

**GUIDELINES FOR FAMILIES FACING CHALLENGES:**  
**A PASTORAL APPROACH**

by

BARBARA PAULA KOSSMANN

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SUPERVISOR: Dr. C H THESNAAR

JOINT SUPERVISOR: Dr. M E HESTENENS

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Student number: 3029-582-3

I declare that “Guidelines for families facing challenges: A pastoral approach”  
is my own work and that all the sources that I have used have been indicated and  
acknowledged by means of complete references.

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Signature

Rev B P Kossman

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Date

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1. Inspiration to the research**

We live in a complex world, where national and cultural boundaries do not seem to exist anymore. Certain developments, for example "... more rapid, widespread and affordable communication (Travel, Telecom, Satellite Televisions, Internet)" have contributed to the process of globalisation" (Tulloch, 1998:102). Especially "... communication media and cultural flows extend more and more across boundaries.... These processes are described today as globalisation, a growing interconnectedness producing complex forms of interaction and interdependency" (Imma Tubella in Castells 2004,385). These developments influence many areas of life, like the economy, media, education, or culture, just to name some. The influence of globalisation needs to be recognised, especially in regard to social institutions or social groups, like the family.

"Globalisation is the absorption of all countries and systems into one" (Peter Tulloch 1998, 101)<sup>1</sup>. The spread of globalisation and its consequences for the family still need to be explored, as the situation of the families in South Africa is the focus of this thesis. In this research the effect of globalisation on the family and specifically the family functioning will have to be taken into consideration. Tulloch<sup>2</sup> quotes four definitions of globalisation<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Jeffrey Garten in the Financial Times (21.5.1997) gives a short definition of globalisation, which Peter Tulloch quotes.

<sup>2</sup> 1. "... the growing economic interdependence of countries worldwide through increasing volume and variety of cross border transactions in goods and services... the more rapid and widespread diffusion of technology" (World Economic Outlook, May 1997, quoted in Tulloch 1998, 101).

This view of globalisation is especially relevant in regard to the influence of the media on the family and its functioning. Individual families and their personal set of values are threatened by today's television programs, since they might offer 'alternative' value systems to the ones preferred by individual families. Some examples shall be mentioned: The language preferred by a Christian family might well differ from the use of language in an action movie, or the attitude towards consumerism will be different in an advertisement than in a family living on a tight budget. These examples are only mentioned to emphasise the challenges, families are dealing with in terms of keeping their personal values, which are part of their family identity. One can conclude that the general influence of the media on family life is detrimental since modern technology brings the outside world right into the living room or even right into the rooms of young people. Therefore parents are in danger of losing educational influence on their children in regard to ethical or moral values. The walls of the family home simply do not offer enough protection any more (Pipher 1996, 12).

Yet it is not only the influence of the media, which challenges families in general, but also the ongoing change in the demographic situation, which affects families in their functioning. For example in a country such as the USA the following changes in the demographic situation can be noticed: the decrease in the child mortality rate, decrease in the number of children per family, the population becomes more ethnically diverse, the increase in divorce rates and rearranging of families, the aging of the population .... cohabitation, more single parent households and often economic stress (,9).

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2. "the widening of the spectrum of goods and services entering international trade (as) a consequence of trade liberalisation, increased freedom of establishment and technical innovations...." (Jones, Ronald & Kierzowski, Henryk 1997, quoted in Tulloch 1998, 101).

3. "... a process whereby producers and investors increasingly behave as if the world economy consisted of a single market and production area..." (Globalisation and Liberalization, UNCTAD 1996, quoted in Tulloch 1998,101).

4. "... the absorption of all countries into one" (Garten, Jeffrey, Financial Times May 1997, quoted in Tulloch 1998,101).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>3</sup> For this thesis the fourth option was chosen since this definition is broad and does not merely focus on trade or and economy, which makes it suitable for this research.

Changes within a society obviously have an impact on the families it consists of. This is also true of the situation in South Africa. Here, as in other parts of the world, families have to deal with the same task, namely adapting to a changing world. The United Nations (UN) dedicated the year 2004 as the "Year of the Family"; the South African Government did likewise.

In preparation for the "Year of the Family" the Department of Social Development in South Africa published research information, collected by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC). This information is based on the census of 1996, other household surveys in 1995–1999 and other resources. The focus of that research was to describe the situation of families in South Africa. Families in South Africa find themselves in a challenging situation that will be described in chapter 3.

Some of the main examples of the challenges families are facing, according to the HSRC-Report, will be mentioned here:

- Families needed to adapt to broad social trends like globalisation, colonisation, urbanisation and migration (Hanks 1993 as quoted in HSRC-Report, 18). These social changes lead to non-traditional family forms such as single-parenthood, childless marriages, re-constituted or blended families, which in return lead to more non-family households who adopt living arrangements to adapt to increased stresses (HSRC-Report, 18).
- Some of the family functions, namely protection and socialisation of children have to be taken over by child care institutions as more women enter the labour market. 42% of all South African women are economically active, which means that a large proportion of children will need childcare facilities (HSRC-Report, 43).
- The rapid change in traditional gender roles through women being economically active. That has implications for the power structure within the family (HSRC-Report, 9).

- The abuse of children is an escalating problem, especially since on the one hand the brutal force increases and on the other hand the age of the victim and the offender decreases (HSRC-Report, 53).
- Families affected by HIV-Aids spend roughly 1/3 of their income on medical care. This puts a great burden on the families financially and emotionally. The infection rate has risen from 1992 –2002 from 1% to 15% (HSRC-Report, 48).
- Increase in diversification of families that means children grow up in a greater variety of families than ever before (HSRC-Report, 9).

These findings by the HSRC-Report show the situation of families in South Africa, which allows the conclusions that families are burdened with difficulties.

This situation of families must also be understood within the context of the political change South Africa went through and is still going through today after its democratisation. It is necessary to see some of these challenges and problems that families in South Africa have to deal with, in the context of the legacy of apartheid: unemployment, poverty, crime and domestic violence. The impact these challenges have on the emotional, social and psychological well-being of families cannot be underestimated.

The report of the Department for Social Development does not mention the unhealed wounds of individuals and families, which were caused mainly by apartheid itself or by the effects of apartheid-related crimes. Although these hurts were partly addressed at meetings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, one needs to keep in mind that the motive of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was not primarily counselling or healing, but the establishment of the truth on the one side and to reconcile different people in South Africa on the other (Waarheid en Versoeningskomissie, 25). Although healing could well be the consequence of the reconciliation process, but it cannot necessarily be assumed that it always took place.

It is interesting to see how families seem to cope, even in spite of the toughest challenges that cause severe stress on the family functioning. Many families in South Africa cope with the extra burdens they experience. This points to the fact that families as social institutions are dynamic and seem to have some 'self-regulating-mechanisms', since "...families throughout the world continually adapt to changes in social, economic, political and material circumstances" (HSRC, 9).

The experience of a healthy family in the early years of life seems to be vital for our coping mechanisms, as Johnson puts it: "We are born into a group called the family, and we would not survive the first few years of our lives.... without membership in this group." (Johnson 1994, 6) This statement by a psychologist emphasises the importance of families and their dynamics for the normal healthy human development. But it also points out the necessity of belonging to such a group, called the family.

Goode defines families as "... social units governed by 'family rules'" (HSRC-Report 2003, 10). This definition as well as other definitions for the term 'family' will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3.

This research is of the opinion that family counselling could be an appropriate method to assist families in the healing of old hurts. This option might be more effective than counselling the individuals of the family separately.

## **1.2. Motivation for the research**

The publication of the Department of Social Development indicates that faith-based activities could provide social structure, assist in self-esteem and could facilitate material and social support (HSRC-Report, 32). 84% of the people reached by the Census 1996 stated that they regard themselves as Christians. Therefore the role of the church in supporting families cannot be underestimated. The local congregation could offer assistance through the way they minister to families, as this would enhance the well-being and the functioning of the family. This research is placed within that framework, namely to find ways in which the church can be involved in assisting families towards better family functioning via their family ministry.

This research is done by a white female Lutheran pastor of German background, who has lived in South Africa for 20 years. Through the experience of working as a Lutheran pastor in different congregations, she was motivated to this research. In the congregational work it became obvious that most of the problems congregation members presented in pastoral counselling were actually family-related.

Families who struggle with some of the above-mentioned challenges often show a sense of helplessness in dealing with their situation. Partly as an expression of their stress and their helplessness, family members might fall into alcohol abuse, substance abuse or domestic violence or one partner files for a divorce (FAMSA annual report 2006,5; but also personal work experience). The danger is, that if families are not able to adjust to those challenges, their family functioning can be threatened. This in return will have consequences for the well-being of the family members as well as the community. Families "... constitute the building blocks of communities" (HSRC-Report, 11). Therefore it is of great importance to assist families in maintaining their own value system as well as their individual "family rules" in an ever-

changing world. The local church could be of assistance here; families could be supported and strengthened in order to maintain their personal identity as a family. Hence it seems sensible to support the backbone of the society and at the same time be part of the transformation process South Africa is undergoing.

### **1.3. Research problem**

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines health as "... a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (Constitution of the World Health Organization, Geneva, 1946, updated October 30, 2006). One can therefore draw the conclusion that a mal-functioning within the family can have an influence on the state of health of that respective family.

Families in South Africa, as described earlier, are challenged on many different levels. Families will need support to deal with their challenges in an appropriate and healthy way. Therefore it is important and desirable to assist and guide families through family ministry in order to nurture them towards a healthy family functioning; one option to assist families within the framework of family ministry could be pastoral counselling. The church could be involved in taking up this task. How this could happen, is discussed in chapters four and five of this thesis.

The research-question for this research will be:

How can families in South Africa be assisted by the church in such a way that they are enabled to deal with the different challenges they experience?

As described in chapter four the term 'family functioning' will be defined according to the McMaster Model of Family Functioning as described by Epstein, Ryan, Bishop, Miller and Keitner in Froma Walsch: "Normal Family Processes" (2003). Within this approach the primary function of today's family is described as "to provide a setting for the development and maintenance of family members on social, psychological and biological levels" (Epstein, Levin, Bishop 1976 in Walsch 2003,584). The dimensions of family functioning as described in the McMaster's model are: Problem-solving, Communication, Roles, Affective Responsiveness, Affective involvement and Behavioural Control.

#### **1.4. The goals of the research**

This research is compiled with the following goals in mind:

1. The first goal of this research is to name and explore the challenges that families in South Africa have to face.
2. The second goal is to explore what role the church could play in changing the situation of families in South Africa through the way they minister to families.
3. The third goal will be to introduce and evaluate one family therapy approach, which pastors could use to assist families in the congregational set-up. That approach will be the McMaster Model of Family Functioning.
4. On the basis of that acquired information guidelines for family ministry will be compiled. These guidelines will not be specific with regard to family life, but with regard to the theological approach towards ministering to families in need.

## **1.5. Research methodology**

This research is qualitative in its nature. It is more of interest in social research to explain the nature of the existing social phenomenon; therefore working in the qualitative paradigm implies an inductive research strategy (Zaaiman 2003, 12). Being qualitative in nature, this research can be placed in the phenomenological tradition. The phenomenological tradition regards the social reality fundamentally different than natural reality. “Social research must therefore make provision for people’s way of making sense” (Zaaiman 2003, 12).

In the inductive research strategy, which is followed here, the researcher moves from the particular to the general; the Latin word ‘inducere’ means ‘to lead into’. This is an approach, which makes use of empirical methods and might lead to the formulation of a new theory (Heyns 1991, 29). Inductive research will “move from a set of specific observations to the discovery of a pattern that represents some degree of order among all given events” (Babie 2004, 25).

Social research is driven by two different motivations for research: To understand or to apply (Babie 2004, 28). In this research both motivations are present; in the literature review the researcher wants to firstly understand and secondly also apply the gained insight. The research will therefore be an applied research.

In social research the object of research needs to be defined. This is called the unit of analysis. A unit of analysis “is the unit about which information is collected and that provides the basis of analysis” (Babie 2004,189). Units of analysis of the research can be groups, individuals, corporations, social clubs or families. In this research the unit of analysis will be the functioning of families in South Africa.

## **1.6. The Research in the framework of practical theology focus**

This research is done in the field of Practical Theology. Practical Theology can be defined as "the bridge builder between the theological theory and the church practice" (Heyns 1991, 9).

Theology is about truth – the truth that God has revealed himself to humankind and the world in Jesus Christ. Truth in this regard refers to the reality of God's presence in the world; this reality was accessible and visible through Jesus Christ's life on earth. God is still present and active in our world today through the Holy Spirit. Theology is about truth – but a truth "that is to be encountered, wants to be lived out, related to and above all loved" if it is truly to be known (Forrester 1999, 25f). Practical Theology is about communicating the truth of God's Advent in this world and his appearance to humankind through Christ.

The medium chosen by God to communicate this truth, the gospel of Jesus Christ, is the church (Hendrickse 2004, 19). The church is the community of brothers and sisters assembled around Word and Sacrament, who experience the presence of Jesus as their Lord through the Holy Spirit (W. Huber 1997, thesis 4). Huber further states that the church is to witness its belonging to Christ. If the church belongs to Jesus Christ, who is not of this world (John 18:36), then the church may not be like the world either. This is also true for the believer, who is not to be conformed to this world: "but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God" (Rom 12,2 NRSV). This suggests a kind of different culture, with different values and standards than the world, to be lived out within the context of the church; therefore the church should be a place, which exists and lives in contrast to the world.

Some authors ask in that context that the church needs to be a counterculture – since in most cultures Christian values are not honoured (Olson 1997, 46). This counterculture would not only serve “those who are committed to right relationships among people and justice in society” (Olson 1997, 47), but believers could experience a safe place, a shelter, where they can “be”. Therefore it makes sense, when Walter Brueggemann requests, “... that the community of faith must stand in some tension with the dominant culture” (Brueggemann in Hesselgrave 2000, 39). Yet it is precisely that lack of tension between the church and the dominant culture that can create a danger for the identity of the faith community. This topic can be seen on the background of the task of practical theology. The task of Practical Theology is: to work towards change or improvement within the faith-community and the communication of faith in general.

Practical Theology has undergone many changes in its methodology in recent years. It is interesting to note that the discipline of Practical Theology is a relatively young discipline, as the Empress Maria Theresa established the first chair for Practical Theology in 1774. F. Schleiermacher played a major role in the development of this discipline. He subdivided Theology into philosophical, historical and practical Theology (Nel 1999, 25).

In the past Practical Theology was more concerned with the “know-how” of the practical pastoral work. The church and its social network were not really considered. Since Karl Rahner, the church is seen as the community of faith or the community of believers, which consists of pastors and the church members (Pieterse 1994, 32). Today Practical Theology has “to play its role of a practical theological hermeneutics, that interpret contemporary praxis for the whole theology” (Pieterse 1994:32f). Practical Theology is “no longer church oriented, but located within the system of co-ordinates made up by society, Christianity and the Church (Van der Ven, quoted in Pieterse 1994, 33); therefore the methods used in this field have changed

more towards the empirical research. The discipline of Practical Theology can contribute empirical knowledge towards a theology of reconstruction (Pieterse 1994, 34). That makes Practical Theology contextual.

The key issues in Practical Theology are communication and interpretation, realisation and action as well as liberation and transformation (Louw 1999, 4). The above-mentioned issues in Practical Theology will have to start with understanding or explaining in order to come to realisation and action etc. That implies that Practical Theology makes use of the methodology of hermeneutics, a scientific method of interpretation and explanation (Fremdwörterbuch 1994). DJ Louw regards theology as hermeneutics (Louw 1999, 102), as "... theology is a discourse about God and an interpretation of the intervention of God as well as the encounter between God and human beings" (Louw 1999:101). Practical Theology is therefore hermeneutical-empirical and follows hermeneutical principles (an der Ven 1999, 331). In that context it can be agreed with Louw, who states: "Practical Theology is the hermeneutics of God's encounter with human beings in their world" (Louw 1999, 4). Part of the tasks of the Practical Theologian is to enable this encounter between God and human beings in their specific world.

The encounter with God and his word will change us – it will work in us through the Holy Spirit – therefore it is only logical that the key emphasis of Practical Theology is to work towards change (Heyns 1991, 52). Tracy puts it differently: "The need for transformation is the principle criterion for Practical Theology" (quoted in Louw 1999, 11). The following quotation summarises that: The Practical Theologian "seeks to interpret scripture and praxis in order that the contemporary praxis of both church and the world can be transformed" (Anderson 2001:59).

## **1.7. Key concepts**

The key concepts used in this research need to be defined.

- Family

This concept family can be defined in many different ways. For this research the chosen definition will not only focus on family as kinship, or people sharing one kitchen or living under one roof. Rather the definition will be broader; the definition of W. Goode will therefore be used: Families are "social units governed by "family rules" (Goode 1964, quoted in HSRC-Report 2003,10).

- Challenges for families:

Challenges are those situations in the life of a family, which put a burden or stress on the family as such. These burdens can have an impact on the whole family. As examples can be used: the main breadwinner loses his/her work or a teenage child becomes addicted to drugs or a family member becomes a victim of crime etc.

- Pastoral Care:

D. J. Louw describes Pastoral care as "... an embodiment of an encounter with the Gospel. As such Pastoral care may be described as a process whereby people not only become better acquainted with God (theologically) but also learn to know themselves better (anthropologically). The encounter is thus the medium through which this theological learning process becomes a human experience" (Louw 1998, 70).

- Family Functioning

The primary function of today's family is described as "to provide a setting for the development and maintenance of family members on social, psychological and biological levels" (Epstein, Levin, Bishop 1976 in Walsch 2003, 584). This family functioning can be threatened by the present challenges and circumstances families in this country go through.

In this introduction the situation of families in South Africa has been described. How the church can assist in this situation through specific family ministry will be established in this research in chapters 3, 4 and 5.

Chapter 3 explores a definition for the term family that will suit the South African context and collects the challenges of families today. These challenges will be distinguished according to where the church could assist and where not. In chapter 4 one method of family therapy will be introduced and evaluated on its feasibility for South Africa. In chapter 5 a suitable understanding of family ministry is developed and guidelines for family ministry are compiled to support the model of family therapy, which is the McMaster approach.

In the following chapter the term 'family' will be explored in the context of the Old and New Testament, the need for a key to scripture interpreting will be established and a family theology will be created.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **CREATING A FAMILY THEOLOGY**

#### **2.1. Introduction**

In this chapter the concept of family and family-household will be explored in the context of the Old and New Testament. The relationship between the church, the traditional family, and the church as family of God, will be explored. Before one can draw up a family theology, one needs to explore the present challenges such a theology has to face; these challenges need to be incorporated into a family theology. One suspected challenge is the responsible use of scripture for today's family problems. A responsible and Christ-centred way to interpret scripture will have to be found in order to answer the family-related questions of today. Taking note of the possible problems in transferring the message of scripture to the problems of today's world shows the need for a clear hermeneutical approach to scripture interpretation in regard to family questions or biblical guidelines for the family. In that context Martin Luther's approach to scripture interpretation will be presented. For a theology of the family a solid foundation is needed; this foundation will be God's covenant with the people of Israel and the New Israel, the church.

The foundation and perspective for a possible change towards improvement of the family relationships lies in the Christian hope. This hope is not only based on the new beginning through the forgiveness of sins, but it is also founded on the work and promises of Christ and His world to come.

The term 'family' will firstly be explored in the Old Testament context.

## **2.2. Understanding families in the light of the Old Testament**

The word family, deriving from the Latin word 'familia', refers in our days to the smallest sociological unit, comprising of parents and children, who are usually related by blood (EKL 1956, 1258). One can say that families are empirically ubiquitous and in constant flux. This refers to the times of Ancient Israel as well as our times (Perdue 1997, 1).

In Old Testament times the understanding of and the dynamics in the family were quite different to our contemporary family. While in our times individualistic thinking is quite common, also in our families, one characteristic of the family household in ancient Israel was its corporate identity (Perdue 1997, 253). This corporate identity expressed itself in the family values, where a large emphasis was placed on solidarity (Perdue 97, 167).

The solidarity of the family was maintained by its organisation around the father figure and by the application of the principle of retributive justice in term of corporate (family) responsibility (The Interpreter's Dictionary 1962, 238). The difference between the family of biblical times and the contemporary family is already quite apparent.

For a deeper understanding of the kinship structures of ancient Israel it is important to understand its terminology.

### **2.2.1. Terminology**

The three units of social organisation, shaped by kinship structures are:  
tribe (sebet),  
clan (mispaha) and  
the family household (betab).

The tribes (*sebet*) were the primary unit of social and territorial organisation in Israel; they bore the names of the twelve sons of Jacob. Sebet were the least significant circles of kinship (Freedman 1992, 761f). The community of tribes then were the people of Israel.

The clan (*mispaha*) can refer to a larger settlement, like the inhabitants of a village. The English translation for mispaha is difficult, but the word 'clan' can be used (Perdue 97, 13). Therefore it is more appropriate to speak of "residential kinship group" as that shows the nature of the village community (Perdue 97, 13). The mispaha was a "protective association of families" (Gottwald, quoted in Perdue 97, 37f).

The father's house (*betab*), is "the third level of kinship structure, in which the individual Israelite felt the strongest sense of inclusion, identity, protection and responsibility. Betab was an extended family, comprising of all the descendants of a single living ancestor in a single lineage excluding married daughters (who entered their husband's betab). A betab could comprise of some 50 -100 persons, residing in cluster units." (Freedman 1992, 761 f).

The betab was a kinship system, which "comprised of the living members but also of the ancestors, who were remembered through story and rituals.." (Perdue 97, 176). The kinship-relation was defined by father-son descendants.

The family groups or clans were expected to come to each other's aid; that is why the individual family unit (betab) rigidly identified with its own members first, in order to differentiate between brothers and strangers (Alexander 2003, 291). The concept of 'shared blood' was the basis for securing trust and assuring willingness to engage in mutual aid (Perdue 97, 37). Even though blood kinship played an important role in the determination of personal identity and the distribution of power, the real critical requirement for membership of the family was not kinship, but the covenant (Alexander 2003, 291). The individual found his or

her identity as a member of the covenant people of Israel within the smaller units, specially the mispaha and the betab (Freedman 1992, 761).

To be a member of the covenant community meant to carry social responsibility for each of its members, namely to uphold the honour of the individual household ((Alexander 2003, 291). A possible sense of individual agency for the individual of the betab came mainly from a person's contribution to the household survival rather than from individualistic accomplishment (Perdue 97, 21). This covenant community explains why the concept of the individual as well as the individual identity did not exist in the biblical world. It was rather a corporate identity created by a profound interdependence of family members in the self-sufficient agrarian set-up of that ancient time.

Yet another kind of interdependence can be mentioned within the betab, namely the interdependence between husband and wife. Husband and wife of the betab were farming-partners, as they both contributed essentially to the subsistence labour of their families (Perdue 97, 33). Even though husband and wife were interdependent, nevertheless specific roles were allocated to father and the mother. The father was responsible to beget, instruct, discipline and love his children. On the other hand he was responsible to uphold the social status and well-being of the family (honour) and to provide for their daily living. The mother's responsibility was to bear children for her husband and the betab; she had to love and discipline them as well as to care for all the members of the family. She had considerable authority over family life (The Interpreter's Dictionary 1962, 239). Not only did husband and wife have certain roles, but also the clan or family household as such had certain functions to fulfil.

## **2.2.2. Social functions of clan and family household**

The role and function of the mispaha, the clan was “primarily to protect and restore the constituent household” (Freedman 92, 762). The betab had a broader set of functions, which included economic, judicial, didactic and covenantal functions. On the economic level the betab gave “the individual the essential locus of personal security within the national covenant relationship with Yahweh” (Freedman 92, 763). The judicial functions of the family household refer to the head of the household; he could act judicially in matters of marriage and divorce and other matters, which are not of relevance here. On the didactic level the betab was the “vehicle of continuity, for faith, history, law, and traditions of the nation. The preservation of these ‘national assets’ lay in the hands of the father especially. He was to teach the law of Yahweh to his children, not only as a duty of parenthood, but indeed as a condition of his own prolonged enjoyment of the gift of the land. (Deut 6:7)” (Freedman 92, 763f). On the covenantal level one can say, that the family was of vital importance to Israel’s relationship with Yahweh. For the social, economic and the theological realm the family became the focal point (Freedman 92, 765).

Talking about families in theological context cannot be done without considering the covenant God made with his people Israel; this covenant is extended to the believers of Jesus Christ. This covenant is the foundation for a theology of the family; therefore that topic needs special consideration. It will be discussed under 2.6. in this chapter. How the situation of the family is according to the New Testament will be established in the next point.

## **2.3. Understanding families in the light of the New Testament**

As established above, the family in the sense of the nuclear or contemporary family, did not exist in the Old Testament. The closest to our family understanding was that of the betab, the family household, which comprised of about 50 -100 people.

Two words are used in the New Testament for 'family': patria and oikos.

Looking at the perspective of lineage, then patria is used; looking at the perspective of the house, oikos is used. If one speaks about oikos, one refers to the family's household. Oikos would include blood relatives, but also other dependents. The household played a major role in the growth and the character of the early Christian movement. The apostle Paul made use of this reality in his mission strategy: One or more households usually built the nucleus of a church. Even the household itself could function as a church (Freedman 92, 768). What was the situation of the family in the New Testament? The next point will answer that question.

