two wives, Sarah and Hagar, in chapter 21 of the book of Genesis. Sarah gave birth to her son Isaac as the LORD had promised. At that time, Abraham was one hundred years old. He made a great feast on the day his son was weaned. Then Sarah saw Ishmael, Hagar's son, mocking Isaac. This made her upset. She wanted Hagar and her son to leave as she said to Abraham, "Drive out this maid and her son, for the son of this maid shall not be an heir with my son Isaac. And the matter distressed Abraham greatly because of his son" (Gen 21:10-11).

The LORD knew Abraham's circumstance, and commanded him to do according to Sarah's request. God promised to make a nation through Ishmael, and to give descendants for Abraham through Isaac. Abraham prepared everything for Hagar and Ishmael's trip away from him. Making comment on the event that distressed Abraham, Ross wrote:

God used this incident of Ishmael mocking Isaac to drive out the child Ishmael and Hagar (v. 10), for they would be a threat to the promised seed...Earlier Sarah had mistreated Hagar (16:6); now Hagar's son was mistreating Sarah's son. Earlier Sarah caused pregnant Hagar to flee (16:6); now she caused Hagar and her 16-or-17-year old son to flee.²⁴

Ross says that the trouble came to Abraham's family and distressed him because of the consequence of Sarah's action. In other words, Sarah reaped what she sowed. She was promised a son, but she was impatient and could not wait for God's promise to be done according to His plan, and did what she thought was right:

So Sarai said to Abram, "Now behold, the LORD has prevented me from bearing children. Please go into my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children through her." And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai (Gen. 16:2).

This was Sarai's plan, not God's. Sailhamer gave his comment on this:

By placing the Hagar story here, the author suggests that Sarai's scheme was intended to head off that divine promise by supplying it with a human solution. Sarai's

²⁴Allen P. Ross et al., eds., The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Genesis, vol. 1 (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1997), 62.

plan, though successful, does not meet with divine approval (17:15-19), just as the unsuccessful plans and schemes of those in the previous narratives (11:1-9;12:10-20;13:1-12;14:21-24).²⁵

Sarai's suggestion of Abram's marriage with Hagar was the cause of her family problem. Since her request approval, she had been despised by her maid, and her family got into trouble. Abram himself participated in his wife's scheme to please her by listening to her: "But Abram said to Sarai, 'Behold, your maid is in your power; do to her what is good in your sight.' So Sarai treated her harshly, and she fled from her presence" (Gen. 16:6).

The LORD kept His promise and blessed Abraham. But he and his wife suffered anyway from the second wife in their family. This teaches us that heading off God's plan causes trouble, and human solutions seem to succeed in the beginning but fall in the end. In addition, it is good for the spouse to listen to the other spouse's suggestion which fits with Scriptural teaching. And he or she should be very careful in pleasing someone who does not follow God's will.

- B. Parental Authority - The second account is about Jacob's family. His father Isaac told him to go to marry a wife from his uncle Laban's daughters in Paddan-Aram. He pleased his father and served his uncle for seven years in order to marry Rachel whom he loved so much. But Laban deceived Jacob by giving his older daughter Leah to Jacob on the wedding night, instead of Rachel as he promised.

²⁵ John H. Sailhamer et al., eds., The Expositor's Bible Commentary, vol. 1, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 135.

Being very upset, Jacob said to his uncle Laban, “What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served with you? Why then have you deceived me?” (Gen 29:25b). One week after his first marriage, he married Rachel whom he loved more than Leah. The Bible says, “Now the LORD was that Leah was unloved, and he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren” (Gen. 29:31). Leah gave birth to four sons: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, hoping her husband would love her because of her four children.

Then the trouble came to Jacob when Rachel became jealous of her sister Leah. She gave her maid Bilhah to Jacob as his third wife from whom two children, Dan and Naphtali, were born. Then Leah gave her maid Zilpah to Jacob as his fourth wife who gave birth to two children, Gad and Ashar. The family atmosphere became so bad that the two blood sisters often quarreled with each other, because Jacob favored the younger one, Rachel. Jamieson quoted Miss Rogers “Domestic Life in Palestine” about the polygamy problem:

Experience in polygamous countries has shown that those run great risk who marry two members of one family, or even two girls from the same town or village. The disadvantages of such unions are well understood. I have often witnessed the quarrels, disputes, and jealousies which arise in harems, where the several wives of one man are nearly related to each other. The more remote the connection or relationship among the women in a harem, the more chance there appears to be of peace within its wells.²⁶

²⁶Robert Jamieson et al., eds., A Commentary: Genesis, vol. 1, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1995), 205.

Jacob's family's troubles and the frequent quarrels happened to the two blood sisters in the polygamous family due to Laban. His deceit and parental authority caused many problems to his daughters' family. Circumstances like this still happen to some developing countries where parents still apply power and authority to children in marriage. They do not give their children any freedom of choice. Children marry those whom the parents like. Otherwise, children will be persecuted and driven out of the family and lose their rights as children.

The trouble in Jacob's family was his fault, too. He loved Rachel more than Leah. This unjust and prejudicial attitude toward Leah displeased her and God. This created Rachel's arrogance and hatred against her sister. And finally, the family's troubles were due to polygamy. Two women should not be in a same kitchen. Jealousy often leads to incompatibility.

- C. Dictatorship - The third story is about a Gentle king, Ahasuerus of Persia, written in the book of Esther. It happened right in the palace in Susa, the capital of Persia. The king made a great banquet for all the very important persons of his empire to attend. Then he ordered his wife, queen Vashti, to display her beauty in front of him and his guests. His wife did not obey him. This made him very upset. Listening to his officer's advice, the king divorced her.

The royal family was broken due to the husband's superiority. Once a party employs dictatorship to another, there is no balance between a couple. The

king in this account got drunk, lost his control and mistreated his wife. His dictatorship apparently caused trouble for his family. Any spouse who has superiority but lacks love and respect toward the other will sooner or later break the relationship.

- D. Unfaithfulness - This is an account of the prophet Hosea's marriage. He married Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim. She gave birth to two sons and one daughter. She committed adultery as described:

For their mother has played the harlot; she who conceived them has acted shamefully. For she said, "I will go after my lovers, who give me bread and my water, my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink." (Hosea 2:5).

The LORD employed Hosea's marriage as an illustration of Israel's unfaithfulness to Him. A family's troubles can begin when one of the two spouses becomes unfaithful and commits adultery.

- E. Obedience - The first happy family in the Bible was Noah's. Noah was described as favored in God's eye, a righteous blameless man who walked with God. The LORD commanded him to build an ark to save those who obeyed God. He fully obeyed God to take his whole family and the selected animals into the ark according to God's order. His family consisted of four couples. The Bible tells about this happy family:

"And Noah did according to all that the LORD had commanded him. Now Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of water came upon the earth. Then Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him

entered the ark because of the water of the flood (Gen. 7:5-7).”

His wife and his children got along with him and obeyed God in the completion of the ark. Therefore, God saved his whole family, and blessed them as written, “And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth’” (Gen. 9:1).

- F. Humility - Another happy family in the Bible was the family of Zacharias and Elizabeth. Zacharias was a priest. Both of them were godly persons as written, “And they came both righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the LORD” (Luke 1:6). Elizabeth was barren at her old age. The angel Gabriel came to inform Zacharias in the temple that his prayer was heard, and that his wife would give birth to a son who would be named John. He said to the angel, “How should I know this for certain? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years” (Luke 1:18). During her pregnancy, Elizabeth praised the LORD in this saying, “This is the way the LORD has dealt with me in the days when He looked with favor upon me, to take away my disgrace among men” (Luke 1:25).

Their words were very soft and humble. Their marriage would be very happy in spite of no children. They loved and got along with each other, and received blessing from the LORD because of their humility.

- G. Endurance - The renowned family of Joseph and Mary was happy and blessed for their endurance and obedience. They had an engagement before Mary's conception by the Holy Spirit. Joseph characteristics were described, "And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her, desired to put her away secretly" (Matt 1:19). An angel came to explain about Mary's pregnancy to him. He understood and followed the angel's instruction. Joseph went with Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem for the census. Mary gave birth to Jesus in the city of David at a poor place. Afterwards they fled to Egypt as refugees. Both Joseph and Mary endured hardships for the LORD's sake. They have portrayed good examples of compatibility, endurance, love, stewardship, and obedience to God.
- H. Cooperation - Another happy family is described in Acts 18 and 19. They were Aquilla and Priscilla who came from Italy to Corinth where they met the apostle Paul. The Bible says about their cooperation with Paul, "And because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working; for by trade they were tent-makers" (Acts 18:3). For awhile, they came with Paul from Corinth to Ephesus where they met Apollos and explained more accurately to him about God's way. They got along with each other and like to cooperate with those who served the LORD in missions.

Parenting

The accounts of troubled families in the Bible consist of two categories: 1) The parents and the children, 2) and the children themselves.

A. Parents and Children - This is an account of Ham, Noah's son, who "saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside" (Gen. 9:22).

Meanwhile, Noah's other two sons, Shem and Japheth, "Walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father, and their faces were turned away, so that they did not see their father's nakedness" (Gen. 9:23).

Noah's nakedness occurred not because of sexual involvement, but intoxication. Ross said about the ancient culture of nakedness, "to the ancients, however, even seeing one's father naked was a breach of family ethic. The sanctity of the family was destroyed and the strength of the father was made a mockery."²⁷

And this is the reason why Ham was cursed:

Ham's act of hubris could not be left without repercussions. A humiliation in like measure was needed, according to the principle of retributive justice. Ham had made an irreparable breach in his father's family; thus a curse would be put on his son's family.²⁸

²⁷Allen P. Ross et al., eds., The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Genesis, vol. 1 (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1997), 41.

²⁸Ibid.

Wenham also emphasized the Old Testament's serious teachings and the ancient culture about children's blessings in honoring parents, and punishment for cursing parents:

Some attempts have been made to suggest Ham was guilty of incest or other sexual impropriety. But these notions are wrong and fail to appreciate how seriously the Old Testament and other ancient cultures took filial duties. "Honour your father and mother" comes next to the Godward commandments in Ex 20, and striking or cursing your father or mother could be punished by death (Ex 21:15,17; cited by Jesus, Mk 7:10).²⁹

Another account is Absalom's rebellion against his father, king David. He was the third son of David, the only son of his mother Maachar. He murdered his half brother Amnon in revenge for his sister Tamar, who was suffering from a rape and mistreatment by her half brother. In addition, applying his evil method to overthrow his father, he took possession of Jerusalem and David's throne. This made David flee from his palace for his life due to his son whom he loved so much. Later, Absalom was killed by his father's army general for his crime and rebellion.

Gunn gave a commentary on Absalom's deeds at the end of the account of a son's rebellion against his father:

At the close of the episode we glimpse the king, sitting mute at the gate, reviewing his triumphant army and nursing his parental anguish. We have an even more vivid

²⁹G.J. Wenham et al., eds., New Bible Commentary (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 67.

image of the son, suspended between heaven and earth
(18:9) most appropriately for one who so aspired to raise
him up.³⁰

- B. Children Themselves - The Bible tells of conflicts between the children which caused parents' distress. They were sometimes a part of the consequences of the parents' faults and sins.

Cain, the son of Adam and Eve, murdered his younger brother Abel just because of the refusal of his inappropriate offering of the fruit of ground. Adam and Eve had to suffer for their children's sins, the elder's punishment and the younger's loss of life. Henry described the couple's great grief of their children like this:

No question, the murder of Abel, and the impenitence and apostasy of Cain, were a very great grief to him and Eve, and the most because their own wickedness did now correct them and their backsliding did reprove them. They folly had given sin and death entrance into the world, and now they smarted by it, being, by means thereof, deprived of both their children wickedness, they should take occasion thence to lament that corruption of nature which was derived from them, and which is the root of bitterness.³¹

Esau and Jacob, the twins of Isaac and Rebekah, warred among themselves because of the patriarchal blessing from their father with the favor and help from their mother for Jacob. This made Esau upset and plan to get rid of his blood brother as written:

³⁰David M. Gunn et al., eds., Harper's Bible Commentary: 2 Samuel, (New York: Harper Collins, 1988), 300.

³¹Matthew Henry, A Commentary on the Whole Bible, vol. 1, (Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell Company, nd.), 18).

So Esau bore a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him; and Esau said to himself, "The days of mourning for my father are near, then I will kill my brother Jacob" (Gen. 27:41).

Trouble came to this family due to Rebekah's, like Sarah's, employment of human will, instead of waiting for God's timing. Therefore, Jacob had to flee for his life after his older brother's slaying, according to his mother's instruction:

Now therefore, my son, obey my voice, and arise, flee to Haran, to my brother Laban! And stay with him a few days, until your brother's fury subsides, until your brother's anger against you subsides, and he forgets what you did to him. Then I shall send and get you from there. Why should I bereaved of you both in one day?(Gen. 27:43-45).

Any unjust behavior and mistreatment may cause severe problems, damage relationships, and create dangers for the members of the family.

The Lord's Teachings and Commands About Marriage

- A. Husband - The first command of the Lord for the family is given in Genesis 2:24, "For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh." God's design for the family is then for the man to leave his parents' home to establish his own in the union of marriage with his wife. Leaving one's father and mother does not mean abandoning or dishonoring them. This aspect of God's command may be difficult for the Vietnamese to understand because of the longstanding tradition of teaching

loyalty to one's parents and brothers above one's own wife and family. The Vietnamese even have a saying that considers one's brothers as his own body and one's wife as his clothing. The implication is that one can change wives, but cannot change his brothers!

On the other hand, the Bible teaches that one shall cleave to his wife or to become one flesh with his wife. In other words, the wife is his body and he should not divorce or mistreat her. This is a major conflict between the teaching of traditional Confucianism and the Bible, and a source of confusion even for some Vietnamese Christians.

- B. Wife - Paul instructed the wife, "But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband (1 Cor. 7:10). It is the same thing as the husband, the wife should not divorce, even to an unbeliever, "And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, let her not send her husband away" (1 Cor. 7:13).

The second command to wife is submission, "Wives, be subject to your own husbands, and to the Lord" (Eph. 5:22). It is good for women to be supportive, submissive, spiritual and smart as described, "But women shall be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint" (1 Tim 2:15).

The Lord's Teaching About Parenting

Strack conceived that God gives parents a home ministry to do:

Most of all, fathers and mothers, God has a ministry for you in your home. You may also have a ministry outside your home, but God wants you to first dedicate yourself to the home He has placed within your reach.³²

Indeed, the Bible describes many things for parents to do such as teaching, training, nurturing, disciplining, and loving.

1. Teaching - The LORD exhorts his people to love Him. And once they love Him, they should keep His words in their heart. Besides, they have to teach their children God's word, "And you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up" (Deu 6:7).
2. Training - When children grow up, parents should also follow His way to train them until they become mature in spiritual life, "Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it" (Pro. 22:6).
3. Nuturing - Parents should nurture their children in the tender loving care as a good mother, "But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children" (1 Thes. 2:7). It is hard for children to grow in a spiritual way without the father's participation in

³²Jay Strack, Family Matters Handbook (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1994),

nurturing, “Just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children” (1 Thes. 2:11).

4. Disciplining - The book of Hebrews mentions a kind of tough love, a discipline, which God applies to Christians, as father’s discipline his children, “It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what sons is there whom his father does not discipline?” (Heb. 12:7).

Discipline is good for children to be taught as a lesson review, provided no damage to children’s physical body and spiritual characteristics to avoid child abuse, as Paul said, “Fathers, do not exasperate your children, that they may not lose heart” (Col. 3:21).

5. Loving - The Lord commands Christians to love one another, “by this all men will know that you are My disciples if you have love for one another” (John 13:35). And parents are commanded to love their children, “That they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children” (Titus 2:4).

Children

The fifth commandment is, “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you” (Ex. 20:12). The

Bible commands children to love, respect, honor, obey, and please parents, “Obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right” (Eph. 6:1).

In the Old Testament time, any child who struck or cursed his parents would be strictly judged and punished, “And who strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death...And he who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death” (Ex. 21:15, 17). In addition, children ought to follow parents’ instruction, “Hear, O sons, the instruction of a father, and give attention that you may gain understanding. For I give you sound teaching; Do not abandon my instruction” (Pro. 4:1-2).

Chapter Two

REASONS FOR VIETNAMESE PRESENCE IN THE UNITED STATES

It is necessary to present a brief geography and history of Vietnam as a background study of the reasons why there is the presence of thousands of Vietnamese people in the United States of America.

Geography of Vietnam

The term, “Vietnam,” written in English is just one word. But it actually is composed of two separate words when written in the Vietnamese language: Viet Nam. Each word has a specific meaning described below:

Vietnam has been known by as many as 11 names. Its first known name about 4,000 years ago, was Van Lang. It was Nam Viet, or the “far South,” in the Trieu dynasty (207-137 BC). Nam is Vietnamese for “South” and Viet means “beyond” or “far.” The name Vietnam was adopted in 1802 for only three decades, and it reappeared again in 1945.¹

Vietnam, located in the Indochinese peninsula, south of China, east of Laos and Cambodia, “is a long narrow country shaped like an elongated “S” that resembles a set of scales balancing two baskets of rice. At its narrowest point, the distance between its border with Laos in the west and the South China Sea in the east is only 31 miles.”² It

¹ Audrey Seah, Vietnam (North Bellmore: Marshall Cavendish, 1994), 7.

² Ibid.

has a total area of 127,210 square miles with 2,038-mile coastline along the Gulf of Tonkin in the Pacific Ocean, stretching straight from north to south about 1,000 miles. It is composed of three distinct geographical regions:

Vietnam is a country of tropical lowlands, hills, and densely forested highlands, with level land covering no more 20 percent of the area. The country is divided into the highlands and the Red River Delta in the North; and the Gai Truong Son (Central Mountains, or the Chaine Annamitique, sometimes referred to simply as the Chaine), the coastal lowlands, and the Mekong River Delta.³

The population of Vietnam was about 60 million in 1985, and “Vietnamese officials estimated that the population would be at last 66 million by 1990 and 80 million by the year 2,000.”⁴ The northern region has a lot of minerals such as coal, iron ore, copper, gold, tin--and people there live on manufacturing industries. The central region has valuable timber, and people there live by woodworking. The southern region has immense rice fields in the Mekong River Delta, and people make their living in agriculture.

The upper class people who live in the urban areas are the businessmen, government officials, professionals, medical doctors, university professors, and lawyers. Middle class people are the commercial factory employees, teachers, shop owners, farm and factory managers. And the lower class people are the villagers who work as laborers in the rural areas:

³ United States Department of the Army, *Vietnam: A Country Study* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1989), 85.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 90.

