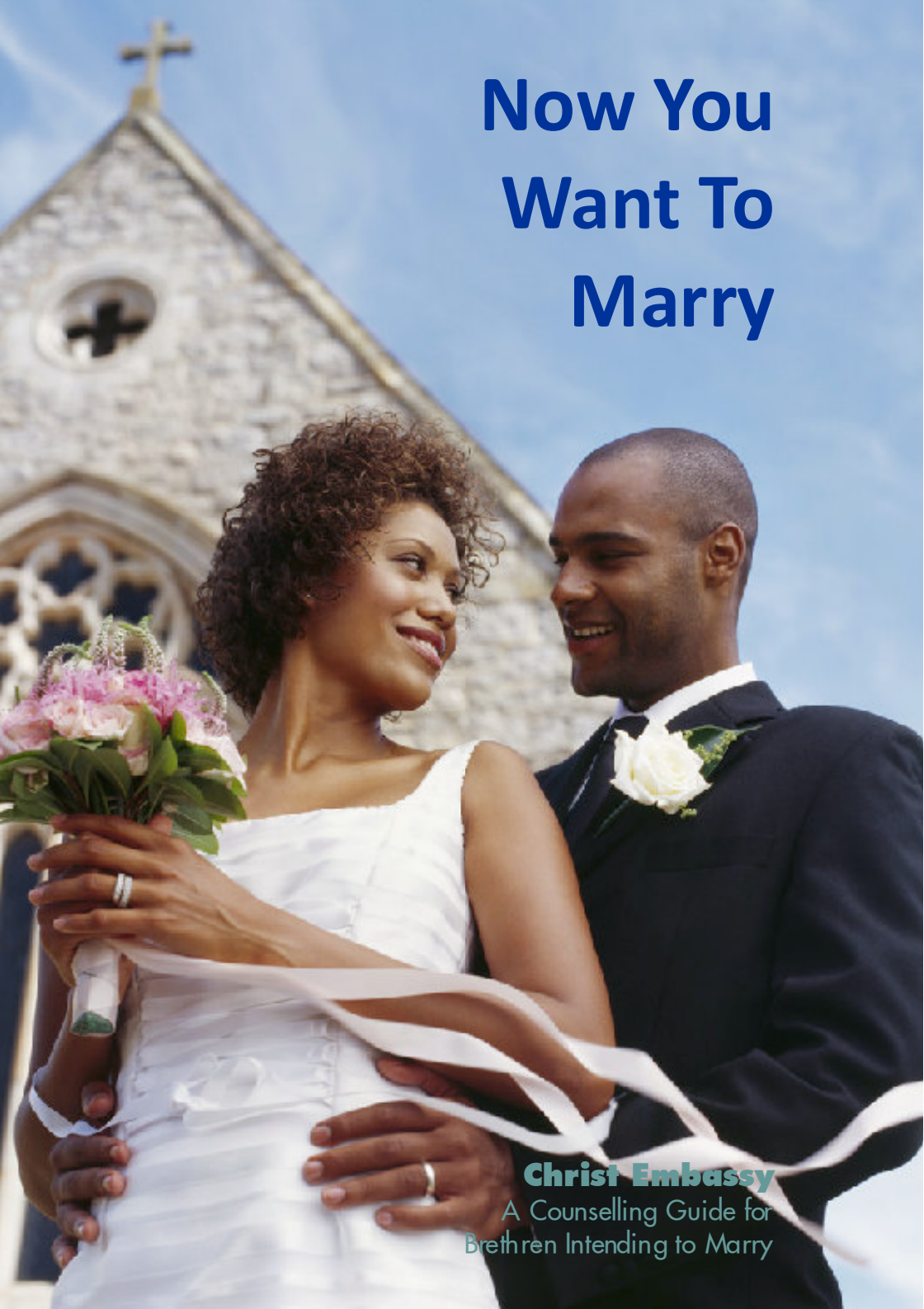
Now You Want To Marry



Christ Embassy

A Counselling Guide for Brethren Intending to Marry

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(c) Marriage Counselling Unit
Christ Embassy Port Harcourt 2007

PREFACE

Marriage is God's idea. When He made man and gave him a task, He said 'it is not good that man should be alone. I'll make him a helpmeet'. God saw that for man to succeed in the task, he needed someone of the opposite gender to which he was covenanted.

One hears often, 'am old enough to be married' supposing that to be ready to marry depends mainly on numerical age. From God's account, to be ready to marry, you should have a God-given task for which you need help. It means also that you 'choose' your helpmeet based on the task you received from God.

The notion of helpmeet from Genesis looks like only the woman is a helpmeet. Far from the truth! Every Christian received a task from God for which they'd render account at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Recall that the scripture says there is neither male nor female in Christ. The man is as much a helpmeet to the woman as the woman is to the man.

This guide puts all these in context. It is used during marriage counselling classes in Christ Embassy chapters in Port Harcourt. It is essential that the sister and brother intending to marry attend the classes together to derive the greatest benefit from the discussions.

The guide contains ten broad discussion areas beginning with the purpose of marriage and the role of the Church. It then looks at right and wrong relationships as well as the types of foundation to build during the engagement period.

The fourth discussion looks at order in the home before looking at how to manage finances. Maintaining good communication is treated during the sixth discussion. Managing extended family ties is discussed before looking at intimate relations between the wife and the husband and how they plan and raise their family. The penultimate discussion looks at traits from bad and good wives and husbands in the scripture before rounding up with organising the marriage ceremonies.

This guide gives broad outlines only and is not intended as a substitute for attending the marriage counselling classes. Furthermore, understanding the scriptural foundation in the guide is of uttermost importance. Each person is enjoined to search the scriptures for themselves like the Berean Christians.

Our prayer is that God will grant you wisdom to function in this sacred institution.

PURPOSE OF MARRIAGE & ROLE OF THE CHURCH

A. Purpose & Reasons For Marriage

In Genesis 2:1-3, 7-9, 15-25, we see two very important principles:

1. **Marriage was instituted by God and not man**: It was not Adam that went to meet God to ask for a wife because he was lonely and needed someone to cook for him. It was God himself that said that it is not good for man to be alone. In fact, to help Adam realize that he needed a mate, God subsequently paraded all the animals in front of Adam (Genesis 2:19-20). So marriage is not man's idea but God's idea and if it is God's idea, we can then conclude that God is more interested in you getting married than you are!
2. **The purpose of marriage is for you to be joined with someone of the opposite gender who would help you fulfil God's calling and responsibilities in your life**: A purpose is the reason for being; it is the end to which something was created or made. God gave Adam an assignment before He said that Adam needed a helpmeet. We can deduce that the help meet was to help Adam fulfil the responsibilities God gave to him in Genesis 2:15-17 since the declaration that he needed help came in verse 18. Therefore, anyone who intends to marry ought to know the purpose to which God has called him/her and is working that purpose before such a person should consider being joined to a helpmeet. **Marriage is primarily to help you serve God better**. This spiritual purpose of marriage comes before all other secondary purposes.

The secondary reasons for marriage include:

- Having godly seeds (children); a godly family is the smallest unit or cell of the Church (Psalms 68:6)
- Companionship (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12); Companionship in this instance should not connote having someone physically by your side all the time but someone of like mind who is working with you towards common goals regardless of where he/she is physically located at any point in time
- Abstaining from fornication (1 Corinthians 7:2); Marriage provides the only avenue where legitimate sexual desires can be channelled alright

Though these are the most commonly stated reasons for marriage, they are secondary reasons and should not overshadow the primary purpose of marriage, which is to have someone of the opposite gender help you fulfil your God-given responsibilities. These secondary reasons can be likened to side effects that are associated with most medicines. They are part of the package but not the main reason for taking the medicine. One of the issues we face in our generation is that we see people marrying for the side effects rather than for the primary ailment. For instance someone taking a cough

syrup whose side effect is drowsiness in other to sleep and not because he/she has a cough!