### **2.3.1. Social functions of the family**

For the Israelite in the Old Testament the betab was the place, which held the following social functions: a) inclusion, b) authority, and c) spiritual continuity (by teaching and preserving the faith and traditions). This has been touched on under 2.2.2.

The same three functions are noticeable in the household-church pattern of the New Testament Christians. Yet it seems that the social functions of the betab in the Old Testament were more around continuity in the area of authority as well as in spiritual matters. A new dimension is brought into the social functions of the New Testament. The apostle Paul determines in a

revolutionary way who belongs to the household and who not; he does that in interpreting Jesus' teachings in his letter to the Ephesians. Therefore Paul speaks no longer of blood kinship or dependents, but he creates a new inclusiveness, which is built upon faith in Jesus Christ. He writes in Ephesians 2:19-22: "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God." (NRSV). This new inclusiveness has some implications for the believer and the family as such.

### **2.3.2. A new inclusiveness**

Paul creates the concept of inclusion in God's household for all believers in Christ. This new household is not built with stones anymore, but Christ himself is the foundation for this new household, of which the believers are part. The dwellers of this household are not blood relatives, but relatives through the Spirit of Christ. This "inclusion in the family of God" produces strong obligations to one's "kin" in faith. The social and ethical demands of "koinonia" are prominent in the New Testament, as for example in Acts 2,42; 4,34; Rom 12,13; 15,26ff; Gal 6,6; 2.Cor. 8,4; 9,13; etc. The emphasis on sharing, meeting needs, equality and generosity strongly recalls the economic ethic of the Old Testament and has roots in the household ethos" (Freedman 92, 768).

The household of faith (family of believers Gal 6, 10) had to have priority over the kinship household. The new inclusiveness takes its toll; this becomes especially clear in the words of Christ in Mark 10:29: Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left his house or

brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the Good News, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age -- houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields with persecutions -- and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first." (NRSV).

The natural family is disrupted; the new family of believers takes the place of the natural family. It can well be imagined, that these words of Jesus did not go down well with the standards, teachings and moral fibre of that time. And yet, for those burdened by rigid family structures on the one side and under pressure to contribute towards the family honour on the other side, it might have been deeply liberating news.

On the level of social functioning with regard to authority, it can be said, that also here certain patterns of the Israel households were taken over. It was natural for the early Christian house-churches to take these patterns over, as those were the social structures of that time. In the early church authority and leadership was in the hands of the elders, who were usually older men. They were chosen out of high functioning families and the family had to be exemplary. Women were also mentioned as heads of households (Freedman 92, 768f).

The social function of continuous religious instruction took place in the Israelite family and was regarded as very important. Therefore it developed naturally for the early Christians to keep the religious instruction in the homes, where also the preaching of the gospel and the breaking of bread took place.

"The early Christians took over the metaphorical use of family as a picture for the whole faith community/church. As Israel could be called the beth-Yahweh, "the house/family of Yahweh" (Num 12:7; Jer 12:7), so the Church could be called the oikos of God" (Eph 2:19; Gal 6:10; Heb. 3:2-6) (Freedman 92, 769).

What has been said so far shows the importance of the household or family for the individual Christian – as in the time of the early church the individual was mostly defined by his/her belonging to a household (Green 92, 226). That also implies that the individual was still characterised by a corporate identity – and the belonging to either a family or a church- family was vital for survival, especially for women.

### **2.3.3. Family ties in the gospels**

The family relationships and the belonging to Jesus Christ are described differently in the gospels. The authors of the gospels each deal in their own way with the subject of family ties.

In the gospel of Mark one finds statements on family ties, which are consistent with the way Jesus dealt with his own family. “Theologically Mark’s deep ambivalence about ties of natural kinship expresses his conviction that there is a new criterion for membership of the people of God: faith in Jesus, the Son of God” (Green 92, 226)

In the gospel of Matthew we find a strong emphasis on spiritual kinship.

Those who obey and follow Jesus can call God their father. Consequently – if God becomes their heavenly father, they become Jesus ‘true family’ in sharing the same father (Mt 12:46-50). This new ‘true’ family is then characterised as kinship or even household and has to have priority over the natural kinship (Mt 8:18-27). The material in the gospel of Matthew wants to offer “an authoritative basis in the story of Jesus for the formation and development of a new household of faith...” (Green 92, 227).

In the gospel of Luke-Acts the situation is not much different. Here Jesus links Israel with the church. As in the other gospels Jesus’ demands are clear:

"1. Discipleship to Jesus is a costly affair. Radical detachment is required: from possessions, family ties or even one's own spouse (Luke 9:57-62). 2. Belonging to God's new people involves household based expression of solidarity" (Green 92, 228).

The gospel of John does not make much use of kinship language, yet it aims to "provide a basis in the story of Jesus for developing their own identity and life together as God's people;" this understanding brings about two things: the division that Jesus causes and the new identity of the elect (Green 92, 228).

The functions of the household / oikos in the New Testament have been established. The believers of Christ have developed a new concept of household. The belonging to a household through the lineage of blood changed towards the belonging through faith in Jesus Christ. This created new family ties in the 'surrogate family' or the household of believers, which later became the church. The different ways the gospels deal with the relationship between natural family ties and the surrogate family has been shown. The family relationships and the belonging to Jesus Christ are described differently in the gospels. The authors of the gospels deal each in their own way with the subject of family ties.

It can be seen that scripture is not a book without contradictions and it is at the same time not necessarily consistent with regard to certain questions, for example regarding family issues. A theology for the family needs to take cognisance of these difficulties.

The following point deals with these difficulties and challenges of a family theology.

## **2.4. Challenges facing a Christian theology of the family**

People try to find answers in scripture for questions of today – and might get disappointed because scripture has not been written with the intention to answer questions at all.

The same applies to the question: ‘What does the Bible say about the family?’ The Bible is not a manual that offers answers to all our questions and has never been compiled with that intention. Rather the different Bible books were written as documents about God being in relationship with humankind. This relationship is described from different angles and viewpoints in the individual books of scripture. The biblical stories have been collected and compiled in order to tell the story of God’s love and His story with his people, which is actually his-story or history.

Therefore: To look for answers to certain questions is not necessarily in line with the intention of scripture. Yet that does not mean that scripture is not relevant for today.

The question: “What does the Bible say about the family” can illustrate this. This question is probably not the question one should ask, as will be seen for different reasons.

### **2.4.1. The “unbiblical” question: What does the Bible say about the family?**

The question: ‘What does the Bible say about the family’ suggests, that one can find answers to all family questions in scripture. Yet families were differently structured in the Old and New Testament times than today; one example is the hierarchical patriarchal structure of biblical families, which is not necessarily the structure most of our families have today. One also needs to keep in mind that certain contemporary issues, for example pornography, were not

part of the biblical world at all; so it is obvious that scripture cannot be expected to give concrete and specific answers to all our contemporary questions.

1. The question 'What does the Bible say about the family', "fails to consider how the Bible speaks and how we as readers may hear what God through the Spirit is saying to the church" (Barton 2001, 38). The Bible is not written as a timeless manual, but "scripture is the life of the triune God, whose story is told in scripture and recapitulated in the sacraments and in the lives, saints and martyrs, participating in which is the privilege of all Christian believers as members of the body of Christ (Barton 2001, 37).
2. The question ignores the difference between the families in scripture and contemporary<sup>2</sup> families, which will be dealt with under 2.4.2.
3. The above question does not take into consideration how love was understood in biblical times. Love being the reason for marriages in our days, differs hugely from the biblical understanding of love. See 2.4.3.
4. Another aspect, why this question is not appropriate, is the description of the Haustafeln or household rules, which give guidance to families in scripture thinking of New Testament times. Yet, the Haustafeln, as will be briefly discussed under 2.4.4. were not meant as time-less guidelines at all. In taking them as a guideline for family life today, one actually misses out on their original revolutionary, yet contextual guidance they gave in their time.

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<sup>4</sup> The contemporary family is, for the framework of this research, a family consisting of partner(s) and their child(ren), which can be nuclear family (see footnote 2), a single-parent family, gay-lesbian family or a remarried family with their children (blended family).

The above deliberations show that passages from scripture about the family cannot simply be used to answer today's question around the family. The following point, which describes the difference between the families in scripture and our contemporary families, will support this argument even more.

#### **2.4.2. Difference between biblical and contemporary family**

When looking for answers to questions about family issues, the Christian might hope to find them in scripture. Yet - in doing so - one tends to forget the difference between the families in scripture and the nuclear family<sup>5</sup> or the contemporary family with its many variations. A number of reasons underpin that difference between the families in scripture and the contemporary family. Yet many variations of this family-form are possible today, especially in South Africa. Different definitions of the term 'family' will be discussed under 3.2.3.

In seven points the differences between the Hebrew family and families of today will be highlighted.

1. The families mentioned in scripture, especially in the Old Testament, are often ruling or leading families; and it is especially those families, which do not make anyone proud (David and Bathseba; David's son Absalom rapes Tamar; Jacob and Esau etc) (Lawler 1999, 14).

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<sup>5</sup> Nuclear family is "a core family unit of husband, wife and their child(ren), .... has traditionally been seen as the main provider of socialisation for the young and as a preserver of cultural traditions" (Gladding 2002, 7).

2. The Hebrew family could be polygamous, while the traditional or bourgeois family<sup>3</sup> is usually monogamous (Clapp 1993, 35).
  
3. The Hebrew family did not differentiate between public and private spheres. Households provided their own economic resources; there was no need for father or mother to leave the house and earn the family's bread and butter (Clapp 1993, 35). These two worlds coincided. (Lawler 1999, 13).
  
4. Another argument is the size of the Hebrew family in contrast with the traditional family. The Hebrew family, the betab, consisted of 50-100 people; the average household in South Africa consists of 3,65 people<sup>4</sup>. The Hebrew family household was in comparison a little village; every son had his own shelter with his wife and children (Clapp 1993, 36).
  
5. The contemporary family lives in a "highly atomised and mobile society", where the family or the individual in a crisis can rely on the welfare state in many countries. In Hebrew family times instead the other family members were counted on for mutual help and support (Clapp 1993, 36).
  
6. The traditional family usually does not get involved in economic or political functions. Affection or romantic love is the usual draw card for getting married. In the family of ancient Israel marriages were not romantic, but they were arranged (Clapp 1993, 37).

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<sup>3</sup> Clapp uses the both terms to describe the family of today, namely traditional or bourgeois family. He took over the term 'bourgeois family' from Brigitte and Peter Berger (Berger 1983,7). Bergers sees the Biedermeier family, the Victorian family or the bourgeois family in the same light. Clapp criticises the Evangelicals, who regard the bourgeois family as the biblical family. Clapp's argument proves that the distance between the Hebrew family and the traditional family does not allow conclusions about guidance towards a 'biblical family life'. Clapp's understanding will be taken over for this research.

<sup>4</sup> Data from Stats SA: population of 47 391 millions in the year 2006, divided by the number of households in 2006, namely 12 972.

The reason for the marriage arrangement was to better the economic situation of the family and strengthen the family ties (Alexander 2003, 295).

7. An arranged marriage created a new bond between the two families, not 'just' a legal bond, but rather a kin-bond or a blood-bond. "The Torah shorthand for this bond was the common phrase: one body, as mentioned in Gen 2:24" (Lawler 1999, 13). The contemporary family creates merely a legal bond. The deeper understanding of covenant seems to be missing. This can be confirmed by the researcher's experience in pastoral care. In marriage counselling one spouse remarked: "I married you, not your family". In biblical times marriage was a real family affair, very different from our mainly legal understanding of marriage today.

From what has been said so far, one can conclude: there is a big difference between the Hebrew family and the traditional family. Michael Lawler goes even further by saying: "So different are both marriage and family in biblical times from their contemporary western counterparts, that Christians need to be very careful about drawing conclusions about the one from the other" (Lawler 1999, 14). One realises how valid this statement is, when one considers that the traditional or contemporary family is not even mentioned in scripture.

It can therefore be stated: It is not easy, if at all possible, to look for actual concrete guidance in family matters to Scripture. That does not mean, that there is nothing valuable in the Bible for the family of today, but one needs to take a different approach than 'wanting to know what the Bible says about the family'. This will also involve the question how scripture should or could be read and interpreted, which will be dealt with under 2.5.

Another difference between the biblical times and today is the definition of love and affection, which will be described next.

### **2.4.3. Understanding love in biblical and contemporary families**

In biblical times a wife would not so much look for affection and/or companionship from her husband than in our times. She would rather look for a good provider and an honourable citizen (Lawler 1999, 13). Love and affection could well exist in Old Testament marriages; one just has to look at Jacob working 14 years for Laban in order to be able to marry Rachel (Gen 29). Yet, this kind of romantic love was not the rule. Often the marriages were arranged for reasons other than love. In the Old Testament love between the spouses was not romantic love, rooted in feeling and passion; "It was love required in the Torah injunction cited by Jesus: Lev 19:18; Mk 12:31; Mt 19:19: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself" (Lawler 1999, 13). It can well happen, that feeling can be part of neighbour-love, but mostly it is not.

When one speaks about love in the contemporary family, one refers to a feeling/emotion. That is quite in contrast to biblical times. In biblical understanding love is rather regarded as a 'verb' – something one has to do. Maybe one can even say that love goes along with a certain attitude. It is love rooted in the will and expresses itself actively in serving the neighbour. Therefore one can say: Neighbour-love is more radical and active than romantic love and acts towards "loyalty, service and obedience" (Moran, William 1963, quoted in Lawler 1999, 13). According to the biblical understanding of neighbour-love this love required loyalty/fidelity, service and obedience and availability to another person. The same applied for the love between spouses (Lawler 1999, 13).

The word 'love' in its possible different meanings can hardly be expressed by the word itself. That is why Lawler refers to what he calls a "poverty of the English language". Lawler describes agape, philia, eros – as three different words for love in Greek, each referring to

something distinctively different. Agape is the love for someone, which focuses on the good of that other person. The love, which is meant by philia, is the mutual love of friends.

Quite different is the underlying meaning of eros, which refers to the love of another for one's own good and one's own benefit (Lawler 1999, 19). As can be seen, each word means something very different. If philia is the most foundational love, then agape is that kind of love that the neighbour-love refers to, since it focuses on the well-being of the other first.

Another point that shows the difference between biblical times and today is the 'Haustafeln', which will be briefly put into their theological context.

#### **2.4.4. The household codes or 'Haustafeln'**

The household rules are important to discuss, simply because they tend to be used as guidelines in some church groups regarding family life and/or family order. Therefore the household rules cannot be ignored in a research about family functioning and family life in the context of scripture.

The subject will be dealt with briefly in an attempt to answer the following questions:

1. What exactly are the 'Haustafeln' or household rules?

The way the early Christians lived together in a household, was arranged by the household rules, which are found in Ephesians 5, 21-6,9, Colossians 3, 18-4,1 and 1. Peter 2,18-3,7. These rules cannot be read in isolation, but need to be read with the background of Eph 5,21ff, where the mutual obligations of the household partners are spelled out (Stuttgarter Erklärungsbibel 1992, 1523). These household codes not only explain the obligations, but also

describe the interdependences of the household members. What is remarkable about the household codes is the call to husbands to love their wives, which was very unusual in biblical times; this love is compared with the love and care of Jesus Christ for the congregation (Stuttgarter Eklärungsbibel 1992, 1510).

## 2. Where do household rules come from?

One reason for the household rules was that the household should be well ordered (Dunn 1996, 43). Especially since the household was the smallest unit of the state (Aristotle). "As part of good ordering it was necessary to deal with its basic relationships. Similar concerns were often raised in Diaspora Judaism (Dunn 1996, 49f). At the same time it is clear that the household rules mirrored the behavioural rules of the society of that time.

Another reason might be that the early Christians had to deal with the prejudice of being socially disruptive and might have therefore been regarded as a threat to good order. The household rules might have served to counter exactly that suspicion (Dunn 1996, 54). And lastly the household rules might have served as a teaching to create awareness that the household and its management are part of Christian responsibility. The relationships within the family were part of the Christian vocation (Dunn 1996, 56).

An interesting angle comes in when listening to Stephen Barton. He emphasises that even in their own time the household rules not only existed to point to a threefold order to be followed in family life. The household rules rather witness to criticism and transformation of the Jewish and pagan household orders of that time. These orders "transform the family from within in the light of Christ" (Barton 2001, 53). If one looks at Paul's letter to the Ephesians 5:21.23.28 one quickly realises that for a husband to love his wife 'as he loves his own body', was a revolutionary demand in that social and historical context.

### 3. What relevance do the household codes still have for us?

Are the household rules just some 'problem-texts', which we try to worm our way around or do they still have anything to say to us today? Or to put it differently: Can we still read them as relevant scripture to answer our questions around family issues?

The household rules must be well understood and read in their historical and social context. They can be regarded as historical texts and must be taken as such; that is exactly the reason James Dunn gives, why these household rules are not timeless rules at all (Dunn 1996, 62). That on the other hand in itself answers the question whether these household rules are still relevant to us. They are not relevant in the sense that they are not intended to give a timeless structure to families, independent of the social circumstances.

Do the household rules still have anything to say to us for our daily living as Christians?

We as Christians, living two thousand years after Christ, are not asked to copy these household rules into our lives, but consider their intentions.

### 4. What do the 'Haustafeln' have to say to us today?

Again it is Stephen Barton who gives remarkable insight into this matter:

He makes the point that the household rules can teach us something that is quite in contrast to our individualistic society. He states that the household rules can teach us to participate faithfully "in the life of the family and other social and political networks in ways which witness with full integrity to our true, eschatological identity as members together in a new household, the household of God" (Barton 2001, 54). This not only demands from us to be self-reflective, but it also requires us to behave consciously in contrast to the society around us.

This behaviour is not only expected from a single person of the household, but should be encouraged as behaviour for the faith community. That again will be an argument for the community of faith, namely the church, to live in 'some tension with the dominant culture' (Brüggemann in Hesselgrave 2000, 39.) Stanley Hauerwas puts this differently in his 'Community of Character'; he suggests, that "if the church is to serve our liberal society or any society, it is crucial for Christians to regain an appropriate sense of separateness from that society" (Hauerwas 1981, 2)). It is this separateness from society, or as Christ said, this separateness from the world, that shapes the Christian identity. This needs to be consistently incorporated into the preaching and teaching of the church.

A couple of arguments have been collected to underpin the statement, that the families in scripture are distinctively different from its contemporary counterpart, the so-called traditional family. Our blood connects us to our individual blood-related families, and our faith connects us to another kind of family: the family of believers, the family of God.

#### **2.4.5. From blood relationships to the new *familia Dei***

It has been previously mentioned, that in the Hebrew family the individual's identity was not determined by his own achievements, personal traits and gifts, but through belonging to the blood community/ family household. Within that framework of understanding, the individual person saw it as his/her duty to contribute towards the well-being and honour of that respective household. This way of determining one's identity continued right into the New Testament times, yet some households got a new base of existence, namely those that were based on their faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

For these believers the reason for living together was no longer their blood relationships, but relationships based on their faith in Jesus Christ (see 2.3.2.). These households were at the same time the beginning of the church, as Paul started his church often in households. The words 'family' and 'family household' were used synonymously.

For the family determined by blood relationships, a certain code of conduct was given; it mostly consisted of mutual aid, fulfilling one's role within the family, which was largely dependent on the status within the family, yet for each family member the striving towards honour for the family was a 'must'. The extended family or the family household was the only "source of honour and status in the Mediterranean society" (Lawler 1999, 15). It was at the same time the "primary economic, religious, educational and social network" (Malina and Rohrbaugh: 1992, 202 in Lawler 1999, 16). Bruce and Lawler state how vital and important the family ties for the individual's well-being and survival were in that respective time.

And yet, by some individuals these blood-family-relations could have been experienced as stifling, maybe even more for women. It can be well imagined how women could have felt drawn towards that new family ties based on faith in Jesus Christ.

It becomes clear, how risky it was to listen to the preaching of Jesus, and even more to follow Jesus Christ. That could endanger the connection to the blood family and would put the social or cultural support net at risk as well (Lawler 1999, 16).

Why was Jesus preaching a threat to the natural family ties?

In his teaching Jesus asked for commitment, which is expressed in his demand to follow him (Mark 3,34b-35, as well as in Mt 46-50 and Lk 8,19-21). This verse in the gospel of Mark for example described the following scene: Jesus' family came to the house where he was teaching;

they intended to fetch him. It is well possible that Jesus' family was against his interpretation of scripture because it did not bring honour to his own blood family. The verses in Mark read as follows: "And looking at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother" (Mk 3,35; NRSV). Jesus made it clear, that by obeying God's will new family ties are created; that means also that in doing God's will a close connection to him, Jesus, will be established.

Regarding the role the biological-extended family played for the individual at that time, the words of Jesus must have been revolutionary. One could even say: To belong to the blood family as a matter of survival and support became less important. In Luke 14:26 Jesus not only demands that believers should follow him and do the Father's will; he goes even further in saying: "Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple". And in the same chapter in verse 33 he says: "So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions". Christ's words make it obvious that to follow him is going to be costly - and cannot be taken light-heartedly. It is here where Bonhoeffer's book "The cost of discipleship" becomes relevant. More about that will be said in chapter 5 under the point

### [5.3.7.2.](#)

#### **2.4.6. The church as surrogate family**

Jesus created a new place of belonging for those who did the will of God, and followed him. When Jesus said to his disciples or other listeners: "Come and follow me", he basically invited them to join his divine surrogate family. The togetherness of the believers became actually this new family, which was soon "ekklesia", the church of God (Lawler 1999, 17).

The first believers of Jesus understood themselves very quickly as the family of God. That found its expression in the language of the new or surrogate family. "This sense of church as first family is striking in the letters of Paul. ... his most significant language for describing the church is language of the family" (Clapp 1993, 81).

The early church came to existence through the meetings of worship in the households of some disciples. As an example one can take passages from scripture like 1. Cor 16:19b: "Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house" or Acts 2:46f: "Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." These circumstances might also be the reason why family-language was used to describe the bond between the believers of Jesus and God and but also among one another (Joubert 2002, 235).

Another reason for the use of the family language of early Christians is the fact, that they felt more comfortable in the private sphere of the household. Stephan Joubert's points out that during the time of the early Christians life was regulated within two spheres, namely the political and the private sphere. Jesus preaching about the kingdom of God was aimed at the political sphere – namely he called those in power to take care of social injustice etc. That means that the early Christians had to make a choice where they wanted to belong, to the political sphere or to the private sphere. It appears, that the early Christians found their identity more in the intimate space of the household, which consequently lead to the use of family language (Joubert 2002, 236f).

Jesus preaching, and maybe the use of family language, led to a family-code-of-conduct for this new community. The values and norms of blood relationships were taken over: loyalty,

respect, caring for each other, protecting and supporting one another, community property and much more were to be found in the early Christians way of dealing with one another (Joubert 2002, 235). Jesus' preaching fostered a kind of behaviour within the new familia Dei that was guided by agape, a love that focuses on the good of the other person. To bring honour to the whole family was the highest code of conduct for the betab, but to honour God - in doing his will and to love and care for one another - was the code of conduct within the familia dei.

What guidelines other than love in the sense of agape are there for Christian families today? How can scripture be used keeping in mind the difference between the Hebrew family and the family of today? Can the Bible still be a relevant guide for the questions family of today have? The next point will attempt to answer this question.

## **2.5. A key to scripture interpretation**

It seems problematic to make scripture the guide for a Christian life, if one has not defined how scripture will be read and interpreted. A literal reading of scripture, namely word by word, can bring problems or even severe misinterpretations. The following examples of the Old Testament may illustrate this:

Deuteronomy 21:18 deals with the problem of a disobedient child in the following way:  
"If someone has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey his father and mother, who does not heed them when they discipline him, then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his town at the gate of that place. They shall say to the elders of his town, 'This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious. He will not obey us. He is a

glutton and a drunkard.' Then all the men of the town shall stone him to death. So you shall purge the evil from your midst; and all Israel will hear, and be afraid" (NRSV).

This example grants us insight into the way in which certain problems were dealt with in biblical times according to the Mosaic Law. The above-mentioned "solution" to a certain situation is bound to the context, in which it originated. It – obviously – cannot be transferred and applied uncritically to our times. The above example was only quoted to show the need for a key to the interpretation of scripture that will do justice to our contemporary situation.

It becomes clear that the reference to a "biblical approach" can become quite dangerous and misleading. That is why it is a great concern when Christian political parties refer to their approach as 'biblical', without defining what biblical means to them. It is an even greater concern when churches proclaim that they are Bible-centred. The researcher would not join such a church, without knowing to what part of scripture that respective church actually refers.

Again: 'Biblical' approaches can be dangerous if they are not qualified. How can one be guided in interpreting scripture and how can the relevant parts of scripture for the Christian be determined? To answer this question, the Lutheran understanding of scripture interpretation will be introduced, which is the framework in which this research is conducted.

### **2.5.1. Martin Luther's understanding of scripture and scripture**

#### **interpretation**

Martin Luther regarded the Bible as God's Word, which God himself had spoken through the Holy Spirit; yet he did not regard the Bible as inerrant (Nürnberger 2005, 79).

