

Marriage Encounters: Seeking To Make Good Marriages Better

By: Edwin Lehmann

[Paper submitted at the Pastor, Teacher, Delegate Conference of the South Central District of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, in Austin, Texas, January 27, 1984.]

This paper presents a brief history, description, and theological evaluation of the Marriage Encounter Movement within the church. The historical perspectives give the reader a few insights into some of the reasons for the movement's development. The description not only briefly defines the movement, but also gives the reader an example of the materials and topics that would be discussed on a Marriage Encounter weekend. Finally, the evaluation is presented with the idea of building on what others have begun in order to improve on what marriage counselors claim is a good counseling tool.

The best experience for a good marriage available anywhere is Marriage Encounter. It is for those couples who are ambitious for more in their marriage. This experience awakens the sensitivity they thought naturally went away over the years. Marriage Encounter helps us realize that this ebbing doesn't have to happen (Gallagher, 1975, p. 182).

So writes Charles Gallagher, pioneer and staunch advocate of the Marriage Encounter movement in the United States.

Is Marriage Encounter "the best experience for a good marriage?" Since couples have many opportunities for good experiences in their marriages, the decision regarding which is the best should be left to the individual. However, you cannot ignore the fact that hundreds of thousands of couples heartily agree with Father Gallagher, and thousands more are joining those ranks annually. "The Marriage Encounter is one of the hottest things going today in the Catholic Church - and outside the Catholic Church" (Reilly, 1979, p. 6).

Well over 2 million men and women have attended the special weekend course since it was launched in the United States some 16 years ago. In 1979, more than 400,000 persons "graduated" from the program. In that year advocates expected that those numbers would triple within several more years. These statistics are indications that many believe Father Gallagher's claim. At the very least they are checking it out. If you have not already experienced it, then someday soon you just might overhear a fellow church member ask a friend, "Have you made a Marriage Encounter?"

What is it? Where did it come from? Why is it here? Is it as beneficial a program as some claim it to be? Since statistics indicate that the movement is getting stronger, we would do well to have at least an embryonic knowledge of the Marriage Encounter movement for two reasons. First, it has close ties with the church at large. Secondly, if Father Gallagher's claim is a valid one, then, for the sake of our people, it surely would not hurt to look at what he and others are saying and doing.

Historical Perspective

What is now called the Marriage Encounter movement had its start in the early 1960s. It began as a grass-roots movement within the Roman Catholic Church and still retains that flavor today. In January of 1962, Father Gabriel Calvo held his first couples' weekend in Barcelona, Spain. Nine couples had come to him for help. They desired to have better communication among themselves as couples, and they desired to have a greater degree of dedication to their church. The name they chose for "their movement, *Encuentre*, emphasized both the oneness (*en*) of the couple, and the distinctness (*contra*) of husband and wife. Thus, the total encounter experience means to be one couple, to be together in one flesh, and to let the other be fully unique, be "other" (Harper, 1978, p. 1).

In the summer of 1966 several Spanish couples and priests came to the United States to share their experiences in this new movement. They launched what became the American Marriage Encounter movement on a weekend at Notre Dame in 1967. At that initial American encounter was a Jesuit priest, Father Charles

Gallagher, who became so enthused over the ideas and intents set forward by the Spanish group that he threw himself with great zest into the movement and adopted it as his child.