From these principles, we can see that readiness for marriage is determined primarily by how involved in spiritual things the parties are than by how old chronologically they are. So someone who is not yet accountable for specific responsibilities in God's house is not yet ready for marriage. Spiritual responsibilities start from the lowest level – the first prerequisite is that you must be a regular and consistent member of your unit or cell group! If you cannot pass the faithfulness test at this level – you will never get bigger responsibilities from God (Luke 16:10).

B. The Role of The Church

The Church expects to be involved in relationships before they are even contracted i.e.

- For the man – you should have received appropriate counsel before proposing
- For the lady – you should also have received appropriate counsel before accepting

This is not always the case but even then the Church expects to be the first port of call after the relationship is contracted and not the parents. Life is first spiritual before it is physical. The time to get parents involved is after you are through with the Church – then the blessings received from the Church can go before and prepare the way as you go to the parents. This may not be what you are used to but if you remember that marriage is ordained of God to fulfil God's purpose for you and that the Church is the pillar and ground of truth; then you ought to know that in you life's dealings, God's perspective is more important than family, friends and the society.

The Church is not a place where you simply come to 'rent' the building and the ministers for the sole purpose of the wedding ceremony! In other words, you do not come after everything has been concluded traditionally/with the parents etc. and all you just need now is a Church to hold a wedding ceremony. You require time to get the Church fully involved – you have to pass through formal counselling classes and direct discussion sessions with your intended spouse. All aspects of the relationship must be discussed in depth with the relevant Church officials before a wedding date can be set. And this will take time! This is why couples are always advised to start with the Church early. Coming today and wanting to get married next month will not work in a proper Church.

Your attitude to Church matters. The Church MUST confirm your choice of marriage partner irrespective of how strong your convictions are. One reason

for this is that convictions can be wrong. But the primary reason is that just as your eyes are in your head, the head or leadership of the Church can see some things you cannot see. For instance, as long as your hand remains a hand, it cannot see what your eyes can see.

Details of some specific requirements and procedures have already been circulated.

C. Why Some Marriages Fail

As shocking as this may sound, it is NOT automatic for marriages between Christians to work out. Just the same way as it is not automatic for every Christian to be prosperous or healthy etc though the provision has been made so also with marriage.

The number one cause of distress in homes is ignorance – ignorance of the Word of God. The Bible is the manual for life. You do not need books and instructions on 'How to make your marriage work' as much as you need to continuously deepen your knowledge of God's Word – in all areas of life. Marriage seminars are not the issue as much as Word seminars. That is why a marriage in which one or both partners do not have time to attend services will end up with problems. By the way, this is the reason for marriage counselling classes. These classes are to look at various aspects of the Word of God and how to apply them in a marriage as well as other aspects of life.

Another related reason is that couples try to build their marriage solely on the 'love' they feel for each other. They assume that such love transcends spiritual authority so do not bother to involve the Church with their marriage decisions. The Bible says that any foundation other than God's Word will not stand the test of time.

Yet another reason is that Marriage is Holy Ground. In Exodus 3:1-5, God appeared to Moses in the burning bush and the very first thing God asked him to do was to take off his shoes because he was (now) on Holy Ground. A deeper revelation of this is that when you are dealing with God, you need to be careful – you do not just walk (or behave) anyhow in a thing or a place where God is. Marriage, since it was ordained of God, is Holy Ground and you walk into it and behave in it very carefully. An aspect of this is that you do not enter marriage with the attitude 'if it does not work, I'll get a divorce'. You are already on the wrong path! If you cannot have the attitude that Ruth had towards her mother-in law Naomi in Ruth 1:16-18 then it would be wise not to go ahead. And this attitude should be both ways.

RIGHT AND WRONG RELATIONSHIPS

A. Identifying Wrong Relationships

One important clarification to make at the outset is that being wrong in this context might be relative to a period in time. In other words, if necessary adjustments can be made, the relationship might become right. So with this understanding, the following categories of relationships are to be avoided until suitable adjustments are made:

1. One Party is Too Busy to be Involved in Church

Luke 16:10 says that faithfulness starts with little things. If someone is not fulfilling their call in God, why does he/she want to marry since marriage is to enable you serve God better. If a person's commitment to Church cannot be ascertained, then it is better to wait until suitable adjustments are made.

2. No Financial Commitment to the Gospel

Matthew 6:21 says that your money follows where your heart is. Someone who does not tithe or is not a partner is clearly saying that his/her heart is not in the gospel. The first thing God requires from a person is his/her heart. The transgressor (one who does not do the word) and the sinner (one who has not accepted Christ as Lord) will both suffer the same consequence for their error (Isaiah 1:28) There is no point suffering like a sinner after what Christ Jesus has done for you.

3. One Party is Not Submitted to the Authority of His/Her Church

Such a person is walking 'time bomb'. 2 Timothy 2:24-26 actually gives a very graphic description of such a person – he/she is being manipulated by the devil. This is particularly important for ladies as in a marriage context you won't always agree with every decision the man makes. You do not put yourself under the authority of someone who is not submitted to his Church, because if problems arise, you would have no one to escalate it to. An interesting story along these lines is the rebellion of Korah, Dathan & Abiram in Numbers 16.

Also in this category is someone who encourages you to lie to your leaders (Acts 5) or someone who says the 'love' you have for each other supersedes whatever the leaders in Church have to say.

4. When There is No Regular or Predictable Source of Income

This applies to the male and the female but especially for the male. It is not an ideal situation for a wife not to be involved in an income generating activity no matter how financially buoyant the husband is. The reason you work is so as to have in other to give (to the gospel and to others) – Ephesians 4:26. The other reasons you work are:

- to meet and influence people for the gospel, to have influence which can be used to extend the gospel through your chosen activity and
- to have money to spend for the normal necessities of life.

Someone who is not engaged in productive activities that meets any of these 3 requirements should not marry. (Note that sometimes you might be engaged in an activity that does not bring in income per se but meets one of the other requirements; for example, getting additional educational qualifications or doing volunteer work in a Christian organisation). The Bible says, 'if anyone will not work, neither let him eat' (2 Thessalonians 3:10).

Female undergraduates are NOT encouraged to marry unless there are strong reasons why the wait to finish schooling cannot be done. However, this excludes situations where the lady has been working but decides to go back to school to get additional qualifications.

5. One Party is Always Demanding for Money or Other Resources
Proverbs 30:15-16 puts this very succinctly. It is a danger sign if one party is always getting money and/or material things from the other party under one excuse or the other without ever reciprocating. The same proportion with which you spend 10 units of anything is the same portion you will use to spend even one million units of the same thing.

The lady especially should not dump all her financial obligations – accommodation, feeding, and siblings/parents - on the man. If you are not learning and practicing the principles of tithing, giving and receiving financial miracles from God then you are not yet ready for marriage. You should be completely single and independent. This is the time to learn to use your faith for yourself and learn to be the revenue generating virtuous woman described in Proverbs 31. Otherwise, you might not just lose your power of choice but your dignity and self worth too in the long run.

6. When Other Factors Determine the Timing/Nature of the Wedding
For instance, you need to get married quickly because one or both parties want to travel out of the country. You are to take charge of circumstances – not let them dictate the pace of things.

7. When There Are Medical Issues
For instance, genotype incompatibility, HIV positive cases etc. These situations are opportunities to build and exercise your faith to receive your healing. If you cannot develop your faith to handle to handle these things now then it is better not to go ahead as you will not be able to deal with the effects of such conditions. If you have not used your faith to overcome headache, then you would not be able to stand cancer.

8. When One Party Has not Detached him/herself Sufficiently From His/Her Parents

The man especially should have left his parents – **emotionally and financially** (Genesis 2:24). A man that is always running back to his parents for advice has not yet left. There is a place for parental advice (especially if they are godly) but that is where emotional independence has been firmly established. Financial independence is also essential. A man who's every move is still being bankrolled by his parents, is not yet ready for marriage. This also holds true – though to a lesser extent – for the lady.

