LIBERTY BAPTIST SEMINARY

OPEN MARRIAGE AND INTIMACY:
A PERSPECTIVE FOR BIBLICAL MARRIAGE COUNSELING

A Thesis

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By

ALTON R. MELTON

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The views expressed in this thesis do not necessarily represent the views of the institution and/or of the thesis readers.

GRADE

B

THESIS MENTOR

Dr. Ronald Hawkins

READER

Nevin S. Alime
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INTRODUCTION

We live in a rapid paced society with drastically changing views on almost every aspect of life. One of those areas lies within the realm of marriage. The institution of marriage has lost much of its sacredness for many people. Consequently, open marriage and divorce have become widely accepted alternative life-styles. As a result counselors are faced with numerous marital counseling situations that are related to the lack of real intimacy between couples.

George and Nena O'Neill (1972) attribute many of the problems experienced in marriages today to a false concept of the importance of love, sex, and fidelity in a relationship. They claim:

If personal identity is based on love, equality measured by sex, and trust defined as fidelity, then identity will be crushed by a lessening of the initial romantic fervor, equality diminished by a temporary failure in sex, and trust destroyed through even the appearance of infidelity. But if personal identity, equality, and trust exist in full measure, then the normal fluctuations that occur in any relationship between two human beings can be taken in stride (p. 73).

Consequently, any couple who desires to have a relationship, that will indeed weather the storms of life, must strive for intimacy in their relationship.

Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to define intimacy and
identify the key elements making up this important area. We will then identify the major alternatives of intimate relationships, point out the elements of those alternatives as counterfeits of intimacy, and develop the train of thought that these only give the illusion of intimacy. We will then develop the four major areas of intimacy, the establishment of intimacy, and the benefits of intimacy.

The development of intimacy is seen as the highest or most important development for interpersonal relationships and should be sought after by every married couple. Consequently, the counselor needs a proper perspective of biblical marriage counseling. He needs to guide counselees through the popular concept of nonbiblical alternatives to a biblical relationship founded on intimacy.
CHAPTER ONE

The Issue of Intimacy

A. The Definition of Intimacy

The word "intimate" is derived from two Latin words meaning "to make known" and "inner most" (Davis, M., 1973). The implication is that in order to have an intimate relationship we need to "make known our innermost" being. This process is indeed a part of intimacy. However, it is certainly not the only part. Kate White (1979) claims that intimacy is not synonymous with full disclosure. The "exchanging of volumes of information will not guarantee closeness." Dr. Offit, leading psychiatrist, takes this thought further by saying that "true intimacy is not truth telling, not baring one's soul, not emotional disrobing. True intimacy involves knowing, respecting, and responding to the deepest feelings of the other" (Gittelson, 1981).

Erik Erikson (1963), one of the leading figures in the field of human development, defines intimacy as the capacity for an individual to commit himself to concrete affiliations and partnerships, while at the same time, he is developing the ethical strength to abide by his commitments, "even though they may call for significant sacrifices and compromises" (p. 263). He goes on to point out, in his eight stages of man, that a young adult should be capable of developing an intimate relationship between the ages of twenty and thirty. He has, at this time, the
capacity for a sense of intimacy and sufficient ego-strength to fuse with another individual without threat of the loss of identity. Freud describes intimacy as the "loss of ego boundaries between the intimates," while Sullivan describes the highest level of intimacy in terms of "each intimate's view of the other as an extension of himself" (Davis, M., 1973, p.13). A process is taking place whereby one individual is becoming associated with another person in such a way that he is being motivated to change or subordinate his own immediate wants for the privilege of getting to know the other person better (Hamon, 1982).

True intimacy, according to Erikson (1968), is really "a counterpointing as well as a fusing of identities" (p. 135). The young person who is not sure of his identity shies away from interpersonal intimacy or throws himself into acts of intimacy which are purely physical without true fusion or real self-abandonment. When this happens he retains a deep sense of isolation. The young person has failed to realize that true intimacy is possible only between two mature individuals. His action to obtain intimacy through physical means is, in actuality, an immature act (LaRoe and Herrick, 1979).

The fusing of identities involves the merger between the selves of individuals. However, no one has been able to describe the nature of this merger concretely or consistently.

Aristotle describes this psychological union in terms of 'two bodies and one soul.' He also refers to an intimate as a 'second self.' This phrase is better known to us in Cicero's Latin version, Alter Ego (Davis, M., 1973).
However, Aristotle's greatest description of intimacy lies in one person's selfless desire for continued existence of his intimate by referring to a friend as "one who desires the existence and preservation of his friend for his friend's sake" (Davis, M. p. 32).

If an individual does not set out to develop an intimate relationship, he will, in all likelihood, develop its counterpart:

Distantiation: the readiness to isolate and, if necessary, to destroy those forces and people whose essence seems dangerous to one's own, and whose 'territory' seems to encroach on the extent of one's intimate relations" (Erikson, 1963, p. 264).

Ultimately, intimacy is a life-changing experience. "No one can have intimacy without another person, sexually or otherwise, and remain the same" (French, 1981, p. 107). The core of intimacy lies in the "way we open and reveal ourselves to the one we marry" (O'Neill, 1977, p. 57).

What we, as individuals, should be doing is seeking after an intimate relationship with our spouses, which is a biblical principal. The Old Testament command (Genesis 2:24), re-emphasized in the New Testament by Jesus (Matthew 19:5,6) is that a man should leave his father and mother and cleave unto, become a close intimate part of, his wife. If he does this, then the two separate individuals become one flesh. They still have the same old identities. But, they have become a new entity with the strength to meet the world, to restore themselves, and to help each other to know who they are while encompassing all aspects of knowing each other.
B. The Elements of Intimacy

Intimacy forms the core of the most important relationship that an adult will ever have (LaRoe, 1979). In order to enjoy this intimate relationship, he needs to work at developing it to its fullest. Consequently, he will need to know and recognize the elements of intimacy in order to work at developing them within his personal relationship. There are four key elements that are essential for an intimate relationship.

1. Commitment

The first element in intimacy is commitment. In fact, Rogers (1972) feels that this element is crucial to any relationship. Eleanor MacKlin (no date given) noted that there are two distinct components of commitment:

1. Personal commitment, the extent to which one is dedicated to continuing the relationship. And,

2. Behavioral commitment, the consequences of having lived with an individual which made it more likely that one will do so.

Her study went on to reveal that married couples had a stronger sense of commitment to the relationship than did non-marrieds. The commitment felt by the non-marrieds was highly dependent upon the present quality or strength of the relationship, while the commitment felt by the marrieds was based on a deep seated desire to make the union work.

Many people have found that the institution of marriage is the "glue" that holds their relationship together. It is a bond that gives them time to "work" things out. However, in actuality, it is the pledge
they have made to each other and to their relationship that is holding them together. Anthropologist, Bronislaw Malowski, referred to the "almost mystical bond" (O'Neill, 1977, p.40) between husband and wife that exists in most human societies. Religions have compared it to the transcendent oneness we seek with the divine. Nena O'Neill (1977) believes that these mystical bonds exist and that oneness is experienced in a spiritual way. Love and caring help create the human bonds we feel. These bonds are the bonds of marriage; which implies the building of a future together, a future tied to the commitment of the relationship.

It is interesting to note that earlier non-Christian cultures faded rapidly when they violated one of the basic laws of nature. "Couples who live together without the commitment of marriage are compromising their humanity and reducing themselves to a level of pleasure seeking (or perhaps convenience seeking) animals" (Without Benefit, 1977).

In a book entitled Crisis and Faith (Sanhedrin Press) Eliezer Berkowitts puts it well: The highest form of the personalization of the relationship between a man and a woman finds its expression in their complete dedication to each other. It includes unquestioning trust in each other, the full acceptance of one's partner in his or her comprehensive humanity. A love that does not have the courage to commit itself 'forever' is lacking in trust, in acceptance and faith. Love fully personalized desires to be final, ultimate. But, how can one commit oneself forever? Only by accepting the bondage of the responsibility
of commitment. In the ups and downs of the struggle of daily existence, the truth and the faith are tested, often as if by fire (Without Benefit, 1977, p. 32).

