

Long-Distance Marriage Preparation

When a young couple living half-way around the world invited my husband to conduct their wedding, which would back at her home in the United States, we chose this opportunity to experiment with long-distance marriage preparation. We asked them to purchase online the e-book version of the *Growing Love in Christian Marriage Couple's Manual* (Third Edition, Nashville: Abingdon, 2013), which is available both at www.cokesbury.com and www.Amazon.com. They took a “screen shot” of the Wedding Information and Marriage Lifestyle Questionnaire forms, printed and filled them out, then scanned them back into their computer and emailed them to us. We scheduled Skype sessions to review their responses with them and to discuss whatever issues they wanted to raise.

I often participate in marriage preparation and couples counseling with my husband, because of my interest, training, and experience, and in order to provide a female perspective. My husband reviewed their “Marriage Lifestyle Questionnaire” [see instructions on pages 47, 50, and 51 of the *Growing Love in Christian Marriage Pastor's Manual* (Third Edition, Nashville: Abingdon, 2013)] and shared with me his reflections on their strengths and areas of potential conflict. He also selected certain exercises in the *Couple's Manual* that he thought might be useful for them to do.

During our Skype sessions, we found we needed a telephone connection as well, in order to clearly understand each other. We set up the computer so that both of us were visible, although we both spoke into our own phone handsets, as did the young couple, who already had an international cell phone service. It was fun and informative to see their facial expressions and body language during the conversations. As always, we first asked what issues they wanted to discuss, before we began giving feedback on the questionnaire. And, of course, some of our time also focused on details of the wedding plans.

We did not complete all we might have discussed before the wedding, given their normal distraction by wedding details, but they did report good experiences with some of the exercises my husband recommended to them. We agreed to check back with them within the year after the wedding and to continue working with them as mentors and coaches through the years ahead.

Thanks to modern technology, we were able to connect intimately with this young couple, hopefully help them get their marriage off to a good start, and establish an ongoing relationship of support and care.

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