

IDO

courtship, marriage and family life in Christ



Drs. Shawn & Annie Smith

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Do

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Throughout this book, the author capitalises certain pronouns in Scripture that refer to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Hebrew and Greek words have been italicized, quotations in the King James Version written in bold.

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Dedication

We dedicate this book to all who are about to say “I Do” and to all the Christian families of the world. May the love of Christ and its rule of peace abide with you always.

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Preface

Historians have observed that the progression of the Church throughout generations is inextricably linked to strong families. During the patristic period, the first 300 years of the Church, there was a rapid exponential growth of Christianity; one of the secrets for this impact on society was the importance stressed on the family. The Roman society collapsed because marriage was viewed as a mere secular contract to secure mutual interests. There was no morality or sense of direction within these unions and as a result, the foundations for a stable society were out of place, leading to its collapse.

The family is the basic unit of society. If marriages fail, there cannot be strong families. The absence of strong families at the core of society is an indicator of its imminent collapse. The union of man, woman and children, which makes up the unit of the family, is represented by the spirit, soul and body (1 Thess. 5:23). The spirit being the source, the soul being the administrator and the body the expression. The husband plays the role of the spirit, the wife plays the role of the soul and the children play the role of the body. Strong families will lead to strong churches.

The story of redemption contained in seed form in the book of Genesis is the story of one family that grows and becomes prominent in the earth through the obedience of one patriarch, Abraham, and God's promise towards that family. God chooses households and families to fulfil His plans and purposes. The Abrahamic blessing of Genesis 12:2-3 which Paul talks about in Galatians 3:29, which was made to Christ the seed of Abraham, says, *'in you shall all the families of the earth be blessed.'* God is the God of divine order and establishment. If God tells us that the fulfilment of the Abrahamic blessing is within the context, structure and order of the family, then if there is disorder in what we call "the family", it means we are not going to reflect the fulfilment of the Heavenly Father's intent.

The family, is the fruit of marriage. Marriage is not merely a contract between two people; but the two are representing an institution with responsibilities conferred upon both of them. Marriage is about representing Christ and the Church (Eph. 5: 23-32). Most people enter this institution called marriage with high expectation based on wrong information and little or no preparation at all. It is for this reason that my wife and I have painstakingly examined and explained vital aspects of marriage and family. Our prayer is that

you will adhere to this truth; that the mercy of God will prevail in your life; that even if you had made mistakes in your past, in your marriage, you will be able to adjust yourself that you and your spouse may walk in the fullness of the blessings of God; that our families may bear witness to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in our generation.

Introduction

The family is the basic unit of society and the context wherein God fulfils His purpose on earth. The book of Genesis is the study of one family and how God chose for Himself a man and in choosing that man (Abraham), He chose for Himself a nation (Israel). The outworking of God's plan to form that nation was through a family. This teaches us that when we are apprehended by the grace of God, by the call of the gospel, it is not just in an individual or particular sense, it is for the family. Out of the marriage flows the family. The sacrament of marriage is established to bring forth the family, which is called to be the earthly reflection of the heavenly relations of the Triune Godhead.

Marriage is the bedrock of societal development. The sign of the eventual collapse of every civilization is degradation in marriage. Rome fell when the divorce rate reached 90%. There was a time divorce was so high that marriage was forbidden under the Roman civilization. Western postmodernism has greatly influenced secular humanism; the cohabitation phenomenon has prompted couples to not marry anymore. This means if the Church does not wake up, that ideology is going to be imported by means of entertainment and the media. If marriage is taken away, what is left? What is the alternative? How do you define a family without a marriage? Marriage is honourable and this is our admonition to everyone: that you prepare yourself with this knowledge.

When I was about to get married, I discovered that there are schools for almost every other temporary aspect of our lives but there are no schools to teach us how to be married. I believe that if God ordained the institution of marriage, there should be an architectural plan of His design. It is time for the Church of Jesus Christ to restore the dignity and sanctity of marriage in the society.

Strong marriages produce strong families and strong families produce strong churches. The family is the link between our present and future. All we have must be transmitted to our children through our family. Success is not success unless there is a successor. Our children are the heirs of our legacy; all we are, know and have must be transmitted to them. The forum for the transmission of all that we are to our children is in the home.

Section One
Marriage: The Foundation of the Christian Home

1.1. The Institution of Marriage

From the Christian perspective, marriage is not a human idea. Marriage was ordained by God as a mystery. This means that it is God who designed it and He is the one who defines its parameters. Without God, there is no marriage. Christian marriage is supposed to be according to God's plan for the believer. Marriage is ordained by God to be the foundation for the evolution of better societies. The home is the core of the society. When things in the society go wrong, it means things are going wrong in homes.

‘When the foundations of a stable society collapse, what good can even the righteous do?’

Psalm 11:3 – The Expanded bible

The ‘foundations’ speak of the origin, the basis, and the why. Why do people get married? Unfortunately in today's society, Christians have allowed the world to redefine marriage to them. We are witnessing counterfeit categories of marriage seeking to remodel this sacred institution. They look like marriage but they are not the God-type of marriage.

Marriage is trusting your liberty and freedom to someone else. This is what the wedding ring traditionally represents. The God-ordained marriage is a lifelong relationship based on a sacred commitment. It is not temporary; it is not as long as the man and the woman feel it is good between them or that it is convenient for them to be together. By the mystery of God, the husband and the wife become one flesh, lost in each other by the grace of God. You cannot produce this of yourselves; it is a divine production. The God-ordained marriage is defined and ordained by God. If we are to live by His design, it is by choice and not by chance.

One of the problems in marriages today is that people do not understand why God ordained marriage in the first place and the result is that we have Christians who view marriage from a secular point of view – through Hollywood; some kind of romantic comedy. Others have high expectations with little preparation and as a result, they become frustrated because what happens is not what they expected.

One of the ways we prepare is to diagnose what the motives of getting

married are. The Church needs to present the purpose and power of marriage for the preservation of society. Marriage is a lifelong commitment. The relationship of husband and wife is under the institution of marriage. When you see a man and his wife, you are looking at an entire institution and how they live in this institution is going to build something called a home. The origin of the degradation in the world today is because the only one place on earth where values, integrity, honour, faithfulness and commitment are learnt, which is in the Christian home under the oversight of a husband and a wife who serve as a father and a mother, has lost its place in the society in which we live. Many people do not know what a Christian home consists of, neither do they know how to manage one. There are values which can never be taught in schools or institutions, they can only be learnt in the Christian home and without marriage there is no home.

1.2. The Mystery of Joining

“Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid! What? Know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? For two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.”