At the bottom of village life were owners of small farming plots and tenant farmers. Forced to spend nearly all of their time eking out a living, they could not afford to engage in village affairs. Because they could not cultivate enough land to support their families, most of them worked also as part-time laborers, and their wives and children assisted with the field work. Their children frequently went to school only long enough to learn the rudiments of reading and writing.⁵

The location of Vietnam and the unique characteristics of its people have influenced its long history as described below:

Vietnam, as a single unified country, has not existed until recently. To talk of the people and to help understand present-day Vietnam and its complexities, we need to examine the history of the region and see how the country was forged. For centuries, the area was much fought over. There have been few periods of prolonged peace and even during these, Vietnam has been subjected to the influence of other nations because of its geographical location on the Indo-Chinese peninsula and in the centre of eastern Asia.⁶

History of Vietnam

Vietnamese were originally migrants from southern China and eastern Indochina thousands of years ago. They first settled in the Ma River Valley in North Vietnam around 3,000 BC, with the name of Lac Viet.⁷ Their first king was Hung Vuong, the oldest son of Lac long Quan in the Hung dynasty (2879-258 BC).

In 208 BC, the Chinese military commander Zhao Tuo invaded Vietnam and established the nation of Nam Viet by combining southern China and northern Vietnam.

⁵ Ibid., 109.

⁶ Claire Ellis, Culture Shock! Vietnam (Portland: Graphic Arts Center Publishing Company, 1995), 27-28.

⁷ Audrey Seah, Vietnam (North Bellmore: Marshall Cavendish, 1994), 17.

Vietnam has been occupied and ruled by China for more than 1,000 years beginning in 208 BC⁸ in spite of many resistances and battles by the Vietnamese patriots and 900 years of self-rule under 11 dynasties. Since 1859, Vietnam has endured nearly 100 years of French rule and finally defeated France's army in the French Indochina war in 1954.⁹

Ellis wrote about Vietnam's efforts during the war and the results:

Their determination to win became obvious with their colossal defeat of the French Expeditionary Forces at the "impregnable" Fortress of Dien Bien Phu. Official independence came soon afterwards on July 20, 1954, after long discussions in Geneva. The country was split at the 17th parallel pending a general election on reunification which was scheduled for the middle of 1956. The North became the Democratic Republic of Vietnam under the Vietnamese Workers Party (a group set up by Ho Chi Minh, also known as Lao Dong) and the South became the Republic of South Vietnam.¹⁰

Since the beginning of President John F. Kennedy's term in 1971, the United States has been involved in Vietnam's conflicts between North and South, staying on the side of South Vietnam. Because of the fear of the communist threat to Southeast Asia they were sending equipment, military advisors and troops prepared for a long war against the North Vietnamese Communists.¹¹ Meanwhile, North Vietnam had secretly

⁸ Vietnam: A Country Study, 7.

⁹ Audrey Seah, Vietnam, 17.

¹⁰ Claire Ellis, Culture Shock, 37-38.

¹¹ Ibid., 39.

received strong support from some Communist nations including the two leading communist country forces, the Soviet Union and Red China.¹²

The war escalated in the mid-1960s. The U.S. sent more troops by mid-1966 as written: “Now numbering 350,000, the soldiers had gained the initiative in several key areas, pushing the Communists out of the heavily populated zones of the south into the more remote mountainous regions and into areas along the Cambodia border”.¹³

In 1968, the U.S. troops, under the command of General William C. Westmoreland, had increased to 525,000 after the Tet offensive.¹⁴ And in this year peace talks began with a long drawn out negotiation in Paris, France between the representatives of the forces involved in the war: the United States, South Vietnam, North Vietnam, and the National Liberation Front. The result of the four-party peace talks was also the cause of the fall of the Saigon government as written:

By then Hanoi had agreed to accept Thieu as president of a future Saigon government in exchange for the removal of United States forces without a corresponding removal of PAVN troops. Thieu’s objections to the failure to require the removal of North Vietnamese forces was in the end ignored, and the Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam was signed in Paris on January 27, 1973.¹⁵

The withdrawal of the U.S. troops out of Vietnam actually signaled the defeat of the South Vietnam government and its allies. Indeed:

¹² Vietnam: A Country Study, 64.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 66.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 71.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 75-76.

On March 10, 1975, the North Vietnamese Army launched what was to be its final major offensive against South Vietnam, assured that America had lost its will to find or to finance the independence of South Vietnam. No longer fearful of American intervention, the North Vietnamese were certain that victory and the forceful unification of Vietnam was, after nearly thirty years of conflict, soon to be accomplished.¹⁶

The Fall of Saigon Government In the Communist Invasion

The North Vietnamese Communist troops that used the Russian-built T54 tanks began a strong effective attack on Ban Me Thuot, a stronghold province in the central region, at 2:00 AM on March 10, 1975. This fierce battle marked not only the fall of that province, but also the entire regime of the South as reported:

After the fall of Ban Me Thuot, South Vietnam's strategic situation was desperate. There remained no organized Republic of Vietnam Army forces between the Communist troops at Ban Me Thuot and the South China Sea. The North Vietnamese Army was very close to cutting South Vietnam in two and the remaining government forces in the central highlands were isolated in Kontum and Pleiku.¹⁷

When realizing the loss of his two important stronghold provinces in the Military Region 1 without any continued U.S. military aid, President Nguyen Van Thieu of the South "weighed the realities of his nation's situation and finally accepted the necessity of a new strategy."¹⁸ The new strategy was that he ordered his chairman of the Joint General

¹⁶ Larry Engelmann, Tears Before The Rain: An Oral History of the Fall of South Vietnam (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 10.

¹⁷ Clark Dougan and David Fulgum, The Fall of the South (Boston: Boston Publishing Company, 1985), 49-52.

¹⁸ Ibid., 52-53.

Staff, General Vien Van Cao, to abandon the northern half of the highlands in a general retreat of the whole 22nd division of the 2nd Corps to the ocean on “Interprovincial Route 7B, a long-disused logging road that dipped, curved and bumped for about 200 kilometers from just outside Pleiku southeast to the coastal town of Tuy Hoa.”¹⁹

The withdrawal of an army division from an area occupied by thousands of civilian refugees has been described as “the convoy of tears.” It really was a great defeat and disadvantage for the Army in the south. The North Vietnamese Army took advantage of this withdrawal and they sent the 2nd Army Corps from the central region to the southern region to plan to complete the victory and end the war:

On March 31, as regular soldiers of the North Vietnamese 2nd Army Corps swept through the streets of Da Nang attempting to restore order, a “flash telegram” from Hanoi arrived at General Dung’s headquarters in the central highlands signed by Le Duan, first secretary of the Lao Dong (workers’) party. The communique brought final confirmation of an “historic decision” reached by the North Vietnamese Politburo six days before. Emboldened by the unanticipated swiftness of ARVN’s collapse in the highlands and Military Region 1, but also aware that less than two months remained before the onset of summer monsoons, the North Vietnamese leadership resolved to seize the “once-in-a-thousand years” opportunity that lay before them and to “liberate Saigon before the rainy season.” The two-year plan outlined the preceding Fall had been abandoned. The “reunification of the Fatherland” was to be accomplished in 1975--not through negotiation, but by force.²⁰

The month of April 1975 has been called “The Black April” by the South Vietnamese, because it marked the blackest page of Vietnamese history in the minds of

¹⁹ Ibid., 54.

²⁰ Ibid., 92.

the people who suffered from the Communist invasion. It was painful for the South to see the scenes of its failure. The South lost 44 provinces to the hands of its enemy by mid-April. On April 21, President Thieu announced his resignation and flew to Taipei. Since by then, most of his top Armed Forces generals and high-ranking officers had fled from the country, too.²¹ Beginning on April 23, many Vietnamese left Vietnam when Vice President Tran Van Huong took his new position as the new president of the defeated nation:

On April 23, 1975, 3,284 Vietnamese boarded U.S. transport planes to escape Vietnam. On April 24, another 5,574 people flew out of Saigon. Many of the escaping Vietnamese wept. They were glad to be free from danger, but sad to think they would never see their country again. On April 27, four Communist rockets smashed into downtown Saigon. Terrified citizens ran through the burning streets as the Viet Cong moved into the outskirts of the city. Another 7,578 refugees flew from Tan Son Nhut that day.²²

On April 28, the newly selected president Huong Van Tran transferred his presidency to General Minh Van Duong, hoping this solution would be helpful to save the nation in negotiations with the North as General Minh's speech said, "I accept the responsibility for seeking to arrive at a cease-fire, at negotiations, at peace on the basis of the Paris Accords, I am ready to accept any proposal in this direction."²³

²¹ George Esper and The Associate Press, The Eyewitness History of the Vietnam War 1961-1975 (New York: Ballantine Books, 1983), 183-184.

²² Zachary Kent, The Story of the Saigon Airlift (Chicago: Children Press, 1991), 12.

²³ David Bulter, The Fall of Saigon (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985), 315.

As the North Vietnamese troops were nearing Saigon, the capital of the South, more Vietnamese were evacuated from their country so that they could flee from the future persecution by the Communists:

During the frenzied days of April 29 and April 30, a total of 1,376 Americans and 5,595 Vietnamese had been lifted by helicopter out of Saigon. At the same time, the U.S. Navy plucked another 60,000 South Vietnamese from rafts, fishing boats, and cargo ships in the South China Sea. The U.S. government promptly granted permission for as many as 132,000 refugees to enter the United States. A convoy of crowded ships steamed toward U.S. military bases in the Philippines.²⁴

The 30th of April 1975 marked the death date of the Southern regime when the U.S. Ambassador Graham Martin boarded a helicopter from Saigon at 3:45 AM, and at 10:24 AM President Minh Van Duong spoke on national radio to order the South Vietnamese troops under his command to offer an unconditional surrender; he called “on all the Republic of Vietnam soldiers to remain, to stop fighting, and stay put.”²⁵

Shortly after the president’s tearful address, Communist tanks broke down the presidential palace gate and stormed into the front yard, and the captors enjoyed their great victory with the complete fall of the South.²⁶

Communist Persecution and South Vietnamese Re-education

²⁴ Zachary Kent, The Story of the Saigon Airlift (Chicago: Children Press, 1991), 23.

²⁵ Clark Dougan and David Fulghum, The Fall of the South (Boston: Boston Publishing Company, 1985), 175.

²⁶ Ibid., 177.

All of the southerners were scared to death after the northerners took over South Vietnam. The first thing which frightened most of the South Vietnamese were announcements of so-called “re-education” applied to all the workers of the former government as written:

Rebuilding and reuniting the war-ravaged nation was a major problem for the new Vietnamese government. Supporters of the former South Vietnamese government were sent to “re-education camps,” where they were subjected to brutal punishments while being forced to renounce their old loyalties.²⁷

The term “supporters” included soldiers, civil servants, wealthy people, Chinese businessmen, religious leaders, political party members and any opponents.

General Ly Tong Ba testified regarding his “re-education”:

They took me back to Cu chi with my staff officers. Again they kept us behind barbed wire. That was for one month . Then they sent me back to Saigon, where they had me report for “re-education.” Then they sent me to a “re-education camp.” At that time I thought my life would be spared. I was sent to the North in July 1975 and I was not released from the re-education camp until December of 1987. I labored there for twelve years. General Le Minh Dao was in my re-education camp.²⁸

Even the Wycliffe Bible translators were also captured and imprisoned. They were the Millers:

The Millers and the other westerners (and Ike Tolentino) captured in Ban Me Thuot were eventually taken north to Hanoi and held in the “Hanoi Hilton” compound that had held most of the American prisoners of war. They were released in November 1975, eight months after their capture.²⁹

²⁷ Mendy M. Cole, Vietnam (New York: Chelsea House Publisher, 1989), 48.

²⁸ Larry Engelmann, Tears Before The Rain: An Oral History of the Fall of South Vietnam (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 244.

²⁹ David Butler, The Fall of Saigon (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985), 483.

Citizens were forbidden to argue against the Communist government about any thing, even for the right thing:

Doan Van Toai was arrested in June 1975, after a heated argument at the bank with its new Communist officials about the correct economic policies for the South. He was held until November 1977, and was released after an uncle who was a colonel in the North Vietnam army intervened on his behalf.³⁰

People had neither freedom of speech nor of writing. Many writers were put in jail for opposing the government:

From June 15, 1975, the day of his arrest until today, Doan Van Toai probably cannot help recall that he has written "Peace And Prisoners of War," the book where he has put down his terrifying visions. And the Communists certainly are aware of that. Among those who lived by the pen in South Vietnam and were detained by the Communists after 1975, Phan Nhat Nam is the one that has received the harshest treatment, because he represents for them everything that they fear and hate.³¹

Thousands of the POWs died in the re-education camps. Those who lived, could not walk when they were released due to many atrocities they were forced to endure:

Upon their rescue, most of the survivors, too ill from starvation, disease and torture required emergency medical care. Many showed signs of having been beaten and had deformities caused by unset broken bones.³²

The writer of this thesis also experienced such a re-education from June 6, 1975 to September 15, 1977 due to his military service as an officer of the South Vietnamese Army. He labored in the jungle and the rice fields from sunrise to sunset. The camp

³⁰ Ibid., 487.

³¹ Phan Nhat Nam, Peace and Prisoners of War (San Jose: Khang Chien Publisher, 1989), 19.

³² Ibid., 141.

guards gave him a bowl of cooked rice without any other food for a meal twice a day.

They allowed his wife to meet and talk with him for 15 minutes once a month in front of a guard. Many prisoners committed suicide because they were unable to endure such hardship and suffering.

No Freedom At All

The author stayed behind in South Vietnam for five years after the fall of the Saigon government in 1975. He witnessed the total loss of freedom under the new Communist regime. People were not allowed to voice their opinions, especially those critical of the government. Religion, especially Christianity, was considered a danger to the complete control of the government. All newspapers and magazines belonged to the Vietnam Communist Party. The religious leaders including Buddhist monks, Catholic priests, and Protestant ministers were forbidden to get together at one meeting without government permission. Civilians had to make requests for moving from one city to another city. Children of POWs were not accepted to colleges. The Southerners suffered from Communism so much as described:

Vietnamese communism smothered the country with a stifling bureaucracy. The Communists tried to implement Ho's dream--political reunification of the two Vietnams and imposition of a socialist economic order. North Vietnamese cadres and Vietcong took control of South Vietnam, seized private property, collectivized plantations and farms, squeezed out small business, and hunted down South Vietnamese political and military officials.³³

³³ James S. Olson and Randy Roberts, Where The Domino Fell (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 275.

The Communist authorities did not like to see anybody involved in the former government affairs live in the province. Therefore, these people were forced to leave their homes and to move to rural and deserted areas:

The government forcibly moved nearly one million civilians from Ho Chi Minh City, Hue, Da Nang, and Nha Trang to “New Economic Zones” in abandoned sections of South Vietnam.³⁴

Morley Safer, in his book Flashbacks, wrote about his trip back to Vietnam after the fall of the Saigon government, interviewing many people including an English teacher who used to be a former Republic of South Vietnam Army captain whose first name was Linh. This was his testimony about the loss of freedom after being released from his four-year re-education :

When I got out I couldn't get work of any kind. I tried to explain to them that they were wasting the talent of a perfectly good teacher, that I was not political in any way. I had never been political. All I ever wanted to do was teach. I was never a member of any party. To my shame I can say I was never even Nationalist. But it was no use. Our new masters do not think education is very important.³⁵

The human rights abuses have been continually happening in Vietnam despite so many efforts right in the country and even elsewhere in the world to oppose and call the government to stop. An article “Question for Hanoi” on the editorial page of the Orange County (CA) *Register* newspaper on March 6, 1994 gave some comments about human rights abuses:

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Morley Safer, Flashbacks On Returning To Vietnam (New York: Random House, 1990), 44.

The arrest of Liem and Tri should arouse some feeling among their American countrymen to demand their immediate release. It also raises the issue how to work steadily, without jeopardizing the nurturance of Vietnam's embryonic market economy, to address continuing human rights abuses perpetrated by our old adversary.³⁶

James L. Tyson, the president of the Council of the Defense of Freedom, wrote about human rights violations:

But in the case of Vietnam (and the other remaining Communist countries) human-rights violations are much more serious and deadly. What is involved is often literally a matter of life and death: brutal imprisonment and even executions.³⁷

Religious Persecution

Tyson continued to write more about human-rights violations including religious persecution:

During recent years there has been increasing persecution of religion in Vietnam, leading to protest demonstrations by believers, especially the Buddhists, who account for more than 80 percent of the population. Another prominent Buddhist is Dr. Doan Viet Hoat, an American-trained scholar who was president of the Van Hanh Buddhist University. In 1991 he began to publish a newsletter, *Freedom Forum*, on the subject of human rights. After only four issues had been printed, Hoat was arrested and sentenced to 20 years in jail for "promoting the overthrow of people power."³⁸

³⁶ Ngo Yen Dinh Huy "Questions For Hanoi", Movement To Unite The People And Build Democracy (Houston: International Committee For A Free Vietnam, 1994), 155.

³⁷ Ibid., 156.

³⁸ Ibid.

Actually, the Vietnamese Constitution, Article 70, states this about freedom of religion:

All citizens are guaranteed the freedom to worship, freedom of religion , and the freedom to practice and not to practice a religion. Equality of all religions before the law is guaranteed. Places of worship are to be protected. No one shall be allowed to violate the rights to freedom of belief and religion nor use these rights to disobey the laws and oppose state policies.³⁹

However, there have been many constitutional abuses committed by local authorities. All religious leaders have been restricted in travel, communication and contact. Many religious facilities such as centers, seminaries, schools, orphanages, clinics, and even pagodas, temples, chapels and church buildings were seized.⁴⁰

Many Buddhist monks, Catholic priests, and Protestant pastors died in the re-education camps. For instance:

On June 29, 1991, the authorities arrested Pastor Ho Van Nhi and Pastor Ma Phu Tan, who recently returned from the U.S., for having distributed 25 copies of the Bible to Protestant followers in Vung Tau city. In response to strong reactions of the U.S. government and congress, the SRV government released them after 21 days in detention.⁴¹

The hardships such as re-education, oppression and persecution had taken the Southerners to a dead end. This persuaded them to create an outlet--the flight for freedom.

³⁹ Vietnam Helsinki Committee, Religious Persecution In The Socialist Republic of Vietnam: 1975-1995 (Washington, D.C.: Vietnam Helsinki Committee, 1995), 10-11.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 17.

⁴¹ Ibid., 56.

Flights of the Southerners for Freedom

The first Vietnamese refugees were the university students, wives of U.S. servicemen, and South Vietnamese government officials who came and stayed in the United States for personal reasons before the collapse of Saigon. After the tragic events in April 1975, those who were still residing in this country were accepted as the refugees with permanent status by the U.S. government.⁴² The U.S. government had planned an evacuation of the Vietnamese to the free land:

By March 1975, when Thieu's troops abandoned the highlands of central Vietnam, observers around the world realized that the Saigon government was about to fall. On March 18, President Gerald Ford authorized the Attorney General to use his "parole" power to admit 130,000 refugees into the United States.⁴³

In addition, thousands of people, who experienced Communist rule in North Vietnam before 1954, tried many ways to leave Vietnam as soon as possible before the North Vietnamese Communists completely took over South Vietnam. Most of them used fishing and merchant boats to leave the Vietnam coastal areas. They really risked their lives to choose between hardship and death or life. Takaki described that risky hardship as follows:

Thousands did escape--21,000 in 1977; 106,500 in 1978; over 150,000 in 1979; and scores of thousands more later. The second wave of Vietnamese refugees took their wives and children and boarded crowded, leaking boats, risking their lives at sea where storms threatened to drown

⁴² Paul Rutledge, The Vietnamese In America (Minneapolis: Lerner Publication Company, 1987), 16.

