

FAITH BASED DISCERNMENT COUNSELING

Participant's Guide



**A STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROCESS TO HELP
COUPLES CLARIFY THEIR OPENNESS TO SAVING
THEIR MARRIAGE**

Copyright © 2013, George Kenworthy, D. Min and Amanda Horton, PhD. All rights reserved. Reproduction, adaptation, and redistribution prohibited. 2Restored® is only responsible for the material printed in this document and provided in the official 2Resotred® videos. Extra commentary included in any training is outside the scope of our control and responsibility.

This participant's guide is for personal use only. You may print and re-print your own pages as many times as you need for your own use, but you may not share this guide with any other person or group, upload it to any platform, or re-sell it in any format. Because this guide is your "ticket" to attend your event, each individual should purchase and download their own participant's guide.

Because of the nature of digital products,
we do not offer refunds or exchanges.

Please email info@2restored.com with any questions!

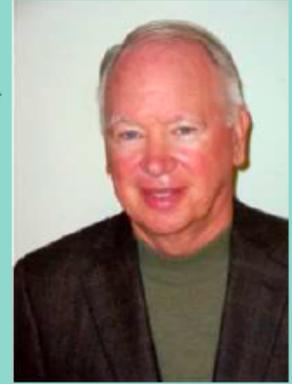
Share your stories of training and utilizing this material by using the hashtag #faithbaseddiscernmentcounseling and tagging @_2restored_ on social media! We look forward to connecting with you.

*Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture referenced in this guide is referenced from The Holy Bible New International Version (2006), published by Zondervan Corporation.

OUR SPEAKERS

DR. GEORGE KENWORTHY

Dr. Kenworthy has been working with couples for nearly 50 years, many in his capacity as a senior pastor and seminary professor. Early on in that role he realized he did not really know how to help “stuck” couples to revive their marriages. Many of the couples he counseled were very desperate and on the brink of divorce. Often, they had seen one or more other marriage counselors before they came to him as a “hail Mary” attempt for help. He wondered what he could offer them that they had not already heard or tried? Over time it became clear in counseling that 3 questions moved the majority of willing spouses forward toward hope and restoration.



In 2005, his wife challenged him to write a book on marriage. The success of the book, *Marriage Makeover*, led to his second book, *Before the Last Resort: 3 Simple Questions To Rescue Your Marriage*. For the last 15 years, he has worked with an amazing group of marriage experts who, together as a team, have developed behavioral tools and instructional seminars designed to help every marriage – even those that seem most hopeless. In 2006, Dr. Kenworthy became founder and President of 2Restored®. He has been featured on FamilyLife® and Focus on the Family® broadcasts, as well as a frequent radio guest on KTIS and KKMS in the Twin Cities of Minnesota, where he gives hope to couples in limbo and crisis alike for a healthier, vibrant and more enduring marriage.

Dr. Kenworthy has earned two Masters degrees and one Doctorate in Persuasion and Oral Communication and has completed all coursework for his Doctorate in Hebrew Scriptures and Philosophy.

DR. AMANDA HORTON



For 20 years, Dr. Horton has practiced as a psychologist in corporate environments and served in Christian ministry providing therapy and professional guidance and conducting empirical research.

Having been raised in a law enforcement family, she constantly heard the heartbreaking stories of physical and mental abuse by the perpetrators. It was clear to her that these wrongs were committed by broken people whose wounds were a result of a cycle of family mental illness. She felt the need for early intervention was paramount and so began providing pro bono mental health work with adult and juvenile female inmates. Through those (and many other) encounters she has seen how people who seek professional help – and are committed to change – can transform their lives and, in turn, the lives of

those close to them.

Dr. Horton earned her Masters Degrees in both Clinical Psychology and Industrial/Organizational Psychology, a Ph.D. in Industrial/Organizational Psychology, and holds a current clinical license. Her credentials positioned her to work in corporate I/O and private practice, which she did for her first 7 years. However, 13 years ago God opened doors that placed her in Christian ministry. 2Restored® is now where she fully leverages her consummate skills to not only transform lives, but also serve God’s kingdom.

OUR SPEAKERS

DR. RUSS BERG

Dr. Berg has worked in pastoral ministry for over 45 years, including 21 years as the Senior Pastor of an Evangelical Free Church in Minnesota. During a time of personal transition, he connected with George Kenworthy. Russell was inspired and encouraged by George's passion for helping hurting marriages, and especially by his focus on strengthening the local church to equip lay leaders to help marriages in crisis. Russell is 100% vested in the potent combination of biblical wisdom and best practices of psychological counseling.