Prior to this weekend at Notre Dame, he was becoming somewhat disenchanted with the programs of the church. He saw post World War II clergy as being “abstracted” from the laity. They began to speak more and more about issues that did not really seem to affect people’s lives (Reilly, 1979, p. 7). He writes of his own perceptions,

(I was) concerned - concerned over what was happening to our world, and above all, to our Church Nothing the Church said or did seemed to be real to people. Though it was all good and beautiful and true, it didn’t hit people where they lived. It all seemed either small potatoes or too idealistic. (Gallagher, 1975, p. 34)

After his Encounter weekend, Charles Gallagher was convinced that Marriage Encounter would be the breakthrough for which he had been searching. To him it seemed to be a program that addressed lay people in their own language. It allowed them to become personally involved. There was no doubt whatsoever in my mind that we were going to touch the hearts of people deeply. Moreover, there would be great joy and richness for everyone involved, and these effects would be felt by the children and then in ever-widening ripples by the whole world. It was a real “Eureka” moment. (Gallagher, 1975, p. 35) With that Father Gallagher wholeheartedly attached himself to the Marriage Encounter movement in the United States and soon became the driving force behind it.

Where Is It Today?

Since 1967 Marriage Encounter has expanded into every state and well over 35 countries. Despite its Roman Catholic origin, an increasing number of Protestants and Jews are attending Marriage Encounter weekends. Besides the attendance of these people from other denominations and religions, the denominations themselves are getting involved. An article appearing in 1978 claimed that in America

There are now twelve different “expressions” of Marriage Encounter - that is, twelve different denominational sponsoring agents (e.g., “Lutheran Expression”). All, however, retain remarkable uniformity and all retain the marks of the movements Catholic origins (Harper, 1978, p. 1).

According to John Kenyon (1978), all of these expressions are affiliated, use the same format, and maintain the original idea of deepening your knowledge, understanding, and acceptance of your husband or wife.

The movement has split two ways in the concept of Marriage Encounter. Both organizations have their roots in the Catholic Expression. The two organizations are Worldwide Marriage Encounter and National Marriage Encounter.

Within the Catholic Expression the Worldwide Marriage Encounter follows the ritual pioneered by Father Gabriel Calvo in Spain, and is the same all over the world. The claim is made that Catholic theology is more strictly adhered to in the Worldwide organization. For example there is no intercommunion of non-Catholics at the Mass which closes a weekend encounter. The National Marriage Encounter allows for what appears to be a greater amount of autonomy on the local level. Intercommunion may be allowed.

Outside of the Catholic Expression, a couple involved in the Church of Christ Expression saw the difference in organization this way:

The Worldwide Marriage Encounter is oriented towards bringing people back to the church. It is interested in renewing people and so is more regimented in its approach. The National is oriented towards making the good better and is less regimented (Speck, 1984).

Another individual in a Lutheran Expression felt that another difference might involve follow-up programs. Worldwide is better in this.

Whatever the differences might be, it is safe to say that Marriage Encounters in its beginning, was greatly influenced by the Catholic Church. It is not regulated by them, but its presence must be somewhat felt for Harper to say, "All (expressions) retain remarkable uniformity and all retain the marks of the movements Catholic origins" (Harper, 1978, p. 1).

What Is The Marriage Encounter

Historical perspectives are often beneficial for giving an indication as to the needs which give rise to a movement and the purpose behind it. The reader now has some knowledge of the movements origin and development. However, if the reader has not previously had occasion to hear much about the Marriage Encounter movement, he may now be asking the questions, "What is it? What is a Marriage Encounter weekend? If the reader is among that group, Father Gallagher comes to the rescue and succinctly describes it:

In the simplest terms, it could be defined as a crash program to learn a technique of communication, and through this communication to experience each other as fully as possible on the weekend It is not a therapy program - Marriage Encounter is for good marriages - nor is it group dynamics It is a work weekend. It is not something done to you or for you. You make it. (Gallagher, 1975, p.36)

The Objectives

In general Marriage Encounter will lay no claims to marital miracles, even if the people describe it as "the best thing that has happened in our marriage." Many leaders make this point absolutely clear, "Serious marriage problems - like chronic alcoholism or spouse abuse - are subjects for the experienced marriage counselor." The priest who made this previous statement then added, "We can't really deal with them" (Reilly, 1979, p. 7).

Neither the lay couples nor the clergy who act as leaders have any special training in counseling. If a marriage is in such an unstable state that total candor or brutal honesty could destroy it, the leaders are quick to say that Marriage Encounter is not the answer.