⁴³ Sucheng Chan, Asian Americans (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991), 154-155.

them and pirates waited to rob them and rape the women. Two-thirds of the boats were attacked by pirates, each boat an average of more than two times.⁴⁴

Forty-percent of the second wave of refugees were ethnic-Chinese Vietnamese due to Chinese persecution since the war between China and Vietnam in 1979. They wanted to leave Vietnam , and the Vietnamese authorities also wanted them out of their sight. They were not allowed to have private businesses and their children could not go to school without permission. Many of them were imprisoned. So they had a choice: if they did not want to leave Vietnam, they had to work in the rice fields. Many wanted to leave. About 200,000 went to China, and 300,000 went to other countries by boat.⁴⁵ And for this reason, the number of the Vietnamese refugees in the United States increased to 643,200 in 1985.⁴⁶

The boat people faced many terrible difficulties during their flights by sea. The first problem was catching the fugitives by the coastal guards. After being sent back once, they might be tortured to death. Many fugitives died during their imprisonment after being captured at sea. The second problem was storm-ravaged leaking boats sinking into the depths of the Pacific Ocean. Many fugitives used very tiny and simple wooden boats which were not made for the open ocean. A few huge waves could easily crush the

⁴⁴ Ronald Takaki, Strangers From A Different Shore (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1989), 452.

⁴⁵ Linda Perrin, Coming To America (New York: Delacorte Press, 1980), 153-154.

⁴⁶ Ronald Takaki, Strangers From A Different Shore (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1989), 454.

boats and make them sink. The writer secretly organized a flight on October 3, 1980 in a wooden boat. That boat was just 30 feet long, and 8 feet wide. It carried 47 people: 10 children (the youngest child was just 20 months old), 13 women, and 24 men. The boat escaped from the coastal area of Vietnam, and continued to flounder in the stormy seas. On the third journey day, it was almost sinking because the storm was pitilessly striking it. The Lord sent a U.S. merchant vessel to rescue it at about 6:00 PM on October 5, 1980 and to took it to Thailand.

The third problem was running out of supplies such as water, food and fuel when the boat was lost at sea for a long time. Many boat people died of starvation, thirst and illness.

The fourth problem was the danger caused by Thai pirates who were camouflaged as fishermen. The pirates caught the boats, killed the Vietnamese men, raped the women and robbed them all of their valuable possessions. Ruthledge made a research of fugitive casualties:

Estimates for the number of boat people lost at sea and presumed dead are as low as 40,000 and as high as 200,000. At the height of the boat people's departure, American officials were reporting as many as 14,000 persons per month leaving Vietnam and arriving in other countries.⁴⁷

The Orderly Departure Program (ODP)

In 1979, realizing that thousands of boat people died at sea as a result of storms, pirates, starvation and thirst, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees reached an agreement with Vietnam and the United States to allow the Vietnamese to leave their

⁴⁷ Ibid., 454.

country for the United States under a program called the Orderly Departure Program (ODP).

The Vietnamese who qualified for one of the three categories under the ODP were permitted to immigrate to the United States. Category 1 was for residents who were living in this country to sponsor their close relatives such as spouses, parents, children, brothers and sisters from Vietnam to the United States. Category 2 was for those who used to work for the U.S. government in Vietnam for at least one year beginning in 1962. Category 3 was for those who were employees of American firms, former students in the United States, Amerasians, and Vietnamese prisoners of war for at least three years. For example, about 50,000 refugees came to this country in the ODP in 1986.⁴⁸

Amerasians, the children of American servicemen and Vietnamese women, were born in Vietnam during the wartime. When the U.S. troops withdrew from Vietnam, the children were left with their mothers. Chan wrote about these people:

The 1987 the Amerasian Homecoming Act, which allowed American-Vietnamese born between 1 January 1962 and 1 January 1976, and certain members of their families to be admitted into the United States as immigrants, so long as they applied for their visas before March 1990, has enlarged the influx--adding yet one more distinctive group to the increasingly heterogeneous Asian-American population.⁴⁹

They were the unfortunate children who were treated as orphans, because they had no fathers. The Vietnamese Communists disliked Americans; therefore they disliked any

⁴⁸ Ibid., 35.

⁴⁹ Sucheng Chan, Asian Americans (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991), 163-164.

part-American children. The Amerasians were mistreated so badly that they were called “the dust of life” as described:

The act was a unique social experiment. Twenty thousand, thirty thousand Americans--no one knew the number for sure--would be transplanted across the Pacific. Teenagers at the bottom of Vietnamese society, many of them homeless and illiterate, would be flown straight to the land of the big PX. Overnight Amerasians in Vietnam went from being bui doi, “the dust of life,” to “gold children” endowed with the power to fly themselves and their family members around the world.⁵⁰

The prisoners of war included any Vietnamese who used to work for the South Vietnamese government as military servicemen or civil servants and were imprisoned in the re-education camps for at least three years. If a husband died during his imprisonment, his wife was permitted to resettle in the United States. Chan continued to report about this type of refugee:

Political prisoners released from re-education camps are the most recent group of refugees to be granted admission under special arrangements. Based on an agreement reached between the American and Vietnamese governments, they are allowed to emigrate to the United States if they have family members who will sponsor them. As many as 100,000 persons may enter under this provision, but U.S. officials estimate they can process a maximum of only 1,000 individuals per month.⁵¹

The report of the Office of Refugee Resettlement of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to Congress says that there were 1,169,397 Vietnamese

⁵⁰ Thomas A. Bass, Vietnamerica (New York: Soho Press Inc., 1996), 3.

⁵¹ Sucheng Chang, Asian Americans (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991), 164.

refugees from FY 1983 through FY 1995.⁵² Most of the South Vietnamese arrived in the United States by any means and any way without bringing any valuable possessions with them, but only some clothes. The U.S. government wanted to spread them throughout the country, in the rural areas as well as in the large cities, in the cold northern states and also in the warm southern ones. Later on, the Vietnamese felt isolated and tried many ways to move to communities where they could meet with one another and get mutual help among their fellow countrymen. California was a state where many Vietnamese refugees preferred to live because thousands of Asians lived there. Texas was the state of choice for Vietnamese fishermen and they formed the second largest group of Vietnamese refugees, and Washington state was the third largest.⁵³

⁵² Office of Refugee Program, Report to the Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health Services, 1993), Table 3, A-6.

⁵³ Sherry Garland, Vietnam: Rebuilding A Nation (New York: Dillon Press, 1990), 111.

Chapter Three

FAMILY TROUBLES CAUSED BY THE DIFFERENCES

This chapter explores the problems in the Vietnamese families caused by differences between living in Vietnam and living in the United States. Through research and personal ministry, many problems can be traced to the differences in the American culture and Vietnamese culture. The basic difference is between emphasis on personal freedom in the American culture and the strict authority structure in the traditional Vietnamese culture. This basic difference is amplified by other important differences including language, education, lifestyle, and belief.

Depression Caused by Environmental Differences

Everything was so strange to the newcomers who had left their homeland, a very poor country, and resettled in the United States, the most powerful and civilized country in the world. They had, of course, many, many difficulties, the most difficult was learning the English language:

Most newly-arrived Vietnamese refugees spoke little English and knew nothing about the American way of life. Some things that Americans take for granted and use every day were strange and complicated to the Vietnamese. On the other hand, many of the things the refugees did seemed strange to the Americans.¹

They could not communicate with American people and were unable to find jobs since they did not know English. The U.S. Department of Education found a way to help

¹ Sherry Garland, Vietnam: Rebuilding A Nation (New York: Dillon Press, 1990), 112.

them overcome this language problem by having local schools around the country open their doors to teach the refugees English as their second language both during the day and in the evening. Despite this tremendous government effort, the problem still remains, especially among the lower-educated people who used to be peasants and fishermen.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services provides the refugees with public assistance such as foodstamps, medical assistance, and cash money for them to live at least eight months when they first arrive in this country. The government pays the apartment rent, basic utilities, and medical care at the doctors' offices, laboratories, and hospitals.

Since 1982 the writer has been helping in social work in his pastorate. For example, he has observed that the Vietnamese become quite frustrated and depressed when they know the cutoff date for their receipt of public assistance. They do not know the answers to the question: "Who will help them pay the regular expenses for their families when most of them have meager salaries?"

When their public assistance runs out, and they are unemployed, they have neither Medicaid nor medical insurance, they worry much whenever they get sick. Who pays the medical bills for them? One Laotian pregnant woman delivered a baby by herself at home in Fort Smith, Arkansas, because she was too poor to afford a hospital. This event occurred during the writer's pastorate there from 1982-1987.

Unemployment also causes many problems, not only for each individual but also the whole family. Living in hard conditions easily creates stress that often makes a family unhappy unless God controls their hearts. Without God's Word and sovereignty dwelling in everybody, family members, especially spouses, easily disagree with each other on one or more topics. This disagreements lead to quarreling and anger which breaks family relationships.

In March 1997, the writer received a telephone call from an unfamiliar Vietnamese lady. The lady's sobbing on the telephone told me that something was very wrong. She told me about her family's problem in which her husband had refused to communicate and sleep with her for more than two months. When asked why her family's situation had become bad like that, she said her husband did not like her to work two jobs, one full-time and the other part-time. She had already explained to her husband that their family really needed money for their three children's education on the university level. The problems of this family could not be solved, and the husband finally left in June 1997 and lives apart from her now.

In addition to the language barrier, unrealistic expectations of one's spouse has also been a big problem for a large number of Vietnamese refugees. Many professionals are expected by their spouses to continue in their same profession in America even though their training and degrees obtained in Vietnam are no longer accepted here. They are under pressure to retrain themselves while working full-time to support their families here in the U.S. and also to support their loved ones still in Vietnam. For some people,

this is not an easy task due to the language barrier, financial constraints, and many other factors.

As for the former military servicemen who came here after a long imprisonment in the re-education camps, life in America is very difficult. Their former occupation of professional soldier is not employable because they are too old for active military service and as the U.S. is in a time of relative peace, there is no need for older, trained soldiers. These people are very unfortunate. Many came here alone, leaving their adult children in Vietnam as they were mostly over 21 and generally married. After termination of their public assistance, they have to work very hard to make a living. They do not drive or know English. It is hard for them to find jobs. The writer often hears their cry and sees their tears with lamentations.

Another problem is the climate. The climate in U.S. is quite different from Vietnam. Vietnam climate is not so cold and hot, never has a quick change. A quick change of temperature from a very low degree at night to a very high degree during the day may cause sickness, particularly to elderly refugees. Vietnamese are not used to the kinds of flu, pollen/tree allergens and pollution in America. Illness is one of the problems that makes them lose their jobs.

Due to the lack of education and knowledge of the U.S. laws and regulations, they have run into many problems in their daily life. They have been fined for not following correct car insurance procedures, taxation, and welfare fraud. For example, they registered their cars at the Department of Motors Vehicles before buying insurance.

Therefore, hundreds of dollars of fines given to them by the DMV will begin a quarrel between spouses, or parents and children, because each side blames the other. A misunderstanding of a medical insurance policy may become a problem for a family. One Vietnamese couple who bought insurance without knowing of its pre-existing disease policy, were not reimbursed for their hospital and doctor's bills.

There is a big difference of environment between America and Vietnam. Any Vietnamese who cannot adapt has a very difficult time living in American society. If these conditions persist, it could lead to trouble in the Vietnamese family..

Disruption in the Traditional Family Authority Structure

The Vietnamese have been much influenced by the Chinese since China ruled Vietnam in the second century:

Over the next few centuries, significant numbers of Chinese settlers, officials and scholars moved to the Red River Delta , taking over large tracts of land. The Chinese tried to impose a centralized state system on the Vietnamese and to forcibly sinicise their culture, but local rulers made use of the benefits of Chinese civilization to tenaciously resist these efforts.²

In addition to the culture, Chinese rulers also brought other religions to Vietnam.

In their research of Vietnam, the authors of the book "Vietnam" continued to write :

During this era, Vietnam was a key port of call on the sea route between China and India. The Vietnamese were introduced to Confucianism and Taoism by Chinese scholars who came to Vietnam as administrators and

² Robert Storey and Daniel Robinson, Vietnam (Oakbrul: Lonely Planet Publications, 1995), 11.

refugees. Indians sailing eastward brought Theravada (Hinayana) Buddhism to the Red River Delta while, simultaneously, Chinese travelers introduced Mahayana Buddhism.³

Confucianism has influenced so many Vietnamese cultures which include one's level in society, and one's order in the family. According to its doctrine, there are three respects: the first was to the king, the next to the teacher, and the third to the father.

Garland wrote about order in a typical Vietnamese family:

Today, there are many problems facing the Vietnamese-American community that have no easy solutions. The most serious of these stem from the differences in the values of traditional Vietnamese families compared to those of American culture. In their native land, Vietnamese family members lived together, with all working for the benefit of the whole family. Older people were respected, women obeyed their husbands and stayed home with the children, and divorce was rare.⁴

Today, in the eyes of most Vietnamese, religious leaders such as Buddhist monks, Catholic priests, and Protestant pastors are more revered than parents.

This is quite different from American culture. In the United States, teenagers like to leave parents to live independently. And children who marry seldom live together with parents as Garland wrote:

Many teenagers move out of the house as soon as they are eighteen, mothers frequently work outside the home, and grandparents often live far away from the rest of the family. Although Vietnamese parents in the United States may wish to raise their children with traditional values, the children--who were often born and raised here--may be more influenced by the society they see around them.⁵

³ Ibid., 12.

⁴ Sherry Garland, Vietnam: Building A Nation (New York: Dillon Press, 1990), 118.

⁵ Ibid., 119.

These conflicts still cause many problems which can lead to troubles in the Vietnamese families. One major problem is about the biblical term “submission” to Christians, and the “family leadership” to unbelievers. In Vietnam, children respect and obey parents. In the states, they like the freedom of speech as Garland wrote:

Vietnamese parents expect their children to be obedient and respectful, doing chores and studying hard. This is often difficult for Vietnamese children when they see their American classmates have what appears to be much more freedom. Vietnamese-American children may try hard to be accepted by their classmates and become American in their life-style. They may be more interested in rock music and movies than listening to their parents about a country they never saw or cannot remember.⁶

Vietnamese spouses have often argued about the gender roles in family. Husband wants to keep the traditional culture; that is, husband is the key person who must be the one to make decisions, and the wife should follow husband’s leadership. The wife does not like to follow that way; she believes that husband and wife are equal in family leadership. This topic is very interesting not only to the Vietnamese, but also all female Christians as Balswick wrote:

Christian feminists seek reform in and through the church. They urge Christian communities to acknowledge the human suffering of women and to come up with solutions. They demand that the church encourage all persons, regardless of gender, to recognize and affirm that they are endowed by God with gifts and responsibilities to strive for love and justice through service to one another in all values of life and in all parts of the world.⁷

⁶ Ibid., 120.

⁷ Jack O. Balswick and Judith K. Balswick, The Family (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991), 161.

In Vietnam a man never cooks, washes dishes or clothes. These jobs are for women. In the United States, the Vietnamese woman has to go to work, sometimes two jobs a day. After work, she has to prepare meals, care for children, and do housework while her husband is reading newspaper or watching TV in the living room. When shopping, she has to wait for her husband's decision on the purchase of merchandise. Otherwise, her husband may get upset and insult her. If she argues with her husband about something, she will be blamed that she is not an oriental woman, but a westerner. Her husband will remind her of the teaching of Confucianism:

In the Vietnamese tradition, the rule of "tam tong", the three obediences, required that a woman when at home had to obey her father, when leaving home for marriage to obey her husband, and when her husband died to obey the oldest son. Hung's mother was not the head of the family, but had to defer to her eldest son.⁸

On the contrary, a Vietnamese wife who came to the States a long time before her husband, has been much influenced by American culture and has not followed Vietnamese culture. If her husband agrees with it, everything is all right. Otherwise, her family will certainly get into trouble. This is a big problem to many Vietnamese families in the United States. Many husbands do not like to change their characteristics in adopting the new culture because of their self-centeredness. They say they had better

⁸ Nguyen Tien Hung and Jerrold L. Schector, The Palace File (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1986), 506.

separate from or divorce their wives, reasoning that they are not Americans, and their wives are not either.⁹

Many tragedies have happened to Vietnamese families all around the United States, even to Christians. The writer received a telephone call from a Vietnamese in South Carolina in April, 1997. This man used to go to his church in Virginia. He married and had three children. On the telephone, he informed me that his wife had just passed away at the age of thirty. His wife had committed suicide by shooting herself with a pistol, after a long quarrel with him about sending gifts to her parents who are still living in Vietnam. He disagreed with her and wanted to control her money and actions. The man's voice sounded very hurt and he was remorseful for his wrong thoughts and actions against his wife. Yet, it was too late for him to stop her from killing herself.

Hans and Donna Finzel in their book, "The Top Ten Ways to Drive Your Wife Crazy" mention dramatically different family backgrounds in giving their personal experiences of "cross cultural" marriage:

Hans' studies in "corporate culture" were very helpful to us in this area. Although we had already adjusted to one another's differences in many ways, we didn't truly understand the impact of "family culture" until we had been married fourteen years! We have a true "cross-cultural" marriage with Hans having been raised in a strong German subculture in Alabama while I was raised in a very American and emotionally open Christian home. My family expressed love constantly and openly. Meanwhile, the German people as a culture do not openly express their love.¹⁰

⁹ Derald Wing Sue and David Sue, Counseling the Culturally Different (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1990), 197.

¹⁰ Hans & Donna Finzel, The Top Ten Ways To Drive Your Wife Crazy (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1996), 63-64.

The Vietnamese in the United States really have cultural conflicts which often cause many troubles and tragedies in their families. It is very important for them to learn how to avoid them as the Finzel's observe:

We strongly believe that this area of "Family culture" gives us our most basic instincts. As no two families are alike, every marriage will have "culture" conflicts that must be worked through. "My way is the right way" is a natural way to feel, but it takes maturity on the part of both in a marriage to adopt and give up some of those ways that offend or conflict with our spouse.¹¹

A tragic event happened to a Vietnamese family in Denver, Colorado in the 1980s. The husband, after his imprisonment in the re-education camps in Vietnam, arrived in the United States to be with his wife who had come some time before. His wife worked in a factory and earned more money than he did. The storm came to this family when the husband became jealous and then did not want his wife to have fellowship with anybody. The wife got angry, then quarrels and fights occurred almost every day at their home. The wife finally went to court and asked for a divorce. The husband shot his wife right in the front lawn of the courthouse. The wife died, and the husband was arrested. The story of this tragedy has been spreading to every Vietnamese community around the United States as an example of how bad some situations can get.

