EDITOR’S NOTES – OF THIS PREMIERE ISSUE

PRE-MARRIAGE QUERIES & FIDDLER-ON-THE-ROOF TRADITIONS

You’ve just picked up the first issue of Marriage & Families—a very different publication. All of us are besieged with information. Newspapers and the nightly news often include the “study of the week”—or sometimes the “study of the day.” The problem is that many of these studies are filled with misinformation. Among the misinformation we’ve been fed recently is the so-called research that would have us believe pedophilia is not harmful. It is. And much of society has been sold the idea that cohabiting without marriage is acceptable. It isn’t. In fact, some don’t even want us to use the “m” word, marriage. But without apology, the name of our publication begins with this “m” word which is so important that we’ll spend lots of time finding articles that will help strengthen marriages and families. Credible research and information support time-tested principles such as saving sex for marriage and fidelity in marriage.

Since marriage is such an important foundation for a family and with so many marriages coming unglued these days, it makes sense to figure out how to put marriages together that will be stronger to start with. Unfortunately many young people start out marriage not knowing much more about each other than those who set out to glue wood to metal without knowing enough to make this work. Whether you have stars in your eyes thinking about getting married, or stars in your eyes trying to counsel others about getting or staying married, I think you’ll be fascinated with the article by Tom Holman and Lisa Hawkins about finding strengths and weaknesses in a relationship before a couple marries. Whether a couple is dating or engaged, a marriage assessment query can provide insights about things that often can be worked out before big bumps crop up—along with an understanding about differences that happen in every marriage.

And Lloyd Newell’s article about how traditions strengthen families is filled with clues for people each of us tries to help as well as for our own families. I love the musical, Fiddler on the Roof—and over the years have thought about the trials Tevye had with his family, a few of which were not unlike our own. But as I think about Tevye singing about traditions and read this article, I’m reminded how important traditions have been in our family—things like going out to dinner for each person’s birthday, holiday breakfasts cooked by dad, sitting down to dinner together (sometimes—but not regularly enough), and family home evenings every Monday night. Lloyd’s article can help us think about using traditions to build roots and unity in our own families as well as in families we want to help.

I hope you’ll enjoy this issue of Marriage & Families so much that you’ll make a tradition of reading it—and each quarterly issue that follows from cover to cover.

Glen C. Griffin, M.D.

Glen Griffin is the editor-in-chief of Marriage & Families, a member of the faculty of Brigham Young University’s School of Family Life, president of the American Family League, and author of “It Takes A Parent to Raise A Child.”

Marriage & Families is a peer-reviewed journal for young couples, husbands & wives, parents, and professionals—including educators, counselors, therapists, psychologists, physicians, social workers, nurses, public health people, teachers, clergy, experts in family law, and everyone interested in marriage and families. Our editorial board members belong to many faiths—with a common belief in the importance of traditional families. Marriage & Families is dedicated to strengthening families. Without apology, our name begins with the word marriage—a concept that many dismiss or completely ignore these days. However, since marriage and fidelity are essentials, not options, in a healthy society, we are pleased to bring you a publication containing credible data supporting this and other time-tested principles and values related to the family.
CONTENTS

2 TRADITIONS
A Foundation for Strong Families
by Lloyd D. Newell

9 FINDING STRENGTHS & WEAKNESSES BEFORE MARRIAGE
Using the RELATIONship Evaluation
by Thomas B. Holman and Lisa B. Hawkins

12 BOOK REVIEW
A Lasting Promise
reviewed by Robert F. Stahmann

13 FAMILY VALUES URGED BY RUSSIAN & OTHER SPEAKERS
At the 20th International Congress on Families

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In *Fiddler on the Roof*, Tevye and the other villagers of Anatevka sing about traditions at a place and time when every person's role in life was dictated by tradition. In Tevye's world, as in ours, traditions served families as a source of strength; they gave families a sense of identity and of faith. Now when so much is changing, traditions still give family members strength and stability, as well as a sense of certainty in family love when life may seem full of uncertainty.

BY LLOYD D. NEWELL
"Traditions give you a sense of family and they give you a sense of belonging to a group of people, not being alone in the world," a thoughtful mother explained.