Commitment, then, is seen as a legal binding to the relationship by means of a contract. That binding is only as strong as each partner desires it to be. If they accept the contract, recognize their responsibility to it, and are willing to give themselves wholeheartedly to its success, they will have real commitment to their relationship.

2. Communication

The cement that binds all of the varied elements of intimacy into one cohesive whole is communication. When there is intimacy in a marriage, a deep seated trust will exist that enables you to share and communicate openly, honestly, and freely with your partner. Intimacy gives a feeling of safety that stems from the knowledge that you are accepted, limitations and all. Plus, of course, it increases your awareness and concern for your spouse's needs, feelings and happiness (LaRoe, 1979).

Two people need to "communicate with each other from the very center of their existence" in order for love to exist and grow (Fromm, 1956). Consequently, each individual must experience himself from the center of his existence.

Love is a constant challenge. It is not a resting place, but a moving, growing, working-together experience. Harmony or conflict and joy or sadness are secondary to the fundamental fact that two people experience themselves from the essence of their existence. They are one with each other by being one with themselves rather than by fleeing from themselves.
"There is only one proof for the presence of love: the depth of the relationship, and the aliveness and strength in each person concerned; this is the fruit by which love is recognized" (Fromm, 1956, p. 103).

3. Trust

Fundamental to intimacy is the element of trust, one cannot exist without the other. Cuber and Heroff (1965) list trust as the "cornerstone" (p. 59) of a total relationship. Furthermore, trust is most generally defined as a belief by a person in the integrity of another individual (Larzelere, 1980). Larzelere goes on to suggest that trust increases security in a relationship, reduces inhibitions and defensiveness, and frees people to share feelings and dreams. George and Nena O'Neill (1972) see trust as a prerequisite for marital partners. It is needed in order for them to achieve their maximum potential for personal and interpersonal growth.

One of the major aspects or benefits of trust is that there is practically no pretense between people who are truly trusting each other.

There are few areas of tension because the items of differences, which have arisen over the years, have been settled as they arose. There often were serious differences of opinions but they were handled sometimes by one or the other yielding: but those outcomes were of secondary importance because the primary consideration was not who was right or wrong, but only how the problem could be resolved without tarnishing the relationship (Cuber and Heroff, 1965, p. 59).

Finally, trust refers to:
the confidence we place in people in general and in a specific person in particular. We think of our lover as dependable and loyal. We can rely on our lover to do good things for us without wondering whether there is something in it for them. We are secure in the knowledge because we assume our destinies are tied together. Trust means more than loyalty to another person. It also means fidelity to our relationship and respect for its integrity. Anything that tends to diminish that relationship threatens both of us. Similarly, while I accept your independence as a person and you accept mine, both of us feel that neither of us should do anything which would jeopardize our trust in each other (Schwartz, 1966, p. 20).

4. Fidelity

In order to fully understand the true meaning of fidelity, it is necessary to look at this complex concept in the biblical tradition. It can be first seen as a major attribute of God - faithfulness or "emet" (Exodus 34:6). Its two Hebraic roots can be traced to "aman" which suggest solidity and sureness and to "batah" which suggests security and confidence. Greek roots which were later incorporated into biblical tradition are less certain since the Greek religion allowed practically no place for faith as such. Even so, the related Greek concepts are helpful, bringing in aspects of hope, confidence, loyalty, belief, truth, and reliability.

The fidelity of Yaweh (emet) is frequently linked with his paternal concern and goodness (hessed, or in the Septuagint elos). Yahweh's
commitment to his chosen people required, in turn, fidelity from man. Fidelity then involved the whole man, every aspect of a person's life, beginning with his commitment to the supreme being and flowing through the mutual relationships binding relatives (Genesis 47:29), friends (I Samuel 20:8), and allies (Genesis 21:23).

Very early in the old covenant, the patriarchs and prophets began using one common human experience as an example; an illustration of the relationship between Yahweh and his chosen people. To explain this divine covenant and especially the fidelity of Yahweh, in spite of the infidelity of his people, the patriarchs and prophets spoke often of the covenant between a husband and wife (Libby, 1973).

Sex is a deep instinctive drive, one of the very exciting components of the marital relationship, and a preoccupation of the time in which we live. The market place is flooded with new information about sex. We have mechanical aids and pornographic stimulators at our disposal and we make pilgrimages to sex clinics in hopes that we will discover the ultimate experience in sexual fulfillment. However, what has been overlooked is the meaning of sex in the context of the relationship (O'Neill, 1977).

Fidelity has always played a leading role in a meaningful relationship. "Sexual fidelity has always been one of the basic problems of marriage whether or not it was carried out in practice" (O'Neill, 1977, p. 198). It is not just a vow in marriage or a moral or religious belief, but a need associated with our deepest emotions and our quest for emotional security.

The relationship is still built upon the biblical principal of
Genesis 2:24, the two shall become one flesh. Not the three, or four, or five shall become one flesh, but the two shall become one flesh. Faithfulness, as Erik Erikson suggests, is essential to one's growth as an autonomous, independent, mature person (Libby, 1973). Consequently, in order for a couple to have a genuine relationship, they must be faithful not only to each other, but to the commitment they made to their contract as well. Dahms (1972) feels that "the capacity to evolve and maintain emotionally intimate relationships is a requirement for survival" (p. 101). If he is right, we should do everything in our power to develop all the elements of intimacy in our marital relationship.
CHAPTER TWO

The Illusion of Intimacy

A. Alternatives To Intimacy

We are becoming more keenly aware of the fact that experimental family forms are being developed daily around us. Americans seem to be obsessed with a desire to achieve personal freedom.

While part of the population has remained steeped in the rugged individualist tradition of marriage, kids, a house, a boat, two cars, and a place in the country; others have responded to a new emphasis on individual growth and freedom that may include, but clearly transcends, the economic emphasis of rugged individualism. Maslow's version of self-actualism has been stripped of its emphasis on responsibility and reduced to do your own thing (Ramey, no date given, p. 4).

George and Nena O'Neill (1972) have stated that institutions are merely a way of formalizing some of the structures underlying human behavior. "The institution of marriage and the family, no matter how diverse in style and configuration they may be, are fundamental to every society" (p. 19). This conviction is shared by many others.

Rogers (1972) feels that the institutions of marriage and family are failing institutions. As a result, people are making every effort to avoid repeating past failures and at the same time exploring "new avenues of relating, new kinds of partnerships, learning from mistakes,
profiting from successes. They are inventing alternatives, new futures for our most sharply failing institutions, marriage and the family (p. 40).

James Smith (1974) cites an increasing dissatisfaction with the "Prevailing patterns of traditional monogamous marriage and the vague but general discontent with our impersonal and fragmented existence" (p. 56), as reasons for the rapid growth of alternative marriage styles. George and Nena O'Neill (1972) emphasize this rapidly changing pattern by noting the fact that nearly "one in three marriages end in divorce and possibly 75% are ailing" (p. 17). They list open marriage, group marriage, communes, polygamy, non-marriage, wife-swapping and homosexual marriages as alternative marriage styles. Each of these is an attempt to obtain an intimate lasting relationship.

We need to keep in mind the biblical description of intimacy as we look at alternatives or counterfeits to intimacy: two shall become one flesh as husband and wife (Matthew 19:5,6). However, the O'Neill's would disagree with this concept.

The one-to-one relationship, whether it is realized through monogamy or within other forms of marriage, fulfills man's profound human needs - those developmental and psychological needs for intimacy, trust, affection, affiliation, and the validation of experience (p. 21).

They felt that this relationship was best obtained in an open marriage.

1. Open Marriage

Open marriage can be defined as a relationship in which the
partners are committed to their own and to each other's growth. It is an honest and open relationship of intimacy and self-disclosure based on the equal freedom and identity of both partners. Supportive caring and increasing security in the individual identities make possible the sharing of self-growth with someone who encourages and anticipates his own and his mate's growth.

It is a relationship that is flexible enough to allow for change and that is constantly being renegotiated in the light of changing needs, consensus in decision making, acceptance and encouragement of individual growth, and an openness to new possibilities for growth. Obviously, following this model often involves a departure, sometimes radical, from rigid conformity to the established husband/wife roles and is not easy to affect (Smith, 1974, p. 62).