The story needs more explanation as to why the husband killed his wife. His wife had been used to American way of life. She was very outgoing and communicated freely

¹¹ Ibid., 64.

with everyone including her American friends who worked in the same company. This habit made her husband suspicious that she may be involved in an adulterous affair. And the husband's suspicion, along with his desires to control her speech, had upset her and her friends urged her to divorce him. He thought her insistency on divorce was intentional so she could marry another man. This tragedy stirred up public opinion in the Vietnamese communities in this country for awhile. Those who were interested in American culture stood on her side, and those who liked to keep Vietnamese traditional culture defended him. The Balswicks concluded their chapter of the gender roles with these principles:

It will take grace to acknowledge and accept differences of opinion in this area. Another element is a mutual serving and empowering of one another. Women and men are both in need of liberation from the gender stereotypes which have hindered growth in person hood. Finally, men and women will achieve intimacy in same-sex and opposite-sex relationships as they become free to know and be known to each other. This requires communication and a desire to understand the other in order that we may cherish and value who we are as brothers and sisters in Christ. As we become fully developed men and women, others will know from our love for one another that we are Christians.¹²

The Argument of Freedom by Differences in Education

Culture conflicts between parents and children are much bigger than between spouses. Vietnamese children born and raised in this country apparently do not know their ancestors' cultures unless they were told and taught by their parents or someone

¹² Jack O. Balswick and Judith K. Balswick, The Family (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991), 169.

else. Those who accompanied parents to this land during their childhood actually do not like to remember the cultures which they believe are too old to follow. Once they are accustomed to American cultures, it is very hard for them to retain what they are not interested in. They are living in an environment full of freedom. Their teachers encourage them to express their ideas freely during classroom discussions. They see their American friends in their neighborhood have the freedom to talk freely with their parents. They like the idea and try to bring it home with them.

Vietnamese often regret bringing their children to this country and have regret that their children have behaved badly toward them. They are displeased with their children's way of talking and their disobedience. A Vietnamese lady called the writer and asked him to counsel her sixteen-year-old daughter at her home in an evening. During the talk, the daughter blamed her mother for reneging on her promise to install an extra telephone line in her daughter's room. The sixteen-year-old-daughter said to that lady, "I do not trust you anymore. I will leave this area when I get to be eighteen years old." Some weeks later, that lady called the writer again and said that her daughter had left the house with a boyfriend without saying any word with her.

Vietnamese parents must often work hard and long hours to make a living and thus are not able to spend time caring for their children until they discover some bad behavior which makes them feel miserable. Most of the time, Vietnamese parents do not want to listen to their children's explanation, but just want to keep a firm attitude of

dictatorship over them. Thomas Whiteman, in his book Innocent Victims, urges parents and children to have open communication:

Open communication is one of the key elements in a healthy family. Dysfunctional families are marked by too much interaction (known as enmeshment), too little communication or emotional distancing, and distorted messages, as found in controlling and manipulative families. Healthy interactions allow for open discussion with honest questioning. It invites verification, as when one parent questions their own motives, or encourages the children to get the other parent's point of view.¹³

Whiteman showed a way for parents to cope with their problems with children not by a manner of anger, but:

The consequences to each situation require thought and patience. This means you need to stay calm, and not react in anger. The easiest thing to do is not always the best.¹⁴

In his pastorates, the writer himself usually saw cultural conflicts between parents and children of his congregation. A widow cried on the telephone when she called him for help because her single, twenty-year-old daughter had attempted suicide and was taken to a nearby hospital in an ambulance. He went to the hospital and met the mother who was waiting in the lobby for permission from a female police officer to see her daughter. The daughter had cut a vein in her wrist as an act of revenge against her mother for interfering in her choice of friends. Her mother did not want her to have an inappropriate relationship with another girl, whom she said she loved. After her recovery

¹³ Thomas Whiteman, Innocent Victims (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1992), 157-158.

¹⁴ Ibid., 202.

and discharge from the hospital, she went out of the room and met with her mother. She was so upset with her mother that she said, “ I do not know what term I should use to call you.”

Whiteman persuades parents to show unconditional love to their children all the time:

No one is capable of displaying unconditional love at all times. However, if this is your goal, then you need also to be able to ask for forgiveness when you fail with kids. If you grew up in a home that was less than loving, then you might have particular difficulty expressing this love to your children. For a more in-depth look at learning how to love your children, I would recommend the following books: How to Really Love Your Child by Ross Campbell, The Art of Loving by Eric Fromm, and Unconditional Love by John Powell.¹⁵

Those who come to a foreign country should spend time to learn at least something about the cultures of the people in that land in order to live in accordance not only with the local residents, but also with the family members. Otherwise, they cannot avoid disagreements and quarrels on some topics. Knowing a people’s culture does not require a high level of education and an expensive cost, but just a desire to learn from others, books, media, and to adapt to them. And the adaptation of a foreign culture does not mean that traditional culture of homeland is forgotten. However, the art of employment and respect of both foreign and homeland cultures is a skillful act to keep peace within family members in preventing culture conflicts and troubles.

¹⁵ Ibid., 199.

Education is highly important in the Vietnamese culture as a means of advancing one's life in a traditionally poor and oppressive society. Otherwise, one is stuck with manual labor jobs that held in low esteem such as farming, etc. Therefore, Vietnamese parents encourage their children to study hard and are willing to make sacrifices to put their children through various schools with the hope that their children will be successful in America. However, the education their children receive in America is in conflict with the expectation that their children follow their traditional Confucian values. For example, American culture allows children significant freedom in choosing their field of study and their future spouses. However, Vietnamese parents still expect to direct the education and to select the future spouses of their children. The children, on the other hand, expect to make their own decisions and often feel that they know more than their parents. Moreover, the children also feel that they do not need the financial support of their parents and can support themselves. These differences in expectation on the part of parents and children usually lead to many family conflicts.¹⁶

To Vietnamese children, freedom is the most important value of all. To the Vietnamese older people, their ancestor's traditional customs are the most respected of all. But to Christians, God's instruction from the Bible is the most precious of all. God's direction gives the secret of family happiness for all generations at all times.

¹⁶ D.W. Sue, Counseling the Culturally Different (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1990), 123-123, 138-139, 201-205.

Problems Due to Differences in Beliefs

Esau's wives were Judith and Basemath, the Hittites, who were Gentiles and displeased Isaac and Rebekah. Rebekah complained about her two daughters-in-law:

I am tired of living because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob takes a wife from the daughters of Heth, like these, from the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me. (Gen 27:46)

Rebekah loved her son Esau and desired to see his happiness in his marriage. Her grief over Esau's wives had to be Esau's grief, too. Mentioning the daughters of Heth, Rebekah meant the Gentiles, a different people from hers. Therefore, Isaac wanted Jacob, his second son, not to marry any Canaanite woman, but a daughter of Laban, Rebekah's niece. Perhaps Esau's wives did not worship Jehovah of Abraham, and did not please Isaac and Rebekah, or Esau was unhappy in his marriage. The daughters of Heth were the problems in Esau's family any way. It was the age-old problem of different races and beliefs.

God apparently disliked His people's marriage with the Gentiles during the Exodus. When His people "began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab" (Num 25:1) and "the people ate and bowed down to their gods" (Num 25:2), God struck them with a plague which killed 24,000 Israelites (Num 25:9). The Lord God commanded them not to intermarry with the Gentiles:

Furthermore, you shall not intermarry with them. You shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor shall you take their daughters for your sons. For they will turn your sons away from following Me to serve other gods; then the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you, and He will quickly destroy you (Deu 7:3-4).

The apostle Paul exhorted the church of Corinth not to have fellowship with unbelievers:

Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? (2 Cor 6:14-15).

The Bible says that there is a difference between a believer and an unbeliever.

That difference is like this:

But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised (1 Cor 2:14).

The Vietnamese Christians, who intermarried with unbelievers, are usually persecuted in many ways. If the spouse is a Buddhist or an ancestor worshiper, the Christian spouse is told to attend death day celebrations which includes worship of the dead in front of an altar installed at home. This is a problem for the Christian who has made a commitment to serve only the LORD according to His first commandment, "You shall have no other gods before Me...You shall not worship them or serve them" (Ex. 20:3,5a).

Many Vietnamese families have troubles when they do not have the same belief. The Christian spouse is often blamed of being ungrateful to ancestors and parents because he/she does not participate in any death day celebrations and does not eat food sacrificed to an idol. The death day celebration has become a frequent argument topic between Buddhists and Christians and has caused religious conflicts which may break the relationship of family members.

One lady, a member of the writer's church, suffered a great deal of persecution by husband because of her devotion to the LORD. She wanted to go to church every Sunday with her teenage son, but was restricted in doing so by her husband. She said she had been so sad about her husband's disagreement and quarrel against her belief.

The differences of religion sometimes causes conflict, and family happiness is shaken. In what religion are their children to be educated? In addition, arguments on giving money and spending time in church activities frequently comes to a family in which one of the spouses is an unbeliever. A believer who likes to give something to the church will not feel free when the other spouse strongly disagrees.

A husband is a member of the writer's church. He loves the LORD and promised to give a large sum of money for the church building project. When the writer visited this family, he overheard the couple quarreling about the husband's promise.

An unbeliever who is superstitious often blames his or her spouse for not following ancestral customs and therefore bringing on conflict. Vietnamese superstitions are based on the day, the date, and the year of birth. They are afraid of some lunar days such as the 5th, 14th and the 23rd of the month as well. The superstitious people never start jobs or projects such as grand openings, travel, construction projects, weddings on those days of the month, because they believe those days will bring bad luck. In any cooperative effort such as a team or project, they would rather have two or four people, instead of three, because number three denotes bad luck. People born in the year of the

rabbit should not marry with people born in the year of the chicken. If marrying, they will not have happiness, prosperity, and peace in their family.

Storms easily come to any Vietnamese family when spouses do not have the same belief. Unbelievers focus on materialism, not on spiritual blessing. Christians who want to marry should think of this conflict of belief in order to avoid problems in the future marriage.

Chapter Four

TROUBLES IN VIETNAMESE CHRISTIAN HOMES

Quarrels

As discussed in the previous sections, Vietnamese homes are facing many problems in the United States due to the cultural differences, and unrealistic expectations of spouses and parents, resulting in quarrels when their disagreements become more and more serious. Quarrels are defined by the Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary as, "a usual verbal conflict between antagonists".¹

Quarrels show signs of incompatibility between the persons who oppose one another. It comes from either a discussion or an argument on a topic with a strong feeling of belief, or value and hurts when each side tries to launch an offense against the other to gain victory for oneself.

Quarrels in the Bible

The Bible tells many true stories about quarrels between family members. Jacob and his wife Rachel quarreled when the latter was jealous of her sister Leah, because she bore no children of Jacob. Jacob angrily quarreled with her, "Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?" (Gen 30:1-2). Job also quarreled

¹ A Merriam Webster, New Collegiate Dictionary (Springfield: G. & C. Merriam Company, 1977), 944.

with his wife when she told him to curse God and then die. He rebuked her, “You speak as one of the foolish woman speaks...” (Job 2:9-10). And even the New Testament saints such as Paul and Barnabas also had quarrels on the subject of their companion John Mark as the Bible says, “And there arose such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another, and Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus “ (Acts 15:39).

The book of Proverbs teaches about quarrel as “hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all transgressions” (Pro. 10:12), and “it is better to live in a corner of a roof, than in a house shared with a contentious woman” (Pro. 21:9). It is advised that family members live in peace and quietness, “Better is a dry morsel and quietness with it, than a house full of feasting with strife” (Pro 17:1). During an argument, a soft answer obviously can reduce a lot of anger as written, “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger” (Pro 15:1).

Quarrels in Vietnamese Christian Homes:

A Vietnamese saying mentions about quarrels in family as, “bowls in dish rack also shake.” It means family members also disagree and quarrel. Yet, the frequency of quarrels depends on spiritual Christian maturity. The Bible says, “but a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised” (I Cor. 2:14). A natural husband cannot understand the thinking of his spiritual wife, and vice versa.

The writer frequently helps to reconcile families of new believers who disagree and quarrel about some small problems. It seems to him that they do not know the Bible verses that may be helpful to them to live peacefully with others in the community and family. One Vietnamese couple, new believers, came to ask him for advice because they often quarreled and fought with each other. His advice was to read 1 Cor 13:7 and asked them to memorize and apply it to their marriage, because it is the secret of Christian family happiness. They both showed their surprise about the phrase "in all things" and asked how they should do that, because it was impossible and unreasonable. This is the reason why the Bible says, "But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised" (1 Cor 2:14).

Most of the immature Vietnamese Christians in the United States run into trouble in their families, because they would rather work hard to earn money on Sunday than to go to church or join Bible study groups. Once they focus on materialism and find that the earnings do not satisfy them, they easily become upset with their beloved family. To them, the solid foundation is not the Bible, but money. They quarrel with one another about the house they rented, the car they bought, the vacation time they chose. There is not a big difference between the non-Christians and the immature believers about quarreling. Most of the members of the writer's current church are new believers. He has been busy with their family problems including quarreling, fighting at home, and even legal proceedings.

The quarrels of Vietnamese Christian occur so frequently and last a long time if no one comes to help them solve the problems. One of the reasons is the cultural conflict. Each spouse fights to have control of the family, and children try to get out from under this control. For example, both husband and wife work at different places. The husband gets home before his wife, and watches TV while waiting for his wife. When she comes home and sees him watching TV, she gets upset, because he did not prepare a meal for the family, and she complained that she was too exhausted to cook. The quarrel exploded when the husband said that she had to do the kitchen jobs as a housewife, and she complained that she was obliged to wear too many hats: bearing and nurturing the children, working hard for a living, and doing the household jobs. She compared the roles of American women with her, asking her husband to follow the good American culture. Whereas he asked her to keep the oriental culture in which cooking is a job for a woman, not for man, and that she should remember and practice the “tam tong” (the three obediences: to father, husband, and eldest son.)

The quarrels with curses and abusive language are often found in the uneducated and lower class of people. They use dirty words against each other. While quarreling, they shout in front of their children, and sometimes even their parents or relatives. Their quarrels might stop if one of them stops talking, or someone knocks at the door, or the telephone rings. Very often physical abuse on one spouse and a fight follows strife in a case of an intense quarrel. Many times when the writer did not see some members come

to church, he visited them at home and saw the bruises on their faces. Those bruises displayed the kind of physical abuse that had happened in the past days.

The Broken Relationship

Without any counsel or help by some mediator, the family relationship of Vietnamese Christians may be broken after quarrels and fighting have lasted for a long time. It is easy to understand it, because their abusive language hurt each other, and it especially hurts their parents.

A couple in the writer's current church continued living in one house, going to church in one car, joining the same prayer meeting group and church activities, but had not communicated with each other in one week. When asked why, they said that their relationship had been broken because of a serious quarrel about spending money for their respective families. Each spouse was badly offended and hurt by the other. It led to the breaking of their relationship.

The period of time of relationship is broken depends on each set of circumstances and family situation. If the pit of division is still shallow enough for them to fill, and the problem is not too critical, the reconciliation may be achieved by some kind of mediation. Some situations that are very strict do not allow one side to forgive the other. Adultery, gambling, drug taking, abuse, laziness are considered to be some tough types of problems that may cause the breaking of family relationships.

One husband whose wife is the relative of the writer's wife was very much interested in gambling . He used up all of his wife's credit cards and owed a big debt because he gambled and lost. In spite of his wife's request and lamentation, he continued to gamble until his family relationship was completely broken. Before that, the couple fought and quarreled almost every day. Finally they decided to seek a divorce.

Some family situations can help solve the problem of broken relationships. One of them is having children. A family with children can reduce the rate of broken relationships. The adult children may act as mediators and reconcilers to connect their parent's thread of relationship. The little children may be the links for their parent's love in marriage. An illustration of this is an aged couple in which the husband had upset his wife so much that she planned to separate from him when he returned from a family reunion in Vietnam. This couple has been the writer's church members . Their oldest son, a married man, went to pick his father up at the airport. When he stepped into his house, his wife did not show her anger, when he came into the house with their son and the writer..

Another situation which is helpful for family relationship is dependence upon each other. Many Vietnamese families have no relatives in this country. They feel alone and need each other. If the relationship is permanently broken, one spouse immediately remarries to avoid loneliness and to get help from another person. A Vietnamese lady whose husband was an American got a divorce after twelve years of marriage. She

promptly remarried with another American, and she is now a member of the writer's church.

A third solution is help from the church. With interference counseling from anyone in the church including the pastor, the rate of the broken relationships may be decreased quite a lot. The pastor or the deacon's counseling and exhortation can be very helpful to nurture good Christian homes. The writer has been counseling many Vietnamese Christian families that have finally regained their good relationships.

If nothing seems to help keep family relationships on a positive level, each member falls into frustration and depression for awhile. The family lives in an atmosphere of quietness and dryness like a desert. If they have no children, it is easy for them to live apart to wait for legal separation or divorce. If they have teenage children, each spouse talks to the other through their children. If they have little children, they might speak by writing. But this situation does not last too long. It is better for both of them to go to their pastor for help.

Friends, relatives and church people may become involved in family relationships to try to prevent them from separating. Many Vietnamese couples regained their relationship after breaking it for a period of time. Some close friends who love the couple can cooperate in finding a way to help restore their relationship by showing them some cassettes, video tapes, books or any means concerning family happiness and good relationships. Relatives such as parents, uncles, aunts, cousins, brothers, and sisters also can take the advantage of seniority and marriage experience to give them counseling and

encouragement for restoration of family relationships. In particular, pastor and deacons can intervene with the family business of their church members, in taking the burden off of their shoulders and putting them close to each other.

Without these means of help, broken family relationships will definitely bring the couple to court which will result in bitter separation or maybe a permanent divorce.

Trial at Court

An old Vietnamese saying mentions the disadvantage of being at the court for a trial, "It is unhappy to be at the court." When a couple agrees to go together to a court for separation or divorce, neither of them is happy. There are many losses for each in this matter. They feel ashamed before everybody they know, such as relatives, church people and friends. They lose credibility in their community. Their first love and emotion from the beginning of their marriage are painfully finished. Their beautiful wedding pictures are removed from the walls of their house. Their children, if they have any, look at them with sadness and hurt, and despise them. They feel sinful before God. Probably they will quit going to church for awhile, because of their separation or divorce.

The losses mentioned above are just sentimental ones. A loss which each of them has to deal with is money. In addition to the fees charged by their attorneys and the court, each of them has to deal with some other financial problems. Their properties, possessions, and money must be divided and scattered. They spent plenty of time, money and even reputation at the trial in which they never dreamed would happen when they first got married. Many tragedies of the Vietnamese troubled families are found in

the records of the courts around this country since they first arrived in 1975. In the 1980s, a couple came to court in Denver, Colorado for a divorce. The husband made an attempt to separate himself from his wife, not by the U.S. law, but by shooting his wife right in the courtyard before the trial. The wife was died instantly, and the husband was arrested. Another couple went to court in Houston, Texas for a divorce. The wife left the husband and four children. The husband afterwards shot each of his four children, ranging in ages from 10 to 18 years, to death, then he committed suicide because of his stress.