The simple objective behind Marriage Encounter is to make the good marriage better. As Father Gallagher likes to say, "It is to teach a .300 hitter how to hit .350. It is good, old-fashioned romance for couples of any age It's a dream vacation a shot in the arm all rolled into one" (Gallagher, July, 1975, p. 182).

Composition and Format of a Marriage Encounter Weekend

The weekend begins Friday evening and concludes 44 hours later on Sunday afternoon. There is no set fee for the cost of the weekend. Couples are asked to make a donation to help with the expenses. However, inability to pay should not be an obstacle and "should not keep them from attending" (Speck, 1984). This fact underscores the sincerity of the people in Marriage Encounter to reach out to people who could use help and strengthening. Most of the expressions use hotel/ motel or dormitory facilities. The Catholics often have their own retreat houses.

This 44 hour "crash course" in communication is usually conducted by a team composed of 3 lay couples and a priest or member of the clergy. In the case of the Church of Christ Expression, they appear to take pride in the fact that it is a program run totally by the laity.

Each leader has made at least one previous "encounter" and became a leader due to his or her commitment rather than because of counseling or forensic skills. They are not usually professionals in these areas. Their talks are not sermons, but personal expressions which seek to share problem areas, to confess personal weaknesses which most people have in common, to encourage and to serve as an example for the couples how people can openly and honestly dialogue with their spouses. This honesty policy is not to be misused in airing all the dirty laundry or in investigating all the skeletons which have been piled up in the

closet. According to the Catholic Expression, “prayer is not stressed and the weekend isn’t heavy with religion” (Reilly, 1979, p. 8).

The thematic thrust of the presentations proceeds from “I” to “We” to “We and God” to “We, God, and the World.” The presentations are to be examined with one or more of these progressions in mind. The dialogue sessions take place between the individual couples. There is little socializing among the weekend couples as a group. The main emphasis is on individual husband-wife dialogue.

Generally, around 12-16 episodes make up the weekend schedule. Each episode consists of a presentation made by a lay leader couple and by a member of the clergy, if the expression uses them. The presentations may range from 20 minutes to an hour in length, depending on the topic.

The initial topics are intended to be non-threatening in nature. Usually the first topic is a reflection on self. What do I look for in myself? What do I expect of myself in our marriage? “Small things” are discussed, like remembering to open the car door for one’s wife or keeping the home neat or kissing each other goodbye in the morning. As the weekend progresses, so do the topics from the “small things” to financial worries, alienation, sex; couple-stagnation, spiritual divorce, the Christian commitment of marriage, and, if you are in a Catholic Expression, the Sacrament of Marriage. Not all of these topics are addressed in each expression (Reilly, 1979, p. 8).

At the end of each presentation, a brief period of time, 10-20 minutes is set aside for each individual making the “encounter” to personally reflect on the matter. During this time the couples separate. One member may go back to the hotel room; the other goes off to the side. Independently they write what Gallagher calls a “love letter” on an assigned question. The questions are designed to get both partners in touch with their feelings about themselves and their marriage. After the 10-20 minutes, the partners are reunited, exchange letters, and dialogue on the contents until it is time to return for the next presentation. This is the most important part of the Marriage Encounter weekend, dialoguing on the “love letters.” This dialogue is shared only by the couple. “There is no group analysis, no public confession, no forced participation” (Reilly, 1979, p. 8).

With its writing and dialogue sessions, Saturday is the main day of the retreat, and it can be very emotionally draining. This dialoguing comes to a conclusion on Sunday morning with the “90 plus 90” - a 90 minute session of writing followed by a 90 minute dialogue.