1 Corinthians 6:15-18 (KJV)

In the days of old, Corinth was a city which had various temple prostitutes. In those temples, the people practiced fertility cults and part of this practice was to have intercourse with the temple prostitutes. Many newly converted Christians continued these practices. Paul taught them of Christ in their spirit. The context in which he says *‘if a man is joined unto the Lord, he is one spirit with him’* was in reference to the technicalities of immorality. He said a man who has intercourse with a temple prostitute is one spirit with her. When you have sex with someone else, what is in their soul becomes joined to you. When you get married to someone, you are not just marrying an individual; you are getting married to their history. You are getting married to their culture, their sins, their mistakes and the things that stand against them as an individual.

Marriage is not merely an agreement between two people, nor is it a civil contract. It is a sacred engagement. As far as the Church is concerned, if you have not been married before God, you are not married. The State may recognize your marriage but God recognizes that which has been officially brought before Him. His Church is on earth to represent Him. Marriage as a sacred engagement implies that there are three persons involved: God, the husband and the wife. Your union is a mutual commitment to the institution which you have entered into with God known as marriage. This is a calling of being a model of Christ and the Church.

Marriage does not take place simply when it is blessed or when the vows are pronounced. A husband and a wife are representing an institution called marriage 24/7. Your commitment is first of all to your marriage, before being to your wife. When your commitment is towards the institution called marriage, you are conscious that your commitment towards that institution is more important than any personal grievance you may have with your wife. Your

commitment is to God and God is the One who empowers you to love your wife and remain committed to her.

1.3. The Purpose and Power of Marriage

‘And God blessed them, and God said unto them, be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.’

Genesis 1:28-KJV

Marriage is not just a license for a man and a woman to have sex. Some have taken out of context what the Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 7:9, that ‘it is better for a man to get married than to burn with desire. Marriage is not a cure for promiscuity; that is why there is something called adultery. If marriage could solve promiscuity, there would be no adultery. If a man could not control his ways before he got married, he will not be able to control himself after he gets married.

Marriage was created for a man and a woman to have dominion over creation as vice regents of God, ruling on His behalf, by pursuing His revealed plan. We do not marry uniquely on the basis of love. Human affections and feelings are temporary. If there is not something superior to human love to preserve and re-ignite, to re-kindle your love, then it is going to diminish and die down very soon after your marriage. Singleness of purpose is crucial to cleave your perspectives together. When love or esteem seems to be shaken or diminished, singleness of purpose will reignite esteem and love. When life partners make progress in the purpose of God together in harmony, value and love increase.

You cannot marry biblically, if your choice of life partner is not first of all a Christian – not merely a God-fearing person. You cannot commit yourself to marry someone who does not first of all share your viewpoint on crucial matters such as faith because division implies two distinct visions. Stability begins with agreement and concord. The agreement of faith is powerful because when you will face trials as a couple, unless you have the same source of teachings, there will be no agreement of faith. You will not be able to believe and receive from God together because both of you will be hearing two different sources. Spiritual agreement is the root of all agreement. The issue of agreement with the singleness of the purpose of God is something which is the key.

Many people say the God-ordained purpose for marriage is for reproduction. If that were true, then unmarried people would not have children. Prostitutes have children; people in adulterous relationships bear children. In the book of Genesis, when God placed man on earth, He gave him dominion. Marriage is for the fulfilment of the dominion mandate. Marriage, understood in the Christian context, releases dominion and grace. Marriage is not just meant to increase your status or meet your needs; it is to fulfil God's purpose.

Getting married to a life partner just because of the indication of your feelings is unwise because there must be foundations to sustain true love. It is being involved in something greater than yourself and building something that is greater than you.

As a Christian, your marriage needs to be centred on the purpose of God which was revealed. The fall took place because Adam failed to convey the vision of God, as given to him by God, to Eve. Eve thought to herself that there was something out of her relationship with God that she could experience that she was not then experiencing. Once you fail to convey the vision of God's revealed plan and your passion and determination to fulfil it to your spouse to-be, there is going to be a fall somewhere in your union.

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish”

Ephesians 5:25-27 (KJV)

The institution of marriage is a calling of being a model of Christ and the Church. The husband and the wife have a calling. Your highest calling, as a husband, is not just to love your wife, but it is to represent Christ to your wife and to thus represent Christ to your world in the marriage. The wife's role is to represent the Church in her relationship to Christ to her husband and to the world. Those who observe you as a couple, are supposed to see the relationship of Christ and the Church through you. The way you join your practice to the doctrine that you have received will determine the way you live your marriage life.

The relationship of husband and wife is under the institution of marriage. When you see a man and his wife, you are looking at a whole institution which is going to build a home. The relationship between a husband and a wife is the closest thing on earth to either heaven or hell. The person you get married to will determine the quality, and even the quantity, of your life. As ministers in Christ, we need to free ourselves of anything that does not constitute God and be surrounded by all that constitutes God. That is your manner of life.

1.4. Leaving and Cleaving

“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.”

Genesis 2: 24-25 (KJV)

It is possible for a couple to live together under the same roof, faithful to each other, yet they are not cleaved; they are not lost in one another by the grace of God. For a woman to cleave to a man and a man to cleave to a woman, it is a process. Scripture says that the husband and the wife become one flesh. There is a flesh life and a spirit life. In Galatians 2:20, the Apostle Paul says *‘this life that I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.’* He was not speaking about living a carnal life; he was referring to a day-to-day life. When the husband and wife cleave together, there is oneness of flesh, oneness of day-to-day life. The life that is lived on a daily basis becomes one. There are certain things a husband and wife need to take into consideration before they can effectively leave and cleave as a couple:

1.4.1. Change of Locations

There must be a leaving before cleaving. For there to be a leaving, there must be a change of location. Whenever a man lived with his parents together with his wife in the Bible, God asked them to change location. You need to move into a new territory together and mark the new territory together with your spouse (Gen. 12:1). This involves finding a house in order to build a home

1.4.2. Financial Independence

Leaving also involves *‘leaving’* economically; it would require that you are financially viable; you no longer rely on your family for your sustenance. As a man, once a woman realises that you are not a provider, the intimacy is evidently going to diminish. This applies to women as well; the man you will marry is not going to appreciate the fact that you are still dependent on your family. Once there is this aspect of financial dependence on external family sources, there is not yet a *‘leaving’*.

1.4.3. Leave Close Friends

Leaving in order to cleave would require that you leave close friends. As a woman, you will have to choose whether to remain with the same friends you had when you were single and live in their influence or to leave them and learn to adapt with the influence of your husband. In the marriage, your spouse is now the new friend with whom you share the Word of God, your joy and your daily life. Your friends should no longer have any right to your privacy, or access to your matrimonial room. This does not mean that you disown your previous friendships, but it implies that your marriage should determine the parameters of your continued friendship. Many women have suffered at the hands of “home wreckers” whom they thought were friends, all because they did not set wise boundaries.

In order for there to be a cleaving between the man and the woman, there needs to be an understanding of the things men want and the things women want. Women want attention. They want to know that the man can sacrifice for them and they want to know that they count. To the believer in Christ, if you are not entirely cleaved to the person of Christ, there is no way you can be cleaved to your spouse. You cannot give what you do not have.