These are just a few of many sad stories of Vietnamese troubled families which the writer has known of during his 16-year stay in this country. He was also sometimes present at the court, not for his own trial, but as a witness or translator for his church members. He has translated for a Vietnamese woman who was divorced by her American husband in 1982 at the courthouse in Fort Smith, Arkansas. At this trial, she insisted on asking the judge to allow her to keep her 14-year-old daughter with her, but her request was denied because of her mental illness.

Most of the time, very few Vietnamese couples forgive and reconcile with each other, thus canceling the legal procedures. They believe that by taking their family problems to a public place means that they are no longer interested in living together in one house. An old Vietnamese proverb says, "It is impossible to assemble the broken bowl" and "It is hard to take up all the water that spilled." There was a young couple who quarreled and disagreed for a long time in Fort Smith, Arkansas where the writer pastored a Vietnamese church from 1982-1987. Both were Christians. The wife was a

granddaughter of a Vietnamese pastor, and the husband was a nephew of a Chinese pastor. They were rich and well educated. Despite their relatives and the pastor's counseling to not separate, they finally went to court in Fort Smith, Arkansas for a divorce. The wife was allowed to keep their three children. During the trial, they both used many dirty words to say bad things against each other. Everything bad about them was revealed at the trial. Their relatives and Christian friends who were present really felt ashamed for them, because of their hostile attitudes towards each other. They used to be so much in love.

Christians who bring their family troubles to court for solutions do not follow God's teaching about it as written:

Does anyone of you, when he has case against his neighbor, dare to go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints? Or do you know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is judged by you, are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, matters of this life? If then you have law courts dealing with matters of this life, do you appoint them as judges who are of no account in the church? (1 Cor 6:1-4)

Biblically, bringing the family matters to court means that the family does not trust the church in which the pastor is a representative. In addition, they break all their vows and promises of living together forever in front of the pastor and the church, and in the presence of the Lord. By being at the trial, they appear to confess that what they said at the wedding ceremony was just a joke or a lie. Actually, they did not love each other before and after their wedding, but they were just an actor and an actress in a play. They began the play in a church wedding ceremony, and finished it by a court trial.

Christians at the court for a trial really betray their Lord with an ignorance of the Bible teaching. They would rather present their difficulties about family trouble to the judge than to God. Where the Lord teaches His people just to come and talk to Him all the things, He will answer them as written, “Call to Me, and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know” (Jer 33:3).

They do not like to present their family problems to the pastor, fearing that the whole church will sooner or later know them. They prefer to bring themselves to a public place such as the court for everybody in their community to know their hidden matters. They do not like to give money to their church for the useful activities such as evangelism, facility remodeling, the purchase of a bus for youth ministry, etc. But by bringing their own lovers to court indicates that they are willing to pay the attorneys fees and the court charges for the trial.

When asked why they prefer to go to court, most of the Vietnamese answer that they want the judge to approve their separation agreement and divorce, and that nobody can change one's mind once the court issues a certificate of divorce.

Vietnamese Christian Families with Separation and Divorce

Some Vietnamese poems are used to encourage a faithful marriage such as: “The virtue of marriage is very difficult, Oh friend. It is not like the bee and butterfly which

perch then fly.”², and: “The virtue of marriage is unchangeable, the couple follow each other, even rich or poor.”³

Ancient Vietnamese laws allowed a husband to divorce his wife when she violated one of these seven faults: 1) bearing no child ; 2) adultery; 3) no sign of any respect to parents-in-law; 4) talking too much; 5) stealing; 6) jealousy; or 7) wickedness.

Later, King Gia Long issued three exceptions for women not to be divorced: 1) Wife has observed a three-year-mourning period for her parents-in-law at their house. 2) The couple were poor in the beginning of their marriage and rich later. 3) Wife has no place to live after the divorce.⁴

Vietnamese traditional culture honors the husband, and demands that the woman submit to her husband. The woman has to follow the conduct of the three obediences: obedience to her parents at their home, to her husband when she’s married, and following her oldest son after her husband’s death. In addition, the husband is allowed to divorce his wife, but a wife is not to divorce her husband.⁵ In reality, a separated and divorced woman loses a lot of respect from not only her community, but also her close relatives. A faithful woman is always respected in Vietnam. In more recent times, during the reigns of the king dynasties of Nguyen from 1802 to 1945, any woman who remained single

² Ha Tan Phat, Marriage Ceremonies (Vietnamese) (Glendale: Dai-Nam Co., n.d.), 7.

³ Minh Huong, Flowers And Grass in the Field (Vietnamese) (Fort Smith: Song Moi, n.d.), 32.

⁴ Toan Anh, Vietnamese Cultures (Glendale: Dai Nam Co., n.d.), 287.

⁵ Ibid., 286-287.

after her husband's death until old age, was honored and given a certificate of being a virtuous widow by the ruling king. The old culture demanded that the widow to remain single and live with her children. Any widow who remarried committed adultery.⁶

The rate of separation and divorce is very low in Vietnam, especially in the rural areas. For instance, the writer's village with a population of 11,000 in the Mekong River Delta about 150 miles south of Saigon had neither separation nor any divorce. However, now the rate has grown so large that the U.S. Vietnamese communities have put it on the alert. Of the writer's current congregation of nearly 300 members 17 couples have been married previously; that is, 6%. The rate of the Vietnamese non-Christians is definitely much higher in both Vietnam and in the USA.

Life in the United States is quite different from the one in Vietnam. House doors and windows are open during the day in Vietnam, but generally closed all the time in this country. Therefore the single Vietnamese person often feels alone and fears isolation. In addition, celibacy usually causes depression particularly among the refugees. Some divorcees have gotten mental sickness after the divorce. That is the case of a Vietnamese woman in the writer's former church in his first pastorate in Fort Smith, Arkansas. Her husband left her after just a year of marriage, and she was brought to the mental hospital for treatment even though she had some children. A young divorced woman with a burden of nurturing her little children has to deal with difficulties outside and inside of

⁶ Dao Duy Anh, Introduction To Vietnam Cultures (Fort Smith: Song Moi Publishers, n.d.), 110.

her family without any support if she has no relatives and friends to depend on. In such a case, she may have to remarry. The Vietnamese communities around the United States have changed their strict viewpoints which they had of the divorcee in Vietnam, to fit with the new concepts of marriage in the new land.

This is a very large country and good people in a generous society are an encouragement for divorced people to “get more step,” a Vietnamese term for a second marriage. Previously, the Vietnamese church had despised and treated the divorced persons very badly. In most of the local churches, those who had divorced, no matter whether right or wrong, were excommunicated. The divorcees felt ashamed and angry, and therefore never stepped again into any church, because they were considered by the others as the lost sheep or backsliders who fell from grace.

The Vietnamese churches in the United States have a more tolerant attitude regarding divorced Christians. Here are some reasons for that attitude change:

1. The divorce rate of Americans is “50% today, with 1.1 million divorces last year in this country and probably a few more this year.”⁷ Divorce is common and popular. Therefore, ex-communicating the divorced members does not show Christian love and tolerance.

⁷ Jerry Falwell, “Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage What Said the Word of God” National Liberty Journal 26, (September 1997), 1.

2. "The fact is that scripture permits divorce and remarriage in certain conditions. In 1 Corinthians, chapter 7, Paul adds another acceptable condition for divorce, namely, desertion."⁸
3. Life is much harder in America than in Vietnam. Many cultural conflicts, difficulties and much stress in daily life have caused problems for most of the refugees. The church understands the problems and may forgive the troubled family members, expecting them to realize what the Bible teaches about separation and divorce, to repent for what they have done , and not to do it again in the future

The Lord Jesus Christ teaches about divorce: "And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality and marries another woman commits adultery" (Matt 19:9). And the apostle Paul instructed about separation: "Stop depriving one another except by agreement for a time that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again lest Satan tempt you because of your lack of self-control" (1 Cor 7:5).

As for the writer, divorce is against God's will. It's consequences are various. Divorce may give a bad example to children and to believers. It is believed that Christians should stay single as Paul said in the Bible (1 Cor 7:8) if they cannot remain faithful in marriage to give a good example to show that we are the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matt. 5:13-16).

⁸ Ibid., 2.

Jerry Falwell in his article “ Marriage, Divorce And Remarriage” in the National Liberty Journal about church forgiveness for the divorcee, “the church must encourage forgiveness and reconciliation as God’s ultimate will for everyone.”⁹ Then at the end of his article he raised 11 questions and gave answers that are very practical and helpful as guidelines for the church to follow:

Jerry Falwell’s Questions and Answers about Separation and Divorce

- 1) What are the grounds for a scriptural divorce? Immorality and desertion.
- 2) On what scriptural grounds can a divorced person remarry? Immorality.
- 3) Is dating wrong for a separated but not divorced person? Yes.
- 4) Can a divorced person take an active role in the local church? Yes.
- 5) What positions in the church may not be filled by a divorced person? Pastor and deacon.
- 6) Is divorce and remarriage before Christian conversion cleansed by the blood of Christ? Yes.
- 7) Are unscripturally divorced and remarried persons living in perpetual adultery? No, if they are under the blood of Christ.
- 8) Should newly-converted divorced and remarried persons consider dissolving their remarriages and, if possible, seek reunion with former spouses? No.
- 9) Is it possible for two former spouses who are divorced and remarried to remain in and serve Christ in the same local church? Yes, in most cases.
- 10) Should divorced but single believers seek to remarry? Each case is different.
- 11) How should divorced and remarried Christian parents relate to each other and to their children of former unions? Discreetly, cautiously and always in the love of Christ.¹⁰

The ideas mentioned above must be a comfort for divorced believers who were mistaken in their decision and choice of partner in the first marriage; but is not considered as encouragement of any continuing immorality and adultery. Most of the Vietnamese

⁹ Ibid.

believers who divorced have often felt ashamed and tried to live harmoniously with their new spouses. This is the case of a lady of the writer's current church. She was divorced before her conversion from Buddhism and Confucianism to Christianity. She remarried with a divorced man, and they both accepted the Lord Jesus Christ in 1984 after they had been married for about seven years. They also fought each other, even after becoming Christians and being involved in some church activities. The writer often went to their house to counsel them. They both confessed their faults, stating that they had tried to get along with each other to avoid one more divorce and to glorify God. In some Vietnamese churches, the divorced persons are not allowed to have wedding ceremonies in the church, and serve the Lord in some important positions such as deacon, trustee, director, committee leader, or Sunday School teacher. Most divorcees suffered very much in their married life, and now try to find joy in serving Christ, but they feel very badly when they are abandoned by the church members who often preach love, but don't act it. And any divorcee, who is forgiven, and cared for with tender love by the church, really rejoices and makes an effort to serve the Lord with all energy and enthusiasm.

Rebellious And Runaway Children

Burns and Brisett, Jr. in their book The Adult Child of Divorce mention the children in a divorcing family are not provided with a safe haven.

Most of us grew up playing the game hide-and-seek. Do remember the relief you felt when you got back to home base and could yell "safe!"

¹⁰ Ibid., 21.

Every child's family ought to be home base; a place of safety, protection, and nurturance. But for the child who grows up in a divorcing family and lives with the aftermath of divorce, home base isn't safe. The dysfunction that exists in the family before and maybe after the divorce can damage a child and prevent the meeting of her emotional needs.¹¹

Children whose parents quarrel and fight almost every day before a divorce are fearful of a storm that might damage the family happiness. They themselves see their parents' gestures and hear their dirty words which show anger, bitterness, and hatred. Those children do not feel safe in such a home, because the peaceful atmosphere disappears. The broken home often hurts children as Burns and Brisset, Jr. continued to write:

However, in divorcing and divorced families, deficiencies and losses usually leave the children emotionally wounded. Those of us who are children of divorce usually suffer a lack of security, a lack of emotional support, and a lack of functional parental modeling.¹²

The children's environment is not good to them any more. Their parents' home is like a war zone:

For children like Jake, living in a divorcing family means coping with instability and disorder: excessive conflict, adults venting intense negative emotions, unavailability of parents, and unpredictability. If the family once had a standard schedule of expected activities, by the time of the divorce it has been thrown out. And the condition of the home is neglected in the midst of crisis, confusion, and depression.¹³

¹¹ Bob Burns and Michael J. Brissett, Jr., The Adult Child of Divorce (Nashville: Oliver Nelson, 1991), 27-28.

¹² Ibid., 28.

¹³ Ibid., 49.

Ketterman in his article "Depression in Adolescents and Older Teens" in the book titled The Family Matters wrote that a child's personality is created according to parents' actions and words:

As I've noted earlier, several studies show that troubled parent-child relationships contribute to depression throughout life. The disturbances may be of several kinds--neglectful, abusive, or overprotective. They often include divorce of the parents, alcoholism, or mistaken forms of discipline that weave the ugly strands of false guilt into the fabric of a child's personality.¹⁴

And once the children do not see their parents' home as a good place to live, they prefer to enjoy another place away which is away from home:

When adolescents cannot resolve such difficulties through discussions, soften their parents with tears, or in any way known to them find harmony at home, they do one of three things: 1) withdraw to their rooms in moodiness, 2) spend more and more time away from home, or 3) resort to angry retorts.¹⁵

Parents' separation or divorce is one of the causes of a child's rebellion at home and discipline violations at school. Vietnamese traditional cultures influenced by Confucian teaching emphasize an absolute respect and obedience to parents. This is the regular basis of the oriental religion of honoring parents. Children must obey parents absolutely all the time. Disobedient children are severely criticized by public opinion:

Parents have an absolute authority on children when they marry. If children are not pleased with the marriage which their parents have

¹⁴ Grace Ketterman, The Family Matters (Co-Writers (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1994), 236.

¹⁵ Ibid., 228.

arranged, they have only one option and that is to run away from the parents' home. Such children are abandoned by their parents.¹⁶

Those who were born in Vietnam and brought to the United States in early childhood are much more influenced by American cultures than the Vietnamese, because they have learned and practiced them since elementary school. Therefore, they feel free to leave their parents to live with any of their friends who will have them. If their parents ask why, they say that because they are unable to endure their parents fighting, and that they are over eighteen years old, and have their freedom of residence. Parents are so sad that they say they wish they had never brought their children to the U.S.

The Vietnamese children born in the United States are 100% Americans. They speak English fluently, and follow American cultures even though their parents are Vietnamese who sometimes do not know English. It is very hard for this kind of Vietnamese family with mixed cultures. There are, of course, conflicts between parents and children. For instance, the children over eighteen years old, may date without their parents' permission in this country. But in Vietnamese culture, children are never allowed to go out on a date with a boyfriend for fear that their daughter may become pregnant and then despised by relatives and community. The Vietnamese parents treat daughters so strictly because they want them to stay virgins until marriage, and their sons to not join gangs. They want their children to become good people prior to marriage.

¹⁶ Dao Duy Anh, An Introduction To Vietnam Cultural History (Fort Smith: Song Moi Publishers, n.d.), 113.

A lot of the Vietnamese parents have cried because of their children's disobedience and rebellion. Their children do not show any respect to them, in particular when they reach the age of eighteen and over and leave home for college and jobs. Many parents depend on their children for many things including driving, translating and even money. Some parents do not drive, and ask their children for rides. Their children talk to Americans for them because of their poor English. And they need their children's help in solving some financial matters because their children earn much more money than they do. For those reasons, they do not want to quarrel with or rebuke their children, because they are afraid of being abandoned.

Many children have left their Vietnamese parents alone in a one-room apartment if they are not retired yet, and in the nursing home when they are in the year of retirement. Some Vietnamese parents prefer to go back to their homeland in Vietnam to live with their poor relatives rather than with their rebellious and runaway children in the United States. A lot of rebellious and runaway children have committed crimes and have been imprisoned for many years for robbery, stealing, fighting, taking drugs and even murder.

Not only have the unbelievers suffered from their children's rebellion, but the Vietnamese Christians do also. Those who rebel against parents seldom go to church and join the youth group. When being invited to church by the pastor or any church leaders on some special occasions, they refuse because they are not really interested in any church activities. In other words, they do not like to follow any religion. When they do

get into trouble, they seem to repent for what they have done and are more willing to obey their parents.

Chapter Five

MINISTERING TO TROUBLED VIETNAMESE CHRISTIAN FAMILIES

Pastor's Recognition of Family Troubles

In America today, the majority of people who seek help do seek out a religious leader. As mentioned earlier, the cultural conflict section in chapter three, Vietnamese Christians respect their pastors who are called and equipped by God to shepherd as the Bible says about their functions in Ephesians 4:12.

Richard Ganz, who has practiced psychotherapy in an institutional setting and now works as an advocate of biblical counseling, "offers proof that biblical counseling is superior to all secular models and gives a clear and convincing appeal for all believers to learn how to counsel from Scripture."¹ He affirmed that Jay Adams thought church leaders could do the counseling as written:

For five years I had the privilege of working with Dr. Jay Adams at the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation (CCEF). Dr. Adams's goal was to train pastors to take congregational care out of the hands of the professional psychological community and put it back into the hands of the church. First, he had to convince church leaders they could do it. His book Competent to Counsel launched a revolution in Christian circles. While not everyone agreed with Dr. Adams, at least the church began to rethink the passive submissive role it had assumed in these vital areas.²

¹ Richard Ganz, Psycho Bible (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1993), 11.

² Ibid., 83.

According to the concept mentioned above, pastors need to be trained to care for the church members if they have need of counseling. The pastor should be sensitive to his congregation individual's problems:

A Biblical church is a living body, willing to listen to the hurts of others, even as it acknowledges hurts of its own. Not all hurt and pain can be eradicated in the Lord's Day preaching--church members need to be sensitive to the needs of others, seek ways to comfort the hurting, acknowledge their own sins, and be willing to confront and be confronted. When that happens, a church is built up.³

Therefore the pastor is to hear, look and sense what is going on with his church members to recognize their problems and to find solutions for them. Not many members inform the pastor and the church staff about their individual or family problems. Because they feel ashamed and want to keep the troubles confidential, they hide every thing and just let the pastor know when they really need help. But waiting until they themselves tell the pastor the truth about their family might be too late to help, and they might reap some severe consequences such as separation, divorce or imprisonment.

There are some ways through which the pastor may be able to recognize the church members' problems:

1. The pastor is informed when church members ask for prayer and help, usually in a sharing time or prayer meeting. This is the easiest situation for the pastor to do his counseling because the problem has already been made public.

³ Ibid., 108.

2. The pastor is informed by a third person who may be the church members' relatives or close friends. In this case, the pastor should be careful in dealing with the problem to avoid the church members' hurt and anger. He may ask the informant to learn if the family people really want the pastor's help. Otherwise, he may be blamed for making an approach when they really want privacy.
3. The pastor may be informed by the church members' attorney, FBI agents, or any community agencies and even by the newspapers. In this case the church members have big troubles. The pastor should make immediate contact with the family to pray and help whenever possible, but he still must respect their confidentiality.

If the church size is small, the pastor himself can learn each family's problems when visiting their home and telephoning. But if the church is too large for him to know each individual and family well, the church staff can be informed about the problems of Christians through Sunday School teachers, group leaders, committee leaders, and department directors.