"Russ" is now the Director of Pastoral Training and Church Development at 2Restored. He spreads a wonderfully contagious passion to help the Church change the broken culture of divorce in America – one marriage at a time. He has worked with over 350 couples at risk of divorce and provided training for more than 450 pastors, therapists, marriage mentors and lay leaders. To reach the next generation of "influencers" (therapists, family attorneys, and mediators) he is building online networks of connection, encouragement and resources for front line workers in the crisis marriage space.

Russ earned his Masters and a Doctorate (D.Min.) in Marriage and Family Ministry. He did his dissertation on Faith Based Discernment Counseling and has used this product vastly in his own practice. Russ' personal experience with Faith Based Discernment Counseling has played a big role in his contribution to this project. His practical wisdom and experience are highlighted in this revision of the training and manuals. He has been married to his high school sweetheart for 47 years (the "35 happiest years of their life" according to his wife). They have 2 amazing daughters married to 2 wonderful sons-in law, and are blessed with several grandchildren.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

OUR PRESENTERS

DR. GEORGE KENWORTHY, DR. AMANDA HORTON, AND DR. RUSS BERG

LESSON ONE

THE BASICS OF DISCERNMENT COUNSELING

LESSON TWO

INTRODUCTION, GOALS, AND OVERVIEW (Both Spouses)

LESSON THREE

CONFLICT NARRATIVE (Both Spouses)

LESSON FOUR

REPAIR NARRATIVE (Both Spouses)

LESSON FIVE

BETTER TIMES NARRATIVE & CHILDREN QUESTION (Both Spouses)

LESSON SIX

3 PATHS (Both Spouses)

LESSON SEVEN

LEANING-OUT SPOUSE ONLY

LESSON EIGHT

LEANING-IN SPOUSE ONLY

LESSON NINE

WRAP-UP (Both Spouses)

ORIGIN STORY CRISIS MARRIAGES IN FAITH COMMUNITIES PROJECT

The Crisis Marriages in Faith Communities Project came out of a professional and personal connection between Professor Bill Doherty of the University of Minnesota's Couples on the Brink Project and Pastor George Kenworthy, an evangelical minister and founder of 2Restored, a nonprofit committed to helping crisis marriages. They were introduced by someone who thought they had more in common than either would have imagined.

They each saw limitations in how their respective communities, secular and religious, were dealing with marriages on the brink of divorce (crisis marriages-suggests a need for a quick and powerful/special response). Bill was interested in seeing couples get values-based help in faith communities where they had relationships of trust. George was interested in improving how pastors work with crisis marriages by combining the best secular knowledge with the faith power of the evangelical Christian tradition.

Both Bill and George had a dream to impact culture on a large scale. They knew that this would require the faith-based world to reexamine current approaches that leave pastors and other leaders struggling with how to help couples on the brink and shepherd hurting congregants.

George brought Bill together with a small group of evangelical pastors and lay professional leaders. This "think tank" began meeting regularly in January 2011, and included pastors from Lutheran, Presbyterian, non-denominational churches, and Evangelical Free churches. The group's task was to create a practical way for frontline clergy to help crisis marriages. The principal vehicle became a protocol for brief "discernment counseling" adapted from the counseling approach Bill Doherty was refining at the University of Minnesota. Members of the think tank began using the protocol in their congregations with good success. (Doherty, B. & Harris, S., 2023)

The expectation is that many faith traditions and denominations can adapt the "faith based" discernment counseling protocol, which is a blend of secular and faith principles, to fit their own needs and desires to help crisis marriages.

PROJECT VALUES

What we believe about marriage

- God has given humanity the gift of marriage for His glory and our good.
- Healthy, life-long marriage has unique value for individuals, families and communities.
- Life-long commitment is especially difficult in today's throwaway culture.
- Children have an important stake in the health and endurance of their parents' marriage.
- Marital commitment brings obligations to work on a troubled marriage before giving up.

What we believe about divorce

- Many of today's divorces could be prevented if both parties took steps to work on their marriage before it was too late.
- Typical marriage counseling available in most communities is not effective enough for many couples on the brink of divorce, especially when they differ on whether to try to save the marriage.
- Divorce is usually an attempt to solve a problem that people think can't be solved in any other way.
- Some divorces are unavoidable in order to prevent further harm in a destructive relationship, such as when one spouse continues in an unrepentant adulterous lifestyle.
- Some divorces are ultimately unavoidable because one party decides on divorce despite the wishes of the other party.