The O'Neills (1972) believe that open marriage should be the norm and not the exception. It is a relationship that should be sought after instead of being avoided because open marriage is an honest and open relationship between two people, based on the equal freedom and identity of both partners. It involves verbal, intellectual, and emotional commitment to the right of each to grow as an individual within the marriage. Open marriage is a non-manipulative relationship between man and woman. Neither one is the object of total validation for the other's inadequacies or frustrations. It is a relationship of peers in which there is no need for dominance and submission to commandeered restrictions or stifling possessiveness. Being individuals, both the man and woman are free to develop and expand into the outside world. Each has
the opportunity for growth and new experiences outside the marriage. Through their growth as separate persons and their supportive love for each other, they vitalize and increase their couple power. Their union grows stronger and richer through this dynamic principle. Because each one is growing through freedom toward selfhood, adding new experiences from the outside and at the same time receiving the incremental benefit of his mate's outside experiences, the union develops in a constantly upward spiral. Open marriage thus draws on the idea of synergy - that one plus one equals more than two and that the sum of the parts working together is greater than the sum of the parts working separately.

Basically the guidelines for an open marriage are: "living for now, realistic expectations, privacy, role flexibility, open and honest communication, open companionship, equality, identity, and trust" (Smith, 1974, p. 156). All of these things sound like elements of a monogamous intimate relationship. However, the concept of open marriage still carries the right of either partner to pack up and move out or to have an intimate (even physical) relationship with anyone they please at any time: "Spousal agreement to sexual freedom for both husband and wife in terms of 'co-marital' sexual relationships is sanctioned in some forms of open marriage" (Libby, 1974, p. 17).

George and Nena O'Neill (1972) feel that the differences between open and closed marriage is the difference between coercion and choice. In an open marriage a couple may attend a social function as a couple, but if they do so, they do so out of choice not because they have to. They feel that a closed marriage, bound together by a formal contract, is
a form of bondage for both the husband and wife. While in a "closed marriage, the couple do not exist in a one-plus-one relationship. Their ideal is to become fused into a single entity - a couple" (p. 39).

We must be careful to note that open marriages are custom made and highly individual. There is no single unchanging stereotype as there is for closed marriage. Furthermore:

each unique open marriage is made more unique because it is constantly growing and evolving. No couple can say that they have an open marriage, because if they believe that, in complacent satisfaction, the status quo of their relationship at that moment will be extended into an unchanging pattern that is only a modified form of a closed marriage. At best, a couple can say they are working towards an open marriage (Libby, 1973, p. 30).

However, George and Nena O'Neill (1972) claim that a closed marriage (traditional) is restrictive and oppressive. They list six clauses of a closed contract to back up their claim:

Clause 1. Possession or ownership of the mate;
Clause 2. Denial of self (sacrificing one's individual identity);
Clause 3. Maintenance of couple front;
Clause 4. Rigid role behavior;
Clause 5. Absolute fidelity;
Clause 6. Total exclusivity (enforced togetherness).

The O'Neill's have lumped what they consider to be negative traits into closed marriage and what they consider to be positive traits into open marriage. Obviously, neither type of marriage has all components.
A marriage may be monogamous with absolute fidelity and have the positive components of open marriage. They paint a portrait of a newlywed couple and show, how during their first week of marriage, patterns are set which will govern their behavior as long as they are married. However, they choose a situation in which neither member of the couple seem unhappy, i.e., she cooks breakfast while he reads the paper, and considers the situation bad and assumes that their relationship will not change. They do not take into consideration the fact that the couple are in an adjustment period and are learning about each other and adjusting to one another's needs.

A radical change took place, early in this century, in attitudes toward sex. Americans shifted from not discussing it to becoming obsessed with it. "Today we place more emphasis on sex than any society since ancient Rome" (May, 1969, p. 47). This accounts for the results of a test recently conducted by Dr. Douglas Sprinkle of the Department of Family Studies of Purdue University. He estimates that 60% of all married men and 40% of all married women have extra-marital experiences (Mayleas, 1980). This report reflects an increase over the findings in a 1953 Kinsey Report that stated 50% of married males and 25% of married females had engaged in adultery by the age of 40 (Smith, 1974).

This century has been the century of the "Sexual Revolution," a revolution that has been brought on by media, books, magazines, and greater mobility. People are able to travel out of sight of parents and friends where their actions go unmonitored (Schur, 1964). The media, books, and magazines flaunt the exciting, appealing side of a free life
style - a lifestyle that more and more young people are seeking after in their search for freedom. They are not seeking security, stability, or fixity, but rather, a commitment that is based on freedom, not security (Bernard, 1972). They desire intimacy. . . physical intimacy. However, physical intimacy is a false intimacy, which is "selfish and one-sided, though it feels like the real thing. You are not into intimate feelings with another but rather your own expectations. In true intimacy both partners are involved" (Moore, 1980, p. 232).

2. Companionate and Trial Marriages

Consequently, more and more young people are making "companionate" or "trial" marriages to find out if they are "suited for each other." A companionate or trial marriage is an experiment whereby a "temporary agreement is made between a man and a woman sexually. But it is part of the understanding that they have not fully entered into a permanent contract or undertaking to produce a family" (Capper and Williams, 1958, p. 62). Therefore, either of them has the right to pick up and leave at will. They do not see themselves married as do participants of a "pair-bond" relationship, which is a reciprocal primary relationship involving sexual intimacy (Smith, 1974). Consequently, there is no commitment to stick it out if the going gets rough.

3. Cohabitation

Cohabitation is a nice-sounding word we use instead of the more coarse "shacking up" that our grandparents used to describe a trial or companionate marriage. Tony Schwartz (1977), in a Newsweek article, said it used to be called "living in sin." He goes on to point out that
cohabitation used to be done mostly by the very rich, who could afford to flaunt society's rules, and the very poor, who had nothing to lose by ignoring them. But now it's a way of life that takes college students, divorcees, pensioners and thousands of young adults in transition from "swingledom to suburbia." He quotes the fact that since 1970, Census Bureau figures show, the number of unmarried people of the opposite sex sharing a household has doubled from 654,000 to 1.3 million, and that almost surely understates the total.

The term cohabitation is used to describe heterosexual living arrangements. In some ways, cohabitation appears to be an entirely new practice. It is a semipermanent or permanent heterosexual relationship initiated without benefit of clergy. Cohabitation is similar to, but different from, marriage (Clayton and Voss, 1977). It is considered to include five forms:

1. Trial marriage
2. Common law marriage
3. Casual arrangements
4. Temporary relationships
5. Stable relationships (Ramey, 1976, p. 128).

These forms have made an impact on the legislators of a number of states. Twenty states have laws on their books making cohabitation illegal (Brill, 1978), while there are twelve states that have passed, "Consenting Adults" statutes that make cohabitation legal (Ramey, 1976).

A study done at Cornell University listed the following reasons people gave for cohabitation:
Loneliness, the superficiality of the 'dating game,' the search for more meaningful relationships, emotional satisfaction of living with someone who cares, the desire to 'try out' a relationship before marriage, widespread doubts about the institution of marriage, emotional attachment, security, companionship, and enjoyment (Macklin, 1974, p. 53).

It appears there was an undercurrent of desire to duplicate an intimate relationship without the commitment that needs to go along with it.

4. Swinging

Trial marriages or freedom in sex is not limited to cohabitating singles, but is practiced by married couples as well. Again, so as not to offend our dear grandparents, we have coined a "cute" little word so it won't sound like adultery. We call it "swinging." Swinging couples are traditionally married and are "engaging in sexual activities with others, and with their partners consent" (Smith, 1974, p. 230). This situation is almost always initiated by the husband, who in essence is "bartering his wife, and terminated by the wife" (Bernard, 1972, p. 62).

Charles Varne distinguishes three kind of swingers: hard core, egotistical, and recreational.

Hard core swingers want no emotional involvement with their partners, and, with little selectivity, swing with as many couples as possible. They are seen as being generally cold and unfeeling by other swingers. Egotistical swingers do not seek emotional involvement with
their partners, but are usually fairly selective. They want purely sexual experiences. Swinging is viewed as a distinct and separate part of their lives and they have no social relationships or friendships with their swinging partners. Recreational swingers emphasize the social aspects of swinging. They are members of fairly stable groups, enjoy both party and one-couple situations, and engage in non-swinging activities with one another. But, significant emotional involvement with the partner is neither needed or desired. The emphasis is on the sociability and sexuality of the experience (Bernard, 1972, p. 197).