When visiting in a home or calling by telephone, the pastor may learn of something strange and abnormal happening to the family through their way of talking and body language. Some Vietnamese seldom go to church or join group activities such as prayer meeting in private homes, Bible studies, and evangelistic meetings at church, etc. When pastor questions their absence, or asks them to do something for the church, their explanation and refusal might be a clue and a hint as to the difficulties in the home.

Most of the Vietnamese Christians love and trust their pastors. When asked to do something for the church, they may refuse the invitation for one or more reasons: 1) They are not spiritually strong enough to serve; 2) They do not like to speak in front of people, 3) They do not have the capacity to perform some jobs at church. However, during the refusal discussion, they may tell the truth of their family troubles which really are the cause of their absence and the reason for a refusal.

A Vietnamese saying indicates the way of knowing the truth, "For information, ask the aged people at the public place, and ask the little children at home." Little children easily tell the truth to their teachers and classmates about the reason why they missed some Sunday School classes. These people can then inform the church staff about the Christian family situation.

Sensitivity is not curiosity. But curiosity from a generous and loving heart in order to assist, especially to brothers and sisters in Christ, is biblical and significant. The apostle Paul knew the situation of the church in the city of Corinth through Chloe's people, "For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you" (1 Cor 1:11). And thanks to that information, he wrote a letter to exhort that church for helping the Christians to live according to the Bible teaching.

The pastor is sensitive and eager to care for his sheep as Ganz mentions: Matthew Henry, the great Puritan preacher and commentator, wrote, "[The pastor] is to bring into an orderly spiritual state and frame, those who had been as it were dislocated and disjointed by sin, and then to strengthen, confirm, and advance them therein so each in his proper place and function contributes to the good of the whole." In other words, the

church is the place where broken people are put back together again, to the good of the church.⁴

Andrew Crones in his book Divorce & Remarriage emphasizes pastoral care and practice with the same Biblical standpoints as he wrote:

The church has the responsibility to care for those who have been damaged or are in need. This care certainly extends to those who are not yet members of the church, but the problems of singleness, marriage, divorce and remarriage are not at all confined to those outside the church. Phybers rightly points out: "As a new generation begins to turn to Christ from non-church backgrounds, so a growing number of converts are bringing tangled sexual and marital relationships with them into the life of the church."⁵

To know the church members problems is to help them, but not to laugh at them. The pastor acts as a medical doctor who diagnoses prior to treatment. After defining the problem, he does Christian counseling in the area of family troubles for his church people.

Christian Counseling to each Member of the Family

When a member calls to ask for advice, the pastor should be eager and ready to help unless he is unavailable because of sickness, on travel, and certain church activities. A prompt "yes" answer proves his love and care for the sheep in need.

The appointment time should be convenient to both the counselor and counselee. Morning is better for both as each should have a fresh mind. Yet it still depends on the availability of both persons. The length of time is usually from 60-90 minutes. The place

⁴ Ibid., 86.

should be at the pastor's office where nobody is present, and no noise disturbs the meeting, including radio or soft music, as Andrew Cornes wrote: "Keep it as private as possible for as long as possible. Jesus says that at first only one individual (other than the one who has sinned) is to be involved. The discussion is to be "just between the two of you."⁶

If the person being counseled is a woman, it is important that there be another woman present or close by in order to not have any questions of impropriety. The "other woman" may be the pastor's wife, secretary or other appropriate woman who has been sworn to secrecy.

It is not good for the pastor to do the counseling at the counselee's home. If the counseling is takes place there, there are some disadvantages and difficulties such as being disrupted by the children, interference from other family members, and interruption from possible visitors.

The pastor's office is open some minutes before the appointment time so that the counselee feels that the pastor is ready to meet with the needy Christian. The initial steps of counseling are important. Some little things at the beginning help a lot. A warm welcome and an invitation for a cup of coffee or tea will show pastoral care for the suffering counselee. The Vietnamese pastor surely knows how to call the counselee in

⁵ Andrew Cornes, Divorce & Remarriage (Grand Rapids: William B. Erdmans, 1993), 359.

⁶ Ibid., 405.

the Vietnamese way. Sometimes the young pastors, born and educated in America, have trouble when they do not know the calling in Vietnamese to the aged people.

The pastor, with a Bible, a notebook and a counseling agenda in front of him, begins the session with a prayer in which he asks God to guide the meeting and help both persons to come up with a good solution for the person's problem. This is the recommended counseling agenda for the Vietnamese Christian troubled families:

The First Session

A. Diagnosis

1. A sincere question: "What is the problem?" The question is raised to let the counselee present the problem, even though the pastor sometimes knows it prior to the meeting. The presentation of the problem by the counselee is sincere or not depending on the maturity of each Christian. The sincerity of the counselee is helpful for the pastor in his diagnosis. He does not waste time seeking the truth of the event. A true story certainly helps the counseling to be more effective.
2. A request: "What do you want me to do for you?" When asking this question, the pastor wants to know what the church member wants him to do. If the request is beyond his capabilities or against Bible teaching and church doctrinal statements and policies, he may refuse to help. For example, the writer was once asked by a man to accept his remarriage with

an unbelieving woman, while his first wife and three children were still in Vietnam. His request was, of course, denied because it was immoral. Any requests that cause more conflict for the two parties must be declined by the pastor with a polite exhortation for the purpose of reconciliation.

B. History:

1. When: "How long have you had this problem?" The answer to this question will help the pastor know the degree of the event. A long time problem indicates its depth and consequence. For example, a 46-year-old Vietnamese woman came to ask the writer for advice concerning her dysfunctional home. Her husband's displeasure was caused by her continuous part-time work. Their relationship had been broken for two months. When asked how long she had worked at the part-time job in the evening, she said, "14 months." The problem had lasted too long and had dug a deep pit between the spouses. A long-time problem creates misunderstandings, division and hostility.
2. How: "What is the cause of the problem?" The question helps trace the original fault caused by someone in the family. Knowing the first cause might be a help for the pastor to present a quicker solution to the problem. He should be aware of the nature of the cause: accident or intention. An accidental action leading to a misunderstanding may be forgiven, but an intentional one definitely creates a critical division that becomes more

difficult when a spouse purposely causes a problem to abandon the other in order to marry another person. It is a hard case for the pastor to be involved in remedial counseling. Once he knows it for sure, he prays for the counselee, asking for God's power to change the situation in His will.

3. Who else gave counsel?: The pastor should know if the counselee had talked with any other counselors prior to this meeting. Did the counselee have other counselors such as parents, relatives or friends before coming to the pastor? If no, the pastor realizes that his counseling would be the first, and be able to give as many recommendations as possible. But if yes, the pastor should ask the question: "What did your other counselors tell you?" The counselee's answer may help the pastor to learn what advice had been given by some people. And, by the way, he needs to ask if those suggestions have been tried yet and what the results were so the pastor would not duplicate the same advice and suggestions. This scenario is quite possible because the counselee might have some relatives or friends who have been giving advice to him or her all along from the beginning. For example, a suffering woman called the writer for help because her husband had mistreated her so much that she wanted to commit suicide. She said some of her friends had given her some counseling, and she had already done them, but in vain.

4. Some further information: “Can you tell me something about you, your spouse, parents, and children?” The answer to this question gives the pastor some further information concerning those involved in the family troubles. Why is there this kind of question? In Vietnamese cultures, there are close relationships between relatives. The custom of a big Vietnamese family will exist as long as the refugees of the first generation are alive in the United States. All the grandparents, parents, children, and grandchildren live altogether in a house. This is not a rare thing to Vietnamese around the world now. They are convinced that the advantages for such a “together we live” are more than the disadvantages as described: 1) economic saving; 2) close relationship; 3) mutual help; and 4) preservation of the traditional cultures.

However, the disadvantages are obvious. One of them is the involvement and interference in the others’ privacy, business and happiness. This kind of Vietnamese culture is never suitable to those who are much influenced by American cultures, especially the young persons of the second generation that are very interested in independence and freedom.

The information about the family members and relatives includes the data of health, occupation, spiritual life, habits, hobbies, and

ambitions. It is very helpful for the pastor to have access to this type of information.

5. “How do you feel now about the problem?” The answers describe some painful feelings such as frustration, anxiety, anger, fear, depression. These answers will also help the pastor determine which Scriptures are best to use in his guidance.

C. Assignments

1. Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis Marital Criss-Cross Testing: The pastor describes the purpose of the T-JTA and how to do it, and asks the counselee to bring them back in the next session. This special testing will be presented later in this chapter.
2. Answer the following questions on a sheet of paper:
 - a. Do you and your spouse read the Bible? ____
 - b. Do you and your spouse pray together? ____
 - c. Do you and your spouse go to church weekly? ____
 - d. Do you and your spouse give money to your church? ____
 - e. Do you and your spouse join any group church activities? ____
 - f. Do you and your spouse ask each other for forgiveness when mistakes are made? ____
 - g. Do you and your spouse often forgive each other? ____
 - h. Do you and your spouse have any conflicts? ____

- i. Do you and your spouse have any difficulties in understanding each other? ____
 - j. Do you and your spouse still love each other? ____
- D. Bible reading and prayer The pastor asks the counselee to read some scriptural references, and to pray continuously for the family problems at home before the second session which will be held in a near future.
- E. Encouragement The pastor gives the counselee some Bible passages to comfort and encourage him, in order to increase his joy and trust in the Lord. Before closing the first session, the pastor prays for the counselee, and schedules the next session.

Second Session - Remedial Counseling

Depending on both the pastor and counselee's convenience and time, the second session may be organized within one week after the first one. In case of urgency, the counselee needs just one meeting with the pastor. The one meeting should be much longer. And if the other spouse already met with the pastor and did the same assignments as this one, the second session is necessary for comparison. For example, if the first spouse had the first session on October 6th and the second spouse his first session on October 7th, then the second session for the first spouse will be on October 8th, and second spouse will have his second session on October 9th.

The counseling agenda of the second session should be as follows:

A. Check of the Assignments:

1. The pastor prays for the Holy Spirit's guidance.
2. The pastor asks the counselee if there were any difficulties in the assignments.
3. The pastor asks the counselee if there are any improvements in the family relationship.

B. The Remedial Counseling: After reading the responses, the pastor begins his remedial counseling in the following manner:

1. The pastor asks the counselee to read or listen to a Bible passage suitable for the counselee's current problem. During this time, he aims to guide the counselee to accept some Biblical guidelines.
2. Once the counselee accepts the Biblical teaching, the pastor tries to set up a plan of action which will be used to deal with the problem. If the counselee has any problems with the plan, the pastor helps to work them out in an easy, comfortable and flexible way.
3. The pastor shows the counselee how to perform the plan. For example, Vietnamese couples often have disagreements on giving gifts to their relatives in Vietnam. Each spouse likes to send money to his or her own relatives rather than to the other's. A great number of Vietnamese couples have separated and divorced because of this problem. In this situation, the pastor may apply the passage of a complaint of the Hellenistic Jews in

Acts 6:1-6, to give suggestions about equality. Then he sets a plan of action for the counselee to do. For instance, the counselee tries to create a pleasant atmosphere for the couple to sit down after a meal to discuss quietly about sending gifts equally to their relatives in Vietnam. The pastor shows the counselee how to handle the discussion.

4. The pastor then asks the counselee to anticipate some feedback from the other spouse in order to cope with the problem in the spirit of tender loving care.
5. The pastor closes the remedial counseling with some words of encouragement, exhortation, and prayer before asking the counselee to call and inform the pastor of any change or improvements in the family situation.

Personality Test for each Family Member

Taylor in his book Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis Handbook defines personality as “the dynamic organization.”

Essentially, personality might be described as one’s individuality, or that which makes a person distinctly himself or herself. It is comprised of the sum total of all the traits which differentiate one human being from another. Allport describes personality as “dynamic organization within an

individual of those psychophysical systems that determine the individual's characteristic behavior."⁷

The Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis (T-JTA) is a self-diagnostic personality test as described:

Thus, the T-JTA is uniquely appropriate both in individual counseling and in premarital, marital, and family counseling. Since it was first published, the T-JTA has experienced widespread use by psychiatrists, psychologists, marriage and family counselors, pastoral counselors, military chaplains, drug and alcohol counselors, rehabilitation counselors, educational counselors, and vocational guidance counselors. It has found meaningful application in counseling centers, social service agencies, hospitals, substance abuse programs, probation departments and schools.⁸

Only those who are authorized by Psychological Publications, Inc. may use the T-JTA which provides individual and criss-cross (husband and wife) profiles. For instance, the wife can take the test on one answer sheet and the husband can take it on another. Then she compares both sheets to find out the similarities and differences in their personality traits.

The profile consists of four zones:

1. The dark zone - excellent
2. The light black - acceptable
3. The dark white - improvement desirable
4. The white - improvement needed.

⁷ Robert M. Taylor and W. Lee Morrison, *Taylor-Johnson (Temperament Analysis Handbook*, 1987), 37.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.

There are traits and their opposites. For example, Dominant/submissive, confident/passive, assertive/compliant and competitive/dependent. If both the husband and the wife are dominant, it is good in one aspect, and bad in another. It is good for both to be confident, and competitive in their job situations, but bad for married life, because each one wants to dominate the other, and that will not work.

The counselee is asked to do the test in order that the pastor can show him or her personality areas which need improvement or adjustment to achieve harmony in the family. The pastor cannot always depend just on the counselee's statements because they are sometimes untrue. For example, the wife states that her husband does not let her keep the check book and credit cards, but she does not tell the reasons. But the true fact is that she sends too much money to her own parents, brothers, and sisters in Vietnam and it hurts the family budget. This no longer makes her husband trust her as the family treasurer.

Also, the counselee sometimes hides his own personality when doing the T-JTA test. It is hard for the pastor to know one's personality if the truth is not told. If both the husband and wife agree to go to the same counselor and do the T-JTA, the counselor can compare the T-JTA profiles to see whether there are hidden areas of differences. For example, the husband does the test and says that he is tolerant, but the answer sheet his wife does for him says that he is hostile. The difference shows that one of them does not tell the truth. If the family relationship is good, the T-JTA profiles may display the truth,

and the couple will still love each other. But if it is broken, the T-JTA profiles done by each spouse may not be accurate.

However the pastor can partly see his counselee's personality through the T-JTA. In addition, he can use the counselee's statements, responses to his questions as the basis for his advice. And best of all, the Holy Spirit is the One who can give him wisdom to help those who are hurting in the broken home.

Reconciliation Performed by the Pastor

Reconciliation is the tough job, but a blessing. The Lord Jesus Christ says, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" (Matt 5:9). The Lord Himself is the Great Peacemaker who reconciles as written: "and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven" (Col 1:20).

Christians can also have conflicts between themselves. Who can judge them and bring them back together? The Bible gives the answer:

Does any one of you, when he has a case against his neighbor, dare to go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints? Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is judged by you, are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, matters of this life? (1 Cor 6:1-3).

Ken Sande in his book The Peacemaker mentions the reconciliation done by the church:

The church's neglect to fulfill its traditional peacemaking responsibilities has deprived Christians of valuable assistance, contributed to the

congestion of our court system, and worst of all, damaged the witness of Christ. Fortunately, there are still some Christians who take Paul's rebuke seriously.⁹

Antonin Scalia, an Associate Supreme Court Justice, made some comments about Christians regarding the courts of law:

I think this passage (1 Cor 6:1-8) has something to say about the proper Christian attitude toward civil litigation. Paul is making two points: first, he says that the mediation of a mutual friend, such as the parish priest, should be sought before parties run off to the law courts. I think we are too ready today to seek vindication or vengeance through adversarial proceedings rather than peace through mediation. Good Christians, just as they are slow to anger, should be slow to sue.¹⁰

The Lord Jesus Christ teaches about reconciliation :

If therefore you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering (Matt 5:23-24).

The pastor should be involved in reconciliation for Christians and family members in his church. Vietnamese people respect their religious leaders such as the Buddhist monks, the Catholic priests, and the Protestant pastors, and like to listen to their teachings, sermons and words of wisdom. When a religious leader calls and talks to them about their family matters including marital problems, they are glad to respond.

Therefore, the pastor must be able to participate in family matters of his church members, especially to attempt the reconciliation for the couple in the case their troubles are leading to separation or divorce. After being informed about the potential for a

⁹ Ken Sande, The Peacemaker (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991), 38.

broken relationship and after seeking permission from the couple, the pastor should proceed with counseling procedures in the following phases:

1. Preparation: The pastor has to know the truth regarding the problem as well as some personal knowledge of each person involved. He must also know the Bible passages and references appropriate for the situation. He writes down on a piece of paper the things he is going to share with the couple. If they can go to the pastor's office for the counseling session, the pastor should prepare some materials such as tracts, books, cassettes, or videos concerning the secrets of married happiness or reconciliation. And if they have time, the pastor may play some videos of good Christian family values in order that the couple will want to have a good marriage and ask advice on how to achieve it. Then the pastor earnestly prays for the couple, asking the Holy Spirit to help him to do the reconciliation effectively.
2. Dealing With Each Party If the couple still live together in one house, and the problem is not too critical, the pastor can call them both to go to his office. But if they live apart, he needs to call each party and urge him and her to meet with him together at the church. Family members or friends should not be present. He may run into some difficulties in the invitation such as refusal, time conflict, disagreement about the place of meeting,

¹⁰ Ibid.

etc. The pastor has to deal skillfully with each party until the couple agrees to come to the meeting for a reconciliation. In the case of a refusal by one party, the pastor has to meet with the other first, then to the person who refuses until both agree to meet with him. The pastor should proceed with the reconciliation at his office, when they both agree to have a meeting with him. If they finally agree to meet at the church, the writer believes there is a chance of reconciliation..

3. Reconciliation This is the main part of the reconciliation. As the reconcilor, the pastor plays an important role in peacemaking. The Holy Spirit who dwells in him will give him wisdom and guidance in the process of reuniting two persons. He must treat them as though they were coming to him for pre-marital counseling before their wedding. A nice smile on his face and a gentle invitation that displays a warm welcome to each party can create a good atmosphere for the couple to open their hearts to attempt a reconciliation. The steps of peacemaking are as follows:

- a. An opening prayer: The pastor's prayer is not a ceremonial procedure, but a real earnest request for the Holy Spirit's guidance. The prayer offered to God is for the couple's opening of their hearts and minds so that they want to forgive , love each other and be reunited into one family according to God's command,

“Consequently they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate” (Matt 19:6).

- b. Video presentation The pastor may play a 5-10 minute video about a reunion of a couple to let them see how the couple in the story give their testimonies of forgiveness and reconciliation. After the video presentation, the pastor asks what they think about the testimonies.
- c. An important forgiveness The pastor does not need to discuss the faults of each party. He needs to remind them about the lesson of forgiveness which the Lord Jesus Christ teaches, “So shall my heavenly Father also do to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart” (Matt 18:35), and Paul’s teaching to the church of Ephesus, “And be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you” (Eph. 4:32).
- d. A glorification of God The pastor needs to emphasize that the reconciliation and the reunion of the couple can avoid the broken relationship, separation and divorce. It is a sign of the glorification of God, and the obedience of His children to Him.