What we believe about healing

- God has the power to restore and rebuild any relationship when both people are willing to follow His plan and pray.
- Human beings have the capacity to move past anxiety, distrust, and hostility and relate to each other from our highest selves.
- Restoring a marriage must not come at the expense of one of the partners. Love and fairness must go hand in hand.
- The key is mutual desire to restore the marriage to health.
- When both spouses devote themselves fully to work on restoring their marriage, with proper help they can usually make it.

LESSON ONE

THE BASICS OF DISCERNMENT COUNSELING

WHAT IS DISCERNMENT COUNSELING?

DISCERNMENT COUNSELING IS A HIGH IMPACT SESSION WITH THE GOAL OF GREATER CLARITY AND CONFIDENCE IN THE DECISION ABOUT A DIRECTION FOR THE MARRIAGE, BASED ON A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO THE MARRIAGE AND EACH PARTNER'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE PROBLEMS.



DISCERNMENT
COUNSELING IS:

A structured
interview process



DISCERNMENT
COUNSELING IS NOT:

Therapy

WHO IS DISCERNMENT COUNSELING FOR? FOR THOSE...

- Whose perspective needs to be heard, even if they see things very differently (mixed agenda couples).
- Who are considering divorce but are not completely sure if it's the right path for them.
- Who want to give their marriage another chance even though their spouse is moving toward divorce.

TYPES OF COUPLES

Same-Agenda Couple

BOTH spouses want to save the marriage and are asking for help (OR divorce).

Mixed-Agenda Couple

One spouse wants to save the marriage, and the other is unsure.

THE ROLES IN THE RELATIONSHIP

Leaning-In (L-IN) Spouse

The spouse who is more hopeful and willing to try to save the marriage.

PHRASES WE HEAR FROM LEANING-IN SPOUSES

"I've made a lot of mistakes, but I want to change."

"I can't believe she wants to leave. I had no idea how unhappy she's been."

"I'll do anything to keep this marriage together."

Leaning-Out (L-OUT) Spouse

The spouse who feels more hopeless and lacks motivation to save the marriage.

PHRASES WE HEAR FROM LEANING-OUT SPOUSES

"I have peace about the decision to divorce."

I can't take the pain anymore. My spouse has been emotionally abusing me for years."

God is a God of love. I'm sure He'll forgive me if I divorce my spouse."

IMPORTANT: Don't make either spouse aware of these roles/labels. This is just for your knowledge.

NATURE OF THE RELATIONSHIP PROBLEMS

Soft Reasons

"Everything else" that isn't a hard reason (like communication, growing apart, and lack of intimacy).

Soft problems are usually problems the L-OUT spouse has contributed to more or less equally.

NOTE: The majority of divorces nowadays are for "soft" problems.

(Hawkins, Willoughby,
& Doherty, 2012)

PHRASES WE HEAR

"We're so caught up in our kids, we don't even know each other anymore."

"I can't remember the last time we were intimate."

Hard Reasons

Harmful, dangerous patterns of behavior that threaten the safety and security of marriage partners and their family members.

THE TRIPLE A CLUB:

addiction, adultery, and abuse are spousal behaviors no one should have to live with. The question is, does the leaning-in spouse have the ability and willingness to hang-on and be healthy until the other is willing to make changes?

PHRASES WE HEAR

"I love him dearly, but I can't take the physical abuse anymore."

"Last night she threatened to leave me. It's just a DUI. What's the big deal?"

NARRATIVES

CONFLICT: What each spouse thinks has happened to their marriage to get them to this point

REPAIR: What the couple has tried in the past to solve their problems

BETTER TIMES: A time in their relationship since the time they met. A time when they felt more connected and experienced more positive emotions in the relationship.

POTENTIAL PATHS

PATH 1: STICK IT OUT Stay married the way your marriage has been and hope it gets better.

PATH 2: SEPARATE/DIVORCE Move toward separation or divorce

PATH 3: RECONCILE The opportunity to pause and explore the possibility of reconciling by committing to an all-out effort over a six-month period, with the best counseling available, to see how God can help you create a healthy marriage that is good for both of you.