While researchers have studied the effects of family traditions on family life for many years, this article describes the results of a recent qualitative study of 28 families. During 1998–99, I conducted interviews with one-, two-, and three-generation families about their experiences with tradition in family life. The families were interviewed in their homes in Chicago, Salt Lake City, and Baton Rouge. Family members were African-American, white, Hispanic, Cajun, Israeli, and Pakistani. They came from many faiths—Roman Catholicism, Islam, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Judaism, Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches. The real-life experiences of these families confirmed in a multidimensional way what scientists had already documented in other, more quantitative studies and shed new light on the interplay of faith and tradition.

Family traditions and rituals* are powerful, significant aspects of family life. Each in their own way, families from the different geographic locations, religions, and ethnic traditions represented in this research, said something similar to what one mother put so well: "Traditions are the cement that keeps the family together . . . and help you withstand the storms that come."

**Traditions Are a Source of Strength**

The most frequent comment about traditions, from every family interviewed, was that they strengthen and sustain the family. In a related study, researchers studying North Dakota and Nebraska families also found the

*While scholars tend to use the word rituals in their work, the families in this study almost exclusively used the word traditions to describe the same activities, so we will use the term most common to families.

strongest families have the highest frequency of family rituals, or traditions. Families in the current study had independently discovered what the scholars had learned when they described how eating dinner together, praying together, observing holidays, and holding family celebrations for birthdays, anniversaries, and accomplishments bring closeness and unity to the family.

Even—and sometimes especially—under difficult circumstances, traditions can have a positive effect. Family members who were interviewed for this study spoke of their traditions as an anchor in hard times, as another mother explained: "At the time of a huge event, like a death, or a birth, traditions can carry you through. When your body goes on autopilot, as it does when there's a death or any other tragedy, the traditions that you have are just like a wonderful cocoon that you feel wrapped up in and comforted by. . . . Traditions help you know that life goes on."

Similarly, another study found that families of alcoholics are less likely to transmit alcoholism to the next generation if they maintain the family dinner-time ritual and do not allow a parent's alcoholism to interfere with this time together. In the same way, diabetic children whose families maintained regular routines and had regular traditions in which they participated had fewer behavioral problems than diabetic children who lacked those benefits.

The ability of traditions to bring peace to the family was emphasized by another mother, who spoke of their Jewish Sabbath, "We feel very close whenever we do these things because it makes me feel like we've brought a moment of peace, a moment of difference into our busy weekly, daily lives. . . . I think that helps us weave our lives together."

Families also reported that traditions helped them feel safe and secure, as a mother pointed out: "They give us something that we can rely on, that we know. Feelings that everybody goes through during difficult periods in our lives cause confusion or feelings of isolation, but they always know, they [the children] can act like they don't like them, but deep inside they may be comforted by knowing that we're doing it the same as we always did, and we're always here doing the ritual and we're going to do it together."

**Traditions Are a Source of Identity**

"We're always here and we're going to do it together." This is what our family does—traditions give families and family members a sense of identity as values are shared and a sense of belonging is established. This mother continued: "Without these rituals, we would not be Jewish. I can tell you that right now. . . . They connect me essentially; they connect me to people around me, my family, my community, my beliefs. . . . Even though we are scattered all over the world, I can go anywhere and observe Sabbath and it will be pretty much the same. . . . Our rituals give us an identity. They give us a sense of who we are and how we're different from other people."

Family scientists seem to agree that traditions help give families and family members a sense of identity. The continuity of this process was a source of fulfillment to a father who said: "One of the things that gives me a lot of joy is to hear [my children] reminisce and think back to things we've done as a
family and the memories they have. Those memories are a part of what makes them who they are and what will shape them for the future and for their family.”

The sense of family identity and unity fostered by traditions has been found by other researchers, as well: “Rituals also protect [family] members against a sense of loneliness and uncertainty in daily living encountered outside the home . . . .” A study of the development of a “Family Ritual Questionnaire” found that the highest level of family cohesion, or sense of togetherness, was related to nothing more complicated than family dinnertime—sitting down to a meal together.