Once the husband is cleaved to Christ, where there is a living relationship with Christ whereby Christ is his head, and the wife also cleaves to Christ in a living relationship, day after day they get lost in Christ. If the husband and wife are in Christ, it would not be difficult for them to be lost in each other because both of them are already lost in Christ. The secret of getting lost in one another is that you first of all get lost in Christ. Once cleaving takes place, something happens called companionship.

The purpose of marriage is companionship which involves pleasing the other more than yourself. If you do not learn how to communicate with your partner, you will not understand him or her sexually. If you are mindful of the quality of life you want to have as a couple, you need to be mindful of the fact that you need to be in the same roof with your husband and wife. When you both abide in the same roof, it will cause you to establish a good foundation for your home.

When cleaving takes place and there is companionship, there is a physical cleaving which is the romance; you are able to take a sexual frequency, one with the other. When there is companionship, you understand when the other is in need of you. If you do not understand this, you have not

reached the cleaving point yet.

1.5. Naked and Not Ashamed

The word ‘companion’ is described in the statement “*naked and not ashamed.*” It means that there is openness and transparency between the couple. There is openness on issues about your life, your history, past relationships and what made them to fail.

“And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam and he slept and he took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh instead thereof. And the rib which God had taken from man, he made woman. And brought her unto man, and Adam said this is now bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh, she shall be called woman because she came out of man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave to his wife and they shall be one flesh and they were both naked and the man and his wife and they were not ashamed.”

Genesis 2:21-22 (KJV)

Couples need transparency. You need the catharsis of your spouse seeing your nakedness and this does not only refer to physical nakedness. Adam and Eve were not physically naked because they were clothed with the glory of God. Adam only saw his nakedness after the fall. You need someone to whom you can expose yourself, those deep things which you cannot tell somebody else, and that person is your spouse. In Africa, it is seen as a weakness for a man to be vulnerable in front of his wife. Being a man is being real with the people you love the most. If you cannot expose issues that hurt you to your wife in a loving manner, you are not loving enough.

1.6. The Inseparable Fusion

“...and the twain shall be one flesh and they shall no more be twain but one flesh. Wherefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder.”

Matthew 19:6-KJV

The word marriage is the Greek word ‘*gameo*’. ‘*Gameo*’ derives from the same root as the English word ‘*gem*’, which is a precious stone. A precious stone is formed as a result of coal put under pressure over thousands of years. When fusion takes place, the coal becomes a precious stone. In chemistry, there is a difference between chemical bonding and fusion. In bonding, two elements are joined together; but under the appropriate amount of heat, those two elements can separate themselves. In fusion, two different elements come together and they form a new element and those two elements become inseparable. If you place this under heat, both elements will still be inseparable.

In a marriage, it is not two people merely coming together, but two people becoming one flesh and becoming one flesh is a process. Before you become one flesh, you are made one spirit; you become one soul and eventually one body. When you become one flesh, it is an inseparable fusion. As far as the Church is concerned marriage is not merely a social or a civil contract between a man and woman, it is a covenant between three persons – God, a man and a woman – and that institution orders a relationship between a husband and a wife.

1.7. Authority in the Home

Man is the head of the union but not the ruler of the union. The man is the leader; the first amongst equals. The fact that the woman is made after man does not mean she is inferior, but that she follows the one who was already made before her. The sequence of God creating man first and woman second reveals how your marriage is supposed to resonate. The man is the decision maker and the woman is the proposer; she is the administrator, the brainstorming person. Your wife needs to be that one who brings you ideas so you can play your role as the executive officer of the union. On the other side, the woman needs a man who is able to encourage her so she will be able to implement his mind.

It is just like in a government: the president has the deciding power, but he has a whole cabinet who come up with what needs to be done. The wife is supposed to be the counsellor in terms of the ideas and the suggestions and the administration of what can be done. The man is the executive officer. He gives the authority, the permission and provides the resources for what needs to be done. The man makes the decision and delegates his wife to execute it. As a couple, there needs to be the aspect of trust amongst you. Your love, romance and compatibility will only go as far as your trust.

The wife is a companion, a helpmate and the associate of the man and not inferior to the man. The husband and wife are supposed to submit to each other; it is a mutual submission. To believe in authority on equal terms is scarce in our modern society. But one defers to the other because of the recognition of God's placement. If, as a wife, you give your husband his place of authority and respect, he will give his authority back to you. This is a deep, God-ordained longing in men; they want you to recognise their place as the head. They want to be acknowledged with respect and authority. Men want respect more than they want sex. The moment respect diminishes, the wife loses her attraction in the eyes of her husband. Unless she respects her husband, intimacy will be compromised.

Men, were created inwardly weak under the veneer of outward strength. Women, on the other hand, exhibit exterior beauty and are weak when compared to the outward strength of men, but they possess strong inward expressions. Women express these strengths in the talking to give articulation to their mind-set, emotions and psychology. A man would feel threatened in his authority if the woman does not give him the right place as the *proton* (first) figure in the

house: that nothing happens in the house without going through him or going before him. If the wife gives him this place, he will give his authority back to the wife.

The husband is the head of the house and the wife is the neck that turns the head. The wife can only remain the neck if she is under the head. It is the same with Christ and the Church. Christ gave us all His authority; He delegated His authority to the Church. As the Church, we cannot go about using that authority without recognising Christ as the head.

1.8. Roles in the Home

“And the lord God said, it is not good, it is not proper that man should be alone, I will make him a helpmate for him”

Genesis 2:18-KJV

The word ‘helpmate’ in the Septuagint, the Greek Old Testament, is ‘parakletos’. The wife is called to be to the husband what the Holy Spirit is to the Church. God brought forth woman as the helpmate, the companion and the amplifier of Adam. Adam was appointed as a leader, a cultivator and a keeper. There we have three roles assigned by God in the first garden wedding.

Man was a leader; he already had an assignment. This means employment comes before marriage. The man and woman must be employed before they get married because if a surprise employment comes during the marriage, it will break the patterns already installed in the marriage and the result of that will bring difficulties. A job that would separate husbands and wives from their children for a long period does not only compromise your marriage but your parenthood. That is why you need to find somebody who is already in the field with you. The fact that she is a helpmate means she is there to help you. If you do not have someone who is of that capacity, then, she does not qualify.

“But I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man and the head of Christ is God.”

1Corinthians 11:3-KJV

From this verse, it is seen that woman is not inferior to man, because essentially, God and Christ are one and the same. The Apostle Paul says, God, referring to the

Father, is the head of Christ. The Father is the head of the Son not in sense of essence, but in terms of Christ’s voluntary submission to the Father. Woman is submitted to man and man is head of woman not because they are essentially different but because they are essentially one and the same. But the woman, out of voluntary submission, submits to the husband. She is not inferior but equal to the man. There is none who is higher and the other lesser; just like the Father is not higher than the Son. They are essentially one and the same but the Son submits to the Father just like the wife submits to the husband. The husband is the leader; he leads by following what God reveals to him; just like Adam led by

following what God revealed to him.