B. Some Special Cases

1. When Both Parties Are Committed to Different Churches

The important things to note in this instance are:

- Sharp or opposite doctrinal differences may eventually divide a home. Initially when the euphoria or novelty of love is still fresh, these things would appear to both parties as unimportant. This is an illusion as when they finally settle down to living, there would be constant conflicts.
- When both parties also have not been exposed to the same set of doctrines, there would need to be a time for 'catching up' by one party. This would result in a delay with respect to making spiritual progress when compared with another couple who also started at the same time but were previously exposed to the same set of doctrines.
- Both parties **MUST** eventually end up in one Church. It is also an illusion to plan to continue attending different churches. You cannot support yourselves spiritually this way and it also limits the level you can get to in such respective churches. There is no hard and fast rule that the couple should end up in the man's Church but this is usually the case, so the lady must ensure she is comfortable in the man's Church.
- The grace and anointing on each ministry/Church is different! This is the punch line and is clearly illustrated in Revelation 1-3. In these passages, Jesus gives different messages to different churches showing that His dealings and workings with each ministry are different.

The best thing to do in these instances is to submit to the advice of the leadership of your Church. It is very wrong to go against the Pastor's advice in the place where you are fed the Word of God and are seeing evident fruit of that Word in your life (Hebrews 13:7, 17). God's dealings with individuals are also different and what is OK for one person might not be appropriate for another. Also at a higher level of commitment, some things are not the best for you. This is where the Pastor (or his delegated authority) comes in. He hears from God and can help set you in the right path for your life.

2. When There Are Accommodation Issues
Especially for the man – if you do not yet have a comfortable accommodation or are still sharing accommodation with friends or family then you have to wait until you get your own accommodation.

The man should have some basic household articles like a 2-burner stove (preferably a gas cooker), as well as good pots and plates. He should also have chairs in the living room, an audio cassette player and a 6x4 feet bed minimum.

3. When The Lady is Older, Has a Better Job or Earns More Money
It is important that the lady marry someone she can reverence (Ephesians 5:33). If she cannot reverence someone who is younger than her then she should not marry him.

However an important spiritual truth for men: Don't build your headship of the home (or your masculinity) on such things as being the one that is older, richer or physically stronger. This is because wisdom does not come with age neither is it by wealth for the Bible says in Proverbs 23:5, "Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven". Also, in this modern age, women can learn the martial arts or bodybuilding and actually end up physically more capable. God ordained that the man be the head of the woman; it is a role conferred; it is not earned or based on anything the man is or has done.

The story of David and Goliath in 1 Samuel 17 gives an excellent example of what a man should base his headship on – the anointing; the fact that he has the Spirit of God operative in him; he hears God and can make the right decisions (Jeremiah 9:23-24). Not only was David the youngest man on the battlefield that day, he certainly was not the richest and neither was he the strongest. But he had the anointing on him and he knew how to walk in that anointing.

A final thing to note is that the fact that you like someone does not mean that God approves of that person! You could already have made up your mind before seeking God's opinion and in this case, there is no point going to seek God's approval because He will answer according to the 'idols in your heart' (Numbers 22, Ezekiel 14).

It is proper to reiterate that your choice of a marriage partner must have been made with much prayer. Your prayer should have been for God to reveal His mind and not your cajoling Him to endorse your choice.

RIGHT & WRONG FOUNDATIONS DURING THE ENGAGEMENT PERIOD

A. Difference Between Courtship & Engagement

Christian courting is the process of a young man seeking out a young woman, under the supervision of the Church, for the purpose of finding a spouse (man) or receiving a spouse (woman).

Courtship is about open and honest exploration of each other's lives and families leading up to engagement and marriage. Courtship is about marriage - you court in order to see if there is any reason why you shouldn't get married to that person. During courtship, you should cultivate each other as friends (you MUST become friends); make sure that you share the same passion and commitment to Christ; make sure that you have the same belief systems; inform your parents and then commit to marry each other! This is not a time to be romantically attached to each other.

Courtship is a word that has been adopted to describe a biblical model for the relationship leading up to marriage. In the Bible, the parents were always involved in the marriage process. They did not arrange the marriage without the children's consent, although they were certainly involved in the arrangements. Sometimes the parents found partners for the children, and then the children were consulted for their opinion. Other times the father of man would approach the woman's father and make arrangements with him.

Engagement starts after there has been an actual proposal by the brother AND an acceptance by the sister and both are committed to their decision. Being engaged is a relationship recognized by God, that is, as soon as you commit to marry each other, you already move to Holy Ground. Two biblical terms are used for this type of relationship – betrothed and espoused – as seen in the following scriptures Deuteronomy 20:7, 22, Leviticus 19:20, and Matthew 1:18.

Another way of putting it is that there are only two kinds of relationship between Christian brothers and sisters that is recognized by God: (a) Being engaged (b) Being married. Different rules apply to each type however and the rest of this class is devoted to learning about rules that apply to the engagement period.

B. Right Foundations

1. Examine your convictions and your motives (Proverbs 4:26; 14:15; 22:3, Psalms 15)

Convictions are very powerful things. They motivate a man/woman and keep him/her going even when there is opposition. You need to tell yourself the truth in your heart (Psalms 15). Proverbs 4:26, 22:3 & 14:15 all stress the

importance of looking well ahead to where you are going. This is a vital part of being careful. You should be able to document your attractions to your fiancée and judge the importance of each of these attractions – 1 Peter 3:3-5. This is in fact an assignment at this stage. You need to answer such things as:

- What are my convictions based on? Am I in this relationship as a response to economic, domestic, societal or sexual pressures?
- What are the other person's convictions?
- Are there incompatibilities of any kind – intellectual, spiritual? If there are, how do we deal with these?

One important characteristic of convictions is that they are not necessarily right. The fact that someone is strongly convicted about something and even willing to die for it does not make that thing right. Clear examples of this are suicide bombers. The Bible also talks about submitting your convictions regardless of how supernatural/spectacular they came about to the authority of God's Word. Any conviction that came from an open vision after 40 days of dry fasting that does not line up with the revealed principles of God in the Bible is from the devil. This is why you need to submit such convictions to spiritual authority. The safest and surest way God leads His people is through the Word and by His anointed ministers.

2. Put all your cards on the table (1 Kings 9:4, Proverbs 11:3; 19:1; 20:7; 14:15)

You need to be completely honest with your fiancée/fiancé on things like

- Health defects
- Aspects of your past that have a consequence on your present & future life (e.g. having a child before)
- Good aspects of your personality and the ones you are currently working on to improve etc

This also provides an opportunity for both of you to start correcting by the mirror principle the things you want to improve on.

3. Prayer

Being engaged automatically means you now have an extra person to pray regularly for. You need to spend time to prayer for the same issues but you do not have to pray in each other's house together. Set a time in the night to pray for your marriage. Pray about the kind of life you want as a couple, about the children God will give you, about your involvement in Church after marriage, etc.

4. Start Making Adjustments In Your Finances

At the very least, you need to start saving for the range of wedding ceremonies you need to have. More importantly however is that since you will have extra responsibilities – spouse and later on children, you need to

be more disciplined with certain expenditure and be more concerned with investments. This will be treated in more detail in the class on finances.

C. Wrong or Weak Foundations

1. Fornication (1 Corinthians 6:15-20; 5:1-5, Hebrews 13:4)

Sexual intercourse between people who have not been married is fornication. The Bible describes it as a sin against your own body! It can lead to premature physical death as seen in 1 Corinthians 5 if not repented of. Fornication also includes any intimate sexual play such as caressing, fondling or viewing of the nakedness.