SESSION OVERVIEW

BOTH SPOUSES TOGETHER

CONFLICT - NARRATIVE

REPAIR - NARRATIVE

BETTER TIMES - NARRATIVE (& CHILDREN QUESTION)

INTRODUCE PATHS

LEANING-OUT SPOUSE ONLY

CONFLICT - NARRATIVE

REPAIR - NARRATIVE

BETTER TIMES - NARRATIVE (& CHILDREN QUESTION)

INTRODUCE PATHS

LEANING-IN SPOUSE ONLY

REASONS MARRIAGE IS IN TROUBLE & PERSONAL CHANGE

BOTH SPOUSES TOGETHER

WHAT EACH SPOUSE HAS TAKEN FROM THE PROCESS

STATUS REGARDING PATHS

WHAT IS YOUR ROLE?



To **GUIDE** the couple through the protocol and help them discern which path is best for them.

GALVANIZE them to action and self-reflection.

So, they have a better sense of their own contributions to problems in the marriage and feel challenged to work to make it healthy (slowing down the breaking-up process if it's under way).

UPLIFT the marriage and spouses with hope.

So, they have hope for their marriage and a sense of God's desire and power to heal their marriage.

IDENTIFY NARRATIVES on the Relationship Timeline with them.

So, they can identify what got their marriage to this place, the things they've tried to fix it, and what better times looked like.

DELIBERATELY GUIDE them through the discernment process.

So, they feel supported and safe in the process, leaving with accessible resources to follow up on.

EDUCATE them on the 3 options and 2 types of marital problems (hard/soft).

So, they understand the options ahead of them, reasons and research behind each, and the types of marital problems.

SEE and hear them and help them see and hear their spouse.

So, they feel seen and heard by you, and have a better understanding of their spouse's perspective.

WHAT IS NOT YOUR ROLE?



To **DISCERN** which path is best for the couple.

GALVANIZE them to action and self-reflection by using **guilt** and **judgment**.

UPLIFT the marriage by offering the false **guarantee** that their marriage will be saved.

IDENTIFY NARRATIVES on the Relationship Timeline but also offer **solutions** or **assessments** of their marital problems along the way.

DELIBERATELY GUIDE them through the discernment process but point them to which path **you** think they should choose.

EDUCATE them on the three options and use the research and information to **pressure** them into choosing path 3.

SEE and hear them and help them see and hear their spouse **so** much that you get absorbed into focusing on feelings and thus **lose sight** of objectivity and the FBDC process.

EXERCISE: While serving in this role, it's likely that you have personal tendencies or triggers that will come up and need to be managed. Work through the items in the table below.....

- Identify which tendencies and triggers you think you may personally identify with.
- Reflect on why each might be true for you (example given may be different for you).
- Read through the reminders for those that apply to you and consider any additional ways you can set yourself up for success.

TRAINING EXERCISE: SELF-REFLECTION

PERSONAL TENDENCIES

I am likely to...	Why might this be true?	Why this can be problematic	Reminders
GALVANIZE them to action and self-reflection by using guilt and judgment.			
Feel the need to rescue them	You're a helper and your empathy toward others can lead you to feeling discomfort alongside them.	While this is kind, it can cause you to take too much ownership of the process or feel frustrated and apply pressure if they aren't taking the actions you believe are in their best interest.	Remind yourself they are the one responsible for their happiness and choices, not you. Their sadness and/or situation is not yours to own or be weighed down by.
See my role as that of their "conscience"	It can be frustrating when someone isn't taking responsibility for their actions or respecting the importance of the decisions they have before them.	Once someone feels judged, they shut down and you become ineffective in your role.	Be mindful of your inclination to place your morals or priorities on them. Be mindful to challenge them without placing guilt or judgment on them.
Feel if the couple doesn't choose path 3, the session has failed.	You may tend to have black and white thinking or be perfectionistic.	The couple can feel pressured to pick path 3 just to please you, without investment to do the work path 3 requires.	Success means staying in your role, sticking to the process, having hope for the couple, and offering them options.