Adam was a keeper; God asked him to keep the garden. The man has to guard the wife because the wife is the weaker vessel (1 Peter 3:7). Precious things are always fragile. Gold is precious because it can take any form as a metal. It can be bent and beaten into any form. God made woman the weaker vessel because she is supposed to reflect the beauty of the marriage. She is supposed to be the reflection of the state of the union.

“Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.”

1 Peter 3:7 (KJV)

You need to know women to dwell with them in knowledge. What you will see on the surface as behaviour and reaction means there is something deeper than that, which you have to understand. Husbands must honour their wives. Your wife is not your official launderer and cook. As a husband, your relationship with your wife will affect your relationship with God and also, as a wife, your relationship with your husband will affect your relationship with God because you are partakers of the grace of life. Your wife should be the first partaker of the grace God has given you.

Eve, the wife of Adam, was taken out of Adams side, which means she was inside of Adam and was brought out of him. This means Adam’s soul was cut asunder and the feminine became separate from the masculine. The concept of God is neither feminine nor masculine; God is Spirit. God our Father is an anthropomorphism. He is a person but He is neither male nor female. He is Spirit. When Jesus came to earth, He came as masculine. God calls Himself the many breasted One – the name “El Shaddai” (Gen. 17:1); this speaks of the maternity of God. God who is Father is at the same time mother and at the same time Son and He who is Son of God, is at the same time husband of the bride of Christ. These are different anthropomorphisms to teach us how to relate with God.

When God made man in His image, the masculine and the feminine were found in man. When He took Eve out of Adam’s side, the feminine was separated from the masculine, making man deficient in his emotions and the woman was also deficient in her soul. In the soul of man and woman, there are

two different tendencies, behaviour and perception of things and events.

1.9. Understanding the Sexes

i. Man is a logical thinker while woman is an emotional feeler

Man is intellectually inclined while woman is emotionally inclined. This does not mean that men are more intelligent than women, but women want to feel before they think and men want to think before they feel. It means in language, men communicate their thoughts and women communicate their feelings. Men express what they think, women hear what they feel. The problem in communication is that communication is not just words. What you see when you are reading a novel is not what you see when you are watching a film. Words convey images and men interpret those words through their minds; while women interpret those words through their emotions. This is because the woman is the weaker vessel and because she is the weaker vessel, she is insecure. She needs to be reaffirmed.

When you tell a man you love him once, it is enough for eternity but for the woman she keeps on asking to be sure continually. To a man, his language is impersonal but for a woman language is personal. She takes everything personally meanwhile the man may just be trying to communicate a concept. Men are impersonal, women are personal.

ii. Men are analytical, women are intuitive

Women can see danger from far. If husbands could listen to their wives in the areas where it involves intuition, they could use their analysis, together with their wife's intuition and make decisions. When it comes to making a decision, the man looks for the principle while the woman looks for the details. When it comes to choosing things psychologically, things reverse: When it comes to a woman making decisions, she wants the principles but the man wants the details.

iii. Men perform one task at a time but women multitask

Men are not prompt to take a decision. They take time to reflect and to think before making a decision. Women have a multi-task gene while men have a one-task gene: they perform one task at a time; they think in terms of one thing at a time. If you do not know how to deal with your wife with knowledge, you will not know how to deal with her as a weaker vessel. Happy wife, happy life; unhappy wife, unhappy life.

iv. *Men are resentful while women, instead of resenting, they take the guilt on themselves.*

A woman will accumulate all the guilt on her and suffer in silence. Men who do not know this change their wives for the negative. As a man, do not speak to your wife when you are angry or when you are annoyed because women misinterpret reactions unconsciously.

Women have a lot of assumptions and suspicions amongst themselves; that is why the greatest enemy to a woman is a woman. As a man, your role is to play the role of an affirmer and reaffirm your wife. That is how the suspicions will subside. The woman is always psychologically ready to fight. They compensate their weakness with noise.

v. *Men turn towards stability, women trend towards spontaneity*

Women spontaneously act on something they know is what they are supposed to do. But for a man, he is looking for stability; so he can stay in the same place for even twenty years.

Incompatibility in marriage does not exist; it is simply one person not wanting to know the other. When you consider all these differences and find areas of understanding, you are able to take your marriage forward. Just as Christ will not reveal Himself to you until you desire deeply to know Him, as a woman, you cannot know a man until you desire to know him. It is a virtue to know your husband. For the believer, the knowledge of a man given by God as head of the home is not a natural activity. Having knowledge of a man is something spiritual. Knowing your husband – what he loves and what he may not love at a particular time, how he reacts, who he wants to see and who he does not want to see, how to deal with what he feels, his comfort and discomfort – is not something you seek to know naturally. The more you desire to know him, the more it will be unveiled unto you. When a spouse fails to know the other, there will be unnecessary conflict and no fulfilment of God's purpose. This will steal the plan of God and the happiness of the marriage.

The woman's desire to know her husband has to be enhanced day after day, without which submission will not follow. The more you learn to know your husband, the more you will submit to him. Desire to know your husband as you desire to know Christ, who is the head of the Church.

When purpose gets into a relationship, it strengthens the agape love that was already present. Before you get married, you need to have a reason greater than love.

Section Two

The Choice of a Life Partner

2.1. Choosing Your Spouse Wisely

“Whoso findeth a wife, finds a good thing and obtains favour from the Lord.”

Proverbs 18:22-KJV

Your spouse is your life partner. You do not get to choose your father or mother, sons or daughters, brothers or sisters. Your choice of a life partner is the only family relationship in your life which God has given you the opportunity to choose; therefore, choose wisely. It is rather unfortunate that the unique choice that God has given to everybody is taken so lightly. The quality of your life, of whether or not you will fulfil God’s plan for your life, is determined by the person you marry.

Marriage is a finding process. The verse in Proverbs does not say ‘*whoso stumbleth on a wife*’, nor does it say ‘*whoso parents presents him a wife*’ or ‘*whoso friend presents him a wife.*’ Neither does it say, your choice of a life partner is based on a prophecy or a dream. The word ‘*find*’ is the word ‘*matsa*’ in Hebrew which means to investigate. So, he who investigates and finds a wife has found a good thing and obtains favour from the Lord. When marriage is done properly, it will increase your life.

According to Proverbs 18:22, the role is clearly indicated. The man finds the woman and not vice versa. The woman needs to believe that God has given her the favour that the right man will find her. As a woman, God has appointed a place where the man will find you. Every marriage in the Bible was at a very specific location. That is why it is important for you to burn for the purpose of God and teach your children to live for the right cause.