Traditions also help to preserve the family’s “story.” Families are eager to share their memories and experiences; the process of telling their stories seems to bring them together as they laugh and remember. Sharing the story of a child’s birth or ever a trip to the emergency room reinforces the sense of family, even though some family stories are more sober than others.

The traditions that create individual and family identity need not have cosmic scope. One woman’s happiest childhood memory was her annual trip with her father to the New Orleans Jazz Festival. She and her husband, their children, and her mother were going back for the first time since her father’s death soon after the interview. “I’ll probably cry more . . . . But that’s okay,” the 67-year-old widowed grandmother said. “For years we sat through the rain and the cold and the heat and the everything; oh but it was fun. It was really fun.” The return to the beloved tradition makes a memory for a new generation and solidifies the family’s identity.

Similarly, another family has invited family and friends over for ice cream every Sunday evening for many years. The mother says this tradition gives the family “that belonging feeling, which is part of being safe and secure.” In addition to connecting themselves to the larger community of friends and family (whether the actual number in attendance is five or twenty-five), this family has created an identity for itself and others as a hospitable family that welcomes others into the immediate family circle for conversation and fun. It’s no surprise that the children in the family intend to continue the “Sunday evening ice cream” tradition when they establish homes of their own. Other families relate: “Traditions are a perpetuation of what we believe to be good and wholesome and worthwhile and necessary. It’s keeping a good thing going.” The idea of “keeping a good thing going” across the generations has been supported by experts who study family life and family traditions.

Something that seems insignificant or begins as a simple routine can become an intergenerational tradition,
where down the line, they’re doing something because, hey, my mom [did it].

TRADITIONS ALLOW FAMILIES TO EXAMINE THEMSELVES AND THEIR CUSTOMS

A father emphasized the teaching function of traditions, saying: “Traditions are times when we can learn more about life, what I can improve on. It’s not just how the kids can improve, but how I as a parent can improve. . . . I see the things that I am doing. My behavior is seen in my children’s behavior; all of a sudden I can see it because of our traditions and interactions.” Perhaps the repetitive nature of some traditions allows family members to chart and evaluate their behavior over time.

Traditions surrounding important holidays or rare but important occasions, such as weddings and funerals, are especially memorable and, perhaps, especially difficult to change, even when circumstances or common sense requires change. Generations of children and teenagers have experienced heart-aches when, instead of going “Over the river and through the woods to Grandmother’s house,” Grandma’s health, Grandma’s new apartment, or a cross-country move requires Grandma to come to their house—or perhaps Thanksgiving happens without Grandmother or Grandfather at all. Similarly, many parents have been forced to adjust their expectations when a child decides to forego college in pursuit of some other dream or doesn’t want to enter the family business. These occasions may give family members the chance to examine themselves and their relationships as well as evaluate a possible need for change.

For example, a mother whose 12-year-old son decided he’s an atheist hopes that as he “goes through the various stages of life, even though he doesn’t believe right now, hopefully, as he grows, if he decides he does believe, he’ll have rituals to come back to. But if we never expose him to these rituals now, whether he believes or not, he won’t feel a sense of connection to them as he grows older.” She also insists that her sons become b’nai mitzvah. “That’s something they don’t have a choice in. They are too young to make that decision, so we’re making it . . . That’s one ritual that’s really important to us.”

There are times when family traditions must continue for the sake of the family, even—or especially—for the sake of family members who refuse to participate.

TRADITIONS ARE A SOURCE OF FAITH AND MEANING

In nearly every interview, a connection between faith and traditions became apparent. Scholars have noticed the sacred or “transcendent” meaning of family rituals and traditions. Interviewed families saw their faith as an important element in why they had traditions, how they structured them, or what they expected to derive from keeping most traditions.

An insightful mother said: “I think my life would be empty without rituals and traditions . . . they’re very enriching for the soul . . . I want my grandchildren to have these values . . . you need to be filled up, and in your rituals I think you fill the soul.”