His understanding of scripture was directly influenced by his personal discovery of a merciful God in the letter of St. Paul to the Romans; it started with verse 1:17, which is a quote of Habakuk 2:4 and reads: "The one who is righteous will live by faith." Luther realized that this righteousness was not a matter of personal achievement through a pious life, but rather this righteousness was a gift from God, which was granted through faith. Luther is said to have responded to this discovery: "Here I felt totally new born, as if I myself would have entered the doors of paradise" (own translation; Zahrnt 1983, 55). For him this discovery was an answer to his spiritual need for a God, that would not condemn or destroy him. This break-through in his understanding of God changed his approach to understanding and interpreting scripture. It is interesting to note, that for Luther the God of the Bible did not reveal himself in a Greek or metaphysical way. Instead God reveals himself in a Hebraic and a historical way, namely in becoming and in coming – God is an acting and transforming God, acting in lovingly turning to his people, with the culmination point being the Christ-Event (own translation; Zahrnt 1983, 58). Klaus Nürnberger puts it this way: "It is in Christ that God's true intentions for humankind are revealed as redeeming love" (Nürnberger 2005, 21).

Luther did not see scripture as an authority in its own right; scripture has only authority when it proclaims God as he is revealed in the incarnate Christ. For Luther Christ is the ultimate word of God (Nürnberger 2004, 17). Scripture could only be interpreted if the central theme of scripture was taken into consideration. This central theme was and is Jesus Christ. Luther said in a conversation with Erasmus: *Tolle Christum e Scripturis, quid amplius in illis invenies* – Take Christ out of scripture, then what will you still find in it? (own translation; WA 18 606,29 as quoted in Lohse 1995, 207).

In that same sense Luther also regarded some books of scripture as more relevant than others, as they pointed more to Christ than other parts of scripture. That is why he spoke of "best

Scriptures” like John’s gospel, Paul’s letters, especially Romans, and the first letter of Peter (Nürnberg 2005, 82).

Luther had an interesting way of differentiating passages from the Old Testament in their relevance for Christians. He distinguished between words of scripture that addressed biblical figures like David and those words addressing the contemporary Christian: “David was told to wage war; Luther was not David and not told to wage war” (Nürnberg 2005, 82). In interpreting the relevance of the old covenant for the Christians, Luther stated that the gentiles were excluded from the Old Testament covenant. Therefore the ceremonial and moral law of the covenant was not regarded as binding for gentiles. Gentiles have the moral law written in their hearts, as Romans 2:14: “They (the gentiles) show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, to which their own conscience also bears witness” (NRSV) (Nürnberg 2005, 83).

In Luther’s time the contemporary interpretation techniques of scripture were the fourfold meaning of scripture, known as the Scholastic Quadriga (the literal, allegorical, tropological and anagogical meaning of scripture). Later in his life, after the conflict around the letters of indulgences, he moved away from this traditional understanding of scripture. He also differenced himself from the way the Catholic Church interpreted scripture, namely always related to tradition. Luther rather insisted that scripture interprets itself: *sacra scripture sui ipsius interpres*; he said: it is obvious and certain that scripture can easily be its own interpreter... (own translation, Lohse 1995, 208).

When Luther referred to “only the Scripture – sola scriptura” he did not suggest that a Christian should take every word of Scripture as binding. Scripture as such has no authority in itself, because “the validity depended on the fundamental theological criterion: the gospel of Christ” (Nürnberg 2005, 90). If the gospel of Jesus Christ does not shine through a specific piece of scripture, it is not relevant for the Christian today. This internal criterion was the core-message

in scripture, something like the “hidden hinge upon which its basic message swings” (Peters 1992, in Nürnberger 2005, 84). Luther had found an ‘internal criterion of truth’ within Scripture. He called it the ‘canon in the canon’ (Nürnberger 2005, 84f). That became the “hidden yardstick for what was to be considered God’s Word within Scriptures themselves” (Nürnberger 2005, 81).

The ‘canon in the canon’ is the core message within scripture; it is Christ as the incarnate Word of God. It is Christ as the only and eternal truth and truth is understood as whatever promulgates Christ (was Christum treibet) (Nürnberger 2005, 84). “Where scriptures contradicted Christ, Luther would say: it is Christ we must follow and not the scriptures” (Nürnberger 2005, 84). There was and is always the danger to make out of Christ’s words a new law. Yet the final criterion in determining what is true and valid for the Christian will always be the gospel of God’s redeeming grace, manifested in the cross of Christ (Nürnberger 2005, 84). ‘What promulgates Christ’ can differ from situation to situation. It is the spoken Word of God, where the gospel and God’s redeeming love are the guide for scripture interpretation and the proclamation of the Word into a specific situation to specific listeners in their own context. Then to preach Christ is only meaningful, when “Christ is proclaimed as the only crucified and risen saviour, whose salvation can only be received in faith” (own translation; Althaus 1994, 80f).

Another criterion, linked to the canon in the canon, is Luther’s differentiation of scripture into law and gospel. For him the Word of God consists of law and gospel, which stand in a dialectical relationship to each other. The law leads the hearer of the Word to realise his own sin and that leads to repentance. The law cannot redeem. One can say that the law is all that is heard as a demand in the Word of God, while the gospel is heard as a promise and gift of God through the Word. In his lectures on the psalms Luther had another way of differentiating, namely to

distinguish between the letter and the Holy Spirit (own translation; Ebeling 1981, 121). Both make the word of God.

The gospel "creates faith, grants forgiveness of sin and leads to the renewal of life in Christ" (Nürnberger 2005, 81). The Word of God as law can be heard as a word of wrath, where God is perceived as being absent and hidden (Deus absconditus). Yet the Word of God that reveals God through Jesus Christ is the word that enables the believer to let God be God, to honour God and to trust in him (deus revelatus). It causes the believer to hand himself over to God in order to be freed from other powers and him/herself (deus revelatus) (Ebeling 1981, 133). One can say that the gospel needs to be preceded by the proclamation of the law, as the law creates the awareness of one's own sins. Then the proclamation of the gospel will be heard; yet the gospel preached without law is meaningless.

And yet there is only one Word of God, even though it has these two aspects and modes of actions; it meets humankind either as law or as gospel (own translation; Lohse 1995, 210).

Where Luther could not find the gospel in scripture, he did not show much appreciation towards that text.

## **2.5.2. Luther's interpretation of scripture in the light of modern hermeneutics**

The different approaches of biblical interpretation are relevant with regard to Luther's key to scripture interpretation. The aim of this passage is to place Luther's approach in the framework of modern hermeneutics.

Through modern hermeneutics one has become aware that the personal background of the reader will influence the interpretation-process of scripture. It is not only the personal background that influences the interpretation of scripture, but intellectual background can also have an influence; for example the way the person gives meaning to his/her life will definitely have an impact on how scripture will be understood. At the same time it is obvious that the personal context of the author of a certain piece of scripture, as well as the situation of the original readers, will shape the message. In modern hermeneutics these insights have been expressed in different modes of readings:

The reading behind-the-text, the reading before-the-text, the reading above-the-text, the reading in-the-text and the reading below-the-text.

The five approaches will be briefly described and Luther's understanding of scripture will be placed within this framework. The Lutheran theologian Klaus Nürnberg, whose recent work is used in this deliberation, deals with this topic in detail (Nürnberg 2004, 28-39).

In the reading behind-the-text one tries to reconstruct the history behind the text. The historical-critical method of scripture interpretation can be placed here. The danger of this reading lies in the possible loss of the spiritual meaning of the text (Nürnberg 2004, 30). The aim of this reading is to understand the world behind the text. Questions such as who was the author, what was the political situation of the addressees, what were their problems, questions or needs or what was the cultural setting in that time are the point of departure.

In the reading before-the-text the present situation of the reader is considered. Personal questions and needs of the reader are known before the text is read – the interpretation of the respective scripture passage is influenced by the situation of the reader. The text can serve as a mirror and the reader can discover him/herself through reading scriptures. The original setting

of the-world-before-the-text is not taken into account. The danger of this reading is that the original meaning is not really noted (Nürnberg 2004, 32f).

The reading above-the-text implies that the situation of the reader in terms of his pre-understanding, his internalisation of Christian doctrines, Confessions or Creeds will shape the meaning given to the text, even if the reader is not aware of that. Unconsciously this internalised knowledge will influence the interpretation process. The danger in this reading is that the intended meaning of the text is not taken into account very much (Nürnberg 2004, 33f).

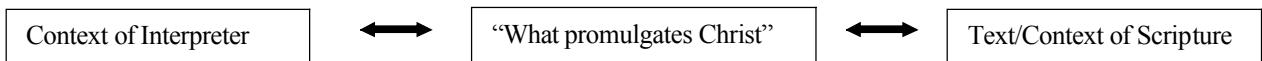
The reading in-the-text takes the biblical text as it is and deals with it as the inspired Word of God. In this approach the Bible is understood as the tool God used to address humanity. In the reading of the Bible the believer encounters God through the written Word. That is also true for the others readings of scripture. Yet the dangers of this reading is that the flow of history and change of context is ignored. At the same time critical reflection on the relevance of certain biblical texts is not allowed (Nürnberg 2004, 34f).

In the below-the-text reading the Word of God is understood as God's redeeming response to human needs and troubles. The biblical stories like exodus for example are read as God's commitment to his people. The stories, in being retold, became 'paradigms of redemption' and "emerged in response to a particular situation of need and evolved in response to new situations of need" (Nürnberg 2004, 36). When the Word is preached today, the message incorporates the message of God to people who lived long before us in totally different set-ups as we live. Yet it is the same Lord, who responds redemptively to the problems and needs of his people anew through the Holy Spirit. Scripture bears witness to God's ongoing redemptive action. This is the underlying thrust of the biblical text, on which this approach focuses.

How does Luther's 'canon in the canon' and the above approaches fit together? Luther's hermeneutical key of "what promulgates Christ" is part of the above-the-text reading, as this principle is part of the doctrines Lutheran Christians are exposed to. This above-the-text reading will determine the entire interpretation and understanding of the biblical text. The influence of the above-the-text reading on the interpretation process cannot easily be established, as most of the doctrines and creeds have been internalised by those attending church regularly.

Yet in the process of scripture interpretation for the purpose of the proclamation of the word, it is required by the preacher to make Luther's hermeneutical key also an external dialogue partner and therefore consciously bring this 'canon in the canon' into the interpretation process. A dialogue between the text, the preacher and the hermeneutical key "that what promulgates Christ" is needed; in doing so the relevance of the text for today's situation of the listeners can be discovered.

This can be illustrated as follows:



This illustration shows the dynamic process of scripture interpretation. The interpreter brings her/himself into the process of interpretation with his personal context. In the interpretation-process the text itself is reflected on in its specific context and meaning, yet through the "glasses" of the canon in the canon, or that "what promulgates Christ". The meaning of that specific scripture passage for the interpreter and her/his listeners in their situation, will be determined by that underlying 'internal criterion of truth' (Nürnberg).

It is important to realise that "what promulgates Christ" can differ from situation to situation.

Luther's approach to scripture interpretation is therefore a Christ-centred approach.

As discussed under point 2.4., a 'biblical' approach as such is not sufficient in compiling a theology for the family. Therefore a scripture interpretation for today needs to be Christ-centred in every respect. This is confirmed by Michael Lawler: "... we advanced not so much a biblical theology of family, determined by the following biblical formula, but a Christian Theology of family, determined by the following of Jesus as interpreted by the Christian tradition, a following that requires the patterning of individual, family, and church life after the life of Jesus as recorded in the gospels" (Lawler 1999, 29). Hence a theology for the family needs to be Christ- and therefore gospel-centred, since it is the works of Christ that grant us hope, and in following him we receive perspective in our Christian lives.

A theology of the family does not only need to be Christ-centred, but it needs to be founded on the covenant of God with humankind.

## **2.6. The covenant as foundation for family relationships in scripture**

It has been established that families existed in a patriarchal society during the time of the Old Testament. The family members had a corporate identity rather than an individual identity. The precondition for being a member of the family was not so much kinship but the covenant, which links to the corporate identity of the individual family member.

A theology for the family is centred around and built on the covenant God made with humankind. It is first of all through the covenant that God reveals himself as a God in relationship. It is the covenant, which builds the foundation for family relationships in the Old and New Testament.

The relationship between God and the people of Israel began, when God elected Israel out of many peoples to be his own, 'simply' because he loved them (Deut 7:7). God expressed this love through delivering Israel out of distress as a sign of grace (Westermann 1969,55). This election and the signs of grace towards Israel accumulated in the covenant, which God drew up with Israel in Ex 19-20. The basis for the covenant is "the unilateral relation established by God with his people Israel, through specific actions by which he summoned individuals and finally an entire nation into a history of response. Essential to this understanding of covenant is the concept of God's unilateral action by which the covenant comes into being and is sustained" (Anderson 1985,33).

The covenant of Ex 19,3ff, the so-called Old Covenant, had its stipulations, which were binding to both parties, as Michael Lawler puts it: "to covenant is to consent and to promise, so that both parties, equal or unequal in other respects, are mutually committed to one another solemnly and radically" (Lawler 1999,12).

A description of what the covenant is, is given by Karl Barth: "The covenant is the fellowship which originally existed between God and man, which was then disturbed and jeopardised, the purpose of which is now fulfilled in Jesus Christ and the work of reconciliation" (Barth in Anderson 1985, 33).

Different forms of covenants are mentioned in scripture. The most relevant one of these covenants for the framework of family-relationships and family-theology is the covenant God made with Abram (Gen 12:2; 15:9-21). Abram was called to leave his home Ur; God drew up the covenant with him in Gen 12:2, which made him Abraham. This covenant was an unconditional divine promise to Abraham. The people of Israel are the offspring of Abraham;

therefore one can say that even the Sinaitic Covenant in Ex 19-24 is related to the covenant God made with Abraham.

The covenant is characterised by covenant love (*hesed*), which is outlined in Ex 20,6 and in Ex 34,6: "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness..." (NRSV). In the New Testament this covenant love is expressed in *agape*, which is "unconditional love of another for the other's sake" (Lawler 1999, 20). God's love, as expressed in the covenant, is an unconditional love, as the validity of the covenant is not dependent on the obedience of the other covenant partner.

This kind of love, forgiving and abounding, shines through in the announcement of the New Covenant in Jeremia 31:31: "But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, "Know the LORD," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more" (NRSV). It is the same unconditional love, with which God loved us first (1.John 4:19).

God's love and faithfulness overcomes all hindrances in the relationship between God and humankind: "God overcomes whatever negative or even indiscriminate tendencies there might be in creatureliness itself" (Anderson 1985, 34). Therefore the covenant remained God's way of expressing his love and saving grace towards his chosen one, the people of Israel (von Raad 1969, 148; own translation), and us, independent of their or our response.

This divine love manifests itself in the New Covenant, which is established as a consequent response to Israel's permanent disobedience; this covenant will include all peoples (Stuttgarter Erklärungsbibel 1992, Sacherklärungen 14, sv 'Bund'). It is important to note, that the old

covenant is not forgotten by Jesus followers (1. Peter 2:9-10); it is rather transformed and rooted in Jesus Christ (Lawler 1999, 18). This New Covenant has its own stipulations, namely the Great Commandment. The Great Commandment given by Jesus in Mt 22, 35-40 (and in the parallel texts Mk 12,18-31 and Lk 10,25-28), binds together Deuteronomy 6,4 and Leviticus 19,18 in a totally new form. Deut 6,4 is the first verse of the Sch'ma Jisrael, the morning and evening prayer of a committed Jew. Both scripture verses from Deuteronomy and Leviticus were well known verses of the Hebrew Bible to the listeners of Jesus; but the way he interpreted them in the Great Commandment was revolutionary.

Jesus made these stipulations also binding for those, "who would covenant in his surrogate ecclesial family. His comment in Luke's version (of the Great Commandment, added by researcher) tells it all: 'Do this and you shall live' " (Luke 10:28; Lawler 1999, 19). It is in committing to the stipulations of the covenant that Jesus as a good Jew treated his family in the way he did: "Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother" (Mk 3:31-35). In that he emphasized the essence of the covenant (Clapp 1993, 73).

Through the New Covenant a new quality of relationship between God and his people has been established. This new relationship is the basis for the togetherness of the believers, namely the followers of Christ as redeemed sinners. This is the foundation of all relationships, where believers of Christ are together as family, as church, as communities or on any formal or informal level. Anderson therefore states that the covenant has "within itself the sources for its own renewal" (Anderson 1985, 35).

It is this understanding of the New Covenant that builds the foundation for a family theology.

## **2.7. Pillars in a family theology**

An attempt to establish a family theology needs to be set in the right framework to incorporate all that has been established so far. A family theology should evolve out of a dialogue between scripture and the teaching and tradition of the church.

A family theology must consequently be built on the following pillars:

1. A family theology has to have a systemic understanding of the family as a pre-condition. This implies that this understanding has to be non-Cartesian (Anderson 1985, 9); that means that the family-reality cannot be reduced to smaller units/individuals. This would do injustice to the dynamic of family processes.
2. The systemic understanding of the family will at the same time exclude a linear approach (Newtonian), which would look for the cause and effect relationship (Anderson 1985, 10). Family processes cannot be reduced to cause and effect, as they are complex and intertwined or to use another word, interconnected.
3. A family theology needs to focus on being-responsible-in-relationships. This latches onto Richard Niebuhr's "fitting behaviour" of the "responsible self". That would refer to behaviour of the individual, which "accepts his or her membership in a community in such a way as to contribute to the benefit and health of that community" (Niebuhr in Anderson 1985, 11). The 'responsible self' takes the other's freedom and well-being into account. In Christian terms this can be expressed in the Great Commandment, which consists of the only two stipulations of the New Covenant (Mt 22:34).

4. The basis for a family theology must be God's covenant with Israel, which through the New Covenant includes the new Israel, which is the church; it includes therefore at the same time all baptised people. The covenant in its nature mirrors a God who elects and calls his people into 'a history of response' (Anderson 1985, 33).

5. A family theology needs to be built on the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is the expression of God's grace and mercy in the unconditional acceptance of the godless sinner - for the sake of Christ.

6. This focus needs to be followed consequently when interpreting Scripture. A clear key to scripture interpretation is required, for example the Lutheran understanding of scripture interpretation: "what promulgates Christ".

The covenant of God with Israel, and in Christ with all people, is the main foundation of a family theology. The covenant reveals characteristics about God, which have been discussed in the previous point; the main characteristic to be mentioned here is God's love and grace, shown in the fact that he elects and then covenants with Israel. That implies that the basic quality of the covenant-relationship is love. This love is to set the tone for relationships among God's creatures, which are created in his image and his likeness. This is especially true for the natural family, based on kinship; this is (or should be) even more relevant for the new family, the surrogate family, which is the church.

Therefore the covenant in its structure and quality is the scriptural paradigm for a family theology. This truth is expressed in Eph 3,14f: "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name" (NRSV).

A trajectory “running through biblical teachings about family relationships” can be observed. This culminates in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, especially in chapters 3 -5 (Olson 1997, 47). The letter to the Ephesians deals with family issues in a revolutionary way, especially in chapter 5. Even though chapter 5 is part of the so-called Haustafeln, which are discussed in their relevance for us today under 2.4.4., the spirit in this chapter is a spirit of love. A trajectory “running through biblical teachings about family relationships” can be observed. This culminates in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, especially in chapters 3 -5 (Olson 1997, The vital importance of the covenant as paradigm of the family today has been pointed out.

The covenant has, at least, the following implications for the believer:

1. God’s creatures are bound to love

It is the above mentioned threefold love that is the only stipulation for the New Covenant, to which all believers of Christ are bound. They are bound to this love on all levels of their existence: in their familia dei, in their kinship family and their work, leisure etc. The relationship between the natural family and the church will need further explorations. A few thoughts on this will be given in chapter 5.

2. The belonging to God through Jesus Christ determines our identity and our choices

Our belonging to Christ through baptism (Rom 6) and our faith makes us Christ’s sisters or brothers and therefore God’s children (Gal 3,26-29). This calls us into responsibility and it will influence the choices we as believers make. The yardstick for our choices ought to be Christ’s command, with which he calls his believers into discipleship: ‘Follow me! This is our core Christian duty, and that means basically: “model your life after mine” (Lawler 1991,21). This cannot but mean a life, guided by Christ’s love. It remains a lifelong task and challenge for the believer.

3. Being bound to the covenant and belonging to Christ will shape the family life of the blood-family and the familia dei.

The covenant was originally a unilateral covenant; God from his side showed commitment to his people. Yet it is exactly through this covenant that God calls us to respond (Ex 19:5); our response would create a bilateral or mutual relationship (Balswick 2002:20f). Balswick sees the necessity for a dynamic and maturing relationship in the covenant-relationship (Balswick 2002,20f). The covenant is an expression of God's unconditional love. This love is at the same time grace towards God's people.

The trust in developing and maturing the family process, built on the covenant, indicates that there is an attitude of hope. This also means that when change or development is part of the equation in theological thinking, then the focus on hope, an eschatological reality – is obvious. Without this hope we as redeemed sinners and followers of Christ could not live nor function. Hope is intrinsically part of faith in Jesus Christ. A brief paragraph on the eschatological hope of the Christian will be added to this chapter.

## **2.8. The Christian hope:**

Hope is part of the Christian faith. In believing in Christ, the believer trusts in those promises made by Christ, which have not yet been fulfilled. In this trust the believer expects a world to come at the end of time. The end of time – when the last promises will be fulfilled - is usually referred to as eschatology, the teaching of the "last things". These last things concern the second coming and the judgement of Christ. Jesus Christ is the 'eschaton' – the 'last thing' to come and to hold this judgement.

The foundation for the hope of the Christian is Christ himself. With him the kingdom of God has come (already now) and yet it has to be completed at the end of time when "God will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Rev 21:4; NIV). This time is still to come (not yet). We as Christians live in this tension between the "already now" and the "not yet" all our lives. It is only in faith and hope that this tension can be born, as there is no natural or scientific knowledge of the end of times, which the Christian could fall back on (Trillhaas 1980,445). The believer only has God's words and those of his Son Jesus Christ in scripture.

What exactly is it that the Christian is 'standing on' as reality or certainty?

It is God acting in this world through Jesus Christ. God acted in this world through the birth and life of Jesus Christ and through his death on the cross as well as his resurrection. For the believer the world has been changed through this forever. Sin and death have been overcome in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The resurrection of Christ is God's way to oppose dying, suffering, humiliation, insult and evil (Moltmann 1966, 17; own translation). It is worthwhile to follow Moltmann's thoughts on the Christian hope. He states, that in trusting God's action the believer becomes part of God's opposition and discontent against the world of death. That is exactly why faith, once it unfolds towards hope, is not calm but restless, not patient but impatient. Who hopes in Christ, is not content with the reality of this world, but suffers in this world and so opposes it wholeheartedly; that leads to peace with God, yet discontent with the world (Moltmann 1966, 17f; own translation).

God has acted in this world and changed the world more than once, yet to a certain degree finally in Christ. And it is exactly this final change of the world that is the foundation of the Christian hope (Trillhaas 1980,481). The believer trusts in the fulfillment of Jesus' promises in

the future, because of God's intervention in history through Christ, which is God's story with mankind, namely his-story or history.

What exactly is the Christian hope and how does this hope influence the presence of the believer?

1. Hope is the inseparable companion of faith. To be in a state of hope means to be in real anticipation of the fulfilment of what God has truly promised according to the Christian faith (Moltmann 1966, 16 own translation). To hope goes hand in hand with being in a condition, which is troublesome as we bear the contradictions of our faith on the one side and the state of the world around us, on the other. Faith then means: holding these two worlds together in trusting the One, who overcame this world, Jesus Christ.

2. Therefore one can say that hope is aimed at future salvation. In hope a person moves beyond his/her present state of affairs. To a certain degree the person is already part of the future (Trillhaas 1980, 482f own translation). It is the promises of Christ, 'the world still to come', that grant the believer the strength to endure and transform the presence.

3. Living towards a promised future can become the driving force for dealing with the presence. As God in Christ is transforming the believer through the Spirit, so will the believer transform his environment or his world; as is written in Rom 12:2a: "Do not conform yourselves to the standards of this world, but let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind." (GNB). Another important quote of scripture is Rom 15:13: "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (NRSV).

4. Faith has inseparable companions: not only hope, but also a clear future perspective, the drive to transform reality and the awareness that life is a permanent breaking up – into a promised future (Moltmann 1966, 11 own translation).

It is the above-mentioned spirit and the reality-changing action of God in Christ that is the foundation for healing, growth and reconciliation. It is the trust in the God of hope, which grants the energy that lies beneath the actions of Christians. Yet it can also be the contrast between our world here and the world promised by Christ that can be the source of energy and strength of the believer.

This is the foundation of the Christian hope – and at the same time the foundation for Christian counselling. It is in trusting the healing power of the Holy Spirit that counselling gets its meaning as well as its perspective.

## **2.9. Conclusion**

This chapter allows the following conclusions so far:

The difference between the families of biblical times and the families of our times, the so-called traditional family, does not allow us to use scripture in a literal sense to guide families today. As has become clear so far, a so-called biblical approach is not good enough to find guidelines for families in our time. What is needed is a Christian approach, where Christ is at the centre of all statements.

It has been argued that the difference between biblical families and the contemporary family is too big to draw conclusions from biblical families to our family life today. The one reason for that difference is the characteristics of the Hebrew family. The second reason is the different

understanding of love in biblical times and today. The third reason is the meaning of the ‘Haustafeln’ – which might be mistaken as a guide to family life today.

Chapter 2 has in detail put the family in the theological context of scripture. A point of relevance is the corporate identity of the family in the Old Testament in contrast to our highly individualised society. While in the Old Testament the belonging to a family household was determined by blood relationships, the belonging to a household got a new dimension in the New Testament. Next to the kinship family a new kind of family arose, namely the *familia dei*, which now includes all believers in Christ. The difference between the families in scripture and the contemporary family has been established, and the challenges for a family theology have been named.