Jacob met Rachel at a well where she was tending her father’s flock. Boaz met Ruth when she was working in the field. As a woman, you should spend time serving where God has assigned you to be. Service beautifies. That is why in Scriptures, you find the Patriarchs who fell in love with the servants of their wives because the fact that they were serving, they became beautiful in their eyes. When the wives of those Patriarchs neglected service and the handmaidens took over service in the hands of those wives, the Patriarchs had children with the handmaidens of their wives.

There is nothing more beautiful under the sun than a man or woman serving in their purpose. The person who is God-appointed will be able to recognize you when you are in your field and have received grace to be found. Service in the purpose of God is service without interest.

It is service that honours and pleases God. It is service with genuine love for God. This comes also to reveal whether you, as a woman, can trust God for a life partner. There are pressures which will come against you, but if you can trust God for eternal salvation, why can you not trust Him for a partner?

When God prepares a partner for you, he or she is custom-made. Trusting God would mean that you will be patient. If you are not patient to get married, then you are not mature. It is the man who finds the woman but this does not mean that the woman plays a passive role, or that she just needs to accept whosoever finds her without her own right. God is not going to force someone on you whom you do not like.

2.2. Things That Influence People to Make the Wrong Choice of a Life Partner

i. Association

The people with whom you work will influence your choice. When you associate with people who do not see what you see, fellowship where you fellowship, neither do they believe in the message you believe, they will influence your choice. Accepting such a person means you accept a man or a woman who does not have your spiritual values. Once you are in Christ, all things change and people will need to qualify to be your friend. The only qualification is Christ because you have become Christ and all that attracts you is in Christ.

If you are pleased by something or someone who is not in Christ, you will be attracted by a life partner who is not in Christ.

What are the bases of your conversations with friends? Your commitment towards a friendship will determine your commitment towards your marriage. Worldly conversation will attract people of the world. When you have friendships, associations, that are worldly, they will certainly influence your choice of a life partner. Their voices will go to the back of your mind and affect the choices you make.

ii. Motives

Marrying for social gratification, security, or financial resources, is getting married for the wrong motives. When you serve for the right motives, you will be patient for the person God has prepared for you.

Marrying with wrong motives and for the wrong motive is death in itself. The lesser things are found in the greater.

Actions speak louder than words but in heaven, motives speak louder than actions. God does not just look at the actions you produce but the motives behind the actions. If you marry for a career, to get a position, to get a nurse at home, someone to take care of your children, cook or to solve the problem of your low self-esteem, it is a wrong motive. As a woman, if you get married to a man to solve a problem on his side, or on your side as well, you will never know true happiness that comes from God because there is never happiness when you

are out to exploit someone else.

iii. Pressure

If you marry out of family pressure, or maybe because you see your friends getting married, it is the wrong reason. A choice influenced by pressure, most of the time, is the wrong choice because quality does not come out of pressure. It is time to sit and think why you are making a choice. The characteristics of your choice may not be God's.

Although you have a choice to make, a life partner is given by God. Most of the time, when God assigns somebody in your life, if you sit and think about your own interest and characteristics, it may not correspond with what you want. When you are one spirit with God, you will locate the person He has chosen. Trust Him for your life partner.

iv. Haste

Someone getting married at the age of twenty does not mean you should get married at the same age as the person. When you are hasty, there is a tendency that you make the wrong choice. Also, having a job does not mean you are ready for marriage.

v. The Lust of the Flesh

“Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul. Live such good life amongst the pagans that though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see the good deeds and glorify God in the day of visitation.”

1Peter 2:11

Some men get married for sexual gratification. Excessive sexual desire is not a reason for you to make a choice for a life partner. Sinful desire will war against your soul. The soul is the administrator. If the Spirit of God does not prevail over your choices, then your desires which proceed from your un-renewed mind will stand against God's will for your life. If your soul is not subjected to the Spirit of God in your life, then there will be no divine administration of the things of God in your life.

Paul the Apostle tells Timothy to abstain from lust. Lust of youth is not just limited to fornication, but the soulish ambition to become somebody important

at all cost. It can make you willing to marry anybody in order to have a name. It also means looking at what is attractive to the eyes. All that glitters is not gold; it will only cause you to war against your own soul and destabilize your life forever. The reasons for which the unbeliever chooses should not be your reasons for choosing. The proof that you are directed by the Spirit of God should be seen in your manner of life, in your home and in the way you live with your partner.

vi. *Pride of Life*

It is refusing to live up to the standard you are supposed to live in at a particular time of your life. There are times when you need to accept discomfort and accept to serve, believing God for your destiny. Some people get married because they need someone to supply their needs. When you jump over stages in life, the best of you will never emerge. Marriage does not give you insurance.

vii. *Disobedience*

Some know that the relationship they are in is not the will of God, but because of shame, they have chosen to disobey God. God will never give us someone who will hurt us, because He longs to see us happy and fulfilled. Disobedience is gradual; rebellion is gradually installed into the heart and a hardened heart will produce disobedience. **viii. Solitude**

Some people get married because they need someone to talk with. If this is your reason, then you are getting married for the wrong reason. The need for a friend is the wrong reason to have a life partner. If you are single, fellowship with God, build intimacy with Him so that He will reveal to you His mind. Enjoy communion with God while you are single. In those times of communion, He longs to reveal great things to you concerning His purpose.

ix. *Satisfying Parents' Desire*

If you get married because you want to satisfy your parents' desire, or maybe because they have chosen someone for you, it is simply incorrect.

2.3. Questions to Answer before Saying ‘I Do’

We get into marriage by an oath which we solemnly make before the Church of Jesus Christ and God Himself. This is an oath that you must mean; words that you must say from the depth of your heart. For this reason, there are questions you will need to answer before you say ‘I do.’

“Which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest happily, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all behold it begin to mock him”

Luke 14:28-KJV

Marriage is something that is built block by block. Many people enter into marriage without first of all calculating the cost. There is a cost to happiness. A successful marriage is not an accident, but a result of deliberate choices and conscious decision made before you get into the marriage. Before you say ‘I do’, there are questions you must answer. It is important that you understand that you never enter a marriage with the intention that you are going to reform your spouse-to-be because you may not have that luxury. So it is a false presumption. If you are building on the wrong foundation, nothing can be done.

2.3.1. Temperament

You need to ask whether or not your intended spouse is an introvert or extrovert. This is important because temperaments have four major categorization: Melancholy, Phlegmatic, Choleric, and Sanguine. To help you understand these different complexities, we have put them in four different words: your personality will either be passive, domineering, firm or manipulative.

i. The Passive Person

This is a person who always says ‘yes.’ They never say ‘no’. They do not express their disappointments or convictions in a way that hurts the other person. There is that sacrifice of feelings and such a person takes guilt and responsibility upon themselves. This is an introvert. If you have a relationship with someone who is an introvert and you are not caring, and do not seek to know what they are going through, such a person will carry pain and keep on sacrificing their feelings in order to claim to maintain peace. They will sacrifice

their happiness on the altar of peace and due to the fact that they are so unhappy and are not sought to be understood, they will implode.