Traditions may be a reflection of the family’s faith and an integral part of a religious holiday or service. Many Christian families have traditions concerning the Nativity scene, the Christmas tree, and special church services at Christmas and Easter. Hanukkah and Passover include ancient traditions cherished along with more modern family traditions in Jewish families. Islamic families may have special family funds and traditions concerning the need for family members to participate in the hajj, the sacred pilgrimage to Mecca. Buddhist families honor the

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**TOP 15 FAMILY TRADITIONS**

As reported by 84 families and their college-age son or daughter enrolled in introductory marriage and family courses at Utah State University. From Jay D. Schvaneveldt and Thomas R. Lee, “The Emergence and Practice of Ritual in the American Family,” _Marriage & Family Review_ 17(3) (1988): 137-143, 139.

1. **CHRISTMAS**
2. **BIRTHDAYS**
3. **FAMILY VACATION**
4. **EASTER**
5. **SUNDAY DINNER**
6. **VISITS TO RELATIVES**
7. **FIXED TIME FOR SUPPER**
8. **THANKSGIVING**

9. **FAMILY REUNIONS**
10. **FAMILY PRAYER**
11. **HOUSECLeanING ROUTINES**
12. **NEW YEAR’S DAY**
13. **NEW YEAR’S EVE**
14. **FATHER COOKING DINNER**
15. **DINNER-TABLE SEATING**
dead through the beautiful rituals of Obon.

However, some family traditions that create memories and strengthen families are not connected to religious observances. One family regularly helps at a local soup kitchen, together with any of the children's friends who are willing to join in. The family's belief that its members have an obligation to help those less fortunate and that friends are welcome to participate could not be better conveyed.

Another family has a 20-year tradition of gathering every spring to list each person's favorite things—favorite book, favorite song, favorite food, etc. The lists are carefully preserved and the now-college-age children look forward to each year's creation of new lists and the review of lists from previous years. Their mother says, "This simple activity has a lot of meaning for our family. . . . It gives us an insight into each other, a way to get to know each family member better, as well as ourselves. . . . This has done more than anything else to build unity and family ties." The lists began as an activity for young children and have become a cherished springtime tradition for a family that emphasizes the importance of knowing oneself and other family members.

This research provided further evidence that family traditions are beneficial as they give families strength, identity, and generational continuity. Traditions strengthen and support families and strong families tend to create more traditions. These traditions allow the family to evaluate itself and make necessary adjustments, while faith and values energize the process and give traditions additional meaning. Healthy traditions create a winning situation for families—a situation worth planning for and well worth implementing. They bring the rewards of love and closeness to family members across the genera-

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Notes
TAKE INVENTORY OF YOUR FAMILY

TRADITIONS

Some families think they have too many or enough traditions and some wish they had more. Because traditions can play such an important part in family life, a couple (engaged or married) or family may want to take inventory of family traditions and perhaps discuss new traditions that would enrich their lives together. The following list of questions will help you get started. It is adapted from William J. Doherty, The Intentional Family: Simple Rituals to Strengthen Family Ties, chapter 12.* (Doherty refers to traditions as “rituals.”)

Evaluating Your Family Rituals

Directions

Put a plus sign (+) in the left column if you think this ritual is already strong in your family and does not need much improvement.

Put a zero (0) if you think this ritual could use some improvement. Put a minus (-) if you think this ritual could use a lot of improvement.

Write “no” if you think this ritual is not important or you don’t want to work on it.

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1. We have meals together regularly.
2. Our mealtimes are full of good feeling and good conversation.
3. We often share enjoyable family activities at home.
4. We often share enjoyable family activities away from home.
5. We have rich holiday rituals.
6. We share enjoyable family vacations.
7. We engage in regular positive contact with our relatives.
8. We celebrate birthdays well.
9. We have satisfying ways to acknowledge Mother’s Day.
10. We have satisfying ways to acknowledge Father’s Day.
11. (For families with young children) We have satisfying bedtime rituals.
12. (For couples) We regularly find time alone to talk.
13. (For couples) We use bedtime as a way to connect at the end of the day.
14. (For couples) We go out alone together on a regular basis.
15. (For couples) We celebrate anniversaries in a way that is meaningful to both of us.
16. We regularly see family friends.
17. We are actively involved in a church/synagogue/mosque, or a similar community concerned with beliefs, ethics, and values.
18. We are involved in neighborhood activities.
19. We participate in recreational or educational groups and activities (for example, athletic programs, book clubs, support groups).
20. We are involved in activities to better our community.
21. (For parents) We talk to our children about social and community concerns.
22. (For parents) We are active in our children’s school.