2. Don't Get into Compromising Situations (1 Thessalonians 5:22, 2 Corinthians 7:1)

A compromising situation is a situation that causes others to doubt your testimony as a Christian. Anything that will cause people to say things like 'we thought you people were Christians' is an appearance of evil and should be avoided. This includes things like being seen coming out of dark places together or been seen in each other company in one party's house at late hours of the night; or spending the night in each other's places and saying that 'nothing happened'. Or you travel together and share the same hotel room, etc

In this category also is calling each other pet names, making clothes from the same material (and co) to wear to occasions like weddings, etc. You should not act as married couples because you are not!

3. Don't Start Buying Things Together!

Avoid having a joint account or buying things together whether they are big things like a car, land or even little things like pots, kettles etc. Wait until you are married. The engagement period is a time to start positioning yourselves to be more relevant to the kingdom. The best way to do this financially is to come together to give for the Kingdom not to buy things for yourselves (Matthew 6:21).

4. Don't Live a Lie (Jeremiah 23:14 NIV, Colossians 3:9)

Don't do things you do not intend to keep up when you are married e.g. if you do not intend to be following your wife to the market, then do not do it while engaged.

5. End All 'Close' Relationships With The Opposite Sex

When you are engaged, you must re-define all other relationships with the opposite sex. You must not have any relationship with someone of the opposite sex that gives the impression that you are 'involved' with that person. You have made a commitment to your fiancé/fiancée and must burn all your other bridges. You should not flirt as a Christian so tell such a

person in very clear terms that you are engaged. If they gave you gifts because they had a 'special' relationship with you before, tell your fiancé/fiancée about it and offer to return the gifts to the person. This is particularly true of sisters; make sure you have not collected gifts under the guise that the brother is 'chasing' you and then you go and get engaged to someone else!

D. When & How to Break an Engagement

The engagement period is not a period for trial and error! Just as you do not enter marriage with divorce as an option, so also you do not get engaged to marry with the attitude of coming out if it does not work out! Since God recognizes the relationship, it is Holy Ground and you cannot just back out whenever you feel like nor have issues that are not resolved to your liking. This is one of the reasons why you should get the Church involved even at the courtship stage.

However, it is recognized that some people (who usually did not get adequate counsel in the first place) get into relationships for the wrong reasons/motives and with the wrong person. The Word of God, through classes such as these, convicts such individuals. In these cases, it must be submitted to the Church elders who will treat the case on its individual merit and advise the proper way of coming out of such relationships.

Two clear cases of engagements that should be broken are:

- One party is not a Christian (2 Corinthians 6:14-17)
- Those contracted before either or both parties became Christians (2 Corinthians 5:17).

ORDER IN THE HOME

A. Roles and Responsibilities of Each Party

First, what are the most common differences between men and women?

	Men	**Women**
1.	Goal oriented	Process oriented
2.	Analytical	Intuitive
3.	Generally physically stronger	Generally physically weaker
4.	Is seen as emotionally stronger	Is seen as emotionally weaker
5.	Not much of a talker	Likes to discuss everything
6.	Sees big things	Sees little things

Secondly, everyone born into this world can be grouped into **extroverts** and **introverts**. What is of importance is that no matter what type of personality you were before you were born again, you learn to be a Holy Ghost ruled person displaying the fruit of the spirit as in Galatians 5:22.

A role is the part you play in any given enterprise while a responsibility is what you do in that role. For instance, a finance manager in a company is a role; ensuring that monies are accounted for properly is a responsibility of that role. Being a husband is a role just like being a wife is a role. Each role comes with its own set of responsibilities confirmed on it by the designer of both roles (God).

Ephesians 5:23-33 likens the relationship between a man and his wife like as unto that between Christ and the Church. This is further confirmed in Revelation 19:7-9. Therefore we see a pattern for the man to follow – anything Christ did, is doing and will do for his Church is what the man is supposed to do for his wife.

Another implication of Ephesians 5:23-33 is that how a man's wife and his family turn out is the responsibility of the man. It is a man's job to remove all spots and wrinkles he sees in his wife/household.

The man should induce (not demand or command) respect from his wife and family not through physical things such as money, age and brute strength but by his ability to walk in God's anointing and the measure of godly wisdom that he displays (Proverbs 12:8).

We can summarize the roles of each party as follows:

	Husband	Wife
1.	Provide direction by hearing accurately from God and then setting the household in that direction (Jeremiah 9:23-24)	Complement by also hearing from God and following on in that direction (Judges 13)
2.	Provide leadership by primarily setting a good example in spiritual activities such as prayer, study of God's Word, church attendance, involvement in ministry activities etc	Follow example by also developing self in the same set of spiritual activities
3.	Ensure all household is maturing in the things of God by enforcing and instilling discipline with respect to spiritual activities	Create & maintain the right environment for spiritual development
4.	Final authority in the home	Administrator of the home; organizes and sets the home in order domestically
5.	Provide adequate finances for the running of the home. Also provide finances for the wife and children	Complements financially
6.	Demonstrate godly wisdom, prudence & discretion in all affairs	Provide suggestions that are in line with God's purposes and plans in Christ Jesus
7.	Teach fine details of God's Word as it applies in their particular situation	In turn teach the rest of the household what to do by following her husband's and the ministry tutelage

Men who are submissive to God (evidenced by his submission/commitment to the Word of God and the Church) will usually find their wives following along very easily. It is usually when this is not the case that the woman too is not so submissive (nonetheless, this is no reason for the woman to be stubborn).

A man's jurisdiction of authority does not extend to his wife's <u>personal</u> finances or to how she performs her own spiritual responsibilities. He can advise however and set an example. Also a wife should not obey her husband when what he is demanding for is clearly against scripture (Acts 3); the wife should not use her interpretation of scripture as a pretext to disobey your husband.

<u>B. Decision-Making</u>

Present day couples face a lot of challenges not common with previous generations. For instance decisions concerning taking a job outside the current location of the other party, managing home-Church-work balances

are far more complex nowadays than in previous generations and there are no hard and fast rules to them. In any set of situations, decisions should be thought through properly (Proverbs 4:26) and proposed course(s) of action should be run through the filter of James 3:17. **The overriding factor in all cases must be what courses or scenarios will position you to fulfil the purpose God made you the most.** This should always be the selected option regardless of apparent inconveniences. Once the kingdom is progressing faster, all other things will be perfected to the couple's advantage.

One of the most important characteristics a lady should look for in a man to marry is his ability to hear from God and consequently make correct decisions (and he should have a 'CV' in this respect). Then she would be able to fully follow along very easily. However, it is important for the man to realize that God talks to women as can be seen in Judges 13. It is a wise man that will learn to discern when God is talking through his wife and follow according.

It is probably not all the time that the wife will agree with all of her husband's decisions (assuming his jurisdiction extends to such). In such instances she must learn to let God vindicate her. Rebellion is never taught anywhere in the scriptures otherwise Moses would just have marched the Israelites out of Egypt without obtaining Pharaoh's permission.

C. Domestic Chores & Housekeeping

Is there any role for the husband in the daily/routine of domestic chores such as sweeping, laundry, washing dishes, baby's diapers etc? YES! It depends on the nature of the schedule of both parties. It is unrealistic to expect the wife to cope with as full a work schedule as the husband, as full a Church schedule as the husband and then to still expect her to be responsible for all the domestic chores in the home. It is also unrealistic, on the other hand, if the wife is not currently working (for valid reasons) and the husband has a schedule that takes him out in the morning to return late at night, to expect him to start washing dishes when he comes back late.

The couple has to work out an arrangement for domestic housekeeping that takes their current circumstances and work schedule into consideration. This could take the form of house-helps, machines, paid helpers, daycares etc. or a combination of some of these. This has to be a dynamic arrangement as their circumstances and schedules will change from time to time. The woman has to organise how she wants things done and run in the house but she does not necessarily have to do everything. She can delegate some to the man!