- e. A restoration of reputation The pastor says that separation and divorce mar the family reputation, but a reunion and reconciliation restore it as the Bible teaches, “A good name is to be more desired than great riches. Favor is better than silver and gold” (Pro 22:1).
- f. Benefits for the family The pastor points out the benefits for the family when everyone gets along with each other as the Bible mentions,

Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by my Father who is in heaven. for where two or three have gathered together in My name, there I am in their midst. (Matt 18:19-20).

The first benefit is the Lord’s answer to their prayer. The second is the quietness, or the harmony in the family as the Bible says, “Better is a dry morsel and quietness with it than a house full of feasting with strife” (Pro 17:1). The third is the success as a Vietnamese proverb says, “Once the husband and the wife get along, they can dry up the Eastern Sea.” The fourth is the joy and happiness for everybody in their family. For instance: their parents, brothers, sisters and even children are so glad to see the couple’s reunion.

- 4. A closing prayer The pastor asks each party to pray, if they do not mind, before the close of the meeting. The reason is for each of them to confess

to God what he or she has done to the other in the past, to promise to God what he or she will do to the other in the future, and to ask God for forgiveness.

5. An actual reunion The pastor recommends them to move to live again in one house as soon as possible if they have lived apart.
6. A word of congratulations If the reconciliation is successful, the pastor shakes their hands and says a word of congratulations to them, inviting them to bring their whole family to church the next Sunday. In case of the failure of reconciliation, the pastor continues to pray for them, assisting wherever whenever possible and asking the Lord to bless and bring them back together in the near future.

Follow-Up Procedure After Reconciliation

A follow-up session is necessary after the reconciliation. The pastor should call the couple, at least one time in the first week after their reconciliation, to check if they are making any progress in family harmony. The recommended follow-up schedule should be as follows:

1. First week The pastor calls to say “hi” with either both or one of them, and to ask if every thing is smooth in their attitudes. On this occasion, the pastor needs to advise each of them how to keep their relationship stable for their happy marriage. The pastor also needs to ask if he or she has any questions.

2. Second week If the couple go to church together on the first Sunday after their meeting at the pastor's office, the pastor is glad. Otherwise, the pastor has to call or pay a visit to their home to see what is going on. If they have no progress after the meeting, the pastor should call them in for an additional session.
3. Third week The pastor checks their church attendance on the second Sunday. Their presence at the Sunday School or the church worship service shows their faithfulness to the Lord and to each other. If not, the pastor calls them again and asks why they did not go to church. The pastor or his associate pastor or their Sunday School teachers can visit them at home to pray for their happiness in marriage.
4. From the fourth week on If the couple keep going to church, their marriage is fine. The pastor continues to pray for them, calls and visits them as much as possible. If not, the pastor should call them to come to his office once again so that he can help them to improve their relationship until they can find harmony.
5. Outside Consultations - Of course, a pastor cannot solve all of the problems in all of the areas. He might be strong in biblical teachings and pastoral counseling, but weak in the biological, social, psychological, philosophical, and cultural areas. Therefore, he needs to seek outside consultation and help as necessary to stabilize a person emotionally to

mature in Christ.

Chapter Six

PREVENTING TROUBLES IN VIETNAMESE CHRISTIAN HOMES

The Bible says that the pastor is gifted to equip the Christians in the church (Eph 4:11-12). Dettoni mentions the church's function: "The church must be active and aggressive in meeting the needs of all of its members--if it is truly to be the body of Jesus Christ. It is unconscionable to put the church member in a position of crying out to the church for help."¹

As the church leader, the pastor should care for the hurting people in his church. He helps them in giving them his remedial counseling. And he has to do whatever he can to help prevent troubles from happening in the Vietnamese Christian families.

Sermons Focused on the Family

God's word is powerful enough for nurturing Christian spiritual life until maturity including the construction of marriage, parenting and other family matters. The Bible tells many stories in which the prophets taught the people of Israel in Old Testament times and the apostles exhorted the Christians in the New Testament church for following God's way as written: "All the commandments that I am commanding you today you

¹ Carol Deltoni, Caring For Those Who Can't (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1984), 126.

shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD swore to give to your forefathers” (Deu 8:1).

The prophet Samuel talked to King Saul and rebuked him for his intentional faults. The prophet Nathan blamed King David for his sins of adultery and murder. The Scripture is living and useful all the time: “All scripture is inspired by God and profitable teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16-17).

The Scripture contains many teachings on various topics of family matters: marriage, separation, divorce, husband’s and wife’s duties, parenting, parents and children’s duties--with many true stories as illustrations. For example, the stories of Abraham with Hagar, and Jacob with four wives indicate the problems of polygamy in the ancient time. The story of Absalom’s betrayal toward his father David may be a consequence of David’s adultery.

The discussion of family is as necessary and important as the others such as evangelism, church growth, stewardship, sanctification, the Lord’s return, etc. The pastor should take the advantage of some special holidays, i.e., Mother’s Day, and Father’s Day, to preach his sermons regarding parenting. In addition, he needs to preach on Christian marriage as suggested in some current events such as the Promise Keepers rally.

Vietnamese generally still keep the traditional cultures in which the wife has to depend on her husband, and the children have to obey their parents. The pastor’s sermons on family are Biblical, emphasizing the Commandments--the wife is submissive

to husband and the children honoring to parents. This is an apparent similarity between the Vietnamese cultures and the Bible teachings. Yet there are three differences:

1. The Vietnamese cultures are from man, and the Bible teachings are from God.
2. The Vietnamese cultures force the woman's absolute obedience to man in the way of dictatorship in spite of man's weakness and mistakes. Meanwhile, the Bible teachings command wife's submission to husband, and husband's love and sacrifice to wife:" Nevertheless let each individual among you also love his own wife even as himself; and let the wife see to it that she respect her husband" (Eph 5:33)
3. Vietnamese cultures also oblige children's absolute obedience to parents all the time in spite of parents' faults. Meanwhile the Bible teaches children to obey parents in the Lord, and parents not to provoke children to anger: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right... And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Eph 6:1-4).

The Bible teachings are more suitable to the current time in the United States for the Vietnamese people to accept than the past time in their homeland. Vietnamese women and children are especially interested in the American cultures which seem to set them free from the traditional cultures which are full of obligation and dictatorship. Most of the Vietnamese Christians like to hear the sermons on family matters, because they are

more practical and easier for them to understand than the theological ones such as the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, the second coming of the Lord.

Sermons on family are helpful for the unbelievers who go to church as visitors and to know that Christianity teaches not only theology, but also marriage and parenting. Vietnamese non-Christians often believe that Christianity teaches children to abandon their parents. This belief is based on the fact that Vietnamese Christians have never worshipped the dead at a funeral, nor celebrated their ancestors' death day at the altars installed in their houses since their conversion from Buddhism to the new belief in Christianity.

This type of sermon is more effectively applied to some families that have signs of troubles. Satan is strongly striking their happiness with various temptations such as materialism, adultery, drugs, gambling, etc. The sermons that focus on family help pull them back from the absorbability of the Satanic power. The Holy spirit talks to them through the pastor's sermons which remind them of the Lord's commands about the sacredness of marriage and parenting in His design and desire. The Bible gives them enough guidance from which they can follow to obtain joy and peace in marriage. On the way back from church to home both the husband and wife may recall something mentioned in the sermon to help each other adjust their wrong thoughts for the improvement of their marriage and parenting, as the Bible says, "Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path" (Ps 119:105).

Chuck Swindoll in his book The Strong Family calls for the Christian to go back to wisdom according to the Biblical truth:

There is no school that families can attend and earn a degree in family strength. It doesn't work like that. Families become strong, not because they have gone to a school and learned the rules, but because parents pay the price to be different because they inculcate biblical truth in everyday life, conducting their relationships in the realm of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge. Remember that kept scripture? It brings us back to the basic ingredients: By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; and by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches (Pro 24:3-4).²

Sermons on love, forgiveness, humanity, unity, care, sincerity to be preached to the congregation are related to biblical wisdom on which family is built. For instance, love is a solid foundation that strongly encourages family happiness as the biblical chapter of love says:

Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous, love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. (1 Cor 13:4-7).

The pastor's sermons, with the Holy Spirit's power, affect life and can change human attitudes.

The men who follow the mandates of Promise Keepers display their interests and changes in their own homes where their wives and children feel thankful to their husbands and fathers for "keeping of promises to God and families." The more sermons

² Chuck Swindoll, The Strong Family (Portland: Multnomah, 1977), 24.

on family that are preached, the more the husbands, wives and children become godly, and the less the broken homes happen.

Family Seminars For Church Members

In order to equip the saints for the body of Christ which are the members of the church, it is recommended that the church regularly organize special seminars for the family members to attend. This seminar can be divided into at least four areas: 1) a pre-marital counseling group; 2) a marriage group; 3) a parenting group; and 4) a youth group.

Depending upon financial capacity, facilities, convenience and time, the Vietnamese church can organize the seminars as recommended below:

1. For the small-size church of 50-150 people: A well-trained pastor can probably teach all the groups on two Saturdays a year..
2. For the medium-size church of 151-350 people: The pastor teaches each group two Saturdays a year.
3. For the large-size church of 351-500 people: One family counselor is invited to teach two groups (pre-marital and marriage; parenting and youth) in two Saturdays a year.

In case the church is unable to afford the cost of a professional counselor, several small-sized churches in a given area can cooperate to pay him. At this present time, most Vietnamese churches around the United States rarely have family counselors on staff. Local church pastors are recommended either to attend the family counseling seminars held by Anglo churches and associations in some areas, or to take some courses in family

counseling in pre-marital, marriage, parenting, adolescence, and youth, from a Bible college or seminary.

The regular seminar for each group, if possible, may be scheduled on Saturdays as recommended below:

9:00 AM - 12:00 Noon - Lecture

12:00 Noon - Lunch

1:00 PM - 3:00 PM - Workshops

3:00 PM - 4:00 PM - Personal Questions

The recommended topics consist of:

1. Vietnamese cultures of marriage and parenting.
2. Biblical teachings on marriage and parenting
3. Cultural conflicts of Vietnamese and Americans.
4. How to cope with the troubles in Vietnamese families.
5. Separation and divorce in Vietnamese families.
6. How to reconcile the separated and divorced people.
7. How to prevent troubles in Vietnamese Christian families.
8. Teaching the Vietnamese youth to honor parents in the United States.
9. Helping Vietnamese parents to raise their children in the United States.
10. A ministry to troubled Vietnamese Christian families in the United States.
11. Relationship to parents back in Vietnam and ancestor worship, etc.

In the seminar at the church, there should be a separate time for discussions in two different age groups, the parents and the children, in order that each group can openly present their opinions and learn of the other group's feedback on some general topic. Then the pastor or the counselor gives his comments on it. The open discussion between the husbands and wives is similar to that of the parents and youth. The purpose is for both groups to learn the others' viewpoints regarding family matters, so that each person can adjust to the right behavior suitable for the godly Christian home.

Because this is not a secular seminar, the Bible must be the foundation for family counseling. The cultural conflicts of American and Vietnamese on family matters are to be openly discussed and resolved for a harmonious atmosphere in the family. But God's word must not yield to any human cultures, no matter whether the seminar participants obey it or not. It means that there is no flexibility in the application of God's commands. For example, one of the ten commandments says, "Honor your father and your mother..." (Ex 20:12). The Vietnamese cultures tell them to worship their ancestors and celebrate the death day of their ancestors by worship at their ancestors' altar with incense, fruit and sacrifice. They explain that they please both God and their ancestors. Their explanation is an excuse that cannot be accepted, because their approach of honoring their ancestors is against one commandment, "You shall have no other gods before Me" (Ex 20:3).

During the seminar workshop, some personal testimonies shall be shared by godly participants who have a wholesome marriage. The testimonies are considered as proof of effective applications of the scriptural principles for the secrets of family happiness. And

a time of discussion should be scheduled for each study group to participate in a topical subject concerning the as it pertains to the Vietnamese Christian family in the United States. The conclusion of the study group discussion is to come to a decisive point: the Vietnamese Christian should not divorce, and should not despise divorced persons.

Before concluding the seminar, the counselor distributes some tracts or materials about families to all the participants. And a closing prayer is offered by one of the participants for everybody to receive the blessing from the Lord.

Prayer Time in Vietnamese Christian Homes

A man is blessed according to the Bible when “your wife shall be like a fruitful vine, within your house, your children like olive plants around your table” (Ps 128:3). Evening is the time when most of Vietnamese family members can get together after work and school. After dinner and before bedtime, a prayer meeting of all members of the family should be called. There are some advantages of this evening prayer:

1. When everyone in the family is aware of the exact time scheduled for the daily prayer, they make every effort to be there, except in case of an emergency. The family member tries to get home before dinner so that the prayer meeting is not missed.
2. Children must attend as the Bible says, “Your children like olive plants, around your table.” The parents do not worry about where their children are because they know they will be home on time for prayer meeting.

3. This is the time for family gathering. Each person can share the joys, sadness, problems that happened today at school, at work, in order that the others may be informed, in particular the head of the family.
4. Evening prayer time may take about a half hour and it includes singing a hymn, Bible study of a short passage or a verse, and a prayer. This proposed time is very helpful for the family to keep reading the Bible, praising the Lord in song, giving thanks for that day, and praying for tomorrow activities.
5. If there is a misunderstanding during the day between two persons, husband and wife, father and son, mother and daughter, etc. the prayer time is can help bridge the gap. Everybody sings, reads, and prays for the problem or trouble of the family. The anger should stop before bedtime as the Bible teaches, "Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity " (Eph 4:26-27).
6. Evening prayer time gives daily revival. Therefore the couple should take time to read the Bible in advance to share with the family in the evening prayer. This urges them to study God's word and develop spiritual growth for maturity in their Christian life as the Bible says,

God's plan is this--the husband, the wife and God--a triangle. If God is left out, there is little hope for a marriage to be successful. Temptations, stresses and tensions within marriage are so great, and homes are

breaking up so fast, that only those couples who have a strong faith in God are most likely to have a truly successful marriage.³

The habit of family devotions is good, as Thigpens wrote: “If you can’t seem to carve out a daily time for family devotions, don’t give up altogether; instead, do it once a week. If you can’t find half an hour, find ten minutes. Something is better than nothing.”⁴

Christian Literature about the Family Displayed at Church

Very few Vietnamese churches in the United States have their own libraries, because they do not own the church facilities. Most of them use the Anglo church buildings. Therefore their activities are very limited. Many churches do not place even a bookshelf in the corner of a room. And if they can, they have just a few Christian books. Most of the Vietnamese Christian books are about evangelism, Sunday School, church growth, but not books of marriage and parenting.

It is suggested that the Vietnamese Christian literature on the family be written by Vietnamese counselors, or be translated from the English for Vietnamese Christian to use. This kind of Christian family literature should be made in a form of a tract, and displayed on the bookshelf of the church. The bookshelf should be positioned where people can easily see and reach it.

³ Billy Graham, Let Christ Transform Your Home (Minneapolis: Article of Monthly Magazine Decision Published by Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Vol. 38, N.6, June 1997), 1.

⁴ Paul Thigpen and Leisa Thigpen, 52 Simple Ways to Build Family Traditions (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1993), 50.

The displayed family literature which concerns various topics regarding family matters should be free of charge for anyone to use. They may be printed in two languages: English and Vietnamese for the convenience of all. The church encourages its members to read the Christian family literature to help keep their own family in peace and harmony. The pastor introduces any books helpful for the Christian family to read.

In addition, the church should show a film or play a video about Christian family needs for the congregation to watch on some Wednesday or Saturday evening. After the showing of the film, the pastor delivers a short message that focuses on Christian family according to scriptural teaching.

Involvement of Lay People in Family Counseling

As in any ministry, the involvement of lay people is indispensable (Eph 4:11-13). Therefore, it is important for the church to have lay people trained in family counseling to reach out to the troubled families, Christian and non-Christian alike. This is an important ministry for the health of the church and may be an effective way to reach the Vietnamese non-believers with the reconciling message of Christ. It is especially important for the Vietnamese church to have key lay people grounded in the Word of God and trained in biblical family counseling because Vietnamese Christians tend to trust only the pastor.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the causes for the break-up of troubled Vietnamese families in the United States have been explored in this thesis. It is the fervent hope of the author that this thesis will contribute to a better understanding of the problems facing Vietnamese families in the United States, and provide some recommendations for an effective ministry to the Vietnamese community.

The project focuses on troubled Vietnamese Christian families in the United States with a survey among the Vietnamese churches along the east coast.

The root causes of these problems can be traced to differences in the American culture and the Vietnamese culture. The major effect of these differences is the break-up of the family authority structure and communication between spouses as well as parents and children.

In addition, many other important differences between living in Vietnam and living in the United States all contribute to the break-up of many Vietnamese families. An awareness of the problems and a clear understanding of the root causes of these problems is a prerequisite for any attempt at addressing the needs of the Vietnamese family. This awareness will require more education in Vietnamese churches.

In practice, the church should focus more on family issues in various ministries of the church. For example, the pastor should focus his sermons on family issues. The

church should organize regular seminars on marriage and family. More Christian literature on the family should be made accessible to church members. In other words, the church needs to be creative in bringing God's power to bear on this important problem of the Vietnamese community in the United States.

The most urgent need of the Vietnamese Christian community is to have a clear understanding of the biblical foundation for marriage and family. More biblical as well as counseling training, especially for lay people in the Vietnamese churches, is necessary. As a strategy, the Vietnamese church should select key lay people for special training in biblical counseling. These people will be the leaders for small ministry groups focusing on building a biblical foundation into the lives of the church families. These small groups are also important in promoting communication in the family and helping resolve family conflicts.

The church should also pay attention to the remedial needs of the troubled families. These families need counseling, encouragement, and reconciliation. One problem peculiar to the Vietnamese community is the lack of communication between grandparents or parents and children, due to a language barrier and intergenerational cultural gaps. As a result, it is important for the church to have a youth ministry focused on these children to keep open the communication channel in order to help them reconcile with their parents. This is also a great opportunity for the church to reach out to the Vietnamese non-believers.

Appendix A
INSTITUTIONAL LETTER

Dear Pastor,

My family and the Vietnamese Hope Baptist Church in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area respectfully extend the greetings of love to you, your family and your church in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the spirit of Christian ministry according to 2 Timothy 2:3-4.

I am mailing a questionnaire to you, and two other questionnaires for members of your congregation to secure their opinions in the surveys of the Vietnamese Christian troubled families. Please run off enough copies for your church members. Please ask your congregation to fill out the forms and then return them to you for collection and would you be so kind as to mail them back to me by October of this year. This is the last part of my Doctor of Ministry program.

I sincerely convey my gratitude to you and your church for your help. May the Heavenly Father of Grace bless you, your family and your church.