Overtime, such a person will carry grievances. They will smile, but inside they are suffering. If you are jolly good-boy with whom everything goes, you will think you have a wife who never complains, although she is not enjoying the marriage and does not have happiness. You cannot make such a person talk anyhow. You need to know how to approach them to bring out their feelings. The passive person's way of getting back is to cut off their feelings.

ii. *The Domineering Person*

This is a person who reacts on the outside but does not hold on the inside. Such a person would call you names; they would be ambitious and want to exploit the maximum of what is presented before them. They want to exploit the maximum of every given situation. The domineering person does not know how to keep relationships because for them, everything must go their way, otherwise they destroy everything.

A domineering person can be touched in the inside. It is with calm that such a person is treated. It would be pointless trying to verbally defend yourself, or prove that they are wrong. Do not seek to win an argument and lose a relationship. In every conflict, there must be a redeemer. The redeemer of the marriage assumes the responsibility of the problem and takes it upon themselves to save the situation. Since men do not like to see women angry, they always tend to play the role of a redeemer but the redeemer must not always be the husband.

If you are always on a quest to show that you are right, if you think your marriage is a debate competition, you are going to win the debate and lose your marriage. The woman, being the weaker vessel, may always want to prove that she is right. But marriage is not a series of debate whereby you always want to prove that you are right, even if you are indeed right. Men love to be right. In Christ, we are not natural but spiritual beings so we need to put our pride aside and know how to come back to our spouse and say 'I am sorry.'

The domineering person does not know how to say they are sorry; they would rather say it is the fault of the other. They use intimidation, threat or force. The domineering person is to be treated with care or calm. The defence mechanism of the domineering wife is that she argues, shouts and threatens to

leave.

iii. *The Firm Person*

The firm person freely speaks their mind without thinking of the consequences. They give the truth directly, not necessarily in love. The domineering person would reach for a moment while the firm person would make a decision and never backs off. The firm person would make a choice even if it would hurt them. They know how to disagree without being disagreeable. One who is firm needs to be approached with much diplomacy, because they know how to make up their mind and not come back to the issue.

A woman who is firm can look at a man in the eye and say “this relationship is over”, and does not shed a tear or come back to her words. If your spouse-to-be is someone firm, you will need to know how to approach them in diplomacy otherwise they will make decisions that will hurt the marriage.

In Christ, we are supposed to give grace because we have received grace. You need to be a distributor of grace. Even when you think there is no way you can give grace because your feelings have been hurt, Christ was hurt for you, bruised for you and today He still loves you no matter your mistakes. A firm person must be approached with understanding. The firm person’s defence mechanism is the hardness with which they deliver the truth, without thinking of the consequences.

iv. *The Manipulative Person*

This person is subtle in their reaction. What you see is not all there is. Women, in their Adamic nature are manipulative. Everything they say and want is to manipulate the man for their own interest. The manipulative person uses the method of control which is to appeal to sentiments.

A man who is manipulative would say ‘*after all that I have done for you?*’ A woman who is manipulative would say ‘*I thought you love me.*’ This is all manipulation; it is an appeal to the emotions to gain control. The defence mechanism of the person who is manipulative is that they are going to appeal to sentiments; they will use crocodile tears; they will use sex as a weapon.

For there to be a relationship, you need to know the temperament of the person you are getting married to. This is important because psychology teaches us that there are four mentalities in every personality. Man is a multiple

personality. These different types of self-include:

The public self, which is the 'you' that you want everybody to know. This is what you consider to be the best of you. It is where all your training is focalized and all maximum interest is put to have a beautiful image of yourself.

When people begin a relationship, they show the intended spouse the public self, and do everything so this is the only side that is seen. The public self is the self of the makeup that people see. It is the guy who speaks beautiful American and British English. It is not hypocrisy, it is psychology.

Then there is what is called the hidden self which is the private self; it is the 'you' that you know and you do not want anybody else to know. Your private self, which is your hidden self, are secrets, addictions and bad habits. When you begin to relate with someone intended for marriage, they must see your private self, because until they see your private self, they do not know you.

The blind self is the part of you that you do not know that others know. A part of you that you do not see but everybody else can see. Habits, attitude you exhibit without knowing. You may not know how to treat other people right. It is the role of your spouse to adjust your blind self.

There is an unknown self. It is the part of you that you do not know but only God knows. That is where your potential is. That part of you is gradually unveiled as you serve God faithfully.

These aspects of your temperaments will determine your relationship. For example, they will lead you to ask questions like:

Is your spouse-to-be confident or suspicious?

Are they an indoor or outdoor person? If your intended spouse is an outdoor person and you are an indoor person, there must be a ground for agreement. It does not mean two people of different temperaments cannot agree. On the contrary, if temperament is understood, there are bases for there to be a good relationship.

How do you feel after you come from a conversation with them? If you feel low spirited and exhausted, it is a dangerous sign, because it means there is nothing that the person is contributing to your life that brings energy.

Your husband or wife is not the source of your joy; you are in that marriage to give them joy. You do not enter the marriage as a taker of love, joy or sex; if that is the mentality, there will be no happiness in that marriage. The word 'makarios' is blessedness, which means to give and it is more blessed to give than to receive. When you are truly in a relationship ordained of God, each partner would want to initiate the happiness and joy of the other. The moment the subject arises about not making the other happy, it means the purpose of marriage has been misunderstood. Your spouse is not there to make you happy; you are there to make them happy. If you cannot make your partner happy, it is not ordained of God.

Can you edify them spiritually? Do they give you a deaf ear when you talk to them about spiritual things so much such that at the end, instead of being edified, you are exhausted? It is an indication that you are not giving out and if you proceed into marriage, you will not be happy tomorrow. Your joy is found in the joy that you give; your happiness is found in the fact that you make the other happy.

According to the psychology of the world, if your spouse does not make you happy, you should leave. If your joy is not received now, it means that person can never make you happy. There are people you discuss with and it is a struggle to make conversation or to keep interest. The proof that someone is your life partner is that you find joy in giving than in receiving.

How does he or she handle difficult situations?

Have you had the opportunity to face a crisis together? What is their reaction? Does he or she place emphasis on the crisis that concerns them and take equal importance on the crisis that concerns you? Their true personality emerges in the crisis that concerns you. If you have not had the opportunity to face a challenge with your spouse-to-be, you need to wait.

Is there vindictiveness or malice in the relationship?

Is the person someone who wants to take revenge and cannot forgive easily?

The temperament of someone who cannot forgive is the temperament of someone who is always going to be mention the things which have happened in the past or even things in the future.

