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BOOK ON CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE FEATURES LETTERS FROM ABE, SOLOMON

DAYTON, Ohio -- Letters of advice from Solomon, sections on medieval infanticide and nepotism, and case studies of modern-day Buffy and Biff illustrate attitudes toward marriage through the centuries in The Challenge of Christian Marriage: Marriage in Scripture, History and Contemporary Life, a new book by Thomas Martin, chair of the religious studies department at the University of Dayton.

"If you're going to try to understand Christian marriage and you simply look at the contemporary issues, you're lacking in perspective," says Martin. "You have to understand how the Christian mission adapted to past cultures as well as challenged past cultures."

Designed for use in college courses, the book was recently published by Paulist Press.

Martin's tongue-in-cheek vignettes include an imaginary exchange between Solomon and Abe in which Abe complains about his wife's infertility. Solomon tells Abe to have his wife choose a concubine from among her maidservants since she "is obviously being punished by God and will probably never become pregnant."

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"One who has grown up in a culture where family is seen as a community of intimacy simply finds life in the Old Testament rather raw and shocking," says Martin, a Kettering resident who has been married to Mary Ann Martin for 24 years.

Martin says that people marrying today look for intimacy and companionship, which they don't find in their work.

"The Waltons on Walton Mountain--that's what you'd have in a more traditional society, where work and family and intimacy were all wrapped up in one. Today, if both parents are out working, and she's a lawyer and he's a supervisor of a production line, they're in two different worlds all day."

Martin offers a few suggestions for developing intimacy.

"Spouses must treat each other with care and respect. They must place a high priority on the other's feelings, goals, intentions and happiness. If they are successful at that level, the more intimate life will follow."

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For media interviews, call Tom Martin at 229-4321.