

Introduction

Let me pray for us as we start.

Father, we live in many different places, some far away and some right here in Saint Louis. We pray for the time that we are going to share together. We ask for Your blessing. We pray that You would help us to learn. We pray that You would bless what we do. I would ask that You would help me to say the right things. I pray that those things I say that are not right, which surely can happen, would not have impact or effect. I pray that those things that are true and consistent with Your Word would be the things that really have impact. We pray for each individual, for his or her learning and his or her individual needs that we hope can be addressed through our work together here. We pray that You will take the single thing that we do together and apply it in multiple ways to meet the needs of each person. We pray and ask You for Your help, because there is no one else to whom we can go to ask things like this, as we trust You and we pray in Your name. Amen.

After a brief introduction, I want to talk about the course description and then talk a little about the books for the course. I am Dan Zink. When people ask me where home is, I say, “Quincy, Massachusetts.” I was born in Wisconsin, so I do not talk like people from Massachusetts, but that is home. One other thing I would like you to know about me is that I have been married for 33 years and have two children.

I want to take a few minutes to look at the books for the course. A big, overarching objective for me in this course is to somehow reach into your soul and make things stir. I want you to wrestle with your own issues from your own family. This is my goal partly so that you can understand your own issues better, but also so you can understand the impact of family on others. That always takes time. You will need to take some of these things and continue to think about them after you are done with this course. There are always decisions to make about what you are going to think about and how far you are going to think about it and what you will do with it, and those are your decisions to make. I would encourage you to be ready for doing that kind of work.

Let me just make a comment on the books. One book you do not need for the course but that I recommend to you is *The Singlehood Phenomenon* by Beverly and Tom Rodgers. I think it is a really good assessment of where we are these days in light of the fact that we have had a high divorce rate in the United States for at least the last 35 years. Another book is *The Leader's Journey: Accepting the Call to Personal and Congregational Transformation*, which takes family-systems thinking and applies it to ministerial leadership. This is a great book for those who are pastors. It really is an excellent book. You may have heard of the book *The Emotionally Healthy Church* by Pete Scazzerro. It is one of the best books—actually one of the only ones I can think of—that helps us see that emotional maturity and spiritual maturity cannot be separated. They are really intertwined. The more we come to understand what spiritual maturity really looks like, the more we see that our growth as people works out in all kinds of realms. It is perhaps artificial to divide it like we do into separate categories of emotions and spirit and other things. Scazzerro's book is really good with that, and *The Leader's Journey* is as well. It does not say it as directly, but it really works on that principle. Another book I would recommend is *Windows of the Soul* by Ken Gire. It is not a counseling book. As I was looking back at it today, I thought, “This really should be a counseling textbook somewhere, in some course.” The concept of the book is, “How do we grow at a soul level?” The basic premise is, “By paying attention to all the ways that God shows up around us, all the time, every day.” The windows into those kinds of experiences, into that reality, are there if we pay attention. But it is hard to pay attention. It takes a long time to learn how to pay attention. So that book is a great help with that, and so I commend it to you. It has been

around for about a decade. Ken Gire is a really good writer. He has a good sense of who God is and how we relate with Him.

Now I will move on to the required texts for the course. This book is called *Hold Me Tight: Seven Conversations for a Lifetime of Love*, by Susan Johnson. It is the best book on the nature of marriage, in essence, and how you make it work, written by a non-Christian. Which is better? I do not know. This book, *Each for the Other*, was written by Bryan Chapell, the president of Covenant Seminary. It gives us good perspective on Ephesians 5. This is not a critique of Dr. Chapell, because I do not think it is what he does in this, but I believe that most often as Evangelicals, the biggest mistake we make in looking for Scriptural information about marriage is that we start with Ephesians 5 and pull it out of the context of Genesis 2. *The Intimate Mystery* by Dan Allender is a really good biblical statement in brief form. It is pretty much in language that you can understand. Allender has a tendency to make up his own vocabulary, but once you get into it, you are okay. *Holding Hands, Holding Hearts* is another good biblical description of marriage and a really good model of what I think is good process—understanding the truth of Scripture, not only the details but the big picture, and then applying it to a specific issue, like dating. The next book is *Close Calls* by Dave Carder. Dave Carder is the counseling pastor at First Evangelical Free Church of Fullerton (the church formerly pastored by Chuck Swindoll). Dave Carder wrote a book called *Torn Asunder*, which is one of the two best books written by Christians on infidelity. The other one is out of print. He has continued to research the subject, and this is part of the results of that.