Is he or she one who rejoices in the downfall of others? If they are that kind of

person, they would see any demise of yours as a point of having revenge over you.

Are they excessive? Do they know how to stop talking when it is time to stop talking? Do they value the importance of silence and your personal privacy?

“A wholesome tongue is a tree of life; but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit.”

Proverbs 15:4-KJV

Is the tongue of your wife to-be a tree of life or does she use it to crush your spirit? Does she have uncontrollable impulses?

Do you know how to manage your anger and does your spouse to-be know how to manage their anger? Do not express your anger in the presence of those you love. You need to learn anger management. In anger, you manifest your worst traits. When you are quick tempered, you display folly.

2.3.2. Education

What is the I.Q of your spouse to be?

Do they feel intellectually threatened by your own intellectual capacities? If a man feels threatened by a woman’s intellectual capacities, he is always going to be reactionary because he is going to think she is trying to do something against him.

Does your spouse only know about school and not life? It is possible for your spouse to be academically educated but uneducated in issues concerning life. They may know nothing about withdrawing money from a bank account, nothing about insurance, and other issues. Having a job will expose you to some of these experiences including conflict management.

How does your intended spouse relate with the social world? Will you be able to present them to your colleagues when there is an annual event in the company? Can they participate or take part in a conversation about the issues of society; and can they relate socially within your sphere of influence? Are they presentable?

How much does he or she know about parenting, being a leader, leading a home?

2.3.3. Background

Does your partner come from a united home or broken home? Are their brothers and sisters united? Do they love one another?

If it is a broken home, they will import the luggage with them. When you get married to a person, you are marrying their history, culture and family upbringing.

“Better is little with the fear of the lord than great treasure and trouble therewith.”

Proverbs 15:16

What are the traumatizing experiences of your childhood, and that of your partner to be?

Do they come from a Christian home? If not the parents will despise your faith.

How do they deal with your role as a minister, or an active member of the Church?

As a minister, you need to choose someone who has taken their stand in their family because it is up to your spouse to be able to defend your role in front of their family and likewise, it is your role to defend your spouse in front of your family. You are each other's defender and ambassador in front of your in-laws. Most women think that if a man is socially positioned, they have nothing to defend. But we are talking about defending beliefs; for example, his role as a pastor; not being ashamed to stand and make them understand that he is an honourable person. This cannot be shown if you do not have honour for your spouse.

What kind of relationship does your partner entertain with their parents and siblings? Are they close? Are they estranged? If they do not have a good relationship with their parents and siblings, it means there is a relationship issue. This is a dangerous sign. There must be parental consent in both families.

What is the reputation of your spouse-to-be in the church, socially, in the family, and amongst colleagues?

What is the tribe of your partner-to-be? Does their tribe perform practices that are anti-Christian? Will they want to impose such practices on us upon getting married? Is there a ritual to be performed before you get married?

Is your spouse-to-be from a tribe where upon the death of the husband the wife becomes second wife to another? What is their tribe's view on the role of men and women? Do they believe in polygamy? What will be the pressure they put if a child is not forth coming within the first two years of the marriage?

Has your spouse put conditions in place to demarcate between his family (with you) and the family he is from?

2.3.4. Spiritual Commitments

Does your partner-to-be complement your efforts to fulfil God's plan or do they simply want to play their own role?

Do you have the approval of the Holy Spirit concerning this relationship?

In case you are a pastor, what is her view of fulltime ministry and is she convinced of the value you carry as a pastor? Does she know the honour that you have or the gift that you are? Does she respect your personal value as a Man of God? Does she honour your ministerial status and spiritual empowerments and can she speak about them? Has she changed something in your life? What does she know about you spiritually? Does she believe in your endowments?

Do you have Pastoral approval in this relationship?

Does the future marriage threaten to estrange you from your spiritual parents? Has that relationship drawn you closer to your spiritual parents and to the Church?

What are your future partner's view on giving? Will you give as a couple?

2.3.5. Respect

Does your future partner have respect for you, or do they only have self-respect? Do they know how to respect themselves in public in the side of others? Do they have a personal sense of dignity and responsibility? Do you respect them for who they are? Do they bring out the best of you or are you becoming worse?

2.3.6. Sexuality

What are their perceptions about sexuality? Will there be sexual compatibility? Is there simply an emotional attachment – in other words, is the motive solely to derive sexual satisfaction from the partner? Has your partner emphasized on their sexual need in the relationship above any other thing? Has your intended spouse been sexually abused when they were growing up? Have they been raped? Are you open enough to talk about your sexual status? What other partners have they had in their life? What are the attachments they still maintain with those partners? Are those partners in their daily sphere of influence?

2.3.7. Communication

Is your partner-to-be one who can verbally communicate with or do you communicate just with touch? If your communication is just with touch, it means there is no deep communication. Text messaging is not a means of communication. How deep is your verbal communication? Can you communicate grievances without hurting one another? In discussions, are your ideas valued or are they always dismissed, not considered or are they treated as important?

What are your points of view in life that are different? Do you perceive life from the same world view or are you seeing the world from different perceptions? How do they react when they are angry and how do you respond to that?

2.3.8. Money

Money is one of the main reasons for divorce in a marriage. What are the spending habits of your partner? Are they under the impression of always being under the pressure of buying something new? Are they in debts? Do they have a job? How much do they earn? Will you have a joint-account? How will budgeting be solved? How are you going to manage household expenditures?

Is your wife-to-be capable of doing something if your source of income is suspended? The wife is equally a provider (Proverbs 31: 16) and the husband needs to allow the wife to learn how to provide for herself.

What are the things your spouse considers worthy of investment? Do they consider things which have intrinsic value as an asset?

Is your husband-to-be on a wild goose chase? That is, does he always promise to do something that he ends up not doing?

2.2.9. In-Laws

How do your parents feel about your intended spouse? Take courage and ask them and correct whatever they would say that is negative.

Has the subject been clearly bought whether the in-laws are going to come and live with you after marriage? The right policy in the home is that in-laws are welcome at all times but not with the intention of them staying; except with the exception of an emergency like health issues or loss of a partner.

Does your spouse-to-be respect your parents or will it become an issue after marriage? Is your intended spouse of a tribe that will view you as illegitimate? Are your in-laws traditionalists? You need to be radical with what you believe.

Do they or do you have hereditary diseases (heart diseases, diabetes)? What is your medical history and that of your spouse-to-be? Prevention must be the policy, which means you need to educate yourself and watch yourself even through dieting.

Have you checked your genotype compatibility? There are many things that will be avoided if people go with science. Science is not an enemy to faith. If there is no compatibility, there are certain scientific solutions to that.

Do you want children? When do you want children? Will you be offended if the child is of a particular gender? Are you ready to handle the pressure if the forth coming child is delayed? You both need to understand your time schedule before marriage, and know how to manage it in order to have intimacy.