However, as exciting or enlightening as swinging may seem, there is a high price that must be paid for swinging. It includes: "jealousy, hazard of VD, mechanistic sex, and not being able to live up to your own sexual expectations: (Bernard, 1972, p. 197).

5. Open-Ended Marriage

A swinging couple technically has an open-ended marriage. It is certainly "monogamous, a primary one to one relationship based on mutual commitment and intended to last a lifetime" (Mazur, 1973, p. 16). In fact, their marriage is quite conventional. However, it is not based on a covenant exclusive of other intimates and sensual friendships. It is based on just the opposite, freedom. The partners are free to have any number of intimate relationships with others (Mazur, 1973). Ronald Mazur goes on to call traditional monogamy "with its rigid requirements for exclusive devotion and affection, even though hallowed by the theological concept of fidelity, a culturally approved mass neurosis" (p. 12).
The proponents of open-ended marriages are well aware of the tremendous risks involving human growth in an open-ended marriage. However, they claim that the open-ended marriage seeks to promote: risk taking in trust; the warmth of loving without anxiety; the extension of affection; the excitement and pleasure of knowing sensually a variety of other persons; the enrichment which personalities contribute to each other; the joy of being fully alive in every encounter" (Mazur, 1973, 16).

Even the term extra-marital is misleading in the context of open-ended marriage. For it is precisely within marriage, rather than outside it, that open-ended marriage incorporates the freedom of two spouses to enjoy multilateral sexual and friendship relations.

Co-marital is a more appropriate term for open-ended marriages because it at least carries the connotation of togetherness and cooperation within the structure of the marriage. Within such marriages the possibility of adultery is totally absent because exclusion, possessiveness, and jealousy have no place in the relationship (Mazur, 1973, p. 13).

Open-ended marriage, then, is claiming to be able to provide the same kind of intimacy as a closed traditional marriage and possibly a little more because it alone is really "free". However, is it really free? Is it or any other alternative life style able to produce a truly intimate relationship? "The two shall become one flesh", not the three, or four, or five, or six shall become one flesh. We shall discuss this more fully in Chapter 3.
B. Counterfeits of True Intimacy

Alternatives to intimacy, in turn, bring out a remarkable phenomenon. They are capable of producing the sensation or illusion of intimacy. The first factor in creating the illusion of intimacy is the denial of the necessity of commitment.

1. Intimacy Without Commitment

Clara Livsey (1977) points out that there is a highly vocal minority today that advocates alternative life styles as a replacement for marriage. New groupings, new ways to relate, which avoid personal commitment offer the individual freedom to move in and out of relationships. These "new" modalities are not all that new. People simply talk more openly about their intimate relationships today. However, throughout history the upper classes have experimented with forms of group marriage, concubines, and other relationships involving outsiders.

George and Nena O'Neill (1972) argue that the married couple could have relationships with other persons that might involve sex, and that such relationships could be accepted as a normal part of a stable marriage. Social scientists find that many husbands and wives are opting for this "open" aspect to their marriage. Consequently, partners have been found to accept and even encourage expanded intimacy, often claiming that such experiences renew and enrich the original union. However, many people, who have tried open marriage, report that jealousy and uncertainty can be serious problems in their relationship.

Eugene Schermann (1971) broadens this aspect of illusion with the claim that he has seen adultery with consent actually add a rich new
dimension to the lives of couples who believe that sex with more than one person is enjoyable. However, many people believe that the commitment they have to their marriage partner is what makes them want to be totally honest with each other. Consequently, they honestly feel that they have a stable relationship, even if they have no intention or desire to remain married or together forever (Ramey, 1976).

Even trial cohabitation is nothing more than conditional love. When two people agree to live together and have physical intimacy to see if they are compatible, they are advocating partial commitment (Ellison, 1966). Gary Schwartz (1966) points out that even though two people may be bound together by a marriage contract, they may still feel at liberty to look for a better relationship. Unless there is a total commitment to that relationship then there is no intimacy. That commitment must include exclusivity for the relationship to give birth to and nurture intimacy. But, there are still those who would argue in favor of non-permanent commitment, claiming that it puts both partners on their best behavior and prevents either from sinking into a taken-for-granted status of neglect (Bernard, 1972).

We have seen that many people are claiming that they do not need to be committed to their relationship in order to experience intimacy. They have gone so far as to devise numerous and complicated relationships and life styles in an effort to prove that intimacy can be experienced without commitment. However, as popular as these life styles may have become, they have not become the norm (Livsey, 1977). In fact, just the opposite has occurred. Even though more couples are deciding to live together openly today than in the past, there is no evidence that this life
style is their permanent choice. The consensus among the young people interviewed in an article by Barnard and Fain (1980) is that they are just not as comfortable living together unmarried as they were married. The sense of security and completion was missing from their relationship.

2. Intimacy Without Trust

Another factor in creating the illusion of intimacy is the denial of the necessity of trust in the relationship. If either member loses confidence in the other, the relationship is in serious jeopardy. However, George and Mena O'Neill (1972) attack the institution most capable of bringing about a secure intimate relationship, the marriage. They claim that couples would find it easier to relate in the present and to live a more dynamic open life if marriage were not given this position of importance. Their concept of open marriage is nothing more than an illusion of intimacy. It attacks the ideals and beliefs of closed marriages by declaring them to be unrealistic and unreasonable. In so doing, they are claiming that the cornerstone of trust can only exist in an open relationship. However, the ideals and beliefs of closed marriage are only attainable in a relationship stabilized by trust. Those ideals and beliefs are:

That it will last forever
That it means total commitment
That it will bring happiness, comfort, and security
That your mate belongs to you
That you will have constant attention, concern, admiration, and consideration for your mate
That you will never be lonely again
That your mate would rather be with you at all times
That jealousy means you care
That your mate will always be true to you
That having a child is the ultimate expression of your love to each other (O'Neill & O'Neill, 1972, p. 81).

Craig Ellison (1966) reinforces the necessity of trust by pointing out that many people are driven by a desire for autonomy, the desire to be independent and free, which breaks down trust. We can't trust others "because they may simply be using us for their own ends" (p. 69). So, we don't let our real selves be known. We play a deadly game behind pleasant masks. A game of individualism which makes it nearly impossible to form genuine close relationships with others. Insecure couples, afraid to lose any freedom, choose living arrangements that sacrifice commitment for imagined autonomy. Even within marriage, individual kingdom building may take place. Each partner may be more concerned with the action of his autonomy than with the kind of giving that will result in mature interdependence and love. Consequently, he communicates to his partner, "I do not trust you." He, thereby, opens the door to the establishment of the greatest illusion of intimacy, that of physical intimacy.

3. Physical Intimacy

Many people feel that just because they have a physical relationship with another person, they have an intimate relationship. However, this is recognized by Moore (1980) as False Intimacy. Free lance sexual relations have become common place in the United States. However, sex
and intimacy are not equatable (Ellison, 1966). In fact, the only thing anyone involved in a purely physical relationship is doing is satisfying their own lusts. They feel that love making must be an earth-shattering orgasmic high every time, and when it is not, something is wrong with the marriage. The instinct then is to look elsewhere, which results in an affair. The participants of the affair are frequently guilt ridden because they recognize the fact that their affair may inevitably mean the end of the existing marriage (Libby, 1973).

Even though there is some feeling of guilt over extramarital sex, much of the research in the area of co-marital sex indicates that "many persons report little or no guilt following non-marital sex, especially if participants feel genuine affection for each other" (Collins, 1980, p. 288). However, a lack of remorse does not make such activity morally right. The Bible still indicates that sin hardens the heart (Romans 1:21-32) and "emotional turmoil, guilt, jealousy, fear, anxiety, insecurity, self-condemnation, anger, and depression are among the reactions that have been known to follow in the wake of sex apart from marriage" (Collins, p. 288).