For each ritual you would like to improve, ask yourself these follow-up questions:

1. Is a ritual missing where you’d like one to be?
2. What is the current ritual lacking?
3. Is there too much responsibility placed on one family member?
4. Are family members achieving a balance between individual time and family time?
5. Is an underlying family problem hurting the ritual?

Guidelines for Talking to Family Members About Changing Rituals

1. Choose a peaceful moment for the discussion.
2. Explain that you would like to discuss a specific family ritual, that you have been thinking about this family ritual and want to hear their thoughts as well.
3. Express your feelings and needs related to the ritual.
4. Invite the others to share their own feelings, needs, and thoughts about the ritual.
5. Offer your ideas tentatively, rather than definitively.
6. Negotiate a trial run of a new or modified ritual that balances everyone’s needs.
7. Agree to follow up to determine how everyone likes the new or modified ritual.

As couples and families think of ways to enhance family unity, strength, security, and identity, their traditions can become richer and more satisfying as they become a reliable part of family life. A couple can choose from the best traditions in their families of origin and choose new traditions to build together and with their children. MF

Finding Strengths and Weaknesses Before Marriage

Using the RELATionship Evaluation
by Thomas B. Holman and Lisa B. Hawkins

In an ideal world, every couple would spend considerable time evaluating the strengths and weaknesses in their relationship. The movie fantasy of a whirlwind courtship and spectacular wedding is accompanied by hopes for a long and wonderful marriage.

But we know that, however spectacular the wedding, some marriages are anything but "happily ever after." If only someone could help couples understand which relationships would result in long, happy marriages. Researchers have been trying to find a way to make that prediction for more than sixty years.

Now, dating, engaged, and married couples can learn more about their relationships by means of pre-marriage counseling and by filling out a questionnaire, such as PREPARE (available through Life Innovations in Minneapolis) or FOCCUS (developed by the Catholic Archdiocese of Omaha). The questionnaire we have worked with is called RELATE (short for RELAtionship Evaluation), and was designed to assess important areas that a couple can discuss as similarities and differences. Those areas are (1) personality characteristics and values, (2) amount of support for the relationship from family and friends, (3)
communication and conflict-resolution skills within the relationship, and (4) family background.

Earlier generations of couples may have wondered if an evaluation like RELATE could provide any meaningful information about a relationship. But young people today—many of them children of divorced parents—want guidance before they make the commitment to marriage. As an example, unmarried cohabitation, or "living together," increased from half a million adults in the United States in 1960 to more than four million adults in the United States in 1998. People sometimes believe that living together before marriage is an "audition," a way to avoid an unhappy marriage and perhaps divorce. However, there is strong evidence that those who live together before marriage increase their chances of a later divorce.

Others have sought to provide help to a growing pre-marriage movement. Marriage therapists, family life educators, clergy, and others are working to create counseling practices, information, and workshops for engaged couples. State legislatures are providing incentives for or requiring premarital education. Family scholars are working to create pre-marriage assessments that will allow couples to make informed decisions about their similarities and differences, often as part of pre-marriage counseling.

RELATE provides more information for couples to evaluate than any other comparable instrument. RELATE is a 271-item survey, taken separately by each individual. It is easy to take, with detailed instructions to walk the taker through the evaluation. Most people complete RELATE in about an hour. Currently, about four thousand people take RELATE each year.

The RELATE Report, which is created from each person's responses, comprises twenty pages of computer-generated charts, graphs, and explanations that can be easily understood. The report gives information on strengths and weaknesses in more than sixty areas of a couple's relationship.

RELATE is not designed to tell couples how their relationship will turn out—no survey can do that. But it does show many of each person's strengths and weaknesses, as well as similarities and differences between partners, so possible problem areas can be identified and addressed. After the results of RELATE are compiled into a report, a couple can pick up a copy or receive it through the mail, or have it sent to a pre-marriage counselor, member of the clergy, or therapist who is helping the couple prepare for or adjust to marriage. When a couple takes RELATE on the Internet, their RELATE report will be returned through the computer in a few minutes.