Respectfully yours,

Minh Van Lam

APPENDIX 2a

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE PASTOR ABOUT MARRIAGE AND PARENTING

A. DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

1. Age (25-35)____ (36-45)____ (46-up)____
2. Length of time in the pastorate:____
3. Church size:____
4. Size of community:____

B. WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THE CAUSES OF FAMILY TROUBLES?

BETWEEN SPOUSES: Do you agree that because

- | | | |
|------|------|---|
| Yes | No | 1. They have some conflict ways of life and culture? |
| ____ | ____ | 2. They have some major conflict personalities? |
| ____ | ____ | 3. They have some different interests? |
| ____ | ____ | 4. They have different levels of knowledge? |
| ____ | ____ | 5. They have some different levels of Christian maturity? |
| ____ | ____ | 6. They have some problems in sexual relationship? |
| ____ | ____ | 7. They have some financial problems? |
| ____ | ____ | 8. They have problems about relatives? |
| ____ | ____ | 9. They have problems about children? |
| ____ | ____ | 10. They have health problems? |
| ____ | ____ | 11. One of them has dictatorship? |
| ____ | ____ | 12. One of them intends to leave the other? |
| ____ | ____ | 13. One of them fails to perform responsibilities? |
| ____ | ____ | 14. One of them gambles or takes drug? |
| ____ | ____ | 15. One of them becomes disable? |
| ____ | ____ | 16. They have other reasons_____. |

C. BETWEEN PARENT AND CHILDREN: Do you agree that because

YES NO PARENT'S FAULTS

- | | | |
|------|------|---|
| ____ | ____ | a. Parent has not educated child since childhood? |
| ____ | ____ | b. Parent does not understand child's situation? |
| ____ | ____ | c. Parent raises child in a broken home? |
| ____ | ____ | d. Parent does not give child good example? |

- ___ e. Parent does not bring child to church?
 ___ f. The other reasons: _____

YES NO CHILD'S FAULTS

- ___ a. Child is influenced much by environment?
 ___ b. Child is influenced much by books, films?
 ___ c. Child likes to live independently?
 ___ d. Child is not satisfied by parent's behavior?
 ___ e. Child begins to grow in adolescence time?
 ___ f. The other reasons: _____

D. SOLUTIONS

1 FOR SPOUSES

- YES NO 1. They should seek counseling from their pastor?
 ___ 2. They should avoid divorce, separation?
 ___ 3. They should spend time to stay close with each other?
 ___ 4. The spiritual person should yield to the cardinal one?
 ___ 5. They should go to church, attend the revival, marriage seminar?
 ___ 6. They should reconcile in prayer, Bible study?
 ___ 7. They should make friend with some good Christian couples?
 ___ 8. The other ways: _____

B. FOR PARENTS AND CHILD

- YES NO 1. Parent should teach child according to the Bible way?
 ___ 2. Parent should give child good example in daily life?
 ___ 3. Parent should understand child's situation as health, desire?
 ___ 4. Parent should seek counseling from the pastor?
 ___ 5. Parent should show love to child?
 ___ 6. Parent should send child to some relatives to care for?
 ___ 7. Parent should discuss gently with child?
 ___ 8. Child should please parent?
 ___ 9. Child should run away from parent's dictatorship?
 ___ 10. Child should explain respectfully to parent the way child does?
 ___ 11. The other recommendations: _____

Thank you very much for your help. And may God bless you.

APPENDIX 2b

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE ADULTS ABOUT THE TROUBLED MARRIAGES

I. THE DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

1. Age (teenage-24)____(25-35)____(36-45)____(46-up)____
2. Sex: Male____ Female____
3. Marital status: Married____ Divorce____ Separation____ single____
4. Marriage length of time:____
5. Size of family:____persons
6. Length of time in the USA:____
7. Size of community:____
8. Length of time in Christian life:____

II. DO YOU AGREE THAT THE FAMILY TROUBLES CAUSED BY

A. THE WRONG MARRIAGE

- | | | |
|------|------|--|
| YES | NO | 1. Caused by parent ? |
| ____ | ____ | 2. Caused by money? |
| ____ | ____ | 3. Caused by wanting a good reputaion? |
| ____ | ____ | 4. Caused by young age ? |
| ____ | ____ | 5. Caused by a quick choice and love? |
| | | 6. The other reasons:_____ |

B. THE CONFLICTS

- | | | |
|------|------|-----------------------------|
| YES | NO | 1. Different cultures? |
| ____ | ____ | 2. Different educations? |
| ____ | ____ | 3. Different religions? |
| ____ | ____ | 4. Different personalities? |
| ____ | ____ | 5. Different interests? |

C. ONE OF THE SPOUSE'S FAULTS

- | | | |
|------|------|------------------------------------|
| YES | NO | 1. One has dictatorship? |
| ____ | ____ | 2. One is influenced by relatives? |
| ____ | ____ | 3. One has another lover? |
| ____ | ____ | 4. One gambles or takes drug? |
| ____ | ____ | 5. One becomes disabled? |

6. The other reasons: _____

III. SOLUTIONS : DO YOU AGREE THAT THEY SHOULD

YES	NO	1. Seek counseling from their pastor or a marriage counselor?
___	___	2. Yield each other in the spirit of reconciliation?
___	___	3. Go on a vacation far away from home to stay close together?
___	___	4. Celebrate their anniversary?
		5. Other ways: _____

APPENDIX 2c

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARENT AND CHILD ABOUT PARENTING

I. THE DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

1. Age (Teenage-24)___(25-35)___(36-45)___(46-up)___
2. Sex: Male___Female___
3. Marital status: Married___Divorce___Separation___Single___
4. Children: How many:___(1-5)___(6-10)___(11-15)___(16-up)___
5. Length of time in the USA:___
6. Length of time in the Christian life:___
7. Size of community:___

II. DO YOU AGREE THAT THE CHILD'S REBELLION CAUSED BY

A. PARENT'S FAULTS, BECAUSE PARENT DOES NOT

- | | | |
|-----|-----|--|
| YES | NO | 1. educate child in the right way? |
| ___ | ___ | 2. understand child's problems in health, behavior, knowledge? |
| ___ | ___ | 3. give child good example in daily life at home? |
| ___ | ___ | 4. bring child to church for being taught? |
| ___ | ___ | 5. live in a good community? |
| ___ | ___ | 6. The other reasons: _____ |

B. CHILD'S FAULTS BECAUSE CHILD

- | | | |
|-----|-----|---|
| YES | NO | 1. is influenced much by bad environment? |
| ___ | ___ | 2. is influenced much by books, and films? |
| ___ | ___ | 3. is not satisfied when parent do not meet child's need? |
| ___ | ___ | 4. likes to live independently? |
| ___ | ___ | 5. begins to know sex relationship? |
| ___ | ___ | 6. The other reasons: _____ |

III. DO YOU AGREE TO SOLVE THE PROBLEMS LIKE THE FOLLOWINGS

- | | | |
|-----|-----|--|
| YES | NO | 1. Parent should please child any way? |
| ___ | ___ | 2. Parent should show dictatorship? |
| ___ | ___ | 3. Parent should send child to live in some relatives' home? |
| ___ | ___ | 4. Parent should talk gently to child? |

- ☐ ☐ 5. Parent should seek counseling from pastor?
- ☐ ☐ 6. Child must obey parent any way?
- ☐ ☐ 7. Child must explain respectfully to parent?
- ☐ ☐ 8. Child should run away from parent's dictatorship?
- ☐ ☐ 9. Child should ask the pastor to explain to parent?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH. MAY THE LORD BLESS YOU.

APPENDIX 3

QUESTIONNAIRE SUMMARY

The questionnaires were sent to twenty-five Vietnamese Baptist churches in the east coast of the United States in August of 1997. There are three kinds of questionnaire. The first is for the pastors about marriage and parenting. The second is for the married Christian couples about troubled marriages. The third is for both the Christian teenagers and parents about the troubles between parents and children.

The questionnaires were received by mail and personal contacts from September to October 26, 1997, with the results as follows:

1) Fifteen pastors answered the complete questionnaires (sixty percent). Six pastors have from 25-100 members. Nine of the pastors have from 101-300 members. There are sixteen questions about troubled marriage and twelve questions about troubled parenting. Eighty-six percent of the pastors agreed that the cultural conflicts and different ways of life in the first question cause the troubles for the Vietnamese families in the United States. Sixty percent agreed the different levels of Christian spiritual maturity in question 5 are also a cause for a broken home. Sixty percent agreed that rebellion of children is caused by the broken homes in question c of the parenting survey. And one hundred percent of the pastors agreed that the troubled families should ask the pastor for counseling when answering question 1 of the solutions.

2) One hundred ninety-six Vietnamese Christians answered the complete questionnaires, 110 surveys of troubled marriage, and 86 surveys of troubled parenting. These people are the members of the fifteen churches mentioned above, with the results as follows:

a) About marriage: sixty-nine percent agreed that broken home is caused by the cultural conflicts in the first question of part B about the troubled marriage. Only one of 110 surveys does not like to ask the pastor for marriage counseling in question 1 of the solutions.

b) About parenting: eighty-one percent agreed that rebellion of children happens because parents do not give them good examples at home in question 3 of the parents' faults, and because children live in a bad environment in question 1 of the children's faults. These two questions are raised for the Vietnamese Christians, both parents and children, to show that the rebellion happens not because of the children's faults all the time. Fifty-seven percent like to ask for parental counseling from the pastor in question 5 of the solutions for parents, and question 4 of the solutions for children. Very few teenagers like to see anybody involved in their personal business, even their pastor.

Some other reasons, the Vietnamese adults blame that children are very influenced by the bad TV shows and friends to cause troubles for parents. And some wrote that parents should listen to their children talk to know them better. This kind of

survey is necessary for the pastor to understand the conflicting ideas between parents and children.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. BOOKS

- Andersen, Linda. Irresistible Wifetypes. Denver: Accent Books, 1990.
- Adams, Jay E. Shepherding God's Flock. Grand Rapids: Ministry Resources Library, 1980.
- Burns, Bob and Michael L. Brissett, Jr. The Adult Child of Divorce. Nashville: Oliver-Nelson Books, 1991.
- _____. Recovery from Divorce. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1992.
- Barnes, Robert. You're not My Daddy. Dallas: Word Publishing, 1992.
- Butler, David. The Fall of Saigon. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985.
- Bass, Thomas A. Vietnamerica. New York: Soho Press Incorporation, 1996.
- Balswick, Jack O. and Judith K. Balswick. The Family. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991.
- Braun, Michael A C. Second Class Christians? Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1989.
- Clark, Chap and Dee Clark. Let Me Ask You This. Colorado Springs: Navpress, 1991.
- Coleman, Jim and Shella Coleman. Friends For Life. Dallas, Word Publishing, 1992.
- Cornes, Andrew. Divorce And Remarriage. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1993.
- Cerling, Charles. Remarriage. Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1988.
- Chan, Sucheng. Asian Americans. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991.
- Crabb, Larry, Jr. and R. Lawrence Crabb, Sr. God Of My Father. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1992.
- Cloud, Henry and John Townsend. Boundaries. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992.

- Cole, Mendy M. Vietnam. New York: Chelsea House publishers, 1989.
- Dobson, James. Home With A Heart. Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1996.
- Dao, Anh Duy. An Introduction To The Vietnamese Cultures. Fort Smith: Song Moi Publisher, n.d.
- Dougan, Clark and David Fulghum. The Fall Of The South. Boston: Boston Publishing Company, 1985.
- Dettoni, Carol. Caring For Those Who Can't. Wheaton: Victor Books, 1984.
- Ellis, Claire. Culture Shock! Vietnam. Portland Graphic Arts Center Publishing Company, 1995.
- Engelmann, Larry. Tears Before The Rain. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- Esper, George and The Associated Press. The Eyewitness History Of The Vietnam War 1961-1975. New York: Ballantine Books, 1983
- Finzel, Hanz and Donna Finzel. The Top Ten Ways To Drive Your Wife Crazy. Wheaton: Victor Books, 1996.
- Gaither, Glora et al. Marriage. Portland: Multnomah, 1986.
- Gunn, David M. Harper's Bible Commentary: 2 Samuel. New York: Harper Collins, 1988.
- Ganz, Richard. PsychoBable. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1993.
- Garland, Sherry. Vietnam: Rebuilding a Nation. New York: Dillon Press, 1990.
- Hunt, Richard A. and Joan A. Francis Hunt. Awaken Your Power To Love. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1994.
- Henry, Matthew. A Commentary On The Whole Bible. Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell Company, n.d.
- Hawkins, Ronald E. Strengthening Marital Intimacy. Kearney: Morris Publishing, 1991.
- Houmes, Dan and Paul Meier. Growing In Step. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992.
- Harvey, Donald R. The Spiritually Intimate Marriage. Tarrytown: Fleming H. Revell

Company, 1970.

Hunter, Helen. Remarriage In Midlife. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991.

Ha, Phat Tan. Vietnamese Marriage Ceremony. Glendale: Dai Nam Co., n.d.

Huong, Minh. Flowers And Grass In The Field. Fort Smith: Song Moi, n.d.

Horstman, James L. and Van T. Moon. Helping Hands. New york: Paulist Press, 1993.

Jamieson, Robert. A Commentary, Vol. I. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1995.

Johnson, Greg and Mike Yorkey. "Daddy's Home." Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1992.

Kent, Zachary. The Story Of The Saigon Airlift. Chicago: Children Press, 1991.

Ketterman, Grace. The Family Matters. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1994.

Kindig, Eilen Silva. Goodbye Prince Charming. Colorado Springs: Pinon Press, 1993.

Keil, C.F. and F. Delitzsch. Commentary On The Old Testament, Vol. I. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996.

Landorf, Joyce. For Me And My Family. Santa Ana: Vision House Publishers, 1977.

McBurney, Louis. Counseling Christian Workers. Dallas: Word publishing, 1986.

Murphy, James G. Barnes' Notes, Genesis. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1873.

Mace, David and Vera Mace. The Sacred Fire. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987.

McCall, Virginia. Sunrise. New York: Paulist Press, 1992.

McClung, Flayd, Jr. God's Man In The Family. Eugene: Harvest House Publisers, 1994.

Moore, John L. Loosening The Reins. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992.

MacDonald, Gordon and Gail MacDonald. Till The Heart Be Touched. Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1992.

Newenhuyse, Elizabeth Cody. Strong Marriages Secret Questions. Batavia: Lion Publishing Corporation, 1990.

Nguyen, Hung Tien and Jerrold L. Schector. The Palace File. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1986.

- Olsen, James S. and Randy Roberts. Where The Domino Fall. New york: St. Martin's Press, 1991.
- Purnell, Dick. Making a Good Marriage Even Better. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1994.
- Patterson, Richard. It's The Little things That Count. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1993.
- Perrin, Linda. Coming To America. New York: Delacorte Press, 1980.
- Phan, Nam Nhat. Peace And Prisoners Of War. San Jose: Khang Chien Publisher, 1989.
- Poole, Matthew. Matthew Poole's Commentary On The Holy Bible, Vo. II. McClean: MacDonald, n.d.
- Richards, Lawrence O. Expository Dictionary Of The Bible Words. Grand Rapids: Regency, 1985.
- Rosenan, Douglas. Slaying The Marriage Dragons. Wheaton: Victor Books, 1984.
- Rosberg, Gary. Choosing To Love Again. Colorado Springs: Focus On The Family Publishing, 1992.
- Rickerson, Wayne. The Winning Hand. Colorado Springs: Navpress, 1991.
- Rutledge, Paul. The Vietnamese In America. Minneapolis: Learner Publication Company, 1987.
- Ross, Allen P. The Bible Knowledge Commentary. Old Testament. Wheaton: Victor Books, 1997.
- Sailhamer, John H. The Expositor's Bible Commentary. Vol. 2. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990.
- Strack, Jay. Family Matters Handbook. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1994.
- Storey, Robert and Daniel Robinson. Vietnam. Oakland: Lonely Peanut Publications, 1995.
- Swindoll, Chuck. The Strong Family. Portland: Multnomah, 1977.
- Seah, Audrey. Vietnam. North Bellmore: Marshall Cavendish, 1994.
- Shelton, Bettye and Andy Landis. She Stays. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995.
- Safer, Morley. Flashbacks On Returning To Vietnam. New York: Random House,

1990.

Sande, Ken. The Peacemaker. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991.

Takaki, Ronald. Strangers From A Different Shore. Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1989.

Tran, Binh An. The Secret of King Midas. Gaithersburg: VN Education Fund, 1995.

Trent, John. Love For All Seasons. Chicago: Moody Press, 1996.

Toan, Anh. The Vietnamese Cultures. Glendale: Dainamco, n.d.

Taylor, Robert M. and W. Lee Morrison. Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis Handbook. 1987.

Thigpen, Paul and Leisa Thigpen. 52 Simple Ways To Build Family Traditions. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1993.

Whiteman, Thomas. Innocent Victims. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1992.

Wright, Norman H. The Other Woman In your Marriage. Ventura: Regal Books, 1987.

Wenham, G.J. New Bible Commentary. Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994.

Williams, Pat and Jill Williams. Just Between Us. Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1991.

B. PERIODICAL ARTICLES

Graham, Billy. "Let Christ Transform Your Home," Decision, June 1997, pp 1-2.

Falwell, Jerry. "Marriage, Divorce, And Remarriage What Said The Word Of God?" National Liberty Journal, September 1997, pp. 1,2,20.

Nguyen, Huy Dinh. "Questions For Hanoi," Movement To Unite The People And Build Democracy, 1994, p. 155.

C. DOCUMENTS

United States Department Of The Army. Vietnam: A Country Study. Washingt, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1989.

Vietnam Helsinki Committee. Religious Persecution In The Socialist Republic Of Vietnam: 1975-1995 , by Vietnam Helsinki Committee (1995), pp. 10-11.

D. DICTIONARY

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary. Springfield: G. & C. Merriam Company, 1977.

VITA

Minh Van Lam

PERSONAL

Born: September 15, 1939

Married: Khanh Minh Ngo, October 28, 1961.

Children: Phuong , born on September 13, 1962.

Loan, born on April 6, 1964.

Ai, born on May 24, 1971.

Linh, born on May 11, 1973.

EDUCATIONAL

B.A., Washington Bible College, 1993.

M.Div., Capital Bible Seminary, 1995.

MINISTERIAL

License: June 6, 1982, Grand Ave Baptist Church, Fort Smith, Arkansas.

Ordination: April 28, 1984, Grand Ave Baptist Church, Fort Smith, Arkansas.

Pastorate: June 6, 1982-August 15, 1987, Grand Ave Baptist Church, Fort Smith, Arkansas.

August 18, 1987- October 29, 1995, Vietnamese Gospel Baptist Church, Alexandria, Virginia.

November 5, 1995 till present, Vietnamese Hope Baptist Church, Alexandria, Virginia.

PROFESSIONAL

Elementary School Principal, Soc-Trang School, Vietnam, 1959-1965.

Instructor, Armed Forces Language School, Saigon, Vietnam, 1966-1970.

Teacher, Public High School, Soc-Trang, Vietnam, 1970-1975.

Instructor, Boyce Bible School, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, 1995 till present.