The weekend then concludes with the celebration of a Mass or Communion. Reilly writes,

During the “Eucharistic Banquet” each couple places on the altar, in a sealed envelope, their commitment for the future. At communion time, the envelopes are returned. Before the final blessing, the couples renew their marriage vows and then hold hands for the benediction. (1979, p. 9)

So ends the Encounter weekend, but the “encounter” is not over. Ideally, it will never be over as long as the individuals are alive. The couples are urged to continue their dialoguing technique daily, at home, with the “daily 10 plus 10.” This is the Marriage Encounter as developed by Gallagher. (See Appendix B.)

The Secret Behind Its Success

The secret behind Marriage Encounter’s success does not lie in group dynamics, but in couple dynamics. Each couple makes their own “encounter” apart from the others. In most cases it appears that there are few, if any, sessions for mass participation, except for the sharing of experiences by the lead couples. Their personal sharing in front of the group acts as an ice breaker to ease the tension and fear, and it serves as an example of the communication technique.

Also, the intents of those behind the scenes of the Marriage Encounter movement are very sincere. This is readily visible through their enthusiasm not only during the weekend, but in setting the weekend up and in promoting Marriage Encounter. They are very willing to hold informational meetings for those couples who are contemplating on attending a weekend. They truly seem to be working as hard as they can for improving and enriching marriages.

Who could be against that? Personal, humanitarian, loving rescue from the stale, middle-class routine that many complain of now-a-days. Breakfast, newspaper, work, dinner, television, book, bedtime, breakfast—breaking away from the repetitive routine is a goal of Marriage Encounter. Couples learn how to offer the gift of their inner selves to their marriage partner. They learn to offer it through a medium which seems to be almost forgotten in this world of computers and mass communications the medium of personal dialogue.

The leaders work hard to reach their goal of giving this medium to others. They sacrifice much to reach their goal. They give of themselves and their time freely. Here lies the secret behind Marriage Encounter's success, the personal, caring element. It is the human element of genuine concern and commitment which has been obscured in a world of impersonal machines and gadgets. As one priest explained it,

I was always looking for the deep sense of brotherhood I thought should be in people. But I didn't think it existed any more. I was very struck by it on the weekend. I could almost not believe there was so much faith as existed among the team couples and priest I witnessed. I realized there was a new Church springing up. (Gallagher, 1975, p. 47)

A Theological Evaluation

At a time when we are reminded daily that the traditional family structure appears to be crumbling, a great number of voices cry, "Thank God for such a positive approach for the healing of family problems!" Not all people are satisfied or happy with the Marriage Encounter approach, for often couples leave before the weekend is over. However, by far the majority are pleased with the results of their weekend. Marriage Encounter seems to be a good, positive, human approach to marriage enrichment.

Not being a professional psychologist nor counselor, and being without the advantage of attending a Marriage Encounter weekend, this author would not be willing to comment on the effectiveness of the approaches utilized, nor would he be willing to comment on the validity of the research reports that are available. However, a comment is in order regarding some of the statements or slogans that are made during a weekend. Within the church we would be concerned about the movements theological underpinnings and impressions that could be conveyed to people.

Since Marriage Encounter is not a formal theological movement, and since very little or sketchy theological material is presented, its theology must be ferreted out from the slogans and the verbal use of Scripture that is made.

As was previously quoted, "Prayer is not stressed and the weekend is not heavy with religion" (Reilly, 1979, p. 8). This statement is misleading. Whereas it is true that religion is not preached, it is grossly inaccurate to imply that religion or theology does not come into focus. Although the intention is not there, according to leaders with whom this author has spoken, this author and others believe that theology does indeed come into focus in a subtle way.

Time and space do not permit us to deal with all the theological features of the Marriage Encounter movement. Hopefully, the following examples will serve to give us a taste of the statements that others have questioned.

Slogans

One of the slogans repeated quite frequently on a weekend is, "Feelings are neither right nor wrong (they just are)." The Marriage Encounter goal is seeking to strengthen the couple's relationship through communication. The communication of personal feelings between two people is the channel that needs to flow freely. Obstacles must be removed. Therefore, since Marriage Encounter places great emphasis on the "love letters" and dialogue, this slogan becomes one of the major ones the couples should remember. The intention is a good one, to open up the channel of communication and clear up the impediments that might keep that channel from opening up properly.