Although some couples discuss their RELATE Report together and don't see a need to consult a third party, couples are encouraged to meet with a counselor because a counselor can help them understand the report and its implications.

For example, Andrew and Heather, who took RELATE after they had been married eight months, learned more about the information in their
"EVERYONE MARRIES A STRANGER. FORGET THE PERSON YOU THOUGHT YOU MARRIED AND WORK ON THE RELATIONSHIP."

RELATE Report when they talked with a counselor, even though they had studied the report together. They already knew of some differences that occasionally caused tension between them. Their counselor 'pointed out that we have different ways of resolving conflicts,' Heather said. 'I'm more volatile and hostile, and Andy's more avoidant and validating.' (These terms are used and defined in the RELATE report.) "We also interpreted a couple of questions differently and so the results showed a difference where we really agreed," Heather continued. "Our counselor helped us figure that out.' The couple also found the counselor's interpretation more complete than their own.

Andrew listed some of the "good stuff," or ways in which their similarities and differences could strengthen their marriage. He and Heather have religious unity—shared beliefs and spiritual goals—and neither tends to dominate in decision-making. Their mutual kindness, problem-solving skills, compassion, and willingness to learn from experience will, they believe, help them weather storms that may come. The discovery of some potential weaknesses in their marriage through RELATE led their counselor to remind Andrew and Heather that all marriages face difficulties. His perspective was encouraging to Andrew and Heather because "we used to compare our inadequacies to everyone else's public presentation."

Helping couples chart their strengths and weaknesses based on sound research, rather than "everyone else's public presentation," is part of the work of the Marriage Study Consortium, which developed RELATE. The Consortium is a group of scholars, researchers, family life educators, clergy, and counselors with an interest in premarriage and marriage relationships. Although the Marriage Study Consortium is housed at Brigham Young University, which is owned by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the RELATE instrument is non-denominational and the governing board of the Consortium includes many scholars, researchers, and practitioners from varied religious and educational backgrounds. RELATE is the most recent version of a relationship assessment instrument created by the Consortium and has demonstrated the reliability and validity required for questionnaires concerning human relationships.

Menolly and Spencer took RELATE in February and became engaged in August. RELATE helped them feel confident that they would be compatible, despite some differences that had concerned them. For example, Menolly was from an urban area in North Carolina, while Spencer grew up on a farm...
in Idaho. The counselor who helped them interpret their RELATE report helped them understand the possible importance or unimportance of the geographic difference. "He said that the similarities in the way our parents related to each other was good," Spencer said. "And I was really interested to see what she [Menolly] thought about me."

"Me, too," Menolly added. "We had a lot of similarities and no major differences."

"It was comforting that our different backgrounds didn't mean different values or answers," Spencer said.

RELATE, in addition to helping couples evaluate their relationship, may also help them realize how much work goes into a successful marriage. Andy summarized the ups and downs that he and Heather have experienced: "Marriage is different than I expected—better and rougher." He had learned in a class that "everyone marries a stranger. Forget the person you thought you married and work on the relationship."

The first section of the RELATE Report is a beginning for couples who want to "work on the relationship." It includes graphs that demonstrate how each partner rated him- or herself and each other in seven personality areas: sociability, calmness, organization, flexibility, emotional maturity, happiness, and self-esteem. The second section compares partner agreement on values and attitudes concerning marriage roles, employment, sexuality, children, and religion. A third section compares perceptions of background experiences. The questions address family process, parents' satisfaction with marriage, relationships with parents, family stresses, physical and sexual abuse (which are not included in the RELATE Report), and parental and couple conflict resolution.

The fourth section of the RELATE Report summarizes relationship experiences, including couple communication styles, conflict styles, and relationship satisfaction and stability. The report also includes an assessment of problem areas in the relationship, for example, differences over whether one or the other person is "in charge," alcohol or drug problems, or money problems.

When asked if they would recommend RELATE to other couples, Menolly and Spencer answered, "Yes, definitely!"