When scripture passages, regarding the family, are transferred to our days as answers to questions of today’s families, the serious danger of a theological “quick-fix” arises, which is irresponsible towards the believer and unjustified towards scripture. Therefore the necessity for a key to scripture interpretation was offered in detail with Martin Luther’s “What promulgates Christ”. This Christ-centeredness was worked into a family theology. The covenant and its implications for a family theology were elaborated on. And finally it is the Christian hope, the trust into development and growth through the healing power of the Holy Spirit that grants the theological foundation for pastoral counselling of individuals and families.

There is a great need for answers to questions believers have in regard to how one can live together as a Christian family, since the biblical teachings around the family cannot be applied to today’s world easily; that has been established thoroughly in this chapter.

Yet how can the believer’s questions be answered, so that he/her is satisfied and scripture is used responsibly? The church is called into responsibility to assist believers in their

uncertainties and to answer questions regarding family life in a satisfying way. Guidelines towards family ministry will be developed in chapter 5.

Before one can give more detailed answers to some of these questions, or develop a pastoral approach to assist families, the situation of families in South Africa and the challenges they face, needs to be discussed. This will be done in the following chapter.

The role of the church in helping families through their challenges will also be looked at.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **SITUATION OF FAMILIES IN SOUTH AFRICA**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

"It is within our family and peer groups that we are socialised into ways of behaving and thinking, educated, and taught to have certain perspectives on ourselves and our world. Our personal identity is derived from the way in which we are perceived and treated by members of our group" (Johnson & Johnson 1994, 6). These words of Johnson show the relevance of the family as institution for the socialisation of the individual. This process of socialisation can be hindered by a number of factors or challenges that families in South Africa encounter on a daily basis.

It is the goal of this chapter to explore the situation of families in South Africa, especially the different challenges they experience. The functions and tasks of families will be discussed first. This will be based on the research of the Human Sciences Research Council in the year 2003. This research was compiled as a report for the Department of Social Development for the "Year of the Family 2004". This report will be referred to later in this research as HSRC-Report. The report of the HSRC emphasises that family relationships in South Africa are an important source of social support as well as material support for the majority of people throughout life (Disney et al 1996, in HSRC-Report 2003, p.11).

Secondly the challenges that South African families are facing will be described. These challenges can be external and internal challenges. Some examples of external challenges for families could for example be the economic difficulties, political unrest, and difficulties in finding

work. Many more could be named. Examples of internal challenges could be relationship issues, power struggles, and terminal illness of one partner for example. These are just examples of possible problems which could arise within the family situation.

The challenges described in this chapter are taken from two sources, namely the HSRC-report and the statistics from FAMSA, the Family and Marriage association in South Africa.

Not all families have suitable coping mechanisms at hand to deal with these extraordinary challenges as can be seen by the problems that were brought to FAMSA (Family and Marriage Society of South Africa) in the course of the year 2006. Details of this will be discussed later in the chapter.

Some of the challenges South African families have to face are the hurts of the past due to apartheid-related crimes or discrimination; they were mentioned earlier in chapter 1. To deal with these hurts in a family-oriented manner would be very necessary and recommendable, yet any more detailed deliberations on this topic would go beyond the scope of this research.

It seems that families in South Africa are in need of assistance in order to deal with their challenges in an appropriate and healthy way. The church could play a major role in this assistance as will be taken up in chapter 4 and 5. The statement that families need help will be underlined with evidence from two different sources as was noted above.

Before these challenges can be discussed, the term 'family' needs to be defined for this research.

### **3.2. Towards a definition of family**

Families today have many faces. There is the nuclear family, the single parent family and the blended family, which consists of re-married partners and their children. But there are also non-traditional families, namely people who have decided to live together under one roof and share household costs and chores for economic and/or other reasons. Therefore a workable definition within the South African context is needed for this study, which will be dealt with under 3.2.3. Before dealing with a workable definition for the family it is important to realise that families do not only have many faces, but they also have to fulfil specific roles and functions in South African society.

#### **3.2.1. Functions and tasks of the family in the society of South Africa**

The family is one of the oldest institutions and it has kept most of its original functions, as it still "produces and socialises children, acts as a unit of economic cooperation, gives us significant roles as children, husbands, wives and parents, and provides a source of intimacy (Strong and DeVault 1986 in Gladding 2002,4)". Family is where life begins and where ideally integration and socialisation is experienced and learnt. Families also teach values that are most probably different from the dominant culture (Pipher 1996,11). Families not only teach values that are important to them, but they are also the place where certain behaviour is learnt and internalised (Pipher 1996,14). It is important to take note of the fact that families are both, an institution and a social grouping that play a vital role in society.

The most important function of families is to care, protect and socialise their children (HSRC-Report 2003, 43). To be part of a family holds certain benefits for its members and at the

same time the family contributes to the broader functioning of society. Family provide for the costs of schooling for their children as well as transport and the costs of schoolbooks, it grants care and support to its children as well as the aged and disabled (HSRC-Report 2003, 12). Families carry the social and financial costs in terms of their functions of education, care, protection and normalisation as well as the cost of caring for their dysfunctional members (HSRC-Report 2003, 39). Families with limited resources cannot fulfil their traditional family function because they are not able to provide for the material or social needs of its members, as they would like to (HRSC-Report 2003, 12). These resources include "cultural values, education, employment, household amenities, income, kin and friendship networks and government grants" (HSRC-Report 2003, 22). Families with these available resources can for obvious reasons function more effectively than families lacking these resources. The reality is that 50% of South African households are poor, 30% of households can be regarded as Lower Middle Class; only 12% of the households can be classified as Middle Class (HSRC-Report 2003 28). The situation in the rural areas is even more challenging for families (HSRC-Report 2003, 29). That allows the conclusion that the socialisation of children is severely challenged by widespread poverty (Richter 1994, HSRC-Report 2003, 41).

The report of the HSRC states that families that function well "sustain their value-systems through the socialisation of children and through inhibition and promotion of certain behaviours among their members. Compliance with agreed systems of right and wrong, the inhibition of violence, values of diligence and achievement at school and in work, respect for elders and compassion for the weak, are examples of such values" (HSRC-Report 2003, 22). Another interesting function of the family is that it is creating information networks; most young people make use of these informal contacts for their employment (HSRC-Report 2003, 22).

The well-being of children depends on strong, stable and supportive families. These kind of families are the best foundation for children to become responsible adults (Eastman 1989,

quoted in HSRC-Report 2003, 11). Therefore one can say that the development of children is directly influenced by the quality of parents' behaviour as caregivers and teachers (Meisels 1985, in HSRC-Report, 15). This is supported by Botha, van Ede and Piek, who write from a developmental psychology framework: "Verskeie agente van sosialisering, dws persone, instansies en massamedia, rig direk en indirek die gedrag van die kind deurdat hulle waardes, norme en tradisies aan die kind oordra. Direkte beïnvloeding word veral deur die ouers en die gesin uitgeoefen..." (D.A. Louw 2005, 300). This shows how high the responsibility and the influence of parents on their children are.

Before describing the challenges families in South Africa are dealing with, it is important to understand the term 'family' and look for a suitable definition. This definition has to comply with certain requirements.

### **3.2.2. Requirements for a definition of the family for this research**

A definition of the family has to comply with two requirements, which will be discussed below.

#### Interconnectedness of the family members

The first requirement for a definition of the family is that it needs to express the family members' interconnectedness. The realisation of this interconnectedness and interdependence of the family members has supported the development of family therapy in the field of Psychology. Gladding expresses this, when he indicates, that the underlying belief for family therapy is that "most life difficulties arise and can best be addressed within the family. ... families are seen as powerful forces that work either for the good or the detriment of their members. Because an interconnectedness exists among family members, the actions of the

members affect the health or dysfunctionality of each individual and the family as a whole" (Gladding 2002,61). The interconnectedness and interdependence of family members can also be regarded as interrelatedness. This interrelatedness of a social group like the family needs to be reflected in the pastoral care approach. D.J. Louw supports this, when he emphasises the importance of practising pastoral care in context (Louw 1999,14). To work in context means to acknowledge, "how social structures and cultural factors influence the individual" (Louw 1999,14). Therefore the individual needs to be seen in the framework of his/her family and his/her contextual relationships.

### **The family as a system**

The interconnectedness of the family members has been one requirement for a definition of the family. This interconnectedness can also be seen as a network of relationships, as each family member is connected again to others at work or in school or in social life. This network of relationships can be regarded as a system. Hence to work with families requires a systemic way of thinking. This is confirmed by the findings of family therapists in the late 1960s. They realised the limitations of cause and effect thinking, stemming from modernism, and moved away from linear causality to a more circular causality when treating families (Gladding 2002,68). The focus was not on the individual and her/his problem anymore, but on the family and its relationships and dynamics instead. This also meant a shift in the paradigm of thinking. If one moves beyond linear causality, one actually moves from the world of individual psychology to the world of system thinking (Becvar 2003,5). As Gladding puts it: "A system is a set of elements standing in interaction with one another. Each element is affected by whatever happens to any other element" (Gladding 2002,69). This way of thinking in regard to the family is part of a bigger picture, namely the systemic way of thinking.

### **Does systemic thinking only reflect a post-modern worldview?**

In South Africa people from different paradigms are living alongside each other; that means some live in a pre-modernistic, some in modernistic and others in a post-modernistic worldview. In order to make these terms more transparent, a brief description of pre-modernism, modernism and postmodernism follows:

Pre-modernism, up to the 1650's, was based on knowledge of authoritative sources. It was assumed that an 'ultimate truth' existed, which could only be revealed through direct revelation from God. The source of authority was the church, which was "the holder and interpreter of revealed knowledge" (Hoffman 2005).

### **From Modernism and Post-Modernism (according to Hoffman 2005, from 1650-1950)**

"Central to the modernist paradigm are two epistemological moves. The first move is the notion of distanciation, which resulted in subject-object split: The inquirer assumes the role of an impartial spectator. The second move is the notion of radical doubt, where the inquirer initiates the process of knowing by doubting all things, except for the fact that he or she is indeed doubting" (Greer 2003,222). The subject-object split means, that the observer regarded himself as the subject, and the observed became the object. In regard to radical doubt the idea was to create a 'blank slate' (Greer 2003,222) in the mind of the inquirer in order to strive for an objective truth or as Bevcar puts it, a value-free science with "either/or dichotomies" (Becvar 2003,5). In modernism linear cause/effect thinking was regarded as appropriate and it was suggested that any problem was solvable "if we can find an answer to the question: Why?" (Becvar 2003, 4). The focus was on reason or logic; science and reason were in conjunction with each other and the source of authority shifted away from the church to politics and universities (Hoffman 2005).

In contrast to modernism, postmodernism, from 1950's to current times (Hoffmann 2005), does not assume that linear thinking will bring the answer to all problems or questions nor does one strive for an absolute or universal truth. In postmodernism the previous approaches to knowing are questioned; rather does postmodernism support an epistemological pluralism (Hoffman 2005). In postmodernism truth is regarded as being "grounded in language/culture" (Greer 2003, 225). Greer states that "a central premise of postmodernism, then, is that language is prior to knowledge. One cannot think without vocabulary, syntax or grammar. In the context of language, thoughts give shape to systems of truths. And since language is the product of culture and many different languages exist in the world, truth is relativised to individual cultures" (Greer, 225). The sources of authority have shifted. Post-modernism "seeks to deconstruct previous authority sources" because power is in general distrusted (Hoffman 2005).

If one looks at these brief descriptions of pre-modernism, modernism and post-modernism, it can be assumed that people in South Africa live concurrently in all three paradigms at present. A definition of the family needs to take this into account by not making any specific paradigm a pre-requisite for a definition of the family.

### **To summarise this point**

A definition of the family in our multi-cultural and multi-religious South African society must be based on system-thinking as system-thinking focuses more on process and less on content (Louw 1999, 74). Since the family is a dynamic social group, this is important. Looking at it this way makes the impact of the paradigms of pre-modernism, modernism and post-modernism of less relevance for such a definition of the family, as the society of South Africa is not a homogenous one and all three paradigms exist next to each other at the same time.

### **3.2.3. Defining the term 'family' for the South African context**

Families today present themselves in such a great variety, especially in South Africa, that ideas about what family is "becomes both confuse and controversial" (,25). Froma Walsh supports that, when she states that the norms and structures of society worldwide are in transformation and at the forefront of emerging trends are the following: Varied family forms, changing gender roles, cultural diversity and socio-economic disparity, varying and expanded family life-cycle course (Walsh 2003,10). These trends are also observable in South Africa.

A lot of different definitions or reflections around the term family exist, and only a few can be mentioned here. Those chosen definitions or reflection about the term 'family' will be from The United States Bureau of Census, Gail Batesman, Olsen and Leonard, Mary Phiper, Wolfgang Huber, Samuel Gladding and that of WJ Goode.

These different definitions have not only been chosen to illustrate the possible variety, but also to show different emphasis given in these reflections on family and its processes.

1. The United States Bureau of Census defines family as:

"two or more people related by blood, marriage, or adoption and who share a kitchen" (quoted in ,26).

2. Olson and Leonard (1996,26) see family as:

"any network of two or more people linked over time emotionally and usually biologically and legally, sharing things as home, spiritual and material resources, interpersonal care giving, memory, common agenda and aspirations"

3. Mary Phiper (1996,21f) understands family as:

"a collection of people who pool resources and help each other over the long haul. Families love one another, even when that requires sacrifice. Family means that if you disagree you still stay together. ... Whether or not they are biologically related to each other, the people who do these things are family".

4. Wolfgang Huber (2006,13) reflects on family in the following way:

"Wenn man den Begriff Familie nicht mit überlieferten Lebensformen und Rollenmustern gleichsetzt, muß man sagen: Zur Familie – also der dauerhaften Zusammengehörigkeit von Menschen in einem Mehrgenerationenverbund, mit der Ehe als Zentrum – gibt es keine Alternative. Wenn es sie nicht schon gäbe, müßte man sie erfinden". Own translation: If one does not look at the term family in the same light as transferred modes of living-together and patterns of social roles, then one has to state: the family – the long term belonging-together of people in a multigenerational set-up, with marriage at the centre –has no alternative. If it did not exist already, one would have to invent it.

5. Samuel Gladding (2002,6) regards family as:

"A family here is considered to be those persons who are biologically and /or psychologically related whom historical, emotional, or economic bonds connect and who perceive themselves as a part of a household".

6. Gail Batesman states, that families have become so diverse, that "What people regard as their family is their family" (Batesman 1996 quoted in HSRC-Report 2003, 10).

7. And finally WJ Gode (1964) defines families as

"social units governed by 'family rules'" (HSRC-Report 2003, 10).

The researcher chose the definition of Olson and Leonard for this research. The authors offer a broad definition, which includes emotional and biological relations as well as sharing resources in a variety of ways. As this includes spiritual resources as well as interpersonal care this definition seems fitting for the South African situation, which will include non-traditional households. Although other definitions are broader, they have not been found specific or precise enough to suit the South African context. Regarding requirements mentioned above for such a definition it could be said that Olson and Leonard's definition allows system-thinking as it emphasises the interconnectedness of the family members. Their definition also allows space for the trends Froma Walsh had mentioned. The other advantage of this definition is that it follows systemic thinking consequently when it foresees developments within the family, which again indicates process rather than content of that system 'family'.

Having cleared this question for a definition of the term 'family', the challenges families in South Africa have to face, will be named and interpreted.

### **3.3. Challenges of families in South Africa**

Families in South Africa have to deal with a variety of challenges. Some of them were mentioned in the first chapter, yet in this chapter these challenges will be discussed in greater depth. This is done with two goals in mind:

Firstly the situation of families needed to be established in detail so that a thorough picture of the general situation and the problems of families in South Africa can be drawn.

Secondly, on the grounds of that picture, the possible role of the church in assisting families shall be explored. The question to answer is: Where and how can the church help families to

improve their family functioning, - since the political, social or economic situation of families cannot be changed by the church.

In order to answer these questions and to establish the challenges of families two sources were used. The first will be statistics from FAMSA ("The Family and Marriage Society of South Africa") Western Cape in Observatory for the year 2006 and secondly a publication by the Department of Social Development for the 'Year of the Family', which was compiled by the Human Sciences Resource Council in 2003.

### **3.3.1. Challenges according to the FAMSA statistics**

The Western Cape FAMSA office, in Observatory saw 1150 clients for counselling in total. From these individual clients 250 came with emotional problems, and 200 with depression. The following figures are interpreted from a graph, which make them 'about' figures (which gives good indications, but not an exact figure).

In the context of family problems at FAMSA Western Cape the statistics show  
more than 380 cases of family conflict  
more than 230 cases of uncontrollable children  
and more than 70 cases of family violence.

In couple problems at FAMSA Western Cape the statistics show  
more than 730 cases of physical, verbal and emotional abuse.  
more than 800 cases of communication/conflict were observed,  
more than 250 cases of marital infidelity

and more than 270 cases of divorce counselling.

Other problems mentioned by FAMSA Western Cape statistics for the year showed

43 cases of sexual abuse,

585 cases of poverty

192 cases of alcohol abuse

as well as 154 cases of drug abuse.

Rape was dealt with 21 times and

abuse of the aged 16 times while

child abuse/neglect mounted to 98 cases

The above statistics are of course limited to the cases or problems, which were brought to FAMSA by the community. At the same time FAMSA is only one institution amongst others where people seek help. This allows the conclusion that the 98 cases of child abuse/neglect for example, which were attended to by FAMSA, are only the tip of the iceberg, as these figures do not include all cases of child abuse in the area at all. This needs to be mentioned in order to grasp the dimensions of the enormous crisis that families in South Africa are facing. This becomes even more obvious if one considers those cases of child abuse/neglect that were not even reported.

To comment on the FAMSA statistics, it can be said that most of the problems brought to FAMSA are problems that occur within the family, which can well have an effect on the functioning of the family. The only issues brought to FAMSA, which come from outside the family is poverty or rape, provided that the rape is not committed by a family member. Any possible help from the church cannot change those problems, which are related to social, economical or political structures in South Africa. That means practically that the church could well have an impact on the other problem areas in the way they minister to families in need.

"Families are the primary source of individual development and they constitute the building blocks of communities"; this is a statement made in the report of the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC-Report 2003, 11). On the other hand one can say that families as building stones begin to crumble under the pressure they experience, which also has an effect on the community as such. This is an alarming situation, which needs to be attended to.

### **3.3.2. Challenges according to the HSRC-Report**

Another look at the challenges our families have to face in South Africa today is offered by the report of the Human Sciences Research Council. This report offers not so much clear figures of cases, but it rather takes note of the situation within our South African society on the ground of the census of 1996 and other research.

The report describes not only changes in the family dynamic, changing trends in family life, but looks also at the employment situation, household income and amenities, religion, dependency and education, care of sick individuals, family stability, cohabitation, divorce and child care. The relevant data offered by this report is interpreted in this research as internal and external challenges that affect families in this country, and might well influence their functioning as families.

### **3.3.2.1. Internal challenges**

Internal challenges are challenges that affect the family functioning. Most of these challenges come from inside the family and their members. These challenges can affect all levels of the family life, from health, to communication to gender roles and more.

The following challenges are taken from the HSRC report, as mentioned above.

1. The family of today has fewer relatives, which makes the family as a network smaller (HSRC-Report 2003, 9).
2. Families are very diverse, especially due to remarriage, but also due to cohabitation and other family forms. That can cause instability, confusion, insecurity and/or power-struggles among the children (HSRC-Report 2003, 9).
3. Traditional gender roles are changing due to women participating in the labour market; children have to look after themselves until parents return from work (HSRC-Report 2003, 9).
4. The change of power structure, due to both partners working, can contribute to shared-decision-making, but can also cause power struggles that might lead to violence. This is a major challenge to handle (HSRC-Report, 9).
5. Due to divorce, death and re-marriage “family-blending” occurs. Not all family members with children live therefore under one roof anymore (HSRC-Report 2003, 9). This can cause disruption in emotional family ties, especially for the children.
6. Non-family households are formed as living arrangements and strategies to support emerging lifestyles in order to adapt to increased stress (HSRC-Report 2003, 18).
7. An increased sense of psychological individuality can be regarded as the cause for loosened family ties (HSRC-Report 2003, 21). This development is of course vigorously supported by the industry/media with the aim of forming more single

households, which in return will each need to be fully furnished and will need electronic appliances etc.

8. Non-family households are increasing (HSRC-Report 2003, 21), most probably as a reaction to the challenges of an ever-changing social environment in South Africa.
9. Even though education is compulsory in South Africa until a child is 15 years old, a large number of children between the ages of 6-15 years are not enrolled or do not regularly attend school (HSRC-Report 2003, 44). This fact is also an external challenge and will be noted there as well. Children not attending school will have a lesser chance of finding work, especially if they are girls. This affects the well-being of the entire family, as this will have long-term consequences for the respective children. Their participation in the labour force will therefore be lower.
10. Children in rural areas attend school even less in comparison to children in urban areas (HSRC-Report 2003, 44). The effects have been mentioned.
11. School dropout is a major problem in South Africa (HSRC-Report 2003, 45); its roots lie, as research in other countries show, in early childhood (HSRC-Report 2003, 45). These findings need to be specified. School dropout is also an internal as well as an external problem as it affects the family of the respective children as well as the social environment.
12. At least 250 youth under the age of 21 years commit suicide in South Africa each year (HSRC-Report, 46). When families keep close contact with their teens and monitor their behaviour, the health and lifestyle risk behaviour of the teens can be reduced (Resnick, Harris & Blum 1993, quoted in HSRC-Report 2003, 46). This might for example influence the suicide rate among teens.
13. The households which care for a person suffering from HIV/Aids spends on average one third of their income on medical care (HSRC-Report 2003, 48). This leaves the family not only with an emotional strain, but also with a financial one. It threatens not only the food supply but also health care and education for the surviving

members of the family. The above-mentioned facts and the impact HIV/Aids make poor people even poorer (HSRC-Report 2003, 48).

14. Another problem is that women become infected at a younger age than men, so there is going to be an excess of adult men over adult women (HSRC-Report 2003, 49) and a lack of care and loving support in the respective households.
15. This situation implies a loss of able-bodied persons to contribute to the household subsistence activity. In the long run this might mean more involvement for children and the aged in food production (HSRC-Report 2003, 49).
16. Four social disorders in South Africa have a severe impact on families. These social disorders are: crime and incarceration, substance abuse, gender and family violence and child abuse and neglect. These disorders affect the individual family and the social environment (HSRC-Report 2003, 51). These challenges are also internal and external.
17. The imprisonment of the breadwinner, which is often the father, has a severe impact on the family, economically as well as socially and emotionally.
18. More than half of the abused women in South Africa have been abused by their own spouse or partner (HSRC-Report 2003, 53). This also affects the socialisation of children, as they often become witnesses to the abuse.
19. Every six days a woman is killed by her partner or spouse in Gauteng (HSRC-Report 2003, 53). This is severely disruptive for the children involved.
20. The high rate of crime against children is alarming (HSRC-Report 2003, 54). This is disruptive for the family, but also for the social environment.
21. The impact of HIV/AIDS on family functioning can only be assumed, as in the year 2000 3 million people were affected by HIV/AIDS. The impact of this epidemic will only be felt in about 10-15 years (HSRC-Report 2003, 62).

A few comments shall be made to those listed challenges. As mentioned above, the church can only make a valuable contribution to those families that experience challenges unrelated to the economic, political or social situation in South Africa.

Looking at the internal challenges, the church could possibly make a contribution to the following areas through intensive family ministry:

Gender roles, power structures, psychological individuality and loss of a sense of community or belonging (last point is added by the researcher); support in these areas might decrease the above problems, but might also have an influence on the high suicide rate among the youth. These assumptions would have to be proven by further research in that direction. The external challenges will be described below.

### **3.3.2.2. External changes**

External challenges are challenges that come to the family from outside, such as violence, crime, economic crisis in the country or poor schooling, just to name some examples. Families have to adapt to ever-changing circumstances in their lives (HSRC-Report 2003, 10). These changing circumstances, here called challenges, can also influence the functioning of families.

1. The fragmentation of the extended family is partly due to migrant labour (HSRC-Report 2003, 18). This can in return lead to women-headed households, and physical separation of the spouses. It can also cause problems in the socialisation of male children due to the absence of the father.
2. Social changes stemming from migration, colonisation, urbanisation and globalisation lead to an increase in non-traditional family forms such as single parenthood,

childless marriages, re-constituted or blended families of multiple marriages and gay and lesbian marriages (HSRC-Report 2003, 18)

3. People adopt non-family households as living arrangements and strategies to support emerging lifestyles to adapt to increased stress (HSRC-Report 2003, 18).
4. The cities of South Africa are the fastest growing urban centres in the world (Jenkins, quoted in HSRC-Report 2003, 19). This leads to informal housing and a lack of the necessary amenities like running water, flush toilets etc. This means an increased workload for the woman running the household.
5. The official unemployment rate in South Africa in March 2003 was around 30,5%; it was most probably even higher in rural areas even higher (HSRC-Report 2003, 24). These facts make it nearly impossible for the family to fulfil its tasks and functions within the South African society.
6. A good education is linked to a greater chance of participating in the labour force (HSRC-Report 2003, 24). That also means that young people who do not complete matric or a degree have very few chances to participate in the labour market, especially in the rural areas where the participation rate in the labour force is generally lower than in urban areas (rural 37%, urban 52%). These facts and the ongoing shortage of income will directly endanger the proper functioning of the affected families.
7. The unemployment rate among Africans is 30% and among Whites 5%. This contrast is even sharper in rural areas, where Whites have a labour force participation of 83% against 51% for Africans. Coloureds again have a higher participation rate in the labour force than African in the urban/rural comparison. This gives evidence of the wide spread poverty among Africans (HSRC-Report 2003, 26).
8. Men are more likely to find work than females; here the participation rate is 53% against 40% (HSRC-Report 2003, 26).