Leaders from a Church of Christ Expression located in Friendwood, Texas, sent this author a booklet which interpreted the term as follows:

We define feelings as an internal sensation or emotion. They are involuntary responses to a mental or physical stimulus. The word “involuntary” is the key to our understanding and appreciation of feelings. (Speck, p. 3)

By considering feelings as an involuntary response to a stimulus, they basically regard them as being something that we really cannot control all the time, since we are not always in control of the stimuli around us. This leads to their saying,

This emphasis on feelings is to show us that a portion of our communication can be separated and no moral or social judgment placed on it. Feelings are simply a part of us (As an example) anger itself has no morality, but what we do with it is what makes it right or wrong. (p. 3f)

If we turn to a specific example, the meaning behind this becomes more apparent. Kenneth Harper (1978) cites a Catholic priest, Father Don Trinkle, explaining this:

A feeling, the gut-level reaction, is akin to the temptation. Just as a temptation is not a sin, neither is a feeling. What is then done with the feeling determines goodness or evil. To give a specific example, if I feel anger (a feeling) because there's always dirty laundry lying about, I can respond by harboring resentment (“She really is a crummy housekeeper”), self-righteously justifying myself (“I always hang up my stuff”), or belittling my spouse (“She's never really cared about our home's appearance”). On the other hand, I can react by forgiving her (“It's OK honey, I know I leave empty glasses all over the house”), understanding (“It is a small apartment and the laundry room is three buildings over”), and looking for avenues of correction (“I'm at your disposal for an hour every night after supper”). The feeling can give rise to either of the two reactions, and only then does morality enter the picture. Since Marriage Encounter concentrates on communication, it stresses the amorality of feelings so that couples will share freely with each other. (pp. 2,3)

A Lutheran counselor and minister defended the slogan to Bradley Hanson on pragmatic grounds:

Only if people cease to evaluate their feelings will they be free to recognize them; if they think some feelings are bad, they tend to repress them and suffer harmful consequences. (Hanson, 1981, p. 55)

Who would not agree that the obstacles which prevent a husband and wife from sharing their feelings would best be removed? What loving husband would not want to be able to share his feelings with his spouse often? Deep down inside of us we want to be freed from the burden of guilt that might plague us because of our feelings. For these reasons we want to hear “Feelings are neither right nor wrong, good nor bad.”

Perhaps this proves to be therapeutically effective in allowing people to overcome any obstacle which gets in the way of communicating one's true feelings. However, at best this statement is misleading, at worst it is a glossing over of what God has to say about our sinful nature. One cannot simply say that feelings are morally neutral. Since we are still in the flesh, we have our sinful flesh to deal with. Feelings are a part of that.

Jesus says in his Sermon on the Mount, “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment (Matthew 5:21-22). The Apostle Paul writes, “I know that nothing good lives in me, that is in my sinful nature Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 7:18-25). Christ's redemption alone pays for our sin, whether it be original sin or sins of thought, word, and deed. This sweet gospel alone comforts the one who suffers guilt because of his feelings - not the slogan “Feelings are neither right nor wrong, good nor bad.” God's truth should

never be glossed over, even for therapeutic reasons that seem good. The Law and Gospel stand; they are effective.

Other slogans and expressions which might be used in a Marriage Encounter weekend follow. Some the reader may like, others he may not like.