"We've discussed things now that we wouldn't have thought to bring up," Spencer said.

Menolly agreed. "Some couples don't even discuss basic things. They assume that because they are from the same culture, they have the same attitudes. RELATE makes you think for yourself before you discuss and compare opinions. We've had good discussions—we understand each other better and have more patience and understanding."

"If you were scared or cautious about the commitment to marriage, it would help you to take RELATE," Spencer said.

"I was cautious about RELATE," Menolly admitted. "I wasn't sure I wanted to know what it would say. But it was okay."

Alternating daisy petals ("he loves me, he loves me not"), love at first sight, overwhelming romantic feelings, a crystal ball, maybe even a magic wand would be among the fairytale ways to choose a husband or wife. A person's good sense, opinions of friends and relatives, and long discussions with one's prospective mate are more common methods of choice. But the old saying that "love is blind" has proven sadly true for too many couples. A scientific look at a loving relationship won't destroy the romance and may give a couple the confidence to make their best choices. Using one of the premarriage assessment instruments and seeking counsel from a therapist, member of the clergy, or other respected third party can be interesting and helpful. In our experience, RELATE has been an organized, statistically valid questionnaire that can tell couples more
about themselves, as well as highlighting important issues for thought and discussion. A little preparation could provide every couple with an idea of what all those days after the wedding day will be like; it could help them work together toward a real-life "happily ever after."

Notes
6. Ibid., 15, 17.
7. J. H. Larson and T. B. Holman, "Premarital Predictors of Marital Quality and Stability," Family Relations 43 (1994): 228–237. Although the data reported in this article are derived from Prep-M, a predecessor of RELATE, the data are comparable for RELATE.
8. Information on abuse currently is used only for research. The RELATE Report also states, under "General Guidelines for Interpreting RELATE," p. 2: "(2) Be aware that especially sensitive information assessed by RELATE (e.g. some answers related to your family of origin) is not reported on this printout. If serious problems related to your family of origin are hampering your ability to maintain satisfying relationships in the present, you should seek assistance in taking care of these problems prior to marriage. Marriage does not usually resolve problems from the past. The resolution of these problems may require the assistance of a qualified therapist. . . ." Legal reporting requirements concerning abuse of minors dictate that a person must be 18 or older to complete RELATE.

RELATE is available by mail in a booklet or over the internet at http://relate.byu.edu. Each RELATE evaluation costs $5 per person ($10 per couple), including the cost of the questionnaire, processing, and the resulting RELATE Report. Payment online is by credit card. The on-line questionnaire and payment for it are handled through a secure server; booklet questionnaires and results are also confidential. RELATE is available in English or Spanish (for U.S. residents). On-line versions are being prepared in Portuguese, French, German, Italian, Danish, Finnish, Turkish, English UK, English Australia, and Spanish International. Also, versions of RELATE will be available for couples who are remarrying and for high-school-aged couples.

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BOOK REVIEW


Reviewed by Robert F. Stahmann, PhD, Professor of Marriage and Family Therapy in the School of Family Life at Brigham Young University and a licensed marriage and family therapist.

While reading A Lasting Promise, I asked myself several questions. First, are the authors involved in the field of marriage and family so that the book's content is well-founded and tested by their experience? The authors provide a reference to a section that deals with their credentials and experience. They are and have been actively involved in developing, counseling with, teaching about, and researching the material in the book.

Is the focus of the book one that applies to my interests and needs? The focus of A Lasting Promise is "time-tested techniques" for any couple who want to solve or prevent marital problems (p. 5). The book covers such topics as communicating clearly and safely, handling conflict, commitment, friendship, intimacy, and spirituality. It "presents a thoroughly Christian model of marriage" (p. 6).

Does the book read well? Chapters in A Lasting Promise read in a conversational style that engages the reader. Principles and ideas are effectively presented, including brief dialogues or stories to illustrate the material. Each chapter contains exercises and quizzes that invite the readers to apply the content to their specific situations through study, goal setting, dialogue, and practice.