9. Unemployment is highest among the youth; that means the participation rate in the labour force for the 15-24 years age group is 23%, compared to 70% in the age group 35-44 years (HSRC-Report 2003, 26). This in return will lead to a financial burden for of the families of the young people.
10. Poverty is one of the greatest challenges, as 50% of the households are poor while 30% can be regarded as lower middle class, and only 12% can be regarded as middle class (HSRC-Report 2003, 28).
11. Male-headed households have a higher total household income than female- headed households (HSRC-Report 2003, 29).
12. The amenities, researched in the OHS household survey 1999 in South Africa were: flush toilet, telephone, electricity from mains, refuse collection, tapped water and ownership of a motor car. Male-headed households possess an average of four of the amenities (HSRC-Report 2003, 31). Urban households possess five of the amenities compared to only one by rural households (HSRC-Report 2003, 31); extended families have in average two amenities in comparison to four of nuclear families (HSRC-Report 2003, 31). These facts show the affect of poverty on the life of the individual family.
13. The situation is similar for financial assets (saving account, stockvel savings, pension savings, unit trusts, cash loans, life insurance and other savings). Financial assets are less likely to be found in African households. 46% of all households do not possess any of the above-mentioned financial assets, and only 26% have one of the assets, while less than 1% have all assets (HSRC-Report 2003, 32).
14. Less than one fifth of all South Africans have a medical aid (HSRC-Report 2003, 32). This fact allows the conclusion that the already poor families will get even poorer if a family member becomes chronically ill. This might lead to a shortage of assets for food or education.

15. Rural communities and women have less social support to assist them than in the urban communities (p HSRC-Report 2003, 38).
16. Families carry social and financial costs in terms of their functions of education, care, protection and normalisation. Families carry the cost of dysfunctional members (HSRC-Report 2003, 39).
17. The socialisation of children is severely challenged by widespread poverty (Richter 1994, quoted in HSRC-Report 2003, 41).
18. 55% of children live in households which earn less than R 1200, - per month. This affects ten million children, who live in poverty (HSRC-Report 2003, 41), most of them in KwaZulu-Natal.
19. Even though education is compulsory in South Africa until a child is 15 years old, a large number of children between the ages of 6-15 years are not enrolled or do not regularly attend school (HSRC-Report 2003, 44). This will contribute to difficulties in finding work. This fact is also an external challenge.
20. Violence among young people in schools is widespread. For example in 95% of the schools physical violence and vandalism were reported. Drug abuse was a serious concern in 90% of the schools, bullying and intimidation was reported in 75% of schools (HSRC-Report 2003, 46). This challenge is internal as well as external, as it affects the family and the social environment of the youth.
21. The HIV infection rate has risen from 1% to 15% in the last 10 years. In 2003 it is estimated that 1074 per 100 000 people will die from aids-related deaths (HSRC-Report 2003, 48). Today, in the year 2007 the infection rate is probably much higher.
22. 41% of all deaths in South Africa are of unnatural and unspecified cause.

Looking at the data coming from the HSRC-report, it can be mentioned that only a few of these challenges would be improved by intervention from the church. A contribution could be made

in the areas of unemployment through providing skills training. A big challenge is poverty, especially the effect it has on children's socialisation. Here the church could assist in applying for grants. Regarding the high violence among young people in schools the church could offer programs that focus constructively on alternatives to violence offered by some NGOs. And finally the HIV infection rate: the church could actively become part of instructions and teachings in that regard and openly support protected sex, - instead of insisting on no sex before marriage.

Looking at the external challenges that families are facing in South Africa it can be concluded that the role of the church in general cannot be underestimated. Yet if one keeps in mind that the aim of listing these challenges was to find out where the church could assist specifically with the help of family ministry, it needs to be said, that in these areas mentioned here, family ministry alone might not be the answer to the problems that families in South Africa experience.

### **3.4. Conclusion**

If one looks at the above statistics from FAMSA and the HSRC-Report, it seems that families are quite overwhelmed by the challenges they face. This situation is even more alarming, if one keeps in mind that most of the figures of the HSRC report go back to the census of 1996 or other research of that time. One may therefore conclude, that the situation is even worse in certain areas of family life today. For example child-headed households, due to HIV/AIDS illness or deaths of the parents, could not be recorded in the statistic as the lag between infection and death due to HIV/AIDS is between 5-10 years.

The present burning issues in South Africa, combining the FAMSA statistics with the data from the HSRC-Report at this point in time, are:

- Abuse (emotional, physical and verbal)
- Abuse and neglect of children
- Conflict and communication problems
- Diverse families
- Changing of gender roles
- Violence at home and in schools
- Children dropping out of school
- Non-family-households
- High suicide rate among teens
- HIV/AIDS
- Effects of crime
- Unemployment and poverty.

What conclusion can be drawn from this information so far?

Many of the challenges families in South Africa are facing have to do with the economic, political, social and health situations in South Africa. The conclusion is that families are in serious need of help in order to fulfil their role and function in South African society, as has been described earlier in this chapter. Since 84% of the population in South Africa regard themselves as Christians, the church could play a major role in the assistance of families to cope better with the demands put on them today. How this support of the church is envisaged practically look like, especially with regard to the ministry towards families will be discussed in chapters 4 and 5. For the purpose of the family ministry the researcher looked at one model of family therapy, which will be introduced and evaluated on its feasibility for the congregational situation and the South African context. This model, namely the McMaster approach, will be described in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **THE MCMASTER APPROACH**

#### **4.1. Introduction**

The first goal of this chapter is to introduce the McMaster approach as one possible model to assist South African families that are in crisis. The need for that has been established in chapter 3. The second goal is to answer the following question: Will the McMaster approach be an appropriate tool for the church to assist their families?

Many models of family therapy exist, namely Structural Family Therapy, Psychodynamic Family Therapy or Narrative Family Therapy, just to name a few. Why then has the McMaster approach been chosen over and above the other models? It has been chosen for the following reasons:

1. Nathan Epstein and his team did research on this model for over 50 years (Ryan 2005,21).
2. The model is well structured and aims for short term therapy, namely between 6-12 sessions (Ryan 2005, 14).
3. The model focuses on family strength and hence does not focus on shortcomings or weaknesses (Will 1985,9).
4. The model has been used successfully in the United States in different cultural and religious settings (Ryan 2005,178).
5. The model is based on systemic thinking (Ryan 2005,13).
6. The model offers a variety of assessment tools, which will be discussed under 4.6.1. (Ryan

2005,125).

7. The model has been used in families where one member has a psychiatric illnesses.  
(Ryan 2005, 166).

An overview of the historical development of the McMaster approach is needed for a thorough understanding of the model.

#### **4.2. Overview of the historical development of the model**

The beginnings of the McMaster approach of Family Functioning go back to McGill University in Montreal, Canada in the middle of the 1950s. Nathan Epstein and his team focussed their research at that time on two areas, namely non-clinical families and the process and outcome of family therapy as such. The model was tested from the middle of 1950 to 1970 at McGill University in Montreal, and later at the McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario. The latter university gave the model its name. Nathan Epstein became the first chairman of the Department of Psychiatry at that university, which was part of the newly founded medical school at McMaster University (Will 1985,8). The research of the McMaster approach was then refined and completed at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, where Epstein had created the Family Research Program. Today the model is still studied and taught at the Family Research Program (Ryan 2005,3). It was here that the clinical research was completed and a basic framework for conducting family therapy was developed.

But how did the model evolve over time?

Nathan Epstein, a child and adult psychiatrist, was interested in understanding a child's development in order to make more sense out of the thinking of adults. This led to a change in his focus (Ryan 2005,4). He realised that families could only be assisted when using a full system approach (Epstein 1981, 445).

Epstein was encouraged by the development of the work of Ackerman, who included the significant actors in the patient's life during the therapy process. Epstein, after trying out different ways of having one or more family members present in therapy, eventually realised that family therapy was most successful when all family members were present in therapy (Epstein 1981, 445). In the years 1963-1964 Epstein and his team discovered that "the family as a system was more powerful than intrapsychic factors in determining the behaviour of the individual family member" (Epstein 1981,446). This type of work was shaped by the general 'zeitgeist', "that provided the context for the development of family therapy in a number of other centres. The influence of general system theory in opening up the family system as an object of study was central" (Will 1985,8). These influences changed the approach of the Epstein team and further research contributed to the development of the McMaster approach of Family Functioning over a period of time. Three conceptual approaches have influenced the thinking of family therapy in general, namely an individual psychodynamic model, an interaction model and a system model (Ryan 2005,7). These have also influenced and shaped Nathan Epstein's thinking about family work.

In the process of developing the McMaster approach Epstein's team tried to establish, what apparently functioning families would look like. The goal was to describe the typical components of effective family functioning (Will 1985,9), which were compiled under the title "The Silent Majority", published by Westley and Epstein in 1969. In this publication the authors sought to determine how the emotional health of individuals related to the overall structure and functioning of their families (Epstein 2003, 598).

In his article in Froma Walsh's book "Normal Family Processes" (Walsh 2003, 598), Epstein stresses that although a lot of changes have occurred in society and in families, the two basic findings of the original study are still applicable. The first basic finding was that "the organisational, structural and transactional pattern variables are more powerful in determining the behaviour of family members than are intrapsychic variables". The second basic finding was that "the emotional health of the children is closely related to the emotional relationship between their parents. .... Couples who were emotionally close, met each other's needs, and encouraged positive self-images in each other were good parents" (Epstein 2003, 598). The next step in the development of the McMaster approach is described in the publication of Epstein, Sigal and Rakoff, called "The Family Category Schema" in the year 1971. In this publication the authors named a series of family dimensions, describing a number of areas in family life. These family dimensions lead then to the classification system, which was called the Family Category Schema, at the time the team was still at the McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario. Here in Ontario the model developed into the McMaster approach of Family Functioning. The ideas of the model were presented to specialists from different fields and their feedback was incorporated into the model (Ryan 2005, 18).

The model has been refined and reformulated continuously, always incorporating the latest research experience (Epstein 2003, 583). The latest publication on the McMaster approach is the book "Evaluating and Treating Families: The McMaster Approach", compiled by Ryan, Christine & Epstein, Nathan B. & Keitner, Gabor & Miller, Ivan & Bishop, Duane. The book was published in the year 2005 and reflects the latest insights and developments the authors had in regard to the McMaster approach of family functioning; it also incorporates the latest journal articles.

A brief overview of this model will be presented under the heading 4.3.

### **4.3. Overview of the McMaster approach**

The McMaster approach is a model based on a basic framework, namely the McMaster Model of Family Functioning (MMFF) as well as a therapeutic model, which is the Problem-Centred System Therapy of the Family (PCSTF). The basic framework is the different dimensions of family functioning, while the process of therapy is guided by the PCSTF, both described under 4.5. and 4.6. respectively.

The point of departure for the McMaster approach is the assessment and treatment of family functioning. One interesting point stated by Epstein is the need to stay away from terms like 'normal' or 'not normal'; in that he agrees with Froma Walsh (Walsh 2003, 8f). Epstein rather suggests that the term 'health' is more appropriate, as "a healthy family is neither necessarily average nor merely lacking characteristics. Rather, it will describe positive features that indicate a healthy functioning. The McMaster approach of Family Functioning contains a description of such a set of features" (Epstein 2003,582).

The areas of family functioning, the model focuses on, are those that seem to have the greatest impact "on the emotional and physical health of family members" (Epstein 2003, 582).

Six dimensions of family functioning are assessed in the MMFF. These six areas are:

Problem Solving

Communication

Roles

Affective Responsiveness

Affective Involvement

Behaviour Control

These dimension of family functioning are established through interviews that have been refined over time. Structured assessment tools have also been devolved, which are described under 4.7. After the detailed assessment, which examines each individual area of family functioning, a written contract is established and a treatment-plan negotiated. The treatment-plan consists of tasks for each individual family member in order to work towards observable behaviour change. These tasks are negotiated with the family. The phases of the McMaster approach are assessment stage, contracting stage, treatment stage and closure stage.

An overview of the dimensions of family functioning, examples of a written contract as well as an example of one assessment tool, the FAD, are to be found in the appendix.

The time period for the treatment is about 6-12 sessions, as the MMFF focuses on short-term treatment, even though the intervals between the sessions after the first 6 sessions can be stretched up to one month according to the individual contract between therapist and family. Details of this process will be described under the points 4.5. and 4.6. The theory underlying the MMFF will be described next.

#### **4.4. Theoretical foundation of the McMaster Model of Family Functioning**

The McMaster approach of Family Functioning, later referred to as MMFF, is very pragmatic (Epstein 1981,446). In the long research done on the model in psychiatric and family practise clinics by the Epstein team, a variety of sources and feedbacks have been incorporated. The MMFF developed over a period of 5 decades. In this time Epstein drew from different sources of theories, which were interwoven with the theory of the model.

In the early phase the team worked with an individual psychodynamic model, where the Epstein team took cognisance of the impact that family members can have on each other; this has become a key concept in MMFF (Ryan 2005, 8).

In the second phase the team used an interactional model, which brought certain insights to Epstein and his team (Ryan 2005, 9):

- An emphasis on here and now
- Use of the strengths of the family members as part of the therapy process
- An open and active encouragement for the family to return at any time for further work

In the third phase the Epstein team worked with a System Model; the insight coming from this phase are that the specific variables that family would be examined on (Ryan 2005, 11):

- power allocation
- division of labour
- patterns of intrafamilial affective expression and involvement
- communication channels

The MMFF is one variation of a systems model; a system refers to "a group of individuals acting as one" (Walsh 2003, 583). Epstein makes it very clear that in the development of the MMFF the team incorporated components, perspectives and theories from other models. These might include the systems model, the psychodynamic and interactional model and additionally aspects from behavioural therapy, narrative, postmodern, couple therapy or idiosyncratic approaches (Ryan 2005, 12). Interestingly Epstein states that a change in the system should change the functioning of the system; therefore the aim in treating families is in the disturbance of the system in order to improve the functioning of that system (Ryan 2005, 13).

The MMFF is based on the assumption that the primary task of today's family unit is "to provide a setting for the development and maintenance of family members on social and psychological and biological levels" (Walsh 2003, 584). In fulfilling this primary task a variety of issues and individual tasks had to be performed; those are basic tasks, developmental tasks and hazardous tasks (Walsh 2003, 584). The basic task area is the most fundamental of the three; it involves instrumental issues like providing food, money, shelter etc. The Developmental task area deals with family issues related to developmental stages, of the individual and the family, such as childhood development, etc until old age. And the hazardous task area comes into play when handling a crisis, dealing with illness, an accident or loss of job, to name only some examples (Ryan 2005. 26). Should families be unable to work effectively with these tasks, it might well be possible that they would develop clinically significant problems or even maladaptive functioning in some areas (Walsh 2003, 584). "The family's ability to solve the problems associated with the accomplishment of these various types of tasks provides the basic focus for the description of family functioning..." (Will 1985,13). The Epstein team focuses on six dimensions of family functioning, which have been mentioned in the previous point. In the assessment process of the family all six dimensions are evaluated in order to get a fuller picture.

The family is regarded as an open system, consisting of systems within systems (Epstein 1981, 447) like extended family, schools, industry, religion (Ryan 2005, 24). In the therapy process the therapist is not concerned about what happens within the family, but rather which processes are occurring within the family system (Epstein 1981, 447). This is one element of system therapy, namely giving preference to the process over and above the content of what family members contribute to the therapy session. The aim of the therapy is to change the system, as that will affect the behaviour of all family members (Ryan 2005, 9).

The following assumptions underlie the MMFF, as described by Nathan Epstein in Froma Walsh (Walsh 2003, 583):

1. The parts of the family are interrelated.
2. One part of the family cannot be understood in isolation from the rest of the system.
3. Family functioning cannot be fully understood by simply understanding each of the parts.
4. A family's structure and organisation are important factors in determining the behaviour of family members.
5. Transactional patterns of the family system are among the most important variables that shape the behaviour of family members.

The consequence of the above assumptions is that the "... therapist is not concerned with the intrapsychic pathology in the individual, but rather with the process occurring within the family system which produces the dysfunctional behaviour" (Ryan 2005, 25).

The Epstein team also took notice of the fact how cultural values can play a vital role in influencing human behaviour. In defining what is a normal/healthy family, value judgments had to be used in order to judge the appropriateness of expressing emotions, for example anger or sadness. The team realised how values vary with culture and religion; therefore they had to become sensitive towards the values the clients holds. This led the team to be cultural- and religion-sensitive in their judgements (Ryan 2005, 25).

In order to differentiate the MMFF from other family therapy approaches, the team names six critical areas, which are described in detail in their latest publication (Ryan 2005, 13-16):

### 1. Theoretical base:

The model is based on family systems approach. The dynamic of the family group cannot be reduced to characteristics of the individual. To identify the family as a system helps to clarify the locus of difficulty and stress in the system; the therapist is therefore able to identify aims, objectives and methods of therapy. In the MMFF the individual is not the focus of the treatment nor is the focus on subsystems.

### 2. Time frame:

The MMFF is time-limited, as the number of therapy session is limited to 6-12 session. The family can for example decide to work on one set of problems now and return at a later stage to work on any other problems, they might experience.

In contrast to other models, the MMFF focuses on problems of the here-and-now and not on the analyses of childhood issues or past origins of problems. The therapist assists the family to become familiar with labelling interactions and their effect on everyday contact.

### 3. Therapist - family member relationship

The degree of openness in the therapist-family relationship and the importance of the role of the therapist and the family members are linked. A strong belief in clear and direct communication exists between therapist and family members, and among family members themselves. The understanding of the role of the therapist is different in the MMFF than in other models. While in some family therapy approaches the therapist acts as director, facilitator, manipulator, educator and guide, in the MMFF the therapist is merely a catalyst, clarifier, and facilitator. The family members are responsible for doing most of the work while the therapist is responsible for openness, clarity of communication and development of problem solving abilities. The focus is on active collaboration of family members and the therapist right through the treatment.

#### 4. Insight

Models based on systems theory do not consider insight as a precondition to change. It is not relevant what produces pathology in the individual but rather the process that occurs within the family that brings about that behaviour. Therefore in the MMFF the therapist aims to change the system and so to change the behaviour of family members.

#### 5. Clarity of concepts and treatment

While other models are not so transparent in their approach, the MMFF being a systems approach allows easy conceptualising for each person's behaviour and so grants a clear understanding of the therapeutic process. The therapeutic process can be broken down to a series of simple, discrete components.

#### 6. Transportability

The MMFF is easily to be transported from one setting to another because it is constructed from clearly defined elements. At the same time it can be said: If what the therapist is doing is unclear, he/she is not a good role model.

The historical development, the theoretical concepts and the therapeutic principles of the MMFF have been discussed. How the MMFF works practically, will be described in two steps; firstly the dimensions of family functioning will be introduced under point 4.5. and secondly the process of family therapy according to the Problem-Centred System Therapy (PCSTF) will be described in its macro stages under point 4.6.

## **4.5. The six dimensions of family functioning**

The family dimension concepts of MMFF will be shown according to the latest publication of the McMaster Team, namely from "Evaluating and treating families: The McMaster Approach" by Ryan, Christine & Epstein, Nathan B. & Keitner, Gabor & Miller, Ivan & Bishop, Duane from the year 2005, from pages 26-38.

### **4.5.1. Problem Solving**

In 'problem solving' the authors speak about the family's ability to deal with and solve problems in a way that preserves the effective functioning of the family. A family problem is a problem that would affect the integrity and functioning of the family; at the same time the family is unable to solve the problem themselves. Family problems can be instrumental or affective. Instrumental problems for example come from everyday life, such as dealing with money, providing food, shelter, clothing etc. Affective problems refer to emotional issues such as anger, depression or other emotional issues.

The authors suggest the following stages in effective problem solving (Ryan 2005, 27f):

1. Identify the problem

Who identifies the problem? Is there a pattern in the problematic behaviour? What type of problem, instrumental or affective?

2. Communicating with appropriate people about the problem

In the communication stage it is established whether the appropriate person was contacted about the identified difficulty.

3. Develop viable alternative solutions

This phase is about the plans developed and how much they are relevant with regard to the type of problem. The role of the therapist is to assist the family in broadening their option of solutions.

4. Deciding on one of the alternatives

In this decision stage the family reflects on the different options they established and decides on one option to resolve the problem.

5. Acting on the decision

In the action phase the family has to actually carry out the chosen option of solving the problem. The therapist needs to ascertain that the family actually carries out the plan.

6. Monitoring the action

In this stage the family needs to see that there are monitoring mechanisms in place to make sure that there will be progress and decisions agreed upon are carried out.

7. Evaluating the effectiveness of the action and the problems solving process

The family needs to review what happened in the problem solving process and evaluate what can be learned for the future.

#### **4.5.2. Communication**

Communication is the verbal exchange of information within the family (Ryan 2005, 29). The authors appreciate the importance of non-verbal communication (like body language, gestures, facial expressions etc, remarks of author of this research). Due to methodological difficulties in measuring non-verbal communication, it has been decided to focus on verbal communication only. The MMFF examines the family's pattern of communication against the communication style of the individual family member. The dimension of communication is divided into instrumental and affective areas. Other aspects that characterise the family communication can be examined on two continuums:

1. The continuum of clear versus masked communication:

This continuum looks at how clear the content of the message is as opposed to being vague, muddy or unclear in any other way.

2. The other continuum of direct versus indirect communication:

This continuum examines whether the message goes to the intended family member or whether it is passed on to the intended target via a third person for example.

Both continuums are independent of each other, which means that basically four distinctive styles of communication can be identified (Ryan 2005, 30):

Clear and direct: both, message and target are clear. Example: "I'm upset you are late, but let's get on with the meeting."

Clear and indirect: the message is clear, but the intended target is not. Example: "I am upset with X, because she is late."

Masked and direct: Here the context is unclear, but it is directed at the intended person. Example: "Are you ok? You don't look well?"

Masked and indirect: The content of the message and for whom it is intended are both unclear. Example: "People who are late, are a pain."

A healthy family communication is clear and direct on instrumental and affective level. As was mentioned before, non-verbal communication is not part of the communication evaluation, except if the non-verbal communication contradicts the verbal message and therefore contributes towards masking or indirectness of the verbal communication.

#### **4.5.3. Roles**

The authors define roles as "the repetitive pattern of behaviour by which family members fulfil family functions" (Ryan 2005, 31). Some functions need to be dealt with repeatedly to sustain a healthy and effective family system. Five necessary family functions, made up of a number of tasks and functions, have been identified. All five functions will also, like the first two family dimensions, have an instrumental, affective and a mixed level.

There are necessary functions and other functions that might arise later in family life.

The necessary functions are (Ryan 2005, 31):

1. Provision of resources:

This area consists mostly of instrumental tasks like providing food, clothing etc.

**2. Nurturing and support:**

These functions are considered as affective, as they provide comfort, warmth, reassurance and support for family members.

**3. Adult sexual gratification:**

Here affective issues are touched on and both partners must feel satisfaction with their sexual relationship. The level of sexual activity needed by both individual partners can vary.

**4. Personal development:**

In this group instrumental and affective components are present. Here the tasks of life skills will be developed as well as helping a child make progress through school or assisting adults to develop socially.

**5. Maintenance and management of the family system:**

Here several functions, involving techniques and actions are needed to maintain the family system. Under this heading the following sub-functions can be named:

- Decision making functions
- Boundary and membership functions
- Behaviour Control functions
- Household finance functions
- Health related functions

Additional to the above sub-functions are two integral issues of role functioning, namely role allocation and role accountability.

Role allocation is defined as the family's pattern in assigning roles. The different ways in which this could be done is implicit or explicit, whether the role assignment has been discussed or arranged by dictum. With role allocation comes the question: Does the person have the necessary skills and/or power for the allocated role? Is the assignment clear and explicit? Is the distribution of the tasks assigned fair and to the satisfaction of the members? Part of role accountability is that the family ensures that the functions are completed. In a healthy family these functions are fulfilled adequately, the task allocations are clear and accountability is in place.

#### **4.5.4. Affective Responsiveness**

Under this dimension the range of affective response of the individual family member is examined; this is done by looking at the experience of family responses to affective stimuli. There are two important aspects examined in family members:

1. Are family members able to respond with the full spectrum of feelings experienced in emotional life or not?
2. Is the emotion experienced consistent or appropriate to the stimulus or the situation?

The affect is either a welfare emotion or an emergency emotion.

Welfare emotions are feelings such as affection, warmth, tenderness, support, love, consolation, happiness and joy. Emergency emotions are feelings such as fear, anger, sadness, disappointment or depression. The focus point of the evaluation of affective responsiveness lies in quality, quantity and appropriateness of the affective responses of the

family members (Ryan 2005, 34). The emphasis in this dimension lies in determining the capacity of the individual family member to respond emotionally and not on their actual behaviour. Here as well as in the dimension of communication the Epstein team prefers to work with a continuum for affective responsiveness, which ranges from absence of response through to reasonable (or expected response) to over-responsiveness. It is of real importance that the family has an overall response to affective stimuli. A family is regarded as healthy, when its members express a full range of emotion; the members will express their affective response in a reasonable intensity and for a reasonable duration (Ryan 2005, 35).