The next book is *The Divorce Culture*, by Barbara Dafoe Whitehead. You may recognize that name, or maybe not. She wrote an article called “Dan Quayle Was Right,” which appeared in the April 1993 issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*. Dan Quayle was the vice president of the United States, and he made a negative comment about the TV show *Murphy Brown*. The main character on the show was pregnant as a single woman, and Dan Quayle critiqued that. He was widely criticized for that, and Barbara Dafoe Whitehead wrote this article saying that Dan Quayle was right. Her book is a sociologic work saying, “Wait a minute. This stuff makes a difference.” She is one of the only voices I know of who rightfully says, “The high level of divorce we have in our country has impacted us all. It has shaped the way we define marriage. It shapes the way we decide about divorce.” It affects all of us, whether there is divorce in our families or not, so that people like the Rodgers can write a book saying, “Hey, something is happening related to singles and marriage. Here are our 10 reasons.” If you go back and look through the reasons, you see that several of them are related to uncertainties and fears connected with the lack of endurance in many of the marriages that people see around them these days. So I think that Barbara Dafoe Whitehead does brilliant work. She does things like follow the shifts in what is said in Emily Post’s book on etiquette through the century, as her descendants continue to publish it. Things like that give a really interesting read of the culture and the society itself. She looks at the self-help literature and how it addresses the topic with children and with adults. It is a brilliant analysis, it seems to me, and it should slap us in the face with “Wait a minute! Look how different it is these days.” We are in a very, very different world, and it seems to me that she describes it well.

We will return to these books from time to time. My interest is really more for you to see the big picture rather than all the details of those seven different books. My idea in making those assignments is, “What are a few themes that you want to remember?” I do not want you to give me three pages of quotes, but rather to find some themes that you can take away. I hope that a regular question throughout the course of the week will be, “What do you want to take away from what we have been talking about?” We may even pause from time to time to reflect on that. So be thinking in those terms. I hope that the lessons will prompt you to do that.

I have my classroom students create a genogram as one of the course assignments. We will talk about the genogram more fully later on, but I want to introduce the concept now, because it is kind of challenging. I often repeat this concept: The genogram is mostly about the dynamics in the family, not the history. I do not want students to write me a history of their family without much analysis into what differences that made and what the family did with it and what marks it has left on the family and what the family continues to do because of how they have responded to those events. It is difficult to do. It is a whole different way of thinking from how we typically think. I often get papers that say something like this: “My father was an alcoholic.” Then they will go on to describe some events that occurred. They might tell a story of something that happened when the father was drunk and angry and abused someone. There is actually no analysis there. It is common to state the fact and assume that communicates the analysis. Any of you who have alcohol in the family at any level need to think about the assumptions that show up in alcoholic families: “Do not trust, do not talk, do not feel.” Back in the 1960s, a writer identified that what happens in families of alcoholics is that the family members end up living by these principles. “Do not trust, do not talk, do not feel.” If there is alcohol in your family at all, you need to look at that and address that.

There is pretty good evidence that my great-grandfather was an alcoholic. That was my mother’s mother’s father. There is pretty good evidence that my grandmother’s husband, after his son was killed in World War II, became an alcoholic. He had one son actually involved in AA. Another son was approached by his family to do an intervention twice, so that is a pretty good clue. Another son’s wife was an alcoholic. There was lots of alcohol around in my mother’s family. Now, my mother became a Christian as a teenager and married a man who was a Christian. They went to a denominational school, and it was a fairly strict denomination in terms of behavior standards, so we did not drink or dance or go to movies or any of those things. When I was a kid in fifth or sixth grade, I took a note to school when we had square-dancing in gym class to say that I could not participate because of our religious beliefs. So there is nothing that looks like alcoholism in my parents’ branch of the family. However, about 15 years ago, I remember having a conversation with my brother, who is five years older than me. He made the statement, “I am like the child of an alcoholic.” He stood there talking about that, and I was standing there thinking, “Oh my goodness, that is so true. Why have I never thought about that?” The fact is, those kinds of effects filtered down through in terms of the way our family operates. And a piece of it is, “Do not talk, do not feel, do not trust.” Those would be the priorities, so that in my family, whatever you felt, you were on your own with it. You were not supposed to talk about it. You were not supposed to talk about much of anything, actually. Now, we got along fine. It was peaceful. People were doing the best they could, but for generations in this family, I am sure, there was an awful lot of “Do not talk, do not feel, and while you are at it, how are you going to trust anyone if you cannot talk or feel?” It has continued. I do that. I think it is partly why I became a counselor. For a lot of us, part of why we do things like that is because we need counseling. So it puts me in situations on a very regular basis where I have to pay attention to feelings. It forces me to keep growing up, and maybe that is because there is a hunger for that, a hunger to be in relationship at a deep level, because in our family, we did not do that very well. So that is an example of analysis in a genogram.