John Powell (1974) would call this instinctual motivation one of the counterfeit versions of love than can exist between a man and a woman. He sees their relationship as a "physical conquest where one or both sees the other as a source of physical pleasure" (p. 53). This is a concept upheld by Freud as well. He felt that if man would give himself over to the full uninhabited satisfaction of all instinctual desires he would create mental health and happiness:
But the obvious clinical facts demonstrate that men and women, who devote their lives to unrestricted sexual satisfaction do not attain happiness, and very often suffer from severe neurotic conflicts or symptoms. The complete satisfaction of all instinctual needs is not only not a basis for happiness, it does not even guarantee sanity (Fromm, 1956, p. 92).

However, most people still feel that "intimacy is established primarily through sexual contact" (Fromm, 1956, p. 53). This assumption has prompted the rapid increase of alternative life styles. Few people involved in extramarital sex view their involvement as being wrong. The swinging couple, especially, looks on their extramarital sex as not being adultery, because their spouses are aware of what they are doing and give consent. The illusion lies in the fact that they believe they have transcended the perceived pettiness, hypocrisy, immaturity, and dishonesty of adulterous affairs engaged in by the majority of married couples. However, they are overlooking the fear that enters into this relationship. Most women swingers fear that their husbands will lose interest or satisfaction with them as sexual partners and consequently lose interest in their relationship (Smith, 1974).

James Smith (1974) goes on to reveal a study of four hundred and twenty-five swinging couples, wherein forty percent claimed their marriage relationship was actually improved by their life style. They claimed they did not feel the jealousy, guilt, or threat to their marriage that people who left swinging life styles claimed. He quotes figures of one to eight million people that are involved in co-marital sex, and reports
Consequently, you would have to be on guard against revealing something which might be used against you (Schwartz, 1966).

Therefore, a common ground must be used upon which to establish or build intimacy. That foundation or common ground is built on commitment to the relationship.

A. Establishing Commitment

From a Biblical perspective and according to O'Neill (1977):

Marriage, with its foundations of commitment, loyalty, and responsibility, with its comfortable familiarity and physical closeness, is for the most of us the place where intimacy is possible. We can only create the climate for this intimacy and trust in each other in a place where we have freedom to be ourselves, where we are accepted and encouraged to grow (p. 67).

Sage (1979) points out that a major life change takes place when two people join forces emotionally and physically to become a couple. At this point, they stop being merely two individuals. They have become a new social unit, a partnership. The whole is different from its component parts. It isn't only the sum of their two personalities with their hopes and needs, but a new entity of hopes, needs, and responsibilities have emerged.

When two individuals become intimate each gives up his individuality, in so far as components that make up his identity combine with the components that make up the others. But each intimate has not only lost the old sources of his singularity, he has also acquired new ones. If anything, he has become more of an individual than he was,
though in a different way than he had been.

Although intimates may mystically merge many of their self-components, they may not be able to make all of them mingle. First, each intimate may neither press all his anatomical aspects into the other nor harmonize all his psychological rhythms with the others, nor mimic all the others conduct, nor share all his possessions. Secondly, each intimate may never match the whole range of the others tastes, opinions, attitudes and ideals, may never assimilate all the others personal culture and may never succeed in making the others past as real to himself as it is to the other. Thirdly, each intimate may not share all his partner's interests. Consequently, he may interact with a somewhat different segment of their common environment. Each may also feel he has been differentiated from the other by certain experiences that occurred when they were spatially separated, which he simply cannot convey to the other in words. Finally, each may be unable to overlap totally his own social circle and the self-component of it with that of his partner. Each may interact to a somewhat different degree with a somewhat different selection of their set of common friends (Davis, M., 1973, p. 189).

The very foundation of marital commitment has always included the attribute of permanence: permanence that nails down the security function of marriage. A commitment that is less than permanent is hardly a guarantee of security at all (Bernard, 1972). It is this idea of permanence that may have prompted Jesus to remind the Pharisees (Mark 10:1-9)
that a man is to leave his mother and father, cleave to his wife, become one flesh with his wife, and never be separated from her by man.

This idea of commitment was so important to Him that He told His disciples than any man who broke this commitment "putting away his wife" or any woman who "puts away her husband," is committing adultery (Mark 10:10, 12; Matthew 5:32).

When a man "cleaves" to his wife, they become one flesh. The term "one flesh" is a beautiful description of the oneness, completeness, and permanence God intended in the marital relationship. "One flesh" pictures a unique oneness, a total commitment to intimacy in all of life together, symbolized by sexual union (Wright, 1978).

The Apostle Paul believed very strongly in the importance of being committed to the right person. He reminds us (I Corinthians 6:15-20) that we are bought with a great price, the price of Jesus Christ, and have a responsibility to Him and His Word. Therefore, we need to be careful who we join ourselves to (vs. 16), avoid sin, and glorify God. If the individual we are joined to (our spouse) is going to become one flesh with us, then we should first of all exercise every precaution that this individual is the right choice. Then we should recognize the fact that God expects us to make a permanent, lifelong commitment to that total relationship. Finally, we should be willing to make such a commitment before we can expect to establish an intimate relationship.

This is a crucial step in the establishment of intimacy and must not be overlooked or bypassed. Most people enter marriage with a feeling of anticipation. They are hoping that their life will be marked by strength and stability so that no matter what problems lie ahead, they will no
longer have to face them alone. By the time a couple decides to marry, a strong bond of loyalty has developed between them; to get married means to settle down emotionally and thus be protected by a stable relationship. A good marital relationship reinforces the spouse's self. The security of their commitment encourages them to grow and to take necessary risks (Livsey, 1977).

This whole concept of being totally committed to each other, of becoming one flesh, and of being inseparable is regarded negatively in today's society (O'Neill, 1977). It is felt that something must be wrong with a marriage if it fosters such reliance on another person. However, Mrs. O'Neill goes on to point out, that neither of her parents have lost their individuality throughout their marriage. "If anything, it (marriage) has reinforced their distinctions as individuals. Their attachment to family and to friends is an extension of their commitment to each other" (p. 55).

James Ramey (1976) reminds us that intimacy does occur in other relationships besides marriage. However, the Word of God clearly teaches against a physically intimate relationship outside the bounds of marriage (I Corinthians 7:1,2).

Furthermore, when we choose a marriage partner, we imply, to the world, that there is no other person with whom we would rather live. Marriage is not like an intermittent affair or one-night stand. It has the element of commitment to the space and continuance of years in which we can grow and develop together. Marriage is quite different from the emotional intensity we may find in a short relationship. The continuity of marriage gives us time to develop a mature
love that does not fluctuate with changing circumstances or seasons, or the latest whim or fancy (O'Neill, 1977, p. 99).

In fact, for most of us, marriage holds the greatest possibility of a deeply intimate, emotional, and physical relationship (Ellison, 1966).

Otto Piper (1960) explains that marriage is a lifelong mutual bond between a man and a woman based on sex. The importance of this physical union is further extolled by Nena O'Neill (1977).

Sex between two people is a symbol of closeness, a gift to each other, a symbol of the love and loyalty we share. There is a deep association between sex as a physical act of closeness and our feelings of attachment and affection. As infants, we are held and caressed, soothed and cuddled by our parents, and thus learn to associate physical closeness with love and security, especially in our culture where the child, from earliest infancy, is usually cared for by only one or two adults (p. 199).

As important as sex is to intimacy, it is not the primary indicator of a solid intimate relationship. Our flesh wants to tell us that if we have a good sex life we have good marriage. And, if we have a good marriage, we are experiencing true intimacy. However, just the opposite is true; a good marriage makes a good sex life. Ellison (1966) states: Emotional compatibility is the true indication of marital success. Many couples spend 5% of their time developing the kind of understanding and dialogue which makes for deep, sustained intimacy and 95% on physical intimacy. Our society and its insatiable emphasis on pleasure promotes this. But when it comes to lasting marriages,
learning to pray together goes much further than (sexually) playing together (p. 140).