Is the book based on solid research? PREP (Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program), the core of the book, is an internationally recognized program that teaches and enhances skills, actions, and attitudes that "can make a powerful difference in your marriage over time" (p. 2). In addition, the authors provide about four pages of "Further Reading and Research References" for those who wish to consult the research referenced in the book or to read further about marriage enhancement.

In summary, A Lasting Promise is solidly based and well written. It can help couples "who need to get back on track or who need simply to help their marriage thrive in the years to come" (p. 5).
"We must improve the moral values of society," the Rector of the Moscow Islamic Institute told an overflow crowd in Moscow gathered to talk about the family. Representing the 20 million Russian Muslims, Rector Murtazin emphasized that children need to be raised in spirituality instead of the vulgarity of the day as depicted on television and in the press.

Zinovij Lvovich Kogan, Chairman of the Congress of the Jewish Religious Organizations and Institutions in Russia, pointed out that participation in the family and marriage is one's major duty in life, that parents have the main responsibility for their children, and the main problem of the day is morality—not the economy.

Terese Wieland of the German Akademie Diözesan Rottenburg-Stuttgart, cited research that shows love, mutual trust, and fidelity are the most important things in a family today. His Eminence Kyrill, a Metropolitan in the Russian Orthodox Church, pointed out that the phony wizards who promote ideas that disintegrate the family have no answers.

"Constant values can never be changed. They were made by the creator," Roman Catholic Archbishop Tadeusz Kondrusiewicz told the assembly, after explaining that God's design for a man and woman was to make them inseparable. The archbishop warned about breaking up the family and called on people everywhere to stop the evils of abortion and euthanasia, noting that God created man and woman and told them to go forth and multiply.

Bishop Andreas Laun of Austria decried theories about gender that are ridiculous and confuse the roles of men and women, explaining that we were created in God's likeness, male and female.

Russian Orthodox Archpriest Alexander Ranne explained that God made man in his own image and that since it was not good for man to be alone, Eve was created as Adam's partner. She was, he said, "the mother of everyone and more than an assistant for Adam."

A professor of international law from the Netherlands, Franz Alting von Geusau, called on fathers, along with mothers, to take primary responsibility for making the family a school of humanity. He urged fathers and mothers to pray together as they lead their families in a broken and imperfect world. "Many problems of modern society are born in empty, loveless homes and the solution of these problems must begin at home."

Henri Joyeaux, a professor at the medical school of Montpellier University France's reported that French law now says that boys may have homosexual relationships, which decision was reached after surveying children. "And even though children are being taught that homosexual love and heterosexual love are equally good," Joyeaux strongly disagreed, adding that humankind will never survive without marriage and the joining of husband and wife.

The theme that the institution of the family is essential for the economy was discussed by Professor Jean-Didier Lecaillon, a professor of economics at the University of Paris XII and Director of the Institute of Labor in France. Professor Lecaillon is regarded internationally as an expert on family-centered economics, defending large families and refuting population control.

From the United States, Dr. Glen Griffin talked about the important role parents have to correct the abundant misinformation children are receiving today—citing the example of the message that it's okay to play around with sex as long as a condom is used. He pointed out that this message is not only spiritually wrong, but is also seriously flawed medically. Dr. Griffin explained that condoms offer little or no protection against many difficult-to-treat or incurable sexually transmitted diseases. Instead of providing strategies, like condoms, that enable self-destructive behaviors, Dr. Griffin urged parents, teachers, and professionals to teach young people to save sex for marriage—and never to give their children permission to do things that are wrong.

Professor and sociologist Antoly Ivanovich Antonov of Moscow State University pointed out that in the anti-family culture, fewer and fewer children are being born and that this drop in the birth rate is one of the great disasters of modern society.

This meeting in Moscow of religious leaders, educators, heads of family organizations, and other professionals from many nations was notable for many reasons—but especially because of the recurrent theme expressing the urgent need for action in a culture gone astray, action by parents and society to return to time-tested values to strengthen families. mf
“TV intrudes on family life, paralyzes attention for others, and shuts off communication in the family. Hours of passive watching are replacing the precious moments of togetherness around the family dinner table for quiet talk and exchange of the day’s experiences and the precious moments of working together, playing games, or making music.”

—FRANZ ALTING VON GEUSAU
The Netherlands