One of the things that happens when you do a genogram is that you think through the family dynamics of you and your spouse, and you look at it and say, “I am seeing reasons why we got married that I never saw before.” Most often, spouses fit together in ways that are best explained by family. It can be complex or it can be obvious. It depends. As an example, one of the reasons I married Carolanne is that she is different from my mother. That is part of what was attractive to me about her—some of the differences from my mom. She can talk. Hearing feelings from me on a daily basis (if not more often) is important to her. By the way, I am not saying that I understood this when we got married when I was 22. I am just looking at it now. In a certain sense, what she needed from me the most—I am quoting Dave

Wilcox—was something that was the hardest for me to give, and that was good. That was a piece of why I married her. Now part of the surprise is that we can relate to each other in such a way that she can look a lot like my mom. I do not mean physically. She can act like my mom, and I can act like her dad, which just seems bizarre, but that is what happens. Again, I think it is a couple of pretty important, significant relationships that together we get to rework, hoping that we do it better this time. So there is some complexity to that. Now I just put out there in a few sentences a lot of analysis that is pretty deep and heavy and complicated. It is not inaccessible. You can do it. I think you understand it. Depending on where you are in marriage and in life, it can be easier or harder, depending on who you are and what your experience has been.

I want you to get enough on the genogram. How much is enough? I have two thoughts. One is, if you were in a family for which these rules—“do not trust, do not talk, do not feel”—were a really strong thing, the kind of analysis I am talking about is really difficult. By the way, the influence of these rules does not have to be from alcohol necessarily. I think these rules can apply to any dysfunctional family, which is probably all of us at some level. But this kind of analysis is really difficult, because perhaps the biggest piece of what I am asking you is, “What feelings were driving the behavior of the family?” It is almost always fear. Fear seldom comes alone. It is usually mixed with other feelings, and usually we see the thing on top that is expressed more, like anger. Most often under anger is something else like shame. So if you have been raised in this kind of environment, it is pretty tough to figure out, “What were people feeling?” If you identify with this, then I would say to focus on trying to figure out what the feelings were that drove this stuff. Choose two or three or four significant relationships and events in each one, and try to figure out what was going on at deeper levels. What were people afraid of? Why did people not talk? What were they afraid of that caused them not to talk? What were they afraid of that caused them not to trust people? What were they afraid of that caused them not to feel?

You will learn how to draw relationship lines. In the drawing of a genogram, there must be relationship lines for all of the significant relationships. You are the focus person, and so you will draw relationship lines between yourself and your spouse, if you are married, to any children that you have, to your parents, and maybe to your grandparents. One of the things that we look for are triangles, and sometimes in these relationship lines you can see triangles. If you do not draw the relationship lines, it becomes hard to see that each relationship impacts the other relationships. So a genogram looks at some major things: what emotions are driving things and how the family functions as a whole with structures or triangles and relationship lines and things like that.

Family secrets are often uncovered during the process of creating a genogram. A family secret might be something like a person exists in the family whom you did not know existed. Sometimes it might be something like your grandfather was married before he was married to your grandmother, and there was a child out of that union. You think, “What? And you are just telling me now?” And one of the curious things to me is that often the secrets get revealed by someone like your aunt. I have said that before, and I have had people call to me across campus and say, “You were right! It was my aunt! She told me the family secret!” But before you talk to your aunt, try to think about what you know and what you do not know and why you do not know more. Or why do you know so much? Some families are really good at putting the data out there, although not very many. So each student in the class will construct a one-page genogram (that is the drawing) including lines to show the nature of key relationships. This should include a minimum of three generations for students, or four for those with children. Married students should include information on their spouse. In the paper portion of the assignment, students will demonstrate their understanding of how relationships work by identifying issues in their family through discussing underlying feelings, motivations, and reasons for these issues. This should include discussion of these factors the student believes are dynamically significant. It should not be a family history. It is

important that the write-up is not a description of historical facts but a thorough analysis of dynamics. The best papers describe history only enough to provide background for analysis. The nature of relationships should be diagrammed. This is very important for thorough analysis. This is a heart-oriented assignment in which the student must deal with the whole-person impacts of his or her family issues. This paper should help you understand how you became who you are, including the emotional aspects of your family. What does your family do with emotions?