I am likely to...	Why might this be true?	Why this can be problematic	Reminders
U PLIFT the marriage and spouses with hope.			
Have a hard time sitting with people in their sadness	This is hard for most people.	Our discomfort can make us quick to change the mood or cheer them up. This can cause us to push false hope on them.	Remember they wouldn't be in FBDC if they weren't experiencing a certain level of pain.
Feel spiritually inept	We all go through valleys in our walk with the Lord. Maybe you're going through one yourself.	The couple may sense your lack of hope for them OR You may hold back from something helpful one of the spouses needs to hear	Confide in someone you can trust who can pray with you and walk alongside you during this time.
Be overly appreciative of their need for me (and my wisdom or advice)	Feeling needed gives you value and a sense of purpose.	If they're engaged, this can push you to offer false hope, or advice/support that are not part of your role. If they're unengaged or unresponsive to your leadership in the process, frustration (with yourself or them) can kick in.	Consider the way in which helping this couple is serving you. Beware of taking on couples you don't have the margin for, and consider training other staff in FBDC.
I DENTIFY NARRATIVES on the Relationship Timeline with them.			
Think I know better than they do	You may have wisdom, perspective, professional training, or life experience they lack.	Your purpose is to get them to self-reflect and consider working on their marriage. This is their decision alone, as they are the ones who will have to stay committed to the process and do the work...not you.	Their decision needs to be based on their own self-reflection and insights, not yours. If they choose Path 3, their therapist can offer an assessment of their problems and work with them on solutions.
Become impatient if they're moving too slowly through the narratives or making a decision.	You tend to focus more on the destination than the journey.	You want this couple to slow down and reflect on themselves, their marriage, and the future. If feeling rushed, they may make the decision that feels best in the short term or requires the least amount of work.	The work the couple is doing to get to a decision is critical. If their decision is to hold off on divorce and work on the marriage, it's critical it "sticks" and isn't made in haste.

I am likely to...	Why might this be true?	Why this can be problematic	Reminders
D ELIBERATELY GUIDE them through the discernment process.			
Feel some responsibility for their happiness	Maybe you feel like if you do your job well enough you can have a direct impact their happiness.	This can cause you to be anxious and/or be too hard on yourself, causing you to lose focus on the discernment process.	While your role is important, you have limited power and control in this situation. Focus on the process and doing your part well, not on the outcome.
Experience some “Imposter Syndrome”	In certain roles or with certain personalities you lose confidence and feel like you aren’t capable (and afraid others will sense that)	It isn’t unusual for a spouse to come on strong in an emphatic way that may break your confidence but it’s critical you stay in control and both spouses feel safe.	You aren’t pretending to be anything you aren’t. You’re trained in FBDC (a structured process) and are there to simply walk them through this process.
Clam up if there is any conflict	You dislike conflict whether it’s with someone on staff or a board member.	It can cause you to lose focus and let one spouse take over the session, leaving the other spouse feeling unsupported.	A couple’s conflict doesn’t have to do with you. They wouldn’t be in your office if they didn’t bring plenty with them.
Have a hard time referring them to a marriage therapist for Path 3	You have mixed feelings about professional counselors.	The couple may sense this and be uneasy going to see a marriage counselor. You may not have the training or margin needed to do the difficult job of walking the couple through Path 3.	You get to build your referral list. Put the energy into getting to know and trust the therapists you give referrals to. You still get to be the spiritual support the couple needs.
E DUCATE them on the 3 options and 2 types of marital problems (hard/soft)			
Push my strong theological or analytical convictions on them	You have strong theological beliefs and/or opinions about the need to make informed research based decisions.	You can easily get off track, step out of your role, or create counter-productive power-struggles by focusing on anything too theological or analytical.	You aren’t there to argue or teach theology or research, but to show grace to a couple in need and get through the structured process.

I am likely to...	Why might this be true?	Why this can be problematic	Reminders
S EE and hear them and help them see and hear their spouse			
Get triggered emotionally when people are sharing their emotions and stories.	You may have untreated trauma or are simply going through a particularly difficult time of your own.	Instead of deliberately responding to a couple, you may react...and in an unhelpful way OR When your emotional bucket is empty, you can do a disservice to you and others to keep giving.	Once you heal from your emotional wounds, your scars can help others. Just take care to give your wounds proper time to heal and professional care if needed.
Feel guilty about the state of my own marriage.	Your own marriage is strained. You may even have concerns whether the state of your marriage makes you unfit for ministry.	Your spouse may resent you helping other marriages OR You can easily identify with one spouse leaving the other not feeling heard or seen OR Your guilt and personal feelings can cloud your judgment	All marriages go through hard seasons. Assess whether yours is just that, or if needs professional help, and get it. You may want to get your house in order before helping others out with theirs.

If anything stood out that causes you some hesitancy in getting started with FBDC, that's okay. Get trained, knowing you may have some personal things to work through before beginning work with couples.

