Couple take the test for success

Bill Kottenstette, Newman Center chaplain, teaches engaged couples to use the self-reported test "Understanding Your Relationship," or FOCCUS, to test their relationship's strengths and weaknesses. The program is offered at St. Mary's Church in Omaha, Neb., where FOCCUS is usually administered, among other locations. FOCCUS is used in the United States by 400,000 couples and is administered in 13 other countries, according to Web links.

The second level is the questionnaires, which both partners answer separately. The questions are in an agreement/disagreement format and range from 60 percent to 90 percent, depending on the couple's scores, according to the program's Web site. Further skill building and intervention occur during the program. The program's motto is "My God, we shouldn't be getting a divorce." It just means they have not achieved the maximum possible score. It doesn't mean they're going to divorce. It just means they have not achieved the maximum possible score.

Participants who score a high percentage of agreement in the first level of the program do not necessarily have the perfect relationship, but they do have a relationship that is strong enough to work on. They may have found a solution to the problem they have come with them or be able to navigate through some of the issues.

Participants who score a low percentage of agreement in the first level of the program are referred to specialized assistance, which may include counseling, spiritual direction, or a combination of both. The participants usually work with a team of professionals, including faith leaders, counselors, and psychologists.

Frequently asked questions about the FOCCUS program are available on the program's Web site, which includes a guide for couples who want to learn more about the program or are interested in attending a workshop. The program is available online at www.focusone.org.