MANAGING FINANCES

A. Managing Money Spiritually

The first thing with respect to finances is realizing that managing money is spiritual. Your money will not go very far without the anointing. Luke 12:15 says that a man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he/she owns; in other words your wealth (in God's eyes) is measured by what you put into the kingdom and not in what you accumulate. For instance, a millionaire by God's definition is someone who has put a million into the gospel not someone who has a million stored up. This is seen in Proverbs 1:32 (KJV) and the story of the prosperous farmer in Luke 12:13-21 where we see that one of the Bible definitions of a fool is someone is who is not rich towards God.

The second thing to note is how to manage money spiritually. This you do by:

1. **Paying your first fruit:** The first income of the year and the first of your increase during the year. (Romans 11:16, Deuteronomy 18:4, Exodus 23:19, Leviticus 23:10, Deuteronomy 26:10)
2. **Pay your tithe:** Your tithe is one tenth of your income payable as you receive it. It is a debt you owe God and it must be paid. (Leviticus 27:30, 32; Numbers 18:26; Deuteronomy 14:22; 2 Chronicles 31:5; Matthew 23:23.
3. **Sow seeds:** Your money represent you cause you earned it. Therefore, when you give it, the Bible says it shall be given back to you according to the measure you gave. Moreover, the Bible also says money answers all things; it can become anything you want. Therefore giving money as seed ensures you get what you want by the principle of sowing and reaping (Luke 6:38; Ecclesiastes 10:19)

A spiritual and economic principle is that you have to be putting more into investments than into consumables if you want your future to be greater than your today. You should put more into Kingdom investments than into regular investments because your heart will follow your money. If you put more into shares and lands etc. then it follows that your heart is more into those things than into the kingdom.

So you have to work at analysing your finances and disciplining yourself to put more into kingdom & regular investments than into consumables. Your first priority with respect to money must be kingdom investments. You need to be an addicted giver. This is a necessary pre-requisite to receiving wisdom to manage money for regular investments and consumables in your individual set of circumstances.

One vital point in this respect is that don't expect that everything you will ever use must be bought or sweated for by you. In fact it is a curse if nobody ever gives you anything. This means that you do not give anything to anybody as well. A spiritual principle found in Deuteronomy 6:11 & Luke 6:38 is that what you want to receive from others you must also give out. If you were not planning on giving other people cars then you would not expect to receive a car.

Finally, there is a relationship between prayer and giving. When you give, there is an automatic return that is activated (Luke 6:38). However prayer is necessary to get the full return on your giving (Galatians 6:9, Luke 18:1). On the other hand, you cannot pray yourself out of poverty, lack or insufficiency. Much prayer without any kingdom investment will not avail anything. There must be both prayer and giving to get the full return God wants you to have on your kingdom investments.

B. Record Keeping & Categories of Expenditure

Finance is the most common source of friction between husbands and wives. The first step to managing money correctly is record keeping. You need to be able to monitor where your money is going. You cannot manage what you cannot measure.

A template for analysing your expenditure has already been circulated. Before you get married you have to cultivate this first discipline of being able you account for your expenditure. You need to develop a budget for your needs and then plan your expenses based on your income then keep track of your expenses. As you do this, you will begin to notice your expenditure patterns, which you can now further analyze.

There are 3 broad categories of expenditure

- Consumables
- Investments
- Savings

Consumables

Consumables are your present – things you spend to live on a day-by-day, month-by-month basis. This includes feeding, provisions, transportation, utilities, repairs, GSM, car or generator maintenance etc as seen on the template.

Investments

Investments are your future – what you put money into expecting to bring in some revenue or profit in the future. This could be shares/stock, building a house for rent, starting a business etc. For Christians, investments can be further subdivided into 2:

- Kingdom Investments i.e. what you sow into the kingdom – tithes, first-fruits, partnerships, offerings and giving to other Christians (Matthew 13:44-46)
- Regular Investments i.e. what you invest outside the kingdom in such things as money instruments etc

Savings
Savings are what you put aside. All savings should have a name; that is, a clear purpose. Savings that are just done without a specific purpose will often disappear with the first good suggestion/idea that comes along. Or end up being borrowed out and never coming back. So if you are saving for a wedding – make sure it is only wedding related things that the savings is spent on. The further issue with savings is that they end up being spent on either a consumable or an investment.

C. Family Finances

If all this is in place on the individual level, it becomes very easy to move into a family setting. When they are not yet in place, then the engagement period should be spent putting them in place.

In a family setting, the following additional points apply:
- Complete transparency – what each person earns or brings in is known, there must be no hidden assets or liabilities
- Responsibility – the husband has the responsibility for providing the money for the consumables for running the home. It is the woman's prerogative to add from her earnings to this money and even go beyond what the man provides (Proverbs 14:1).
- Allowance for the woman – It is also the husband's responsibility to give his wife money for her own personal use separate from the one for running the home. This allowance is irrespective of whether the woman works or not, or even irrespective of whether she earns a higher salary or not. While there needs to be the usual accounting for the upkeep money (for purposes of analysis and decision making), she does not have to account for this allowance since it is for her personal use.

This system must have an administrator. The party that is more adept at this should manage the family finances with regular feedback to the other spouse. The couple should grow to a position where both of them are good in managing the family finances, however, one person still retains oversight of the administration; this can be rotated at intervals to compare.

What about the issue of having joint accounts? Firstly, bank accounts are supposed to be used for banking purposes and to maximally utilize the facilities various types of accounts provide. For instance, it might be a good

idea to open a savings account for the children because this gives a higher interest yield.

Secondly, the reason some people insist on joint accounts is because they do not trust each other. They think that by having joint accounts, the flow of money can be monitored. What they fail to realize is that it is only what you disclose and allow to go to the joint account that will be there; others can be diverted to secret accounts!

It is good practice to have both parties as signatories to major accounts that have (with either/or mandate – any of the signatories) especially the salary accounts for administrative reasons. This ensures that in the absence of one party, the other can withdraw for the account. Also, it is easier to withdraw money from such accounts if one of the parties passes on interstate. Who manages what bank account(s) is best decided and agreed by the couple in light of their individual circumstances.

D. Family Property

It is good practise to have family property like houses, lands and cars in the name of both parties, that is, Mr. & Mrs. Godswill. This way the property will not be contested by extended family members at the demise of either of the couple. Moreover, such accounts can be used easily by either party as collateral without much hassle.

Note that on no account should family property be used as collateral without discussing with your spouse.

E. Conducting A Financial Health Check

Couples should sit down and discuss their finances in depth. Pick a neutral time and location. Here are questions that will help the two of you know where you stand financially. This will also help you both know the best way to handle a financial crisis. Money can be a tool that can strengthen your marriage or it can become a wedge between the two of you.

1. Location of Important Documents
   Do you both know where important documents such as insurance documents, wills, tax information, bank account numbers, investment information, etc. are located?

2. Current Debts and Assets
   How much do the two of you owe in debts and what are your assets?

3. Budget
   Where does your money go? Even if your budget is a general one, it is important to know how your dollars are being spent. If you don't have a workable budget, develop one.

4. Financial Planning
   Do you have any financial goals for your future? If you do, re-evaluate the progress you are making toward your goals. If not, make some goals, both short-term and long-term.

5. Financial Vulnerability
   Where are the two of you most vulnerable in your finances? Is it a lack of job security, over spending, not enough income, and too much debt? Decide together how to strengthen your financial position.

6. Bill Paying
   Who actually sits down and pays the bills? Do you do this together or has one of you volunteered for this task? Re-evaluate if the way you have this set up is working or not.

7. Financial Differences
   How do you think your upbringing, culture, and gender are influencing how each of you approach money? Do you know what your financial personalities are?