Consequently, an intimate marriage begins with the right foundation. That foundation should be the commitment each individual feels toward the relationship and each other. James Ramey (1976) calls this commitment an ongoing process of becoming involved or investing one's self. "A committed relationship is one involving dialogue (an ongoing, problem solving, learning interest: a process), trust, and responsibility" (p. 28). Eleanor Macklin (no date given) found in her study, that most students do not believe that a long-term commitment to the partner is necessary before persons live together. They indicate that cohabitation is acceptable as long as there is a strong, affectionate, preferably monogamous relationship between the two persons. Summarizing Macklin's findings:

Roughly 5% of the undergraduates tested indicated a couple should be married before living together; 15%, formally or tentatively engaged; 40%, strong affectionate, monogamous relationship; 25% strong affectionate, also dating others, relationship or good friends; and 15%, persons who find it expedient to live together should do so, and no emotional involvement is necessary (p. 53).

In fact, George and Nena O'Neill (1972) agreed with these findings, indicating that love and companionship between a couple does not need a "piece of paper." The old marriage contract is archaic and certainly not needed for intimacy. However, J. McGown (1981) points out that:
To marry, to celebrate a love and commitment publicly, in the presence of family and friends, is to say that the meaning of one's life can only be found in the context of community. To acknowledge one's part in the human family is to recognize that one's life is more than one's own, that one's actions affect more than one's self, is to proclaim that marriage is more than a private affair between one man and one woman (p.142).

She goes on to point out that to live together seems to imply that the central relationship of one's life is nobody's business but one's own. There is no community blessing or celebration of the decision, and consequently, little support. Couples who are living together often find themselves quite alone when problems arise in their relationships.

McGowan (1981) points out:

Our wedding was a symbol of the way we want to live our lives: surrounded by family and friends; giving and receiving, the gifts of time, laughter, advice, and help sharing food, work, prayer, and celebration; creating a world where children are free and full of joy (p. 142).

This, of course, supports the biblical view of marriage, "The husband shall cleave unto his wife and the two shall become one flesh" (Matthew 19:5,6).

However, the majority of the people who marry do so because they are in "love" not because they desire to make a commitment to build an intimate relationship. Erich Fromm (1956) describes love as a union under the condition of preserving one's integrity, and one's individuality.
Love is an active power in man; a power which breaks through the walls which separate man from his fellow man, which unites him with others; love makes him overcome the sense of isolation and separateness, yet it permits him to be himself, to retain his integrity. In love, the paradox occurs that two beings become one and yet remain two (p. 20).

The fact that two can become one may be a paradox to Erich Fromm, however, it is a command of God. Even though the two are changing and becoming one they are not losing their individuality.

Nena O'Neill (1977) emphasizes the growing together of two individuals by saying:

Love is giving the other the space to be his own person, his own I. In marriage it is a responsibility for and commitment to sharing some of our personal space together, to contributing to each other's identity, to reflecting each other in honesty and faith. Marriage is a place where we can be ourselves, but it is also a place where we can grow and change in personal ways through the stability of our commitment to each other. Choosing and accepting the responsibility to cherish and respect each other's being through hardships, tensions, and joys, through personal and couple growth, through time together, enabling mature love to grow between two people (p. 117).

Love plays a very crucial part in the intimate relationship. However, the love of true intimacy is a love that has concern and commitment beyond the present moment and does not isolate itself from all other expressions of man except sexual expression. In essence, according to
Callahan (1969):

With a lifetime commitment sexual love can be totally integrated, truly free, truly relaxed and less troubled by temporary failures. None of these conditions are met outside of a permanent mutual commitment; there can be no premarital practicing before the complete commitment is made. If premarital affairs are sanctioned by society, they should not be called 'trial marriages.' The distinctive characteristics of marriage in almost every human culture has been the hope and expectation of permanency. Only as social structure crumbles does the commitment of marriage (along with all other human commitments) become trivial (p. 158).

Nena and George O'Neill (1972) claim that:

Only through knowing another in significant and authentic dimensions can we love, explore the potential of ourselves and others, and fight off the alienation of our time. Marriage, in some form or another, still provides the only framework in which people can find the stability in which to experience the full intimacy of a one-to-one relationship. Strikingly reaffirming this need for commitment are the statements of a now happily married woman, who until thirty-four, had resisted marriage and by her own admission suffered great anxiety and anguish at getting married. Evelyn said, 'without marrying, I had lots of intimate, long-term relationships, but I never really committed myself. Now I find after marriage, I couldn't have accomplished growth any other way. That is commitment, to completely open up to another (p. 24).
An intimate relationship, in order to survive, must be based upon the solid foundation of commitment. The best expression of that commitment is found in the form of marriage. However, marriages are no longer held together simply because two people have stood before a minister, repeated some formal vows, and signed a document agreeing to stay together. Marriages are held together more by:

- Their own internal cohesion, by love, by being primary to one another, by intimacy and companionship, by the time we have shared and expect to share, and by our sense of responsibility to each other and our children (O'Neill, 1977, p. 112).

In order for a marriage to grow into intimacy, there must be a genuine and stated intention to stick it out. "Genuine commitment provides a base of security that allows greater freedom without fear of abandonment (Ellison, 1969, p. 188). Jessie Bernard (1972) feels that a commitment that is less than permanent is hardly a guarantee of security at all. Consequently, a genuine commitment is an absolutely necessary ingredient of marriage. If an individual feels unfulfilled in his relationship, he has probably been unwilling to make a strong commitment to that relationship (Shain, 1978).

The establishment of commitment to the relationship is an extremely important step in the establishment of intimacy. No other step can be established unless the foundation of commitment is solid. Nor can any other step be established unless the step of communication is firmly established.
B. Establishing Communication

Dr. Clyde Narramore (1961) points out that the physical aspect or judicial relationship is an instantaneous experience. However, the practical working together, the building of an intimate relationship, takes some practice and exercise. Intimacy must be developed and maintained by a continued willingness to discuss things that matter, to care for each other's needs, and to affirm and get to know each other (Ellison, 1966).

John Powell, 1969) stated that a relationship would only be as good as its communication. Believing this, he developed his five levels of communication.

Level 5: Cliche conversation. This level represents the weakest response to the human dilemma and the lowest level of self-communication. i.e., How are you?

Level 4: Reporting the facts about others. We reveal nothing of ourselves but simply facts.

Level 3: My ideas and judgements. There is some communication of my person as I tell you some of my ideas and reveal some of my judgements.

Level 2: My feelings (emotions). Gut level communication of feelings that lie under my ideas, judgements, and convictions which are uniquely mine. i.e., communicating what I really feel about the fact you are intelligent. I think you are intelligent and I am jealous or feel inferior, etc.

Level 1: Peak communication. All deep and authentic friendships,
and especially the union of those who are married must be based on absolute openess and honesty. In spite of our unwillingness and reluctance to tell others who we are, there is, in each one of us, a deep and driving desire to be understood (p. 54-95)

To move from one level to the next requires a great deal of effort on the part of the communicator. To reach level one requires a deep seated desire for an intimate relationship. A desire that is reflected in the writings of the brother of Jesus. James speaks fervently of the importance of good conversation. To him, the test of true religion was a man's tongue (James 1:26). If a man claimed to be religious and was unable to control his tongue, his religion was in vain. In chapter three he talks about the power that the tongue has. Its power is equated with the power of a rudder on a great ship and with the power of a bit in a horse's mouth. These two little beings can accomplish great things, moving a whole body anywhere the pilot desires. The tongue has the potential to accomplish great and mighty things, or it can be used to accomplish evil. The owner of the tongue has the power to use his tongue as he wishes. The partners of a relationship, desiring to establish intimacy, need to purpose to use their tongues to establish communication.

Nena O'Neill (1977) claims that it is easy to attain intimacy when when two people are sharing similarities. The intimacy we gain through facing and resolving our conflicts makes it easier for us to dissolve our fears, our doubts, our inhibitions, and our anger. If we know each other's strengths and weaknesses, we can grow through conflict and go on in greater trust to risk sharing other confidences about ourselves and
our feelings.

This "sharing of similarities" is echoed in the writings of Ronald Mazur (1973) who states that unless a friendship is based on some shared values and mutual like-ability, sensual intimacy is impossible. "It is easier for friends to become lovers than for lovers to become friends. A couple starting out with an intense level of physical involvement can't always make the transition to a friendship relationship" (p. 57).