“God does not make junk” (made to combat feelings of low self-esteem)

“I am unique - one of a kind” “

“Openness is giving and receiving”

“3 and 2 = 1”

“Love is a decision”

“God loves us the way we are”

“There’s a new world somewhere” (Speck)

Slogans aid the mind in remembering important points that have been communicated. However, slogans do not come close to telling the whole story. Although this author has been assured by some representatives of Marriage Encounter expressions that these slogans are used to help the individual open up and to gain some measure of self-esteem, there is a danger here of deceiving those who do not have faith in Christ. It can be implied that God does not see any problem with them (“does not make junk”) and that he loves them the way they are.” If the Law has not been presented, and if an unbeliever is present, what effect would such messages bring? Would not there implications make the God of Truth angry?

Over Emphasis on the Horizontal Plane

“The horizontal dimension between people seems to have been well-thought out,” commends Robert Elder, as associate minister of a United Presbyterian Church. However, this horizontal dimension, although it is extremely important, should not supersede the vertical dimension. Elder continues, “At no time during the weekend did I hear any reference to Paul’s treatment of marriage” (Elder, 1979, p.673).

Bradley underscores this weakness. He comments that on his weekend, “the leap from ‘God’s Plan’ for marriage (vertical) to the emotionally close relationship between spouses fostered by dialogue (horizontal) was made so quickly that such rich resources as Ephesians 5:21-33 were not utilized” (Hanson, 1981, p. 56). In the eagerness to over emphasize the horizontal aspect of dialoguing, leaders may sometimes buttress the “theology of listening to feelings” with convenient passages from Scriptures. This can result in an improper use of God’s Word in order to support a point of view. For example, the Church of Christ representatives utilized Matthew 13:1-23, Jesus’ parable of “The Sower and the Seed,” to emphasize what happens to couples when they do not listen properly. Jesus was describing what happens when the Word of God is heard, not what might happen when we listen or fail to listen to others.

Emphasizing the horizontal plane is important. However, by first emphasizing the proper vertical plane, think of how the horizontal would be immeasurably improved. Hopefully, Marriage Encounter will turn more in this direction.

Conclusion

Is Marriage Encounter “the best experience for a good marriage”? Undoubtedly, the reader has now formulated a few opinions on this question. Like in any program, there are strong points and there are weaknesses. Hopefully, this paper provides the reader with a basic overview of both.

What pastor or teacher would deny that activities and things that people can personally discuss and chew on for themselves are beneficial? Marriage Encounter seems to provide much of this in its program. It is more than being lectured at. The people become actively involved in a way that many have forgotten to use, the human dialogue. This is a strength. At the same time, proper Scripturally oriented material needs to be more fully integrated into the presentations, and weak theology must be removed.

If friends or acquaintances or congregational members attend such a Marriage Encounter, we have a responsibility to be in contact and communication with them. The weaknesses mentioned above may be present. Since there are different levels of Christian maturity, some will be able to ferret out the bad material from the good; others will not be able to do that. They may need our help in recognizing what God really says in Scripture.

Finally, should any congregation be entertaining thoughts in venturing onto the marriage enrichment field and are wondering what objectives are beneficial ones to strive for, the Supervisor of Educational and Family Services at Wisconsin Lutheran Family and Child Services advises,

Structure sessions in which the couples could say things even if they are incorrect. They may be incorrect, but it is what they are feeling and struggling over with their sinful nature. They need to talk and work on it. Consequently, the leaders need to be comfortable enough to accept some strange ideas and recognize them for what they are, expressions of the inner feeling of a sinful, yet redeemed child of God. (Matzke, 1984)

Appendix A

Below is a listing of Marriage Encounter contact people for some of the different denominational expressions:

Church of Christ Expression: K. and Esther Speck, box 244, Friendswood, TX 77546 (713) 482-7453.
Vic and Estelle Allen, 3401 Glenbrook, Garland, TX 75041.

Episcopal Expression: Roger and Marty Gilbert, P.O. Box 966, Darien, CT 06820.
Friends (Quakers) Expression: David and Marcila Leach, 6061 Wellesley Way N.E., Seattle, WA 98115.