Do this at least once each year to keep a handle on your finances

SPIRITUAL SINS & COMMUNICATION

A. Spiritual Sins

Spiritual sins are wrongdoings that reduce your rank in heaven. In a marriage context, these things will cause your prayers to be hindered as it says in 1 Peter 3:1-7. In other words, what happens to a man outside the home (in his job, business deals etc.) is determined largely by what happens in the home. The converse is also true. These sins include (but not limited to):

1. Pride

The most common manifestation of this is a refusal to listen to spiritual authority. The attitude of 'my home is my business; no pastor or leader in Church has the right to interfere or advise or tell me what to do. I run my home as I deem fit'. This kind of person will struggle in his job, business or whatever else he/she is involved in as there will no be no release of grace to enable him excel (1 Peter 5:5)

On the other hand God is very impressed with humility. In 1 Kings 21, we see Ahab a very wicked king doing terrible things including stealing and murder. Yet when corrected by the prophet, he humbled himself and God deferred the punishment!

2. Anger

It was Moses' anger that prevented him from entering the Promised Land – cutting short his ministry. David on the other hand committed adultery and though God punished him, he did not lose his throne. Jacob cursed Simeon and Levi's anger (Genesis 49). In both of these cases, it can be argued that the anger was justifiable maybe even out of a righteous indignation however the consequences were far more serious than the perpetuators imagined. Anger that is violent and incontrollable leading to saying all sorts of things is far more serious in God's eyes than stealing, adultery and the other traditional 'big' sins. In fact this type is influenced by demons.

3. Complaining

We see this in the life of Elijah (1Kings 18,19). In 1Corinthians 10:1-12, we see God classifying complaining (murmuring) in the same category as fornication, idolatry and tempting God. Even when you have to do more that your share of an activity, do not complain, otherwise you reward may be burnt up by your mouth and it may even lead to bitterness.

4. Unforgiveness, Bitterness & Strife

Unforgiveness that is unchecked will lead to bitterness, which will in turn lead to strife. Then you have a situation described in James 3:14-16, an atmosphere of confusion and demonic activity. In short the devil enters the home/situation and starts wrecking all sorts of havoc in the health, finances,

job, business, children and all other aspects of the home. Hebrews 12:15 gives a further revelation on this: it is the offended party that harbours the bitterness & un-forgiveness that will be troubled not the offending party unless of course both parties are equally guilty.

5. Physical Abuse & Cruelty
In such extreme situations, immediate physical care must be taken to prevent continuation. There is even legal/police recourse. The guilty party if not repentant should be left alone as God deals very harshly with those who physically abuse His children (1Corinthians 3:16-17).

6. Profanity
Anther spiritual sin is profanity, which is defined as having no regard for sacred or spiritual things. Heb 12:16-17 gives the example of Esau who signed away his birthright with his mouth and several years later when he realized what he had done, it was too late to make amends despite the fact that he cried painfully. He did not realize that he was making a grave spiritual mistake when he signed away his birthright.

B. Handling Misunderstandings and Maintaining a Good Atmosphere in the Home
Proverbs 13:10 gives us the most common source of quarrels – pride! Proverbs 17:14 (NIV & TLB) also gives another valuable advice about quarrels – don't let it start! If it does start, Ephesians 4:26 says that it should be resolved before night falls.

Misunderstandings easily breed the wrong atmosphere – that of strife. Some things to note in handling misunderstandings are:

- **Timing**: don't attempt to talk or discuss when one party is angry. Wait for a more opportune moment. Also never talk when you yourself are angry, you will only stoke the flames of the fire the more
- **Information**: You might also need more time to get more information on the issue. It might be a good idea to check up on relevant scriptures and tapes
- **Benefit of the doubt**: remember that you do not have to win an argument, sometimes it is better to let God fight for you
- **The Race is not to the swift**: in other words, it is not the most 'righteous' or 'correct' party that God sides but the one most concerned about or in tune with His Cause (Joshua 5:13-15).

A simple step to follow to resolve misunderstanding is: 1) Pray about the matter alone and let God enlighten you on the issue; 2) Call your spouse for a discussion on what is causing the misunderstanding, pray first before starting the discussion; 3) Agree action points for each party to prevent misunderstandings of the same nature in the future; 4) Pray about your joint

decision; 5) Remind each other of your action points (especially if one party is neglecting to do their part) but never bring up the issue that caused the misunderstanding and 6) Pray on your own about the matter and together as often as the occasion warrants.

Proverbs 15:15, 17:1 & 21:19 all talk about the importance of having an atmosphere of love, joy etc. in the home. The atmosphere prevalent in an environment or a home affects every other thing and person in that environment/home.

In the event that an issue cannot be resolved between the couples, the best mediators in these situations are the elders in the Church. Inform each other before going to Church. Parents, friends and other outsiders are not the best parties to involve in such issues. This will be unfair to them as they would tend to take sides with their relative/friend in the matter.

C. Maintaining Healthy Communication Lines

Communication is very vital in a relationship. When two people keep the lines of communication open and freely express their feelings, differences can be more easily resolved. When communicating, you do not explode or go the other extreme and keep silent especially when your spouse points out your challenges. You need to communicate truthfully and accurately with one other regardless of whether the truth will hurt the other party's feelings. You would need to learn how to:

- Speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15)
- Say things that might initially hurt but would help the other person improve (Proverbs 27:5)
- Affirm each other's strengths
- Talk gently and unprovocatively (Proverbs 15:1,18)
- Allow the other party express/explain himself/herself
- Forgive (Ephesians 4:32)
- When communicating that you are hurt, use 'I feel' instead of 'You did or made me'. State your feelings and how you interpret a situation and not try and judge the motive of your spouse.
- Use the three golden words often and sincerely – 'I am sorry'

D. Any Biblical Grounds for Divorce?

God hates divorce no matter how genuine the reason; He made them one and does not put asunder (Malachi 2:16, Matthew 19:6). Even if your spouse turns and rejects Christ, Paul says, the believing one sanctifies the unbelieving one and makes the children holy (1 Corinthians 7:13). If such as spouse becomes a problem to your faith, you can live apart until a more amiable time but you must continue to pray for such a person.

Do not cover up physical abuse/cruelty or adultery and hope that it will go away – it won't! Once it starts, it just gets worse! Seek counsel immediately!

To deal with physical abuse, if the offending party is unrepentant after several counselling sessions, the offended party should seek separate living arrangements (move out!).

It might sound unkind but you should not seek divorce even in such a case. Marriage is a covenant relationship and God planned for it to last forever. It is only when the offending party insists on a divorce that the offended party after seeking counsel should agree to a divorce.

FAMILY ISSUES

A. Managing Parental Pressures

Two root causes of parental pressures are (a) Not having left parents emotionally and/or financially (b) not declaring your stance for Christ early enough with your parents

If a man has truly left his parents emotionally and financially as discussed in class 2, there would be very minimal attempts to interfere in the affairs of the couple when married or tele-guide the choice of a mate before marriage. If and when these occur initially, they can be politely but firmly rebuffed but the onus lies on the man in this regard. Respect and a healthy distance are also key watchwords in this regard.

It is also when a person never preached to his/her parents and/or did not let his/her parents know the things he has 'most surely believed' since he/she was born-again that sometimes causes an issue. If when you were born again, your parents have seen you stand up against their persecution and suffer inconvenience for the things you believed they would be far less likely to want to stand against your choice of a partner (for reasons such as tribal or social differences) or interfere in your affairs when you get married. They would have known your stand on such issues. If you have never declared your stand, you have to start during the engagement period.

When there are parental pressures because of social, tribal or religious differences, as a first step, you need to

- Patiently hear them out and note their reasons
- Show them from the scriptures what God has to say about their reasons
- Pray and give them lots of time

As a second step, you need to involve the Church early. In fact we usually find that if the intending couple 'go according to the proper order' by first settling with their spiritual parents (the Church), a blessing and a favour will follow them to deal with their natural parents. The problem usually arises when the intending couple have tried to settle with their natural parents first and only start running to Church when the parents are resistant to their choice of a partner.

When married, the couple should also guard against taking any issue to their natural parents. This definitely promotes interference. If anything needs to be taken out, it should be taken to the spiritual parents, that is, the Church.