For any relationship to remain active and alive it must be growing at all times. A "living partnership is composed of two people, each of whom owns, respects, and develops his or her own selfhood" (Rogers, 1972, p. 206). As this is accomplished the partnership becomes more enriching. This process is an ongoing process lasting for years. Dr. Clyde Narramore (1961) points out that:

Christians often need many years of lessons in union with Christ although He is instantly and eternally their bridegroom at the time of salvation. The growing together and growing like one another in human marriage is much the same. As they share together they begin to know more than just how the mate acts but why he acts as he does. When you understand the background of why a person acts as he does, then you interpret his behavior differently. Deeper insight means deeper understanding and this takes time (p. 25).

Montague (1953) points out:

Theodor Reich says 'as the relationship continues, there is a growing intimacy and honesty and self-expression which at its height is a rare phenomenon. This honesty also includes allowing one's faults,
weaknesses, and physical and psychological shortcomings to be freely seen by the partner' (p. 62).

Erich Fromm (1956) points out that if we really love an individual we will have an active concern for the life and growth of that individual. Therefore, we will have a deep-seated desire to see the relationship with our partner grow to its fullest potential.

Intimacy grows as each partner nurtures the other. This includes a willingness to encourage, allowing each other freedom to grow as individuals as well as agreeing on limits of freedom. As you nurture each other and build each other up, you'll also find that you can interrupt negative response cycles more quickly. It is important to realize that every marriage has cycles of intimacy. There are times that you will feel close and times you will feel distant. This is normal. During that time, continue to think well of your partner and try to avoid alienation and conflict (Ellison, 1966, p. 191).

Intimacy may be established on a physical note and it may be nurtured so that it continues to grow. However, the cement that binds all the attributes of intimacy together in a cohesive whole is communication. No matter how committed a couple may be to establishing an intimate relationship, no matter what they may do physically or spiritually to have an intimate relationship, it will all be for nothing if they are not communicating with each other. Communication is the life blood of love, the guarantee of its growth, and the very essence of love in practice. Powell (1974) has stated concerning communication:
Love is sharing and sharing is communication. So, when we say that communication is 'the secret of staying in love' what we are really saying is that the secret of staying in love is to love, to keep sharing, to keep living out one's commitment (p. 70).

It is a process by which someone or something is made common, that is, it is shared (Powell, 1969).

The Apostle Paul stressed, in his letter to the Ephesians, the need for vital communication as the basic skill needed to establish and maintain sound relationships. A sound husband and wife relationship is impossible apart from good communication.

Good communication is fundamental to a Christ-centered home because it is the means by which an intimate relationship is established, grows, and is maintained. The Apostle Paul discusses open channels of communication in Ephesians 4:25-32, "Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, for we are members one of another." The couple cannot expect to have an intimate relationship unless they do so on the basis of honesty, openness, and truth. As members who function together in the same body, we must have truth in order to work together. Apart from these open channels of truthful communication, there can be no truly intimate relationship.

We can easily recognize the importance of communication in the development of a lasting relationship. We should then strive for the establishment of good communication in order to maintain a good intimate relationship.

The couple should establish, early in their lives, a family altar.
"The family that prays together stays together" may be an over-worked cliche. However, the couple that neglects their responsibilities to God is headed for trouble. To avoid having devotions together is to avoid one of the greatest spiritual opportunities of communication. We are to bring our children up in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). If we are to teach our children, we should begin by learning ourselves through our own private devotions and family altar.

The family altar should be augmented by regular church attendance. The couple who things their family altar is fulfilling their families' total spiritual need is denying themselves of the privilege of obeying God's command (Hebrews 10:25) and the joy of serving Him in the local church. The couple needs the spiritual feeding that will come through the preaching of the word and the fellowship of the other saints to round out their lives.

The family altar and church attendance are not the only elements of successful communication. There are elements of love, not just for each other, but for God and others as well. It is very difficult to communicate with someone you do not love. Therefore, it is important that the couple not only set the example of loving, but that they genuinely express that love to others. A relationship that excludes God or others is not a relationship to be desired, nor is it likely to be a relationship that will survive the storms of life.

The couple that has learned to express a genuine love for each other is a couple that has accomplished a large portion of the work required for developing a relationship of communication. They have fulfilled the
spiritual command to love, not only themselves, but others as well (John 15:12 and Ephesians 5:25)

Perhaps the most difficult element of communication to develop is the element of listening. It is very easy to become so engrossed in jobs, household chores, personal desires, television and any number of things that take up time; time that should be used for communicating. Real listening is hard work; it requires thought, dedication and effort. Non-listening can cause irreparable damage to the relationship. The failure of a marriage can be caused by one or both spouses not listening to the other. Not paying attention when someone is speaking to you comes across as rejection. Jesus admonished us to "take heed then how you hear (Luke 8:18, RSV); not what you hear, but how you hear. This means not only hearing with your ears, but with all the senses and, most importantly, with the heart.

A good communicating relationship will be able to establish other key elements of intimacy. After all, the best indicators of how successful a marriage is isn't the degree of passion the couple feels toward each other, but how well they know each other before marriage and how well they can communicate (Ellison, 1966). As important as dialogue and problem sharing is to an intimate relationship, the average married couple only engage in 27½ minutes of conversation per week, according to a 1967 study by Birdwhistell. People in traditional marriages progressively cut down on verbal communication. As they come to know each other, safe areas of communication are talked out and eventually they have little to say to each other, much less anything to discuss (Ramey, 1976).
One of the major reasons this happens is the fact that the couple do not trust each other. Trustworthiness is a necessary quality in a partner for an intimate relationship to develop and survive (Ellison, 1966).

C. Establishing Trust

Trust is necessary between two people in order to get the communication process going. Each individual needs to reveal aspects of himself about which he feels guarded. However, it is important to recognize that trust has a very important role in the communion process. Trust is not only a precondition to revelation, but in turn revelation builds trust. Thus, revealing aspects of oneself and one's perceptions of one's lover does not simply mean that people come to know each other better. It, more importantly, has the capacity to create and ground trust. In addition, this mode of communication affords the possibility of knowing oneself better since not everything that one confides is fully known or understood prior to communicating it (Schwartz, 1966).

Intimate communication is a communication between two persons that emanates from the very center of their existence and is a reflection of their love (Fromm, 1956). It is also a communication that involves risk and almost always draws the same communication from the partner (Rogers, 1972).

Even though a risk is involved, it is a risk that is worth taking in order to build intimacy. Building intimacy depends on building understanding. Understanding is built by having common experiences and by talking more broadly and deeply about ourselves. As we reveal more
about our basic values, our partners will be better able to understand
the underlying personality structure that shapes why and how we say
and do things the way we do. However, as we move deeper in a relation-
ship it is easier to misunderstand at the very time understanding is
needed most. The misunderstanding is often caused because we disclose
ourselves partially or act in ways which seem to contradict the image
that our partner has constructed on the basis of interaction to that
point (Ellison, 1966).

Trust is strongly related to love and self-disclosure, especially
for couples beyond the newlywed stage. Trust increases with commitment
and declines when relationships are severed (Larzelere, 1980). There-
fore, no trust can be established unless there is first an establishment
of a commitment. Nevertheless a degree of trust is necessary for the
establishment of communication, a trust in the commitment to the contract
or relationship. It takes a while to develop the kind of trust that
brings about total revelation of self. We can only reveal ourselves to
someone we trust and that individual needs to be a person we are committed
to and communicating with.

In order to really "trust" someone, we must overcome the fear that
the individual might sever our relationship some day. The Apostle John
said that "perfect love casteth out fear" (I John 4:18). He is speaking
of the perfect love of our relationship with Jesus. However, an intimate
couple can know that same kind of love and trust. If they are establish-
ing their relationship on a genuine commitment of love and are practicing
genuine open communication with each other, they are able to trust each
other and can have the faith to remain committed to their relationship by establishing fidelity.

D. Establishing Fidelity

Perhaps the most common element of intimacy to be established is that of fidelity. The writer of Hebrews admonishes that "marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled, but fornicators and adulterers God will judge" (Hebrews 13:4). If for no other reason, we should establish fidelity because God commands and expects it of us. The writer of the Proverbs extolls the value of a virtuous woman (Proverbs 31:10-12). He claims that her value is above rubies and her husband's heart trusts in her and she will do him good all the days of her life. He trusts in her because she has remained faithful to him.