Lutheran Expression: Ken and Terri Hill, 1528 Jasmine, Plano, TX 75074 (214) 422-7279. Rev. Harvey and Karen Bongers, 7414 Baneway, Houston, TX 77072 (713) 495-7587. Rev. Glen and Fay Krans, 798 Renee, Seguin, TX 78155 (512) 379-6189.

Presbyterian Expression: Jack and Sue Hartland, 2330 Dellwood Dr., Lake Oswego, OR 97034.

Roman Catholic Expression: Worldwide Marriage Encounter, 3711 Long Beach Blvd, Suite 207, Long Beach, CA 90807.

United Methodist Expression: Ron and Carol Wheatley, 1001 So. 4th Atchison, KA 66002.

Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod: (not affiliated with Marriage Encounter) Frederick Matzke, Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Services, 6800 N. 76th Street, P.O. Box 23221 Milwaukee, WI. 53223 (414) 353-5000.

WLSFS will offer a video taped workshop of four sessions of 1 ½ hours each beginning June 1. It is a new program entitled Marriage Enrichment Through Communication. It will rent for \$200.00 for the four cassette tapes. A leader's guide is provided. It incorporates group discussion and participation and is based on sessions Mr. Matzke now conducts. In the fall of 1984 a video tape series on parenting will also be available.

APPENDIX B

The following is a list of the titles of presentations that are made on a Church of Christ Marriage Encounter weekend. This information was supplied by K. and Esther Speck who formerly headed the Church of Christ Expression.

Introduction - the nuts and bolts about the weekend.
Focus on Feelings -explains and defines them.
Encounter With Self - intended to help one understand him/ herself. "God Doesn't Make Junk."
Pattern of Dialogue -explaining the technique of dialogue.
Marriage in the Modern World -presents the world's plan for marriage. "Love Is A Decision."
Areas for Reaching Out - discusses areas we need to understand about our spouses.
Openness to God in our Relationship - uses Matthew 13:3-23 focusing on our listening to God and to our mate. Confidence, The Key To Unity.
Marriage in God's Plan - contrasts God's plan with the world's "3 and 2 are 1."
Encouragement to Dialogue Daily.
Cana - a time for sharing with the whole group if any desire to.
Sacredness in Marriage - uses Ephesians 5:21ff. "Marriage is Sacred."
Financial Talk - concerning the cost of the weekend if they can pay.
Marriage Commitment.
Beyond Ourselves - stresses our outreach to others; "Couple Power."
Sharing -another opportunity to share with the group.
Closing - we make some closing remarks and have communion at this time.

They concluded by writing, "Other expressions have different titles for their presentations, but the contents are very similar. We do have outlines from which to make our presentations, but our talks are written from our own experiences and we share who we are with the listening couples. They are not "canned" speeches. We have outlines so that we will be sure to get in those concepts and that they will be in the right places and not repeated in every talk."

References

- Elder, Robert J. "The Theology of Marriage Encounter." *The Christian Century*, vol. 96, no.22, June 20-27, 1979.
- Gallagher, Father Chuck, S.J. *The Marriage Encounter: As I Have Loved You*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1975.
- Gallagher, Father Chuck. "Why Marriage Encounter Succeeds." *New Catholic World*, vol. 218, no. 1306, July/August 1975.
- Hanson, Bradley. "Improving Lutheran Marriage Encounter." *Dialog*, vol. 20, no. 1, Winter 1981.
- Harper, Kenneth C. "Close Encounters of the 44-Hour Kind." *Eternity*, vol. 29, no. 3, March 1978.
- Kenyon, John. "'Love One Another as I Have Loved You.'" *Christian Herald*, vol. 101, no. 2, February, 1978.
- Matzke, Frederick. *Personal Communication*, January 1984.
- Reilly, Robert T. "Marriage Encounter: Waking Up a Sleepy Marriage." *U.S. Catholic*, vol. 44, no. 11, November, 1979.
- Speck, K. and Esther. *Concepts of Your Weekend*.