Family members cannot only respond affectively, they can also be affectively involved with each other in different way. This leads to the fifth dimension of family functioning.

#### **4.5.5. Affective Involvement**

Affective involvement is defined as the “extent to which the family shows interest in and value for particular activities of individual family members” (Ryan 2005. 35). This dimension focuses more on the involvement of the family as a whole. Six types of involvement can be differentiated:

1. Lack of involvement

Family members do not show interest or investment in each other. The family basically shares only certain facilities. Minuchin would call such a family disengaged (Will 1985, 21)

## 2. Involvement without showing feelings

A certain interest is there, yet little investment of the self or feelings in the family relationship. Emotional involvement is only demonstrated when demanded; the connection is mostly intellectual.

## 3. Narcissistic involvement

The investment is mostly egocentric. There is no emotional consideration with regard to how important a particular situation can be for the other.

## 4. Empathic involvement

Family members demonstrate a real affective concern towards each other.

## 5. Over-involvement

The behaviour within the family is characterised by being over-intrusive and over-protected behaviour of family members towards each other (Ryan 2005, 37).

## 6. Symbiotic involvement

In this style the boundaries between two or more family members are blurred due to intense involvement. This type of involvement is found mostly in disturbed family relationships, where it is difficult to differentiate one person from another (Epstein 1981, 465).

In this family dimension the Epstein team focus on the degree of interest in each other and also the way in which this interest is expressed.

#### **4.5.6. Behaviour Control**

This dimension “defines the pattern a family adopts for handling behaviour in three specific areas” (Ryan 2005, 36ff):

1. Physically dangerous situations

Physically dangerous situations need to be monitored and the behaviour of family members needs to be controlled. These situations could be dangerous situations for children (such as playing with fire etc) or for adults (such as reckless driving, excessive drinking etc).

2. Psychobiological needs

Situations that involve meeting and expressing needs on psychological or biological levels as well as drives. It is of real importance that the family has patterns of controlling behaviour in place.

3. Situations that involve socialising behaviour.

This can either be between family members and with people outside the family system. There will be standards of behaviour for what is acceptable inside or outside the family. This distinction is of importance because the acceptable behaviour in the family or outside the family will differ.

Behaviour control is generally concerned with the standards or rules a family holds in the above three areas and to what extent latitude is tolerated. This includes parental discipline towards children and also the standards and expectations with regard to behaviour between adults.

For the three above-mentioned areas the family will have to develop standards of acceptable behaviour as well as an accepted tolerance regarding these standards (Epstein 1981, 466). The Epstein team has identified four styles of behaviour control.

1. Rigid behaviour

There is a narrow and constricted standard and rules with little room for negotiation in behaviour control.

2. Flexible behaviour control

The family members find the rules and standards reasonable and there seems to be enough room for negotiation or change.

3. Laissez-faire behaviour control

Behaviour rules and standards are not really existent and a lot of latitude is allowed no matter in what context.

4. Chaotic behaviour control

In this style of behaviour control the rules and standards are unclear and unpredictable and the family shifts "between rigid, flexible and laissez-faire. Family members do not know which standards apply at any one time and they do not know how much, if any, negotiation is possible" (Ryan 2005, 37).

With regard to a healthy family function in that dimension, the most effective form of behaviour control is flexible behaviour, and the least effective is the chaotic form. In order to keep the specific style a family prefers, certain measures need to be in place to enforce the desired behaviour.

The dimensions of family functioning according to the McMaster model of family functioning were described, which are part of the assessment process. The treatment process is explored next. The treatment process, according to the Problem-Centred System-Therapy of the Family (PCSTF) is divided into macro stages of therapy. The PCSTF in its basic underlying principles and its macro stages will be illustrated in the following point.

#### **4.6. Problem-Centred System-Therapy of the Family: The treatment model**

The Epstein team emphasises the importance of the basic principles, which are the foundation of the PCSTF. These principles will be introduced.

In order to present the basic principles of the PCSTF, the newest publication of the Epstein team (Ryan 2005) will have to be used as the only source, since in none of the other publications (in Will 1985, Epstein in Walsh 2003 or Epstein in Kiskern 1981) are these principles so systematically illustrated as here. The latest publication of the Epstein team is the book by Ryan, Epstein, Keitner, Miller and Bishop in 2005.

#### **4.6.1. Basic principles of the treatment model**

The basic principles of the PCSTF are:

##### **1. Emphasis on Macro Stages of Treatment:**

The term 'macro stages' refers to the major stages of treatment, which consist of assessment, contracting, treatment and closure. The Epstein team emphasises how important it is for the therapist to follow the stages and steps of the PCSTF thoroughly.

##### **2. Collaborative Set**

The active collaboration with other members of the family at any stage of the treatment process needs to be stressed (Ryan 2005, 47). This idea is the forerunner of the concept of therapeutic alliance, for which each family member needs to individually contract with the therapist on their mutual commitment during the therapeutic process.

##### **3. Open and Direct Communication with the Family**

This basic principle is the key to the therapeutic process, in the sense that it makes the process transparent to the family. If this principle is followed through consequently the family accepts and is prepared for each step. The Epstein team points out that the McMaster approach does not allow any indirect or paradoxical interventions (Ryan 2005, 47).

##### **4. Focus on Family's Responsible to Effect Change**

As the therapist is mostly a catalyst, clarifier and a facilitator, the main responsibility for the success of the therapy with regard to change, lies with the family. In the process of therapy the family recognises their own strength and shortcomings and learns to effectively use problem-solving methods.

## 5. Emphasis on Assessment

This basic principle prioritises the assessment of the family structure, organisation and transaction as the basic starting tool for the therapeutic process. Here the family system and its problems need to be fully understood before the next stage in therapy, namely contracting, can begin.

## 6. Inclusion of the Entire Family

"When seeing a family for the first time, we prefer that all family members living at home are present.... This allows us to obtain a full range of views, resulting in a complete assessment of the situation, an indication of potential allies and supports, and direct observation of parent-child and sibling interaction" (Ryan 2005, 49). Yet when the sexual relationship of the parents is discussed, children are asked to leave the room. The PCSTF is an approach that examines the total family system; when members of the family are missing, the dynamics differ and the assessment will be incomplete. The total system might need changing, which needs all parts of the system present. Those family members that are not actively involved in the process can learn by observation or share their impressions to be of assistance to the family and the therapist (Ryan 2005, 49f; Epstein 2005, 471).

## 7. Emphasis on Current Problem

One crucial element of the PCSTF is that current problems and not their history are worked on. This can be either problems the family brings into therapy, or those raised during the assessment.

## 8. Focus on Family Strength

PCSTF focuses on strength, which should be recognised and fostered during the therapy process. Therefore to define the strengths of the family is part of the proper assessment; the assessment also evaluates the family's limitations.

## 9. Focus on Behavioural Change

The PCSTF works towards changing the behaviour of the family; the preferred behaviour is formulated as a request and will have to be worded as a measurable or observable change of behaviour. "These changes in behaviour are the defined goals of treatment" (Ryan 2005, 50). Even though the change of behaviour and the changes within the system are the goals of the PCSTF, emotions and perceptions are nevertheless addressed.

## 10. Time Limitation

This basic principle emphasises that the PCSTF works towards 6 –12 treatment sessions, which can take place over a period of weeks or months or a year.

The basic principles of the PCSTF (Ryan 2005, 52ff) have been illustrated as a foundation for the macro stages of the treatment model, which will be discussed in the following point.

### **4.6.2. Macro stages**

Again, the detailed literature available on this stage of the family treatment is limited.

Epstein has described the MMFF thoroughly in Walsh (2003) "Normal Family Processes", yet not the PCSTF. Will and Wrate (1985), the authors of "Integrated Family Therapy" offer a very practical, yet basic description of the macro stages. Epstein, in the publication of his and

Bishop's article "Problem-Centred System Therapy of the Family" in Gurman and Epstein's (1981) "Handbook of Family Therapy" has a similar approach to Will and Wrate, which is basic and very practically orientated. That implies that the latest publication of the Epstein team (Ryan 2005) will be the best source to draw from for this chapter of the research.

An overview of the macro stages of the PCSTF will be given (Ryan 2005, 53)

1. Assessment

- A. Orientation
- B. Data-Gathering
- C. Problem description
- D. Clarification and Agreement on a problem list

2. Contracting

- A. Orientation
- B. Outline Options
- C. Negotiating Expectations
- D. Contract Signing

3. Treatment

- A. Orientation
- B. Clarifying Priorities
- C. Setting tasks
- D. Task evaluation

4. Closure

- A. Orientation
- B. Summary of Treatment

C. Long-Term Goals

D. Follow-up (optional)

While each stage consists of some specific substages, each stage begins with orientation. It has been mentioned that transparency of the therapeutic process is one condition for the good cooperation between therapist and family members; "this is done out of respect for the family we work with and our belief in their right to know exactly what is going on at all times (Ryan 2005, 52f). The individual macro stages will now be described.

#### **4.6.2.1. Assessment Stage**

"The orientation to the assessment stage is quite detailed and sets the tone and direction of therapy. ... We use the orientation to explicitly set rules and expectations" (Ryan 2005, 53). The current problems as well as other problems coming up during the assessment stage will be identified. Further the therapist will examine the structures, organisations and transactional patterns of the family system. It is essential that enough time is taken for the assessment stage as this will reduce the number of the task-oriented treatment sessions (Epstein 1981, 452). The assessment is compiled on the grounds of family member reports. To ensure that the therapist has understood the family correctly, the information of the family is fed back in a condensed way until the family agrees that the therapist's feedback reflects their situation (Ryan 2005. 54).

The individual substages of the assessment stage are:

1. Orientation
2. Data-Gathering

3. Problem description
4. Clarifying and agreeing on a problem list

These substages will be discussed below.

### **Orientation**

The first thing in the orientation stage is that the family is given an overview of the process. Details about the assessment stage will be revealed as well as what the therapist is hoping to achieve in this stage; for each individual step the therapist asks for the family's permission to move on. In this way the family knows exactly what is happening and is more at ease. At the beginning of the orientation the therapist is interested in finding out what each of the family members expect to happen in the session as well as what brought the family to therapy and finally what they expect outcome of this session to be (Ryan 2005, 55). At this point the family is informed why all family members living together at home are to attend the sessions. The reason for this has been established in point 4.6.1.

### **Data-Gathering**

In this substage the therapist collects all the necessary data to receive a full picture of the family situation. The data that is gathered covers four areas:

- The presenting problem will be explored
- The overall family functioning will be examined
- Additional investigation might be necessary
- Other problems, coming up through the assessment, are recorded.

#### **The presenting problem will be explored**

It is of importance to spend enough time on this stage so that "the therapist develops an accurate picture of the nature and history of each problem" (Epstein 1981, 453). S/he has to

examine the precise factual details, the affective components of the problem, the historical perspective, the precipitating events, and of course how each family member is involved in the problem (Ryan 2005, 56).

### **The overall family functioning will be examined**

This data-gathering phase takes place in the framework of the MMFF.

That means that at this point the therapist explores the broader situation of the family functioning. S/he does that by asking the family specific questions about each dimension of family functioning. Detailed examples of possible questions for the evaluation of the family functioning are given in the latest publication of the Epstein team (Ryan 2005, 58-67ff).

It needs to be mentioned here, that the Epstein team has developed several assessment devices (4.7) for the evaluation of family functioning. The therapist will also assess the strengths of the family in each of the dimensions of family functioning; these strengths can be used systematically in the therapy process. The third substage of the assessment is the problem description.

### **Problem Description**

In this stage of the assessment the therapist and the family have a clear picture of the problems to be worked on. The identified difficulties are summarised and a formal list of problems to address is compiled (Ryan 2005, 70). It might be helpful to break down the presenting problem into more specific problems. The list of problems to be addressed needs to be agreed on.

### **Problem Clarification**

Mostly the family and the therapist will agree on the problem list, if the assessment stage has been followed through thoroughly. Once the problem list is clear and priorities have been made, the therapist can move on to the next macro stage, namely the contracting stage.

#### **4.6.2.2. Contracting Stage**

The goal of the second macro stage is to gain a written agreement between the family and the therapist (Epstein 1981, 469). In this agreement, which is the contract, both parties express their expectations, the goals of the therapy process and the willingness to make a commitment for the duration of the treatment. Again, like in the assessment stage, there are four substages in this macro stage: Orientation, Outlining Options, Negotiating Expectations, and Contract Signing.

##### **Orientation:**

During the first substage the family is orientated in detail about what is going to happen in the process of the McMaster family therapy. Once the family has understood and agrees to this process, they grant permission to the therapist to proceed.

##### **Outlining Options:**

During the second substage the different options of treatment for that specific family as well as the option of not making a commitment for treatment, are outlined to the family. This enables the family to make an informed choice on the one hand, while on the other hand they also take ownership of the therapy process on the other hand, should they make a commitment towards it (Epstein 1981, 469). It is important that consensus is reached among family members regarding their choices on how to move forward Ryan 2005, 72f). At least agreement between the partners or spouses should be reached, if agreement cannot be reached among all family members.

##### **Negotiating Expectations:**

The task in this third substage is "to formulate a set of expectations that each family member wants to see occur if treatment is successful" (Ryan 2005, 73). That includes a process of

negotiating what family members would want from each other. Therefore the envisaged changes must be very specific and clear, and to a certain degree be measurable or controllable (see contract in appendix for details). The therapist explains that most probably not all expectations will be addressed at once and that family therapy is a process with long-term-goals. Once this stage has been satisfactorily completed, the fourth substage has been reached, namely the contract signing.

### **Contract Signing:**

At this stage the therapist emphasises the necessity of all family members being present at all sessions in order to be able to evaluate the achieved change in the system family. The written contract consists of list of both, the problems and expectations of the family. The conditions for the treatment are spelled out clearly as well (Epstein 1981, 471). An example of a written family treatment contract is part of the appendix. Once the contract is signed, the therapist moves on to the treatment stage.

#### **4.6.2.3. Treatment Stage**

The treatment stage also has four substages: Orientation, clarification of priorities and task setting and task evaluation.

##### **Orientation**

The therapist explains the process of treatment and acquires the permission of the family to move on to the third macro stage of treatment.

## **Clarification of priorities**

In this substage the identified problems are listed according to their priorities for the family. In doing this, the family takes responsibility for the treatment, which underlines the emphasis of this approach; the family needs to be actively involved, which is communicated to them (Ryan 2005, 79).

## **Setting tasks**

There are two types of principles used in task setting, namely general principles and specific principles. While the general principles are very clearly spelled out to assist the therapist and the family in the process of task completion, the specific principles are very detailed and directly linked to each area of family dimension.

### **The general principles (Ryan 2005, 79f)**

1. The therapist is open and direct with the family about the purpose of the assigned tasks. We do not use paradox or other indirect methods of producing change.
2. The tasks address changing the specific dimensions of family functioning (from the MMFF) that have been identified during the assessment and problem listing phase.
3. The tasks are directed at changing dysfunctional family transactional patterns.
4. The tasks have a maximum potential for success, particularly in the early stages of treatment.
5. The tasks are reasonable with regard to age, sex and sociocultural factors
6. Tasks are oriented towards increasing positive behaviour rather than decreasing negative behaviour. Families often ask someone to stop behaviour rather than asking him or her to do something. We prefer to request positive actions.
7. A task is behavioural and concrete enough so that it can be understood and evaluated.
8. A task is meaningful and important to everyone involved.

9. Family members feel that they can accomplish the task and that they are individually able to commit themselves to carry out their part.
10. Emotionally oriented tasks emphasise positive, not negative feelings. Fighting, arguing and an open display of hostility are strongly discouraged.
11. Tasks fit reasonably into the family's schedule and activities
12. Overloading is avoided. A maximum of two tasks per person
13. Assignments to family members are balanced so that the major responsibility for completing a task does not reside with just one or two members.
14. Vindictiveness and digging up the past are avoided with the focus placed on "constructive dealings with current situations"

In contrast to the general principles are the specific principles connected to each of the six family dimensions, which lead to a very thorough description of these principles. Therefore only some example of these principles will be mentioned, one for each dimension, even though the Epstein team describe more principles for each dimension.

### **Examples of specific principles**

In the dimension of problem solving, the tasks can be related to any of the seven stages of problem solving so that this can be effectively practised.

Another example is the dimension of communication; here the specific principle is linked to the related communication problem. Here the Epstein team suggests setting time aside for communication every day; each family member has about three minutes to talk about personal positive issues of the present, the past or the future and after that family members feed back in a summary what was said. This is done in order to practise communication skills in the family, such as active listening skills. After that the next person shares his personal issue and so forth. The sequence of who talks should be arranged in advance (Ryan 2005, 82).

In the dimension of roles, the Epstein team suggests that a list of the regular household chores is drawn up and the allocation of the chores discussed, as well as the completion of the tasks controlled by one family member (Ryan 2005, 83).

In the dimension of affective responsiveness the Epstein team focuses on the feeling and expression of emotions. For example for the welfare emotional side they recommend creating rituals, such as hugging and kissing each other when leaving or arriving home. This will include the children. Another option is to set time aside once a week for the family or the couple to "say nice things to each other and to hold or stroke each other" (Ryan 2005, 83).

In the dimension of affective involvement for example the family is encouraged to set time aside each week so that family members can sit together and share current interests in their jobs, hobbies, friendships or schools etc. Family members need to listen without interrupting each other, while one person is talking. The other members can ask questions afterwards and can compliment each other wherever possible.

The dimension of behaviour control consists of specific tasks with regard to over-control or under-control. For example in the case of parental under-control "the therapists asks all members of the family what would be acceptable controls instituted for all sides – who would apply them and who should follow them. All details are worked out by participating family members" (Ryan 2005, 86). Then the tasks are structured. The goal of the tasks assigned to the family is to establish effective systems of control within that family.

### **Tasks evaluation**

This is a critical process in the PCSTF, because the completion of the tasks has to be differentiated according to success or failure. The circumstances of the successful completion of the tasks are established, the family's performance is complimented and the positive behaviour is reinforced. Together with the family the therapist looks for possible ways to secure future task completion. Should the completion of the task have been a failure, the family and therapist sit together to enquire about the circumstances and reasons for the failure and to look for ways to support the task completion in the future. If necessary, the contracting needs to be revisited and adjusted or the treatment could be discontinued with the option that the family may return any time (Ryan 2005, 88). According to Ryan et al this happens fairly often, and once the family returns, they work very hard.

It needs to be noted that the task evaluation and the task assignment happen in parallel. While the previously set tasks will be reviewed on an ongoing basis until they are completed in a satisfactory way, new tasks are given out at the same time in order to encourage the family to keep working on their behavioural change. This continues until all specified problems on the contract have been solved or successfully attended to.

Once this stage has been reached, the treatment moves to the final stage, the closure stage.

#### **4.6.2.4. Closure Stage**

This stage, as any other macro stage, consists of four substages, namely orientation, summary of treatment, longterm goals and follow up (optional).

## **Orientation**

At this stage the family is oriented that the expectations, set out in the contract, have been achieved and that the process of treatment has come to an end. The family is encouraged to resolve new issues on their own and to put into practise what they have learned. It is also emphasised that the family can come back at any time.

## **Summary of treatment**

The therapist asks the family members to summarise what happened in family therapy according to each one's point of view, and each member shares what s/he learned in the process. Insights from the therapist's side come in as well as mentioning possible issues the family overlooked. The therapist also 'plays' through the possibility that the problem recurs and works with the family through gained insights in that regard in order to deepen the family's understanding. The therapist also encourages the family to continue the same way they cooperated during therapy on their own and brings to their attention what they actually learned. That leads to the process of long-term goals.

## **Long-term goals**

The therapist and the family set up some long-term goals to work towards in the future. The family is encouraged to define how they will know that they function well or poorly and what they are going to do about possible poor functioning. Finally the family is told that they can come back for additional help, should the need arise. The therapy ends here and a possible follow-up date is arranged.

## **Follow-up**

The possible follow-up date is usually set far in the future, so that the family has a chance to attend to possible problems first on their own. This date assists the family (and the therapist) to observe the progress, the family makes; the follow-up session is not a treatment session.

The process of PCSTF has come to a close, - the family can take it up again at any time should the need arise. During the early stage of the PCSTF a thorough assessment of the family is made. For this the Epstein team has developed different assessment tools, which will be described below.

### **4.7. Assessment tools**

There are different assessment tools for the McMaster Approach, three of which will be introduced briefly. First, there is the Family Assessment Device (FAD), a questionnaire of 60 questions for each family member to complete. Nathan B. Epstein, Lawrence M. Baldwin and Duane S. Bishop compiled this tool. The version presented here is version 3. The completion of the questionnaire takes 15-20 minutes. The results of the FAD can be fed into a prepared excel sheet and the functioning of all six dimensions of family functioning can be seen individually for each family member in the respective columns.

An example of the FAD will be given in the appendix of this research.

The other assessment device is the McMaster Clinical Rating Scale (MCRS), which is compiled by Nathan B. Epstein, Lawrence M. Baldwin and Duane S. Bishop. It is a tool for the clinician, who needs to be really familiar with the McMaster approach of Family Functioning. The

information is gained in a clinical interview, where the interviewer examines the family on all six dimensions of family functioning. Each dimension is rated on a seven-point scale: the family rated 1 on the scale is severely disturbed, and a family rated with 7 shows a superior functioning (Ryan 2005, 237f). Interesting to note is that this tool has anchor points, which assist the clinician in differentiating between severely disturbed, non-clinical and superior functioning for each dimension of family functioning.

The third tool to be mentioned here is the McMaster Structured Interview of Family Functioning (McSIFF). As the name indicates, the McSIFF is a structured interview to explore family functioning. Duane S. Bishop, Gabor I. Keitner, Caron Zlotnick, Nathan B. Epstein, Ivan W. Miller and Christine Ryan compiled this assessment device. The McSIFF is very clear and guides the therapist through the interview in detail, right through all six dimensions of family functioning. After each subsection the therapist can rate the family on a 'yes' or 'no' scale with regard to a certain detail of each dimension of family functioning. The results can be filled into a rating scale, which is the same for the MCRS or the McSIFF.

The researcher has experience with the FAD, and finds that tool very easy to use, for the therapist as well as for the client. Due to the possibility to process the answers by means of a spreadsheet, the test results can be obtained within minutes. This tool is especially handy for those therapists who are not intensively trained in the McMaster Approach, but have a good understanding of the family dimensions and the treatment of families according to the McMaster approach. Another advantage of the FAD is that this tool allows a re-testing of the family functioning at any time during the treatment, and that possible progress can be measured in this way.

The McMaster approach has been discussed in detail in this chapter. The underlying question is: Will the McMaster approach be appropriate to assist families in need, especially in a congregational set-up? The following point is an attempt to answer this question.

## **4.8. Evaluation of the McMaster Approach for the purpose of this research**

The positive points of this model of family therapy need to be acknowledged, while possible shortcomings of the model, especially for the purpose of assisting families in need in a congregational set-up, need to be evaluated. This will be done in this point

### **4.8.1. Strengths of the McMaster approach**

This approach will be referred to as McMA from now on.

1. The McMA is very well structured and can therefore be followed easily as the process is outlined in clear steps. Since the model has been researched for more than 50 years, it has been brought to perfection by the research team.
  
2. The assessment tools are a very helpful part of the McMA. The FAD, the Family Assessment Device, deserves a especially mention, because it is very practical, does not take much time and gives a quick overview of the different dimensions of family functioning. It can be repeated after some sessions and enables the therapist to establish progress easily. The FAD is described under 4.7.

3. The contracting phase is of importance and the final written contract very detailed. It contains the specified problems of the family and of each individual member, while it also describes the preferred behaviour change in clear terms for each individual member of the family. The contract is negotiated with the family and is mutually agreed upon, which guarantees that the family takes ownership. The therapist or the family can return to the contract at any time in the treatment process to encourage re-commitment or to evaluate the progress of the treatment. A re-contracting is also possible.
4. The McMA is culture - and religion sensitive as it has been researched in depth in different cultural and religious environments. The Epstein team is well aware of the fact that most values are interwoven with culture and/or religion; they hence opt for the therapist to be value-sensitive at all times (Ryan 2005, 25).
5. The McMA is a family therapy model, which is based on system theory. The theoretical background of this model has been documented in point 4.4. of this chapter. The fact that the McMA is built on system theory suits the requirements for a definition of the family (see 3.2.2.). Another point is the emphasis on interrelatedness and interconnectedness of the family as further requirements for a definition of the family; system theory incorporates both.
6. Another positive point about the McMA is, that because of its clear framework, it is open to the use of elements of other family therapy types. The researcher has made use of elements of Narrative Therapy with a family and – fully keeping in the set framework of the McMaster approach – worked successfully on certain topics such as anger control.

#### **4.8.2. Shortcomings of the McMaster approach**

Even though the McMA can be regarded as valuable for use in a congregational set-up, it never the less has certain shortcomings.

1. One point is that the McMA is on the verge of being over structured. Firstly the consequence of this is that any training in this model needs to be very thorough and secondly there is little leeway for the therapist in his work. One therapist might enjoy this while another might feel restricted.
2. Another point is the way the McMA deals with emotions. For example in the process of the assessment and the treatment there is little space to express and work through emotions, like 'old' hurts family members might have caused each other over a period of time, - before they actually came for help.