Man has a built-in desire to be selective in love. He wants a love that in its freest sense presupposes both identity and fidelity (Erickson, 1964). If he can then desire a relationship built on commitment and trust, he can expect to remain faithful to that relationship. He has established a legal bond to the relationship through commitment and now needs to establish a moral bond to the relationship by establishing the faithful bond of fidelity.

The sense of primariness, of being each other's most important person is a strong motivation to establish fidelity. "For many of us the primary relationship with our partner in marriage provides us with security we need in order to interact confidently and successfully with the outside world" (O'Neill, 1977, p. 77). Marriage provides the freedom we need in terms of relationships with other people. We can
have friends without feeling the pressure for sexual relations. We need to put each other first, but we also need other people (O'Neill, 1977).

To truly establish fidelity we must convince our partner that we intend to put the continuance of our relationship before our individual interests (Schwartz, 1966). In order to do this we need to realize that sex is the most intimate expression of our love and commitment to each other and as a result it becomes our expression of loyalty and fidelity as well. To become involved with someone other than our marital partner sexually is to say to that partner, "I do not care about you or our relationship. You are not the most important person to me."

Intimacy is a fact of life. It can be established, nurtured, and enjoyed. However, it cannot be obtained instantaneously. It takes time, effort, and a lot of hard work; often a lifetime of hard work.
CONCLUSION

We have seen what constitutes intimacy, what factors of intimacy allow for counterfeit intimacy, and how intimacy can be established. Through all of this information courses the thought that intimacy is a valuable part of our lives, can be obtained through hard work, and should be sought by every human being with all diligence. We need to recognize the fact, as Nena O'Neill (1977) does, that there are some people who may not desire great intimacy, and that stable marriages do exist without intimacy. However, O'Neill has come to realize that this sharing of self beyond the routine of living and beyond our sexual merging, is one of the most important components of contemporary marriage. In fact, this intimacy helps us to meet, to change, to grow, to reorder our lives, and to remain aware of how our unity transcends our individual concerns.

As we move towards an intimate relationship we find that intimacy involves learning to share more than just our physical lives. It involves sharing our spiritual lives as well. As we establish and deepen our relationship to God, we will experience an underlying sense of communion and acceptance that people and events cannot destroy (Ellison, 1966).

However, during the past two decades there has been an increasing tendency for people to challenge and criticize the traditional biblical
family structure. Consequently, we have seen an increasing number of alternative life styles counterfeiting the traditional one husband-one wife relationship. This change in society has been brought on by an increasing decline in sexual morals. We seem to be losing a perspective of the fact that sex before or outside of marriage is nothing new, even in Christian circles. What is new is the increasing approval of pre and extra-marital sex, the upswing in non-marital sexual activity, and the flood of arrangements that are used, often in a casual way, to justify behavior which is clearly condemned in the scriptures.

Although someone may think he is attaining sexual freedom through extra-marital sex, he is actually increasing his bondage to his own psychological drives. In so doing, he is condemning himself to a life of superficial physical intimacy instead of an intimate relationship desired for him by God.

The word fornication, sex between two unmarried people, occurs 47 times in the New Testament alone. Each time it is depicted as being hated and condemned by God. Adultery, sex between two people who are married to others, receives the same treatment. God does not take a light view of sex between two people who are not married. In fact, the Old Testament punishment for extra-marital sex was quite severe. The guilty parties were stoned to death (Leviticus 20:2, Deuteronomy 22:21). If God hates sexual sins enough to have people killed for their commission, then He hates them enough for us to avoid them at all costs. However, He loved the adulterer enough to forgive her (John 8:1-11). Therefore, we can forgive as well. The counselor needs to have the same kind of
compassion that Christ had for the sinner as he deals with sin in the lives of his counselees. God views any deviation from a biblical view of marriage and sex as sin. He not only views it as sin, but judges it as sin and expects us to deal with it as sin (I John 1:9).

We must recognize the fact that no relationship, that is worth having, just happens. It is developed over a long period of time as the result of a lot of hard work on the part of the people involved.

The most rewarding relationship in the world is that relationship of intimacy experienced by a husband and wife. However, no other relationship we can experience has so many things working against it. The married couple is actually involved in a warfare. Satan has a very real desire to destroy anything that God uses to accomplish His will here on earth. And since marriage is a part of God's plan for man (Genesis 2:18), Satan uses every device at his disposal to destroy that marriage even to the point of being like a hungry lion seeking anyone to devour (I Peter 5:8). He uses physical as well as spiritual elements to accomplish his will.

The television, as his tool, vies for valuable family time. The couple must literally struggle to build lasting relationships today and the television set is being used as a substitute companion. Instead of spending time with each other, they are tuning into television programming that conflicts with the Christian life style commanded in the Bible (Triano, 1981). Satan has used this one instrument, more than anything else, to uproot the function of the home. On the average, the husband will spend 25 hours and 38 minutes a week watching television, while the
wife puts in 30 hours and 14 minutes a week in front of the set (Triano, 1981).

Oh, but the couple is together! Yes, they're together, but are they really together? They are present in the same room, watching the same television program, breathing the same air. However, they are not physically involved in an activity that will stimulate the development of a lasting relationship. A dynamic meaningful relationship doesn't just happen. A plant requires fertilizer, water, and tender loving care to develop. The relationship must be cultivated and cared for in order to develop to its fullest.

Television is not the only instrument Satan uses to disrupt the development of the relationship. He uses every aspect of immorality, divorce, drugs, alcohol, movies, and everything else imaginable to accomplish his purpose. Again, he is like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can destroy (I Peter 5:8) and the family is not safe from him.

Before any real victory can be won the couple must learn what real communication is. Herein lies the key to formulating a strong intimate relationship. The couple must recognize the necessity for developing sound principles of communication. This will not be accomplished until they internalize biblical principles governing communication.

The Apostle Paul stressed, in his letter to the Ephesians, the need for vital communication as the basic skill used to establish and maintain sound relationships. A sound husband and wife relationship is impossible apart from good communication. Similarly, a healthy intimate relationship is dependent upon such communication for total development.

Good communication is fundamental to a Christ-centered home because
it is the means by which a husband and wife relationship is established, grows, and is maintained. The Apostle Paul discusses open channels of communication in Ephesians 4:25-32. "Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, for we are members one of another." The couple cannot expect to walk together unless they do so on the basis of honesty, openness and truth. As members who function together in the same body, we must have truth in order to work in concert. Apart from these open channels of truthful communication, there can be no truly Christ-centered home (Adams, 1972) and consequently, no Christ-centered intimate relationship between husband and wife.

The couple will need to work hard at developing communication with one another. Perhaps their most difficult task will be to listen. Most people are wrapped up in jobs, household chores, personal desires, television, newspapers and anything else that will eat up their time. Consequently, they have "no time" to spend with each other. They need to determine that the "battle for the family" is a battle that is worth fighting, a battle that is worth winning, and that it is a battle that will require them to take time for each other. They may need to force themselves to listen with genuine interest at first. But, as they develop this habit in their own lives, and see the tremendous results in others, they will be listening with pleasure.

Each needs to guard against "selective listening," hearing only the things they want to hear. But instead they need to shut out everything else and focus their total attention on the one who is communicating to them. Real listening is hard work, it requires thought, dedication, and effort. Nonlistening can cause irreparable damage to the relationship.
Not paying attention when someone is speaking to you comes across as rejection.

Jesus said, "take heed then how you hear" (Luke 8:18 RSV), not what you hear, but how you hear. This means hearing not only with your ears, but with all the senses and, most importantly, with the heart. This translates into listening with love. Real listening, then, becomes an art of love (Kern, 1981).

An art of love is a good example of what intimacy is. It is an art. No great masterpiece was painted by accident but grew as a result of the artist's commitment to his task, as a result of his communication through the canvas to the viewer, as a result of his fidelity to remain faithful to the task of completing the painting, and as a result of his trust in his ability to accomplish what he had to do. An intimate relationship grows in much the same way. It grows through commitment to the relationship, through communication between the two people involved, through fidelity, and through trust in each other. No real intimate relationship can exist with the absence of any one of these elements.
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