Finally, financial involvement with both sets of parents must be to point them to God rather than to make them dependent on you. If you do not insist that they tithe and give offerings on whatever stipend you give them, you are slowly making them dependent on you - not on God and you are

heading for a situation whereby no matter what you give them, it will not meet their needs. This will invariably cause friction when you find out that you cannot meet their needs since your own financial responsibilities are increasing. You have to use whatever financial involvement you have with them to leverage their coming to Christ and maturing in the things of God.

B. Relating With Siblings & Friends

B.1 Siblings (& Other Relatives)

1. Only take in live-ins when there is a definite reason (preferably win-win) for it. The reason should also have a time limit attached to it. In some cases, the best thing might be to help from 'afar'. Never take in live-ins mainly because you want to be popular with the parents or parents-in-law.
2. Clear rules must be set for all siblings in the house or coming for a visit. Such rules must be well understood (drummed in if necessary). Paramount in such rules must be the declaration that the wife takes charge of all affairs of the house when the man is not around. Anybody also earning an income must pay their tithe and go to Church regularly. Any sibling unable to abide by these rules must be shown the way out or told not to come again until such a time when they are willing to comply. This is particularly necessary where there are live-ins.
3. In cases where there are already live-ins before getting married, the man has to arrange a peaceful transition to the new 'regime'. This might take the form of temporary relocation if necessary.
4. Siblings have to be encouraged to relate with their in-law as they would relate with their own elder brother/sister. Anyone unwilling to do so must not be welcomed. The man also has to take a lead in this. However, both the husband and the wife must put in the necessary effort to draw as close to the other party's sibling as possible and treat such as he/she would treat his/her own.

B.2 Friends

With friends the first thing to re-evaluate is the basis of the friendship, that is, what are the things sustaining the friendship? Is it a friendship based on idleness where time is spent watching films and discussing all sorts or is it a friendship based and sustained by sharing the Word of God with each other to constantly sharpen one another and improve lives? Friends of the former kind need to disappear while those of the latter kind need to be sustained. The book of Job gives an example of the proper kind of friends (Job 2:11-13). When a proper basis exists, the guidelines in this regard are:

1. Treat each other's friends as you would your own. Of course, interests will differ but the man must be able to sustain a conversation with his wife's friends when she is not around and vice-versa.

2. The onus lies on the man to make the extra effort to be friends with his wife's friends and with the wives of his friends.

C. Managing Domestic Helps

The guideline with domestic helps is that you must take an active interest in the person's future. You have to go beyond the mere paying him/her of a monthly salary to investing in his/her future. You have to send the person to some school. School in this case could mean primary, secondary, higher education or tailoring, baking etc. or a combination of some of these depending on the age and previous background of the person. Throughout scripture we see God being very particular about the disadvantaged, that is, orphans, widows, the poor or otherwise underprivileged and is constantly on the lookout for those who will help them. Such a person is sowing a seed for his own children's future.

A spiritual principle is that you cannot mortgage a person's future to take care of your children (with the excuse that you paid a salary) and expect those same children of yours to have a bright future (Exodus 1:20-21). So the total costs involved in helping your domestic help to a better future must be calculated alongside with the salary cost.

The other guideline is that such domestic helps must be integrated into spiritual activities. He/she must be born-again, filled with the Spirit, active in Church alongside her domestic duties. You should not leave your domestic help who is not born-again at home alone with your children during service times.

SEX, FAMILY PLANNING AND BRINGING UP CHILDREN

Topics
A. Romance
B. Sex
C. Family Planning
D. Bringing Up Children

A. Romance

Romance is cultivating an ardent emotional attachment or involvement with your spouse. It is discovering the fascinating quality or appeal, as of something adventurous, heroic, or strangely beautiful in your spouse. This is the act of consciously wooing/courting your spouse. It is not for only when you are courting; you must make a conscious effort to keep romance alive and fresh in your marriage. It is the responsibility of both parties to ensure there is excitement in their marriage; do not leave it alone to the man. Buy each other gifts, treat yourselves to a day/night out during your birthdays and anniversaries; celebrate your relationship. Never take each other for granted.

B. Sex

Sex is a coming together of a man and woman with the sharing of seminal fluids. It is not just a physical activity; there is a spiritual dimension to it (1 Corinthians 6:13-20). This is one of the reasons why fornication and adultery are very serious. There is an intermingling of spirits that takes place during each act and this probably contributes to couples beginning to look and behave like each other after a while. This is also what causes demons to be transferred from one party to the other when fornication goes on between non-Christians.

However you need to have a healthy attitude to sex. It was designed by God and built into man as one of the natural appetites much in the same way as food and sleep. Sex should not also be used for manipulative purposes. As new couples, the physical aspect of sex needs to be learnt. There should be no surprises on the wedding night but you would need to be patient with each other while learning the ropes.

In fact there is a saying that sex begins in the kitchen – meaning that (for men) what you get out of your wife during times of lovemaking depends on how well you treated her during the day!

Do not use pornographic materials – films, magazines etc. God made sex to be enjoyed in private between a married couple; it would be voyeurism and a sin to participate in the sexual act of others especially those who are not married.

C. Family Planning

Family planning is necessary because your mission in life is not to breed children! Sex is also not just for procreation. Family planning is the determination of what you want your family to be – financial, spiritual, no. of children, etc. It is a joint responsibility with the man leading - it is not the woman's responsibility.

In relation to number if children, there are different family planning methods – some for men, some for women. You would need to get a lot of information (mostly medical) in this regard and decide on the most appropriate one (taking your circumstances into consideration) soon after you get married. There are also excellent books by Christian authors on this topic. Some of these books also contain medical information that can help you choose the gender of your children before conception.

Speaking of gender selection, medical science has proven that the sex of the child depends 100% on the man and not on the woman as was previously erroneously held by tradition. Some men are also known to want a male child at all costs more because of frivolous reasons than anything else. You can pray for God to grant the desires of your heart but your motivations matter. Children are a gift from God and any gender is His design.

The man must start praying for the child when his wife is pregnant. Ask God for the name of the child (one easy way of knowing the gender of the child) while your wife is still pregnant. The Bible shows us several people who God named before they were born – John & Jesus for example.

D. Training the Kids

Proverbs 22:6 and Psalm 127:3-5 tells us that children need to be directed in life; there is a way for them to go which might not necessarily be the way the parents want them to go. How do we find this way and set them on the right course? Three primary ways:

1. Pray for them and with them. Look through the concordance for scriptures on seed/children and confess these scriptures on them.
2. Give on their behalf. Just in the same way as you open a savings bank account for your children, Philippians 4:10-17 tells us we can also open a heavenly one for them. This will go a long way in setting them in their correct course in life and giving them the requisite health, intelligence and strength they need to fulfil this course. You also need to teach them to give.
3. Get them involved in Church and spiritual things as soon as possible. Don't go to Church and leave them at home – otherwise you will be training them not to go to Church. Begin from an early age to tell them

Bible stories and to get them involved in prayer and other spiritual activities

It is also extremely important for the parents to live a life of devotion to God. When this is in place, the blessings and anointing on your life will follow and affect your children. The converse is also true (Exodus 34:7, Proverbs 20:7) and this has even been proved by genetics.

Other useful guidelines in training children are:

- Training the kids is a joint responsibility. So it should not be left to the mother alone (Ephesians 6:4 NIV, Proverbs 29:15). In fact the father should set the stage and the mother should just follow along the lines the father has initiated. Especially as the children get older, the father need to play an increasingly greater role. Not training a child properly will bring the parents to shame in the long run.
- Disciplining children is part of love (Proverbs 22:15, Proverbs 13:24). Love is not complete without discipline as God himself disciplines us when we get out of line (Proverbs 3:11-12).
- Need to use 'the rod of correction' when the occasion calls for it – usually with a repeated or habitual offence (Proverbs 19:18, Proverbs 23:13-14). Flogging gets the foolishness out of the child. You need to set rules and make the consequences known and stick to the consequences when the rule is flouted otherwise you would be teaching them not to take your rules seriously. Mothers are especially warned not to be bothered when the child cries.
- Watch the kind of cartoons you allow them to watch and the toys you buy for them. A lot of the cartoons on TV were designed from the pits of hell. Censure what they can watch and explain to them why you do not want them to watch certain programmes.