In line with that is the experience of the researcher when working with a Moslem family at FAMSA. The family has three sons, aged 14,17, 20. Three years ago during a neighbourhood-watch duty the father was hit on the head with an empty large bottle; he was in a coma for three month and suffered brain injury, which affected his memory as well as dealing with his emotions, especially anger. This in return affected the family in its functioning. Working with the family according to the McMA assisted with the family functioning, yet it did not solve the feelings of resentment the elder sons held towards the father. Only after these feelings were addressed and also recognised by the father and the two older sons, was progress eventually possible. That leads the researcher to the assumption that not all problems, especially when they are more emotional, can be treated with the McMA.

3. A further point is that the McMA is can be regarded as a directive method of family therapy. It is directive in the sense that it follows a clearly structured process, which might not suit every family in its specific set-up, or every therapist. Some clients or even therapists might prefer a more client-centred approach.
4. Even though the FAD is an effective help in the assessment, the assessment process of all dimensions of family functioning is rather complicated; it requires a thorough training of the therapist/pastor and the presence of an experienced co-therapist might be helpful in the process.

#### **4.8.3. Requirements for the use of the model in a congregational context**

The McMaster approach can be regarded as suitable in addressing the challenges families in South Africa have to face. It could make a big difference to families in need, especially when used in a congregational set up, where families might feel more at ease than in a therapist's room. Should other families in the congregation undergo the same treatment these families can support each other. The experience of being a family within a congregational family can be an additional asset in the treatment process.

## **4.9. Conclusion**

The question at the beginning of the chapter was:

Will the McMaster approach be an appropriate tool for the church to assist families?

According to the above exploration, the answer is: yes, the model is appropriate for use in a congregation, provided sufficient training and regular supervision of the therapist/pastor can be arranged.

A definition of the family in our multi-cultural and multi-religious South African society must be based on system-thinking, as has been established in the previous chapter. The McMaster approach, as one model of family therapy, is based on a systemic understanding of the family and its dynamics, which then leads to a focus on the process rather than on the content in the work with families.

The model has been researched in different cultural and religious settings and has proven to be appropriate for these different contexts, which makes the approach contextually relevant and therefore acceptable for South Africa. The McMaster approach is also value-sensitive, which was touched on earlier in this chapter.

Even though the McMaster approach is a very structured and detailed model, the church could use this model to enhance family functioning. In doing so, this model can make a valuable contribution to the improvement in the situation of the families involved. The model has the potential to uplift the well-being of families which belong to the church. Since many people in South Africa are Christians, the church could use this opportunity to make a valuable contribution towards challenged families and take care of those families belonging to the church.

Even though the McMaster approach has been found suitable to be used by the church, it is still necessary to support the model with a specific understanding of family ministry, as the use of the model alone within the congregation cannot bring satisfying results. Therefore guidelines, which will support the use of the McMaster approach in the congregation, will be compiled in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **THEOLOGICAL GUIDELINES FOR MINISTERING TO FAMILIES IN NEED**

#### **5.1. Introduction**

In this research the underlying question has been: How can families in South Africa be assisted by the church in such a way that they are enabled to deal with the different challenges they experience?

In order to answer the above question it was necessary to examine the term 'family' in the light of the Old and New Testament as well as to compile a family theology, so that further work would be based on a sound theological foundation. The different challenges families are facing were named and explored. The role the church could play in equipping those families belonging to the congregation was touched on. To address these challenges and to assist families, one model of family therapy, the McMaster approach, was introduced and evaluated on its suitability and feasibility for families in the South African context. This model also had to be appropriate for use in a congregational set-up since the role of the church to assist families in need is explored.

In this chapter some guidelines towards family ministry will be compiled; this is done with the background of the McMaster approach, which was found to be suitable for work in the congregation to enhance family functioning and well-being. Yet the McMaster approach needs to be supported by an appropriate understanding of family ministry. Such a family ministry needs to be guided by a systemic understanding of the family as developed in chapter 3

(3.2.3.) and at the same time carried by a sound family theology as has been created in chapter 2 (2.7).

Before guidelines for family ministry can be compiled, the term family ministry needs some explanation. Therefore three different understandings of family ministry are introduced, namely those of Nathan Frambach, Richard Olson and Joe Leonard as well as Dennis Guernsey. A framework for family ministry will be developed.

Theological guidelines will be compiled, so that these can guide the process of family ministry to families in need.

Why the McMaster approach was found to be suitable to help families in need by the church, will be described next.

## **5.2. The McMaster approach is appropriate for family ministry**

The evaluation of the McMaster approach as one model of family therapy showed that the model could be regarded as appropriate to support pastors in assisting and guiding families in their congregations. A few requirements for this kind of work have been established in chapter 4, for example a thorough training of the pastors and regular supervision of the process.

Yet this study found that the impact of the McMaster approach to family therapy would not be sufficient, if it is used on its own in the congregation. The McMaster approach is aimed at changing patterns of behaviour in the family and through that the family functioning will be enhanced. This model, because it is cultural and religion sensitive can be regarded as

contextually relevant for the situation in South Africa. Yet the McMaster approach needs to be supported and carried by a sound family-theology and family-ministry if it wants to be used effectively within the congregational context.

Such a family theology needs to emphasise that the nuclear or contemporary family is not found in scripture at all. A nuclear family believing in Christ, is not supposed to lead a life just by themselves and/or for themselves. Believing families need to become aware of the bigger family they belong to, namely the divine family or the *familia Dei*. This divine family manifests itself in the church, or rather to say in the local congregation.

Theological guidelines for ministering to families are needed in order to guide the process of family ministry.

### **5.3. Guidelines for a congregational ministry to families in need**

These guidelines are not necessarily practical guidelines regarding family ministry as such, but they are theological guidelines to support the work of the McMaster approach in the congregational set-up. These theological guidelines are supposed to create a clear mindset of Christian identity among the congregants. This mindset will make family ministry possible, so that the McMaster approach can be used successfully in the congregation. The following points will describe that.

### **5.3.1. Clarifying family ministry is essential for ministering to families in need**

Family ministry is relatively new in the history of the church, when it comes to the term (Garland 1996,1), while the work has been around, as long as the church has existed. Feeding the poor, supporting widows or instructing the young and the youth has been part of the congregational work since the early Christians met in their houses as mentioned for example in Acts 6. Recently the term family ministry is used with different meanings, depending on who is talking about it and with what agenda (Garland 1996). Since there are so many different understandings about family ministry the term needs to be clarified for this research. To clarify the term 'family ministry' three different understandings of family ministry are introduced; a framework suitable for ministering to families in need in a congregational set up will then be compiled.

#### **5.3.1.1. Nathan Frambach**

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of America published "Foundations for Youth/Family Ministry" on their website under the division of Congregational Ministries. Rev. Nathan Frambach formulated these foundations and directions for Youth/Family ministries as follows: "Youth and family ministry needs to be fully integrated into the life of a congregation, and directed outward toward witness and service in the community and world. It must also be deeply rooted and grounded in God's word and the proclamation of the Christian Gospel" (Frambach 2000). In order to give content to this statement Frambach collected six principles that need to be considered when being involved in youth/family ministry.

1. Youth ministry is fundamentally relational ministry

It is more important how we relate, than what we do. That means: not programs, but rather relationships are to be seen as the primary vehicle for youth ministry.

2. Youth ministry has an evangelical purpose

The purpose of this work is to tell about God's grace and the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Youth ministry is centred in the life and way of Jesus, driven by the Great Commission and to nurture the next generation in faith.

3. Youth ministry is congregationally owned

The congregation must own this specific work and therefore it needs to become an integral part of the whole congregation's mission and ministry. This approach can be seen in the worship life of the congregation, in the fact that a youth representative serves on the congregational council or that teamwork is practised.

4. Youth ministry is contextual

In youth and family ministry it is particularly important to know your audience – in other words to know: who meets when and where and why. That can only happen through paying attention to the audience. Observing and listening to the audience leads to understanding. Especially attending to the youth through deep listening honours the young person and builds respect and trust, which is the centrepiece in building an authentic community.

5. Youth ministry focuses on faith formation

Young ministry is about helping young people to grow in grace, faith and the knowledge of Jesus Christ and to deepen and strengthen their relationship with God. A strong

partnership between the congregation and home are of real importance in faith formation.

#### 6. Youth ministry demands an authentic community

An authentic community is needed where context is more relevant than content. Young people coming from a post-modern and post-Christian setting need a particular context in which they can hear the content of God's story and the gospel message. The context the young people need is an authentic community, which is a safe and open place, where people can come as they are and be seen and heard. An environment of trust and respect is what makes this authentic community possible; people are not judged and can therefore openly express their questions and concerns.

Nathan Frambach's principles are very relevant as they focus on two levels, namely the relationship/social level and the theological level. Both levels are needed in a healthy approach to family ministry. Healthy is understood here as a vital, nurturing relevant and meaningful ministry towards families.

#### **5.3.1.2. Richard P. Olson and Joe H. Leonard**

In their book: "A new day for family ministry" the authors Olson and Leonard introduce a paradigm for family ministry. They reckon that families need support, if they want to be able cope with the stresses they are facing. That is why the concept of family support is their new paradigm for family ministry (,65).

When family support is the focus of family ministry, families will be in charge of the ministry. The needs, goals and wishes of the families will have to be considered in the way they are ministered to. Olson and Leonard highlight two things when working from a framework of family support:

1. Families need to be listened to what they say about their lives, hopes and needs.

Support begins with listening to what families want and need, and what difficulties they experience. Then the appropriate support can flow out of this interaction with families.

2. One needs to believe in the capacity of Christians to reach out to one another.

The authors suggest that "the spirit of Christian community is embodied in acts of mutuality, as for example my need can become your opportunity" (, 67).

They add that it is vital to structure and organise times and places where families can meet to care for and support each other (, 66). A family ministry that makes the support of families their point of departure has to be guided by the following points, according to the authors.

### **1. Seek a family friendly culture**

Olson and Leonard point out how important it is to work towards a culture that is family friendly; this includes the church, workplace, government and even the media. According to Loren Mead, quoted by the authors, the culture we live in is ambiguous in being at times hostile, at other times supportive or at another time even neutral. Because of that the authors see the need to create counter-cultural styles and to work towards influencing the culture to become more family friendly.

A number of examples how a family friendly culture could look like are given: From the local church having services where children can participate to an affordable day care centre up to

after-school activities in the community or a parent anonymous hotline. The idea is to strive towards influencing our ambiguous culture towards being more family friendly.

The authors document an interesting research: congregations that offer ministries to young people and their families make a major difference in the well-being of both, the family and the next generation.

The implications for family ministry are the following:

- Show respect for a family's agenda or their specific situation
- Grow a family-friendly climate in the church and create a network of households with similar family issues
- Be a family advocate in being available and hospitable

## **2. See family life as a base for mission**

The authors want to encourage awareness within families not see their own family as an end in itself but as a mission base, just as families in the New Testament understood themselves. When families begin to see themselves as being part of mission work, the support and help among families is exchanged. It can be the church's role to help families discover their personal mission since mission can take many different forms (, 78).

The implications for family ministry are:

- Educational strategies to help families discover their gifts and talents to be involved in mission
- Congregations to offer discernment meetings to think through impeding decisions
- To create family mission projects in the congregation to help clear their vision for their mission

### **3. Enrich Family life**

The church can be part of helping the family become a safe, caring, redemptive healing place. For that reason abusive behaviour would be boldly confronted and the church would assist the family in overcoming their destructive patterns. At the same time the church has an obligation to be a sanctuary to the victims of abuse. Finally it is the task of the church to fight sexism as it is deeply ingrained in many cultures. The church can also be part of building a vision for healthy family life by emphasising that all family types can be healthy and health giving (, 83).

The implications for family ministry are:

- Pastoral leadership can foster family enrichment in terms of preventing family crisis through information and if necessary referral and teaching of coping skills
- Intergenerational strategies, which encourage the building of family clusters, which are gatherings of four to six household units for common learning, celebrating, recreating and sharing. These can become vital for family life.
- Family Camps and retreats can make families reflect on their rules, thinking, communication, conflict resolution or decision-making. Camps are a good opportunity for learning in a group.
- The church can contribute to parenting skills in different ways
- To support a youth ministry that is a family inclusive youth ministry

### **4. Strengthen commitment to the covenant of marriage**

Another dimension to the congregation's family ministry is to strengthen the covenant of marriage by seeking healthy marriages or partnerships. The authors mention that it is important to have reasonable expectations and also make a reasonable effort towards marriage. They mention that people take more time to prepare for a driver's license than to prepare for marriage or parenting, which does not match the high expectations regarding the

quality of a life-long relationship. Not only is it necessary to prepare for marriage, but it is also rewarding to work on the relationship once married.

The implications for family ministry are:

- To strengthen marital partnerships can be a congregational priority (, 96).
- Enrichment opportunities should be created for married couples
- Support groups for partners/couples to discuss issues in an informal setting
- To build skills can also become part of the congregational priorities, as conflict resolution skills or communication skills are often lacking.
- Couple to couple intervention is just another example of becoming creative in supporting married relationships.

## **5. Develop a theology and strategy for ministries with singles**

What has been said about families is also valid for singles. Yet their status and situation needs to be recognised and appreciated by consciously including them in all church events. In doing this one should take the reality into account, that a certain percentage of the congregants are single, divorced or widowed. This should consequently lead to a theology of singleness where "... each congregation will need to develop a strategy of ministry with single adults" , 99).

The practical implications for such a ministry are:

- To lift up the presence and gifts of single adults
- To create inclusive opportunities for them in the congregational work
- To generate focused opportunities especially for singles

Olson and Leonard's approach is a very hands-on approach to family ministry and is mainly based on the needs and problems families might experience. The principles they suggest are mostly practical, driven by their theological understanding. These principles can be really

helpful as guidance for a family ministry team. Yet for this research, which looks for guidelines to support the McMaster approach in the congregation, not all of these principles seem to be relevant. The most important principle of those mentioned by Olson in the context of this research is the one that supports working towards a family friendly culture. This will be taken up in the framework for ministering to families in need.

### **5.3.1.3. Dennis B. Guernsey**

The following thoughts of Dennis Guernsey on family-ministry were published as an article in "Directions", a Mennonite Journal in 1990. Dennis Guernsey wrote a book, together with Ray Anderson, on being family, which has been widely consulted for this research. For that reason the contribution of this author in his article on family ministry seems to be relevant to the researcher.

In the above-mentioned article Guernsey indicates that ministry precedes theology, but eventually this ministry has to be monitored and disciplined by theology. Guernsey defines family ministry as the "church's empowering the people of God to relate to one another as if they are family, especially if they are" (Guernsey 1990). It is interesting to note that the term 'family' is understood by Guernsey as a verb and not a noun, namely according to him, we are supposed 'to family to one another'. The thrust is on how we relate to one another as people of God – and not on who we are as humans. In terms of system orientation the focus is rather on process than on content, especially because the Great Commandment of the New Testament is a relational and process-oriented concept (Guernsey 1990). For Guernsey family ministry "represents a philosophy of ministry as well as a strategy for achieving that ministry"

(Guernsey 1990). As a theological foundation for family ministry he presents five theological principles:

1. People are created in the image of God and are of infinite value.

All possible destruction or devaluing of that image is not the will of God. We need to oppose and/or change it. That is why family ministry must have the ethical centre of the imago dei, which gives all people their infinite value.

2. Persons are created as relational beings to exist in co-humanity as male and female, not male or female.

Guernsey highlights the importance of the word 'and', because "the conjunction is not merely a word linking two nouns. It is pregnant with meaning" (Guernsey 1990). With this Guernsey refers not only to the necessity to take this "and" into account, but also to the need for an exegesis of this conjunction. He gives credit to Karl Barth, who spoke of 'male and female as differentiated unity' in his Church Dogmatics.

3. The church as the body of Christ is the real presence of the incarnate Christ in the world.

Guernsey stresses that the body of Christ is not only a metaphor, but also a mystery. This mystery takes shape within the church as the people of God, where Christ is alive and present. Christ is alive because his believers are here in this world, and we might be the only Christ some people will ever experience.

4. The church is primarily the people of God and secondarily the place.

The church exists, wherever the people of God meet, says Guernsey (Guernsey 1990). With that sentence he points out that the place itself is less important than that the

people gather. He warns against the church becoming only the place of the gathering, which would indicate a focus on content more than on becoming family to one another.

5. Family ministry takes place most naturally wherever and whenever people feel most natural.

With this point Guernsey indicates that church in itself can easily become an artificial place, where people cannot be 'real' and therefore not talk about what deeply concerns them. That inspires Guernsey to ask for a family ministry that rather strives towards creating meeting places for people to gather naturally and comfortably, like a 'braai' in the garden or a breakfast around a table. This would facilitate real or relevant conversations because people feel safe and comfortable in a natural environment (Guernsey 1990).

A final comment on Dennis Guernsey's contribution: He brings very clearly the point across that a theology of the family or theological principles towards a family ministry need to guide and control the process of family ministry first of all. If one takes his point a bit further, one could argue that the process of being guided by theological principles prevents short cuts in family ministry. Such shortcuts could for example be: to be driven by the needs of the congregants or the pastor or the elected committees in the congregational and family ministry work - instead of by the words of Christ.

Different understandings of family ministry were introduced. Even though the approaches are very different, they each seem to contribute valuable aspects towards practical family ministry. Yet for the context of this research, which looks specifically for guidelines that support the use of the McMaster approach in the congregation, not all of these aspects are relevant. Those aspects that are regarded as relevant will be worked into a framework to minister to families in

need. An important point with regard to relevance will be whether these aspects can be considered contextually sensitive for the situation in South Africa.

#### **5.3.1.4. Suitable framework for ministering to families in need**

With the variety of the presented views it is rather difficult to choose one understanding as the framework for this research. Therefore the relevant aspects of the presented understandings of family ministry will be combined towards a suitable framework for the purpose of this research.

A suggested framework towards family ministry:

1. Family ministry needs to be an expression of the church's mission and purpose (Garland 1996); hence family ministry is not there to 'sort out' the state of families or to let the church grow.
2. Family ministry needs to be based on the biblical truth that all people are created in God's image and are therefore invaluable (Guernsey 1990), which needs to be reflected in the church's preaching, teaching and its approach to family ministry.
3. Family ministry needs to be driven by its evangelical purpose (Frambach 2000), where God's grace is not only proclaimed, but can also be experienced in the way people relate to and deal with one another.

4. Family ministry needs to strive towards being contextually relevant (Frambach 2000).
5. Family ministry is most effective in natural surroundings (Guernsey 1990). This takes away the artificial/unnatural atmosphere of the church itself and enables the congregation members to engage with one another openly.
6. Family ministry needs to participate in Christ's work by encouraging people to "family" to one another (Guernsey 1990; see 5.3.1.3.). When this happens, Jesus model of the adoptive family ("Woman, behold your son", in John 19, 12f) is lived out and "the watery bonds of friendship turn into bloodlike bonds of kinship" (Garland 1996).

This approach towards family ministry, compiled from different sources, does not claim to be complete, but it takes up those points that are of importance when ministering to families in need. The above points are contextually sensitive, as they can be translated into the South African situation and can be used in the congregations.

### **5.3.2. Pillars of a family theology incorporated**

A family theology was created in 2 chapter; the pillars of this family theology are needed to be build the foundation from which family ministry can operate effectively and they will therefore be briefly repeated here.

- A family theology, especially for the purpose of this research, will have to have a systemic understanding of the family as a pre-condition (3.2.3.). This implies that this understanding has to be non-Cartesian (Anderson 1985, 9); that means that the family-reality cannot be reduced to smaller units/individuals, as this would do injustice to the dynamic of family processes.
  
- This systemic understanding of the family should therefore exclude a linear approach (Newtonian), which would look for the cause and effect in the dynamics of family relationships (Anderson 1985, 10). Family processes cannot be reduced to linear thinking, as this would not recognise how complex and intertwined family relationships are.
  
- A family theology needs to seriously support responsible behaviour in family relationships. This latches onto Richard Niebuhr's "fitting behaviour" of the "responsible self" (Niebuhr in Anderson 1985, 11). The 'responsible self' takes the other's freedom and well-being into account. In Christian terms this can be expressed in the Great Commandment, which consists of the two stipulations of the New Covenant (Mt 22:34).
  
- A family theology needs to be built on the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is the unconditional acceptance of the godless sinner by God.
  
- This focus needs to be followed consequently when interpreting Scripture. A clear key to scripture interpretation is required; one key of scripture interpretation has been introduced, namely the Lutheran key to scripture interpretation: "what promulgates Christ" (2.5.). At the same time a clear key to scripture interpretation prevents a literal reading of scripture, which could carry the danger of using family-related statements of scripture out of context and apply them to today (2.4.).

A family theology needs to be founded on the covenant.

### **5.3.3. The covenant is the foundation for ministering to families in need**

It has been documented in chapter 2 that the foundation for a family theology must be the covenant God established with his people. Some implications of the covenant for the believer were given in chapter 2. However it would be important to emphasise the following again to give shape to the understanding of family ministry.

#### 1. God's creatures are bound to love

The basic quality of the covenant-relationship is love, an unconditional love that does not depend on the response of God's covenant partner. This unconditional love was made accessible and visible in Jesus Christ. Hence the covenant is God's way of expressing his love and saving grace towards his chosen people, the people of Israel and the believers in Jesus Christ.

#### 2. Belonging to Jesus Christ determines our identity and our choices

Through our baptism we belong to Christ and are inseparably bound to him. This belonging grants us our identity as believers and redeemed sinners. This calls us into responsibility to live according to this new identity. Therefore the guideline for our choices ought to be Christ's command, with which he calls the believers into discipleship: 'Follow me!' To follow Christ has major consequences for Christians, which will also be touched on the next point.

3. Being bound to the covenant and belonging to Christ will shape the family life of the blood-family and the familia Dei.

God stipulated the covenant with his people Israel and it is in marriage and family life that the loving relationship between God and his people is reflected. This covenant is extended to the believers in Christ and it is therefore the foundation for blood-family relationships as such in the Old and New Testament, but also for the new family, the familia Dei or the ecclesia. This new household of faith or the family of believers had to have priority over the kinship household. It is obvious that this will influence and direct the approach to family ministry.

The relationship between the blood family with the familia Dei will be further developed in the next point.

#### **5.3.4. Be aware of the danger of family idolatry**

The believer in Christ belongs to two families, namely his blood-family into which s/he is born, and the divine family into which s/he is baptised and adopted by God for the sake of Christ. One could argue that there is another family to which one belongs to, namely the family into which one marries. The latter will not be considered, as it has been touched on under 2.3.2. and the relationships between blood-family and familia Dei are of more interest here.

The question arises: Which of the two families the believer belongs to must take priority?

According to Christ's interpretation of the Torah the answer is clear: The first priority is to obey God's will – as that creates the vital new family ties for those who follow Christ. Consequently those, who do the will of God, will become Jesus' brothers and sisters (Mk 3,35). Jesus' statements in that regard are very clear and totally in line with the Torah – yet they

irritated the people of his time. That means: the household of faith must take priority over the family household - then and now. As Paul's letter to the Galatians puts it: "So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith" (Gal 6,10; NRSV).

Even though Jesus' teachings are so clear, it seems that the blood-family still gets priority over the family of believers – as Janet Fishburn points out: "Americans tend to uncritically identify loyalty to the family with loyalty to the church" (Fishburn 1991, 35). On the other hand: one cannot be a disciple of Christ without being part of the new community of believers, which means one also shares in Christ's story at the same time (Hauerwas 1981,49). This new community demands loyalty – and a decision to which community/family one wants to be 'more' loyal, might be necessary. If this decision is not made, this can lead to unclear and unbalanced priorities and too close a union between family and church. This union can become so unbalanced that "family-related needs have become a major preoccupation of congregations that have turned in on themselves. The captivity of Protestant congregations in visions of a domesticated church leads to a severely truncated vision of the nature and mission of the church. It threatens to reduce the role of a pastor to that of a family chaplain" (Fishburn 1991, 36).

One could conclude and wonder: Can the love for the own family be dominant over the love for Christ? If yes, then that could be called worship of the own family or – to use again Fishburn's words: This is family idolatry (Fishburn 1991,50)! This can happen so easily when the family is all you have left, "... it begins to take the characteristic of a church" (Hauerwas 1981,168).

Are certain types of family ministry in our country actually supporting the worship of the own family? Does the local congregation teach the believer where their priorities need to be? The researcher, being a trained youth worker and Lutheran pastor herself, has the impression that

the work in family ministry is often more supportive of the kinship family rather than the family of believers. If this is the case, the theological priorities in that family ministry do not seem to be clear. The question that comes to mind is: Does the present approach towards family ministry possibly support idolatry of the kin-family? However one might answer this question, depending on the personal context - it can be agreed upon, that the tendency to overemphasise the blood-family within the congregational context does well exist.

The believer needs to be taught and encouraged, ideally by the local church, to become fully aware of his/her identity as a believer in Christ; this identity is granted to him/her in baptism where s/he becomes a child of God and a brother or sister of Jesus Christ at the same time. What is important here is the impact such new existence will have on the life of the believer. This new existence brings about consequences, which will be touched on under point 5.3.7.

