

# A Spiritually-based Model for Working with Couples

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## Permanence/Stability

### ASSESSMENT

- Length of relationship/current concerns
- History of the relationship (positive vs. negative perception)
- Personal views of relational commitment
- Level of personal commitment (scale 1 to 10)
- Spiritual life of the individuals
- Personal commitment to Jesus and faith community
- What is the vision for the marriage (expectations)
- When/how did the couple become aware that they were to marry?

### RISK FACTORS

- Family of origin issues
- Previous relational experiences (length, intensity, issues)
- Previous relational splits
- Parental relationships
- Lack of vision for the marriage
- Lack of faith commitment

### SKILLS

- Relationship formation
- Visioning

### SPIRITUAL TASKS

- Cultivation of a sense of couple spirituality
- Understanding of covenantal relationship
- Review of individual spiritual life and commitment
- Detect/discuss faith differences

### EVALUATIVE QUESTIONS

- How secure do I feel in this relationship?
- How committed am I to this relationship?

## SELF REVELATION

### ASSESSMENT

Past/present communication patterns  
 Roles (initiator/avoider)  
 Time issues  
 Pattern of resolving conflicts/previous attempts to resolve conflict (process & outcome)  
 Communication pattern  
 Anger management  
 "hot button" issues

### RISK FACTORS

Pattern of withdrawal and invalidation  
 Tense problem solving pattern  
 High degree of criticism  
 Patterns of domestic violence

### SKILLS

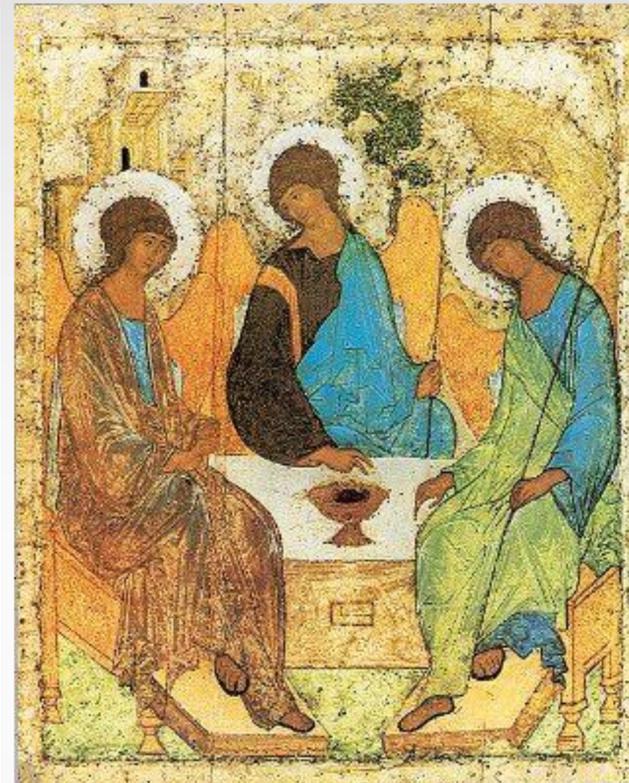
Communication  
 Problem solving  
 Conflict management  
 Anger management  
 Forgiveness

### SPIRITUAL TASKS

Develop pattern of shared prayer and faith sharing  
 Establish spiritual routines and disciplines  
 Discuss coping with spiritual crisis and dark night of the soul

### EVALUATIVE QUESTION

Where are we in terms of our communication in our relationship?



Rublev's Icon of the Trinity

A framework that therapists and pastoral counselors can use to assess and intervene with couples in a way that recognizes the spiritual dimension of the relationship. The framework is Trinitarian and is focused upon four key characteristics associated with the Trinity and applies these characteristics to the marital relationship.

## MUTUALITY

### ASSESSMENT

Pattern of decision-making  
 Time sharing patterns  
 Importance of control to the individual  
 Sharing of leisure/social interests  
 Mutual friends  
 Sense of partnership  
 Ability to forgive and move beyond

### RISK FACTORS

Increased distancing  
 Dominance issues  
 Family of origin: pattern of mutuality between parents  
 Isolation  
 Lack of shared interests/friends  
 Difficulty or inability to let go

### SKILLS

Leisure development  
 Time/stress management  
 Forgiveness  
 Attitude of gratitude

### SPIRITUAL TASKS

Resolution of the Dark Night of the Soul  
 Refocus of relationship on the spirituality of the couple in light of emerging/new roles  
 Processing of relational and spiritual experiences and growth  
 Living with increased trust in the relationship and the Trinity  
 Development of communion

### EVALUATIVE QUESTIONS

Do we have a relationship which reflects mutuality: a sense of partnership?  
 What do we need to forgive and let go of in order to move forward in our relationship?

## OTHER DIRECTEDNESS/SERVICE

### ASSESSMENT

Able to recognize a broader definition/vision of family  
 Movement towards a renewed sense of life mission beyond previous concerns  
 Balancing act  
 Involvement with the larger community

### RISK FACTORS

Isolation/closing in  
 Either or orientation to relationships & life  
 Self-centeredness

### SKILLS

Transitioning  
 Balancing of responsibilities

### SPIRITUAL TASKS

Development of a couple theology of service  
 Discern ways to serve  
 Prepare for eternity  
 Prepare for possible separation from spouse

### EVALUATIVE QUESTION

Where are we with regards to service to others?  
 What are our current responsibilities towards family?