CASE STUDIES: GOOD AND BAD EXAMPLES

This class is a review of case studies in the Bible of good and bad examples of husbands and wives.

A. Husbands

A.1 Bad Examples

Adam: He let the devil continue to talk to his wife without doing anything about it.

David: Was a bad father. Did not discipline his children. This led to the ruin of Adonijah & Absalom.

Solomon: He let his wives turn away his heart from God. He allowed them to build altars to their respective gods and participated in the worship of such gods.

A.2 Good Examples

Joseph: did not allow the idolatrous background of his wife affect the home or his children. Rather he set all of them in the direction of God.

Hosea: Loved and disciplined his wife even when she was unfaithful with other men

B. Wives

B.1 Bad Examples

Portiphar's Wife: Ruined her husband by her inordinate lusts

Sapphira: Joined her husband to lie to the Church

Michal: Not sensitive to spiritual things – despised the anointing on her husband despite the fact that she had previously helped to save his life.

B.2 Good Examples

Deborah: effectively combined marriage & spiritual responsibilities

Abigail: Saved her first husband's life despite his foolishness and later on submitted to David anointing

Aquila: Stood side by side with her husband in ministry

ORGANIZING THE CEREMONIES

Topics
A. The Different Kinds of Ceremonies
B. Planning the Ceremonies

A. The Different Kinds of Ceremonies

In this part of the world, the wedding ceremonies are usually of several kinds; however various Nigerian laws recognize them all.

A.1 Traditional (Native Law & Custom)

This type of wedding is usually conducted according to the culture of the area where the bride's family hails from. Many parents and cultures hold it in high esteem and could regard other forms of marriages as the effect of modernisation and do not count with some of them. It is a multi-stage affair with the scope and 'elaborateness' varying from place to place. It can consist of a single ceremony to a multistage affair. It is during these ceremonies that the bride price is paid by the groom's family to the bride's family.

A.2 Court (Registry)

This is the marriage that the government organizes through the registry in local governments. A 21-day notice period is usually required by law prior to the wedding to allow for receipt of objections to the wedding. It is usually a simple affair at local government offices nationwide where the registrar joins the couple by their taking oaths according to their religious disposition. The registry usually gives a Federal Government of Nigeria certificate of marriage to the couple; a copy if filed with the Ikoyi Registry for document check by embassies of other countries, organizations etc.

A.3 Church

This is what God expects from Christians before entering into marriage. An actual joining takes place in much the same way as a believer is joined to Christ when he/she is born-again. It can be likened to an 'operation' resulting in a union of two born-again Christians. To appreciate the spiritual importance of this, you can read through the wedding programmes of weddings conducted in Church. The Church will usually issue either the Church's own certificate of marriage and/or the Federal Government's certificate of marriage to the couple (depending on whether the Church has been licensed by the government authorities to conduct marriages. Christ Embassy is licensed to conduct marriages).

A.4 Church Blessing

This is for people who were married in any manner before they became Christians. This is mainly a spiritual affair to put the blessings of God into the union that was contracted in any way outside Church. It is to honour God and commands a blessing on the couple for so doing.

God recognises the other forms of marriage (court and traditional) and honours them.

Usually, there is a reception to entertain guests after any of these types of ceremonies. This is mainly a social event where guests are refreshed and thanked for taking time out to celebrate with the couple.

B. Planning the Ceremonies

Some tips in this regard are:

1. Decide on the range of ceremonies that you want to have.
2. Apply formally to get a date from Church. You will need to include letters of consent from both sets of parents in your application. Wait for a response from the Church before printing invitation cards and programmes. Also inform your cell groups in Church as soon as you get a confirmation.
3. Make a comprehensive list of all expenditure items that are required for all the ceremonies you will be having. This will of course depend on the traditional dictates of the bride's father (it is good practise to bring the list of traditional requirements to Church to ascertain that your relationship is not compromised) and the range of ceremonies you want to have. You might need to consult with people who have been married through the same routes you want to take.
4. Cost all these items and arrive at an estimate. Confirm all your income sources, that is, if people are promising to help you out in one way or other get firm commitments of these ones but do not depend on unreliable promises/people.
5. Attend other ceremonies (Church, reception, court & traditional) to get a feel of the things that are necessary and arrangements that need to be made. Make sure you attend other ceremonies in the Church where you plan to get married (this, in fact, is a compulsory assignment). Take notes – of the protocol arrangements, the order of things, etc. This will help you plan adequately for yours. You might also need to negotiate with the leaders of the various groups in Church (choir, ushers, decorations etc) on how you want things to be done during your wedding. Do not assume that someone in Church will do all this for you! Make a note of your likes & dislikes. It is your responsibility to make sure your dislikes you not occur during your own wedding.
6. Decide on a budget and stick to it as much as possible. Suggestions from people that will increase your costs without any corresponding

contributions from such people should be treated lightly. Your budget will influence the timing of the events and how elaborate or otherwise the ceremonies will be. It is advisable to keep things simple and to spend only as much as you want to and can afford. Remember the wedding is only a ceremony with the most important part being the Church program. Get your values right – after every wedding there is a marriage so do not channel all your efforts/resources to the wedding and forget about the home you will be living in after the wedding. Also don't be tempted to think that the wedding is a business investment where you spend to get returns!

7. Take responsibility for your wedding. Don't expect others to be as concerned as yourselves. Don't expect that others will run around for you. You might not be able to do everything yourself but you need to make adequate arrangements and supervise those arrangements.
8. Plan well ahead of time. Don't plan to get things at the last minute. Make sure things like the wedding clothes, rings, shoes, etc. are ready well before the wedding.
9. Sisters should ensure that their wedding clothes are suitable (do not overexpose your body) and that the clothing of the bridal train/other maidens are befitting of Christians.
10. Give and pray towards your wedding ceremonies. Giving ensures a return of not just money but favour, protection and supernatural grace towards the event. There have been testimonies of people who almost had their wedding plans thwarted by other people in their own families but for the giving they did for the wedding.
11. You will be introduced and prayed for in front of the whole Church about a week to your actual wedding date. This actually confirms that the Church is in support of your wedding and that you have passed through all the necessary procedures. Brethren are only encouraged to attend the weddings of couples that have been introduced in Church. Consequently, you need to make yourself available for the introductions.

Finally, the wedding vows you take during the Church wedding are important – so you might need to negotiate well with both sets of parents on the choice of Church where the wedding will take place. You should not agree to marry in a Church where you are not sure the ministers are born-again and where you will be asked to take vows such as 'in sickness and in health', 'in poverty or prosperity' etc – you are already signing your marriage for bouts of sickness, poverty etc. If you do not want sickness and poverty, you do not have to sign for it.

This marriage counselling guide is for members of Christ Embassy. It gives the Christian woman or man scriptural basis for marriage and how to function in the marriage relationship. It contains guidelines that would help a Christian in all facet of marriage life.

The need for this guide arose out of several counselling sessions with married and intending couples. Several of these couples had notions about the marriage institution which were from old wives fables, societal expectations and not so clear references to Christian doctrine.

We believe that this guide would help the Christian who sincerely wants to build a Christian home. It is important to point out that having a good marriage is the responsibility of each party to the marriage. Secondly, knowing clearly the role of the woman and the man in marriage is fundamental. Most of all, knowing the reason why God instituted marriage must be the chief cornerstone on which to build a successful marriage.

This guide is not intended to be used a manual but rather to show the timeless principles that will help you build a good marriage. We believe the best for your marriage and pray that God will fill you with the spirit of wisdom to know how to use the institution of marriage to fulfil His will for your life.

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