### **5.3.5. The church needs to be a counter culture**

Once the believer is fully aware of his/her identity through belonging to Christ, s/he will become part of a new community, share in Jesus' story and so "participate in the reality of God's rule" (Hauerwas 1981,49). That means: The believer needs to lead a life of undivided commitment toward God and has at the same time to live in this world without being from this world (John 17,16). That in itself will encourage the believer to lead a life in contrast to the existing dominant culture, namely a culture that is not focussed on consumerism or the survival of the fittest, to give some examples. Walter Bruegemann points this out very strongly. In his book "The Prophetic Imagination" he states that "the contemporary American church is so largely enculturated to the American ethos of consumerism that it has little power to believe or act (Bruegemann 1978,11). He mentions the danger of losing one's identity as

Christian or to suffer from amnesia when we leading unauthorised lives of faith (Bruegemann 1978,12). Bruegemann calls for a prophetic ministry that evokes, forms and reforms an alternative community (Bruegemann 1978,14).

This is basically a serious call to live as new people or new community in tension with the dominant culture in which we live. The new community needs to know that it is part of a history and tradition, which has always and will always be separate from this world (Hauerwas 1981, 68). There is a need to live in a counter-culture and to stay truthful to who we are as followers of Christ.

Olson follows the same line of thought. He remarks that we do not live in a world that honours Christian values and it is therefore the task of the faith community to "determine our stance as people of faith toward our culture" (, 46). He points out three responsibilities of Christian leaders, named by their priority:

1. Relate to people and families in their present circumstances
  2. Create a Christian counter culture with those who are committed to right relationships among people and justice in society
  3. Join efforts to move the culture closer to scriptural ideals for both personal and social relationships.
- (, 47).

There is a criticism of Olson's last point. As has been discussed in chapter 2, a biblical approach or scriptural approach as such is not specific enough, especially when the way scripture will be interpreted is not defined. Therefore the last point Olson made, should rather sound like: 'Join efforts to move the culture closer to Christian ideals or to Christ-centred ideals....'

In this point it has been acknowledged that the Christian will have to find ways to determine his identity over the dominant culture in which s/he lives. It is not of so much importance to what degree the Christian is actually successful in doing that, as long as it is an ongoing attempt to create awareness of the necessary mind shift.

To be aware of one's Christian identity within the context one lives, becomes ever more necessary today. The following quote of Douglas Hall will emphasise that point:

"... if Christians today and tomorrow want to preserve the faith and not just some of its moral and aesthetic spin-off, they are going to have to become more articulate about their basic beliefs and about the manner in which these beliefs, when taken seriously, distance them from many of the values and pursuits of our society at large" (Hall 1997, 31).

Another point one needs to be aware of in one's Christian identity is Jesus' demand for loyalty and honour towards the new family, the community of believers.

### **5.3.6. God's honour restored through Christ's understanding of the familia Dei**

In his preaching Jesus demanded loyalty and honour towards the surrogate family or the *familia Dei*; loyalty and honour were so far part of the code of conduct for the blood family. In contrast to what Jesus taught in Luke 11:27: "Blessed are those who hear the word of God and obey it". It is interesting to note, that the "blessed" language here refers actually to 'honour' language. While honour was mostly relevant in the context of the family household before, Jesus now introduces this honour-concept into the surrogate family. In the new family this

honour is 'achieved' through obeying God's will (Lawler 1999, 17). Yet in the betab, the family household, honour was achieved through doing something for the well-being and the reputation of the blood-family. The way of 'achieving' honour through obedience to God grants the surrogate family a new dimension, as Jesus states in Luke 14:26:

"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother.... cannot be a disciple of mine." These words of Jesus indicate how serious he was and is in his appeal to his disciples that they should follow him first. This is to be their first priority.

The preaching of Jesus caused a change in determining one's identity at that time:

While the blood family clearly demanded working towards the honour of the family, the familia Dei, the believers in Christ, strived to firstly obey God's will. In striving towards God's will, God is honoured – and the basic priorities in the relationship with God were realigned. And that was exactly Christ's intention.

Jesus' teaching implies that the family ties of the blood relationship, which were very strong at that time, can get in the way of honouring God or following him. Yet he is well aware, that to be cut off from the natural family ties would have been close to suicide at that time because the natural family or blood family was the social security network for each household member. Therefore: "Jesus does not demand such a socially suicidal sacrifice without offering some consolation in the surrogate family" (Lawler 1999, 16). The term 'surrogate family', used by Lawler, refers to the family, which is established through faith in Christ; this is the ecclesia or the familia Dei.

To be a Christian will shape one's personal identity. The impact of that will be mentioned in the next point.

### **5.3.7. Forming the Christian identity through teaching in the congregation**

There is a requirement for the believer to become clearly aware of his/her identity as a Christian and to grasp the implications thereof for daily life. Through the teaching in the congregation the believer's awareness of his/her identity is formed. This is vital for living a conscious life as a Christian and it will affect the believer's way of living and the way s/he understand him/herself in the world. The following points have to be emphasised in the teaching process in the congregation.

#### **5.3.7.1. New identity for the believer through the sacrament of baptism**

This sacrament changes everything for the believer, as it is a new gate to life (Winkler 2001, 59). Martin Luther said: "The life of the Christian is nothing less than a constant baptism" (quoted in Winkler 2001, 61; WA 30 I 22,1. own translation). In saying this Luther not only emphasised the importance of baptism for the individual believer, but he also indicated that it takes a whole life to grasp what it means to the believer to be adopted by God himself. Therefore baptism grants new life, but not only through the forgiveness of sins, but also through becoming part of the familia Dei or the community of believers.

If one wants to find out what the New Testament says about family life, it will become apparent that "each gospel writer encourages the first-century Christians to remain faithful to their baptism, but in slightly different ways" (Fishburn 1991, 75). To be faithful to baptism entails at least two things: Firstly the believer is a redeemed sinner and secondly s/he is part of the family of God. It is in that context that Luther demanded that the believer drowns his/her "old

Adam" daily (the sinful self), so that s/he could daily become aware of the grace received in baptism.

### **5.3.7.2. Needed: To highlight how costly grace is**

This shall be touched on briefly only. In baptism the believer receives not only the grace of the forgiveness of sins, but s/he is at the same time called into discipleship by Christ. This has consequences for the life of the believer since now s/he is bound to Christ himself and called into obedience. Believing without the consequences for the life of the believer is not possible. Believing in Jesus Christ demands obedience to Christ. This obedience is directly linked to faith and includes following him. In his book "The cost of discipleship" Bonhoeffer said: "If Christ bids a man to follow him, he bids him to die" (Bonhoeffer 1946).

To use Bonhoeffer's words: "Only the believer is obedient, and only the obedient one believes" (Bonhoeffer 1946, 19; own translation). That means that we need to learn to lose our lives if we want to follow him, for the sake of Christ (Hauerwas 1981, 48). That also implies obedience to the new community we belong to: "Being a Christian is an expression of our obedience to, and in, a community, based on Jesus' messiahship" (Hauerwas 1981, 49). A lot more could be said about the cost of discipleship, but for the purpose of this research this shall suffice.

### **5.3.7.3. Emphasise the importance of love, not being an emotion**

Building the believers' identity through teaching in the congregations also needs to include how Jesus Christ understands 'love'. Love as agape has been touched on in 2.4.3., yet in the context of forming the Christian identity in the church it seems relevant enough to be mentioned again. Especially since in our days love is understood as romantic love and therefore an emotion, a corrective teaching seems necessary. Romantic love forms the basis of founding a family today (Clapp 1993,37). In contrast to romantic love agape is rather a frame of mind, which focuses on the well being of the other. Therefore love as agape is not an emotion or a feeling, but rather an attitude towards the other. M. Lawler shall have the last word: "It is agape, willed love, translated into action, not feeling love, that the Bible prescribes, when it prescribes covenant love. Love of God and love of neighbour are essentially willing and actively seeking the good of God and neighbour" (Lawler 1999, 20). Through this willed love Christians will have to serve just as Christ has served; this serving then reflects the kingdom into which we have been drawn (Hauerwas 1981, 49). This 'willed love' might be alien to young people in the congregation, who experience love more in the romantic sense, which is also supported by the media. That is exactly why this point is so relevant for the understanding of the Christian's identity in the world.

### **5.3.7.4. Living out the story of Jesus Christ**

This point follows logically on from the previous one. If we are disciples of Christ and part of a new community of believers that implies that we share in the story of Jesus Christ. It is this story of Jesus that forms the community of believers, the church (Hauerwas 1981, 50). This Christian community is able "to trust the otherness of the other as very sign of the forgiving

character of God's Kingdom" (Hauerws 1981, 50). To live out a story and not to live out a set of doctrines is a tall order. It is a tall order because we tend to measure or compare ourselves, even against the Christian teachings or doctrines. Yet to be part of a story and to live out the particulars of that story requires an ongoing process of reflection and honesty towards oneself. It needs an awareness of being part of his-story, namely God's story or history; that means we are able to see one another as God's people and where we live our faith through remembering this narrative (Hauerwas 1981, 51). To live as believers in the awareness of being part of the narrative of Jesus Christ entails also remembering Christ's story and living it out in daily life.

To what extent does living out - or embodying the story of Jesus shape the identity of the believer / the community of believers? Some thoughts on that will be shared in the next point.

#### **5.3.7.5. Individual or corporate identity for the community of believers?**

The family in the Old Testament, which has been discussed under 2.2., existed as a larger household with defined structures and tasks. The family structures were clearly patriarchal and the family had a corporate identity where personal recognition was achieved in making a valuable contribution towards the well-being of the household as such. Solidarity was regarded as a very important value, especially since the family members were all dependent on each other's functioning and contributions towards the betab. It is interesting to note that the individual household member was not aware of an individual identity, because s/he only understood him/herself as part of that household.

In our days identity is mostly defined by who we are and what we do, - and also by what we achieve. The family to which we belong presently or where we come from originally does not

play such a major role in defining our identity anymore. Our identity is also defined by the beliefs we hold, beliefs we hold about the world we live in and about ourselves. And, of course, our religious belief, or our faith, is part of our identity too. We as Christians are part of the community of believers, which encourages us to think differently about our personal identity, because - the one, to whom we belong and whom we follow and obey, defines us.

The question arises: Would it be necessary for us as Christians to either move towards a more corporate identity or to even hold two identities (an individual and a corporate one) consciously at the same time? To move towards a corporate identity would possibly prevent the idolatry of the kinship-family and deepen the understanding of what it means to be part of and live in a Christian community.

Could this community then be, what Hauerwas describes as the greatest need of the family, namely that the family "requires community beyond itself" (Hauerwas 1981, 174)? To try to live in a corporate identity as the local Christian congregation could be a challenging and most probably also a rewarding task, which would allow the believer to practise his belonging to the body of Christ.

A new understanding of corporate identity in the nuclear family and in the congregation would enhance a mind-frame of togetherness. This in return could link families in a congregation in a to a greater network of people who share not only the same belief and story, but also have some of their problems in common.

## **5.4. Closing thoughts**

In this chapter three different understandings of family ministry were introduced, and a combined understanding was compiled.

Theological guidelines, which would support the use of the McMaster approach in the congregation, have been drawn up. A clear framework of theology, in which family ministry can take place, is regarded as necessary for the process of assisting families in the congregation. The McMaster approach and the framework of ministering to families in need will enable pastors to assist families in their family functioning. This will then contribute to the well-being of the family members.

If the church succeeds in helping families in need in South Africa it contributes to the transformation of South African society.

Practical thoughts:

It has been argued so far, that the McMaster approach is only feasible in the congregation, when it is used together with the compiled guidelines for family ministry. It needs to be mentioned that this combined approach towards improving the situation of families through the church will only be suitable for those churches/ pastors that do not follow a predominantly literal reading of scripture.

One example might illustrate that:

Should the household codes from Ephesians 5,22ff be read in a literal sense, certain roles would be allocated to the family members, such as the wife to be totally submissive to her husband. This could well be in conflict with the McMaster approach, which negotiates and examines the understanding of roles with all family members.

Even though the McMaster approach, together with the theological guidelines towards family ministry, is a feasible tool in assisting families in need, each church/congregation needs to decide for itself whether this tool is suitable for their specific situation or not.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **CONCLUSION**

This research looked at the specific problems and challenges that families in South Africa experience and are dealing with. It was examined how this situation for families could possibly be improved.

The first goal of this research was to name and explore the challenges that families in South Africa have to face. For that the term 'family' was firstly examined in the context of the Old and New Testament, a key for scripture interpretation was introduced and a family theology created. Secondly a definition of the family had to be compiled for this research, which had to be suitable for the South African context. Thirdly the challenges, families in South Africa experience, were collected on the basis of two sources. The one source was the publication of the Department of Social Development, based on the Human Sciences Research Council's report. The other source was the statistics of FAMSA (Family and Marriage Association of South Africa) of the year 2006. The challenges families are dealing with were gathered and presented from these sources. From the data gathered it became apparent that families are in a crisis and in need of help.

The second goal of this research was to explore, what role the church could play in improving the life of families, especially since the majority of South African population regard themselves as Christians and attend worship regularly. It was stated that due to the high percentage of Christians in this country the church would have a real opportunity to make a difference in the life of those families belonging to the church. Even though this will not help all families, for those being involved in a congregation, a fair chance of improving their family life exists. It is

clear form the research that assisting families is not only an opportunity, but also a responsibility of the church.

The third goal was to introduce and evaluate one family therapy approach, which pastors could use to assist families in the congregational set-up. That approach is the McMaster approach. The McMaster approach was evaluated on its feasibility to be used in the congregation. For this purpose the model was introduced in detail and the strengths and shortcomings of the model were listed and commented on. Additionally some requirements for the use of this model in the congregation were compiled.

The fourth goal was to compile theological guidelines towards family ministry that would support the use of the McMaster approach in the congregation. These guidelines are not specific practical guidelines in regard to family life or family ministry, but they are theological guidelines to create a framework that could assist the use of the McMaster approach in the congregation. These theological guidelines can help the church to monitor the process of family ministry.

In summarising it can be said that the McMaster approach was found appropriate to assist families so that their functioning as family could be enhanced; a better functioning within a family can lead to an improved well-being of the family members and the family as such. Certain requirements for the use of the model in the church were mentioned and the opportunities of the church to make a difference for families in South Africa were highlighted. In using these opportunities the church could become an active part in South Africa's transformation.

## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix 1      SUMMARY OF DIMENSION CONCEPTS**

#### **1.     DIMENSION:      PROBLEM SOLVING**

GOAL: Successful achievement of basic developmental, and crisis tasks

KEY CONCEPTS:

- Two types of problems: Instrumental and Affective
- Seven Stages in Process

- 1 Identification of the problem
- 2 Communication of the problem to the appropriate person(s)
- 3 Development of action alternative
- 4 Decision of one alternative
- 5 Action
- 6 Monitoring the action
- 7 Evaluation of success

Most effective: When all seven stages are carried out

Least effective: When cannot identify problem (Stop before stage 1)

#### **2.     DIMENSION:      COMMUNICATION**

GOAL: Mutual understanding

KEY CONCEPTS:

- Two types of communication: Instrumental and Affective
- Two independent dimensions:

- 1 Clear versus Masked
- 2 Direct versus Indirect
- Above 2 dimensions yield 4 patterns of communication:
  - 1 Clear and Direct
  - 2 Clear and Indirect
  - 3 Masked and Direct
  - 4 Masked and Indirect

Most effective: Clear and Direct

Least effective: Masked and Indirect

### **3. DIMENSION: ROLES**

GOAL: Successful role integration

KEY CONCEPTS:

- Two family function types: Necessary and Other
- Two areas of family functions: Instrumental and Affective

*Necessary family functioning groupings:*

- A Instrumental – Provision of resources
- B Affective – Nurturing and support – Adult sexual gratification
- C Mixed – Life skills development – Systems maintenance and management

*Other family functions:*

Adaptive and Maladaptive

- Role functioning is assessed by considering how the family allocated responsibilities and handles accountability for them.

Most effective: When all necessary family function are achieved have clear allocation to reasonable individual(s), and accountability is built in.

Least effective: When necessary family functions are not addressed and/or allocation and accountability not maintained.

#### **4. DIMENSION: AFFECTIVE RESPONSIVENESS**

KEY CONCEPTS:

- Two groups of emotions: Welfare and Emergency

Most effective: When full range of responses are appropriate in amount and quality to stimulus.

Least effective: When very narrow range of responses exists (1-2 only) and/or amount and quality is distorted, given the context.

#### **5. DIMENSION: AFFECTIVE INVOLVEMENT**

GOAL: Security and autonomy

KEY CONCEPTS:

- A range of involvement with six styles identified:
  - 1 Absence of involvement
  - 2 Involvement devoid of feelings
  - 3 Narcissistic involvement
  - 4 Empathic involvement
  - 5 Over-involvement
  - 6 Symbiotic involvement

Most effective: Empathic involvement

Least effective: Symbiotic and Absence of involvement

## **6. DIMENSION: BEHAVIOUR CONTROL**

GOAL: Maintenance and adaptation

KEY CONCEPTS:

- Applies to three situations:
  - 1 Dangerous situations
  - 2 Meeting and expressing psychobiological needs and drives (eating, drinking, sleeping, eliminating, sex, and aggression).
  - 3 Interpersonal socializing behaviour inside and outside the family.
- Standard and latitude of acceptable behaviour has four styles
  - 1 Rigid
  - 2 Flexible
  - 3 Laissez-fair
  - 4 Chaotic
- To maintain the style, various techniques are used and implemented under role functions (systems maintenance and management.)

Most effective: Flexible behaviour control

Least effective: Chaotic behaviour control

## **Appendix 2**      **FAMILY TREATMENT CONTRACT**

FAMILY NAME:      Stewart

### **PROBLEM LIST:**

#### Mother & Father

Mother feels pressured, not getting help around the house, especially with handling children.

Father not getting enough attention from spouse, has trouble expressing himself, gets too involved with work problems.

Therapist noted that the father had a quick temper and was clinically depressed.

#### Parents & Children

Parents could not sit down and discuss issues with children.

Parents bothered that son disrupts them at work. Also bothered that son quit school.

Parents upset with daughter for not sticking to any weight program.

Therapist noted parents were not consistent with children and did not follow through with disciplining children.

#### Children

Daughter resentful of time she had to look after her younger brother. Felt neglected by parents and needs more attention. Her weight problem was a third issue.

Younger son was not contributing to any household chores.

Son lied to parents, teased his sister constantly, and, since quitting school, did nothing constructive.

## **TASKS:**

### Mother & Father

Mother and father will set time aside each week to discuss children's behaviour and how husband can help spouse regarding household duties (2 to 4 ways).

Father will discuss work and family issues with spouse.

They will say two positive things about each other during the week.

### Parents & Children

Son will return to school and will not call parents at work.

Son will contribute to household chores, including looking after his brother twice/week. (If son calls them at work or does not do chores, they will take away his privileges: no TV, no borrowing the care, or staying in the house, depending on the offence and discussion between parents).

Daughter will stick to one diet for at least 4 months. Mother can ask about diet only once every 3 weeks.

Parents will go out with daughter once/week to a movie or dinner.

Family will discuss how they are doing, ½ hour together per week discussing each other's interests and feelings, if each is following up on his/her tasks.

### THERAPIST'S EXPECTATIONS:

All family members will attend therapy sessions and call in advance if they cannot attend.

Family members will complete tasks and be prepared to discuss the outcome in therapy.

Family will revise and adjust problem list as needed.

Father will take prescribed medications for depressions as indicated.

All family members present and the therapist have to sign

Signatures:

Family Member

Date

• \_\_\_\_\_

Therapist

Date

## **Appendix 3**      **FAMILY ASSESSMENT DEVICE**

Nathan B Epstein, MD    Lawrence M Baldwin, PhD    Duane S Bishop, MD

### **Instructions:**

This assessment contains a number of statements about families. Read each statement carefully, and decide how well it describes your own family. You should answer according to how you see your family.

For each statement there are four (4) possible responses:

Strongly Agree (SA)      Check SA if you feel that the statement describes your family very accurately.

Agree (A)      Check A if you feel that the statement describes your family for the most part.

Disagree (D)      Check D if you feel that the statement does not describe your family for the most part.

Strongly Disagree (SD)      Check SD if you feel that the statement does not describe your family at all.

These four responses will appear below each statement like this:

41. We are not satisfied with anything short of perfection.

SA

A

D

SD

The answer spaces for statement 41 would look like this. For each statement, there is an answer space below. Do not pay attention to the blanks at the far right hand side of each space. They are for office use only.

Try not to spend too much time thinking about each statement, but respond as quickly and as honestly as you can. If you have difficulty, answer with your first reaction. Please be sure to answer *every* statement and mark all your answers in the space provided *below* each statement.

1. Planning family activities is difficult because we misunderstand each other.

SA       A       D       SD     

2. We resolve most everyday problems around the house.

SA       A       D       SD     

3. When someone is upset the others know why.

SA       A       D       SD     

4. When you ask someone to do something, you have to check that they did it.

SA       A       D       SD     

5. If someone is in trouble, the others become too involved.

SA       A       D       SD      \_\_\_\_\_

6. In times of crisis we can turn to each other for support.

SA       A       D       SD      \_\_\_\_\_

7. We don't know what to do when an emergency comes up.

SA       A       D       SD      \_\_\_\_\_

8. We sometimes run out of things that we need.

SA       A       D       SD      \_\_\_\_\_

9. We are reluctant to show our affection for each other.

SA       A       D       SD      \_\_\_\_\_

10. We make sure members meet their family responsibilities.

SA       A       D       SD      \_\_\_\_\_

11. We cannot talk to each other about the sadness we feel.

SA       A       D       SD      \_\_\_\_\_

12. We usually act on our decisions regarding problems.

SA       A       D       SD      \_\_\_\_\_

13. You only get the interest of others when something is important to them.

SA       A       D       SD      \_\_\_\_\_

14. You can't tell how a person is feeling from what they are saying.

SA       A       D       SD      \_\_\_\_\_

15. Family tasks don't get spread around enough.

SA       A       D       SD      \_\_\_\_\_

16. Individuals are accepted for what they are.

SA       A       D       SD      \_\_\_\_\_

17. You can easily get away with breaking the rules.

SA       A       D       SD      \_\_\_\_\_

18. People come right out and say things instead of hinting at them.

SA       A       D       SD      \_\_\_\_\_

19. Some of us just don't respond emotionally.

SA     A     D     SD   

20. We know what to do in an emergency.

SA     A     D     SD   

21. We avoid discussing our fears and concerns.

SA     A     D     SD   

22. It is difficult to talk to each other about tender feelings.

SA     A     D     SD   

23. We have trouble meeting our bills.

SA     A     D     SD   

24. After our family tries to solve a problem, we usually discuss whether it worked or not.

SA     A     D     SD

25. We are too self-centered.

SA     A     D     SD   

26. We can express feelings to each other.

SA     A     D     SD   

27. We have no clear expectations about toilet habits.

SA     A     D     SD   

28. We do not show out love for each other.

SA     A     D     SD   

29. We talk to people directly rather than through go-betweens.

SA     A     D     SD   

30. Each of us has particular duties and responsibilities.

SA     A     D     SD   

1. There are lots of bad feelings in the family.

SA     A     D     SD

32. We have rules about hitting people.

SA     A     D     SD   

33. We get involved with each other only when something interests us.

SA     A     D     SD   

34. There's little time to explore personal interests.

SA     A     D     SD   

35. We often don't say what we mean.

SA     A     D     SD   

36. We feel accepted for what we are.

SA     A     D     SD   

37. We show interest in each other when we can get something out of it personally.

SA     A     D     SD   

38. We resolve most emotional upsets that come up.

SA     A     D     SD

39. Tenderness takes second place to other things in our family.

SA       A       D       SD      \_\_\_\_\_

40. We discuss who is to do household jobs.

SA       A       D       SD      \_\_\_\_\_

41. Making decisions is a problem for our family.

SA       A       D       SD      \_\_\_\_\_

42. Our family shows interest in each other only when they can get something out of it.

SA       A       D       SD      \_\_\_\_\_

43. We are frank with each other.

SA       A       D       SD      \_\_\_\_\_

44. We don't hold to any rules or standards.

SA       A       D       SD      \_\_\_\_\_

45. If people are asked to do something, they need reminding.

SA       A       D       SD      \_\_\_\_\_

46. We are able to make decisions about how to solve problems.

SA       A       D       SD      \_\_\_\_\_

47. If the rules are broken, we don't know what to expect.

SA       A       D       SD      \_\_\_\_\_

48. Anything goes in our family.

SA       A       D       SD      \_\_\_\_\_

49. We express tenderness.

SA       A       D       SD      \_\_\_\_\_

50. We confront problems involving feelings.

SA       A       D       SD      \_\_\_\_\_

51. We don't get along well together.

SA       A       D       SD      \_\_\_\_\_

52. We don't talk to each other when we are angry.

SA       A       D       SD      \_\_\_\_\_

53. We are generally dissatisfied with the family duties assigned to us.

SA       A       D       SD      \_\_\_\_\_

54. Even though we mean well, we intrude too much into each others lives.

SA       A       D       SD      \_\_\_\_\_

55. There are rules about dangerous situations.

SA       A       D       SD      \_\_\_\_\_

56. We confide in each other.

SA       A       D       SD      \_\_\_\_\_

57. We cry openly.

SA       A       D       SD      \_\_\_\_\_

58. We don't have reasonable transport.

SA       A       D       SD      \_\_\_\_\_

59. When we don't like what someone has done, we tell them.

SA       A       D       SD      \_\_\_\_\_

60. We try to think of different ways to solve problems.

SA

A

D

SD

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