2.4. Think and Re-think

Happiness in marriage is not an accident. No one is successful by pure coincidence. It is as a result of a deliberate choice made by each party in the marriage. You do not enter into something which is as important as marriage without preparation. Manifestation is when preparation meets opportunity. The manifestation of God's grace and glory for your marriage will only take place once you have prepared for that marriage. If you do not prepare, you will spend your time repairing.

Marriage is not some kind of miracle. It is not a chemical reaction. Marriage is work and it does not work if you do not make it work. Very few people enter into it prepared. They enter into marriage with high expectations and low preparation and the result of this is an unpleasant surprise. Marriage will either give you a quantum leap forward or a detour. When you are in the wrong relationship with a person, the influence that person exerts on you can be seen in your relationship with spiritual authorities. People do not change when they get married; they simply unveil who they are.

The only family relationship God has given man the right to choose is the choice of your spouse. In the Garden of Eden, He brought the first woman to Adam and presented her as his wife. You will still have to find the wife that God has appointed for you. That is why God does presentations. When Adam fell, he said 'it is the wife you gave me' and God said, *from this day forward, you will have to find your own wife.*

When we are in a relationship, we are to build boundaries. If not, the excitement of the flesh will cloud your judgment; it will prevent you from discerning properly and you will find yourself in the wrong relationship only after you have exchanged vows and found a ring on your finger. When the purpose of a thing is not known, abuse is inevitable.

In marriage, your commitment to God is seen in the way the man commits to the woman and the way the woman commits to the man. The first commitment is to the institution of marriage. You should make sure you are not influenced by whatever it is that brings about wrong choices: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, pride of life or even family.

When you get married, it is a declaration of responsibility. No one else is responsible for you when you get married. If you ask yourself the questions which you are to ask yourself before getting married and fear arises in your heart, it is an indication that it is not the right person. We have not received the spirit of fear but of love by which the Spirit of God cries in us 'Abba Father.' The peace of God in your heart is what confirms that the person you are with is the right person for your life. While going through the questions, there is an unshakable peace that will preserve you from fear or doubt. Marriage, as instituted by God, is not a horizontal relationship, that is, you and your husband only; but it is a vertical one: both of you with God.

2.5. Defining and Distinguishing Between the Four Kinds of Love

Most people say they are in love; but what kind of love are they in? Some say they have experienced love at first sight. Love at first sight does not have a biblical precedent. In one way or the other, each and every one has been in love before. Even when you were in primary school, you had been in love. What was happening at the time you thought you were in love was that all of the mechanisms God has placed in your system began to operate: attraction towards the opposite sex, understanding the notion of human love and human friendship. It was not love because you did not end up marrying that person. This is the state many find themselves in today and they want to get married. That is not love, it is what I call Madison Square Avenue love; Hollywood love.

This is one of the reasons for the high rate of divorce in the world today because many people simply have a crush on someone. This is what is called lust. God forbid you entertain sexual relations at that time.

What kind of love are you in? Human love is not the foundation for a Christian marriage. There are three kinds of human love:

i. Phileo:

Phileo is the highest kind of human love. It is love for mutual interests. In other words, it invests only after profit has been obtained. Phileo is the love that is attracted by advantages and what each person can gain from the other. That is why many practice profiling. Phileo is a love of emotional bonding.

No emotion is permanent. That is why phileo love is not permanent. The proof is that the friends you have had in your life have not remained permanent. When there are circumstances in your life, you lose friends and gain others, because phileo love is emotional. This explains why people get into marriage without even knowing what it is all about; they were depending on feelings.

For example, in your relationship with God, you do not always feel His love. There are days you do not feel loved of God; that is why God never told us that we will know Him by feelings. He said without faith it is impossible to please Him for He is a rewarder of them that seek Him diligently. You recognize God's love for you daily by faith. If God's love for you were emotional, He would not be a constant lover. Emotional feelings are measurable. To say you

want to build a lifelong relationship based on emotions is a wrong foundation.

Phileo love does not love the person but something about the person. It says things like, *she is intelligent, she has a master degree, I love her hair, etc.* If you do not love your wife for the sake of her person, after twenty years, you will want to divorce and remarry. This is the origin of extra marital affairs and adultery. You find men in relationships with ladies twenty years younger than they are and this has caused women to be under such guilt and obsession about their appearance.

It is not everything your eyes desire that you should give to yourself. Make a difference between what your eyes desire and what your heart desires. Many are in relationships because they yielded to temptations. Phileo love builds loyalties based on accumulated interest; it is motivated by benefits. The relationship is only sweet as long as there is something on the table that both parties can benefit from.

ii. Eros Love:

Eros is sensual desire. Many times, when someone says ‘I love you’, they are talking about sensual desire. The majority of men get into a relationship for sexual advantages. Men are not released from bodily chemicals on a monthly basis as women are. Their hormones are not diluted on a monthly basis as is the case for women. There must be a release before the sex drive breaks down. This means men will always have a higher sex drive compared to women. That sensual and sexual desire is known as eros.

In the Greek language, the word “eros” does not merely refer to sexuality. It also speaks of ambition; a sensual desire to accomplish a particular goal or to build yourself. When something or someone is your obsession, it is the work of the love called eros. Addictions are based on eros love.

iii. Storge Love

The noblest of human love is called storge love. It is the love of a parent for a child; the love of family bonds. But storge love can become selfish. The parents’ love for their child is the love that is going to develop throughout life and the role of the parent towards the child changes throughout life.

It is true that parents must protect their children but they must also,

unfortunately, allow them to make their own mistakes; it is the only way the child learns how to grow. The role of parents is to protect the child to the maximum but not to the extent of not allowing them to make their own mistakes. **iv. Agape love**

This love is spiritual; it is the God-kind of love. It is an endowment and does not come naturally. It is the nature of God planted in our hearts by the Spirit of God.

2.6. Difference Between Phileo and Agape

Agape is unconditional. It is not an emotional response. It is a spiritual force which is pure and it is a choice. Agape love is powerful because it sanctifies the other three kinds of love.

Friendship based on agape is a friendship that will never be broken. Eros love based on agape is love that you will never want to replace with something else. Storge love sanctified by agape is a more powerful bond than just a family bond.

Knowing agape love is the only guarantee that you will be able to recognize real love. Many in the Church do not know the love of God. They have not experienced God's love. You can never recognize real love if you have not encountered the love of God. If you marry someone who does not know God as love, or know that they can give themselves away without interest and that God's love is received not because of any interest but because God is love, then you are in to destroy your own life.

2.7. Counterfeit Categories of Marriage

i. Arranged Marriage

Most of the time, in the African society, parents put together a couple without the parties involved having any right to choose or without their full volition. An arranged marriage is marrying the spouse of your parents' profile. When you want to get married and you say, *what will mummy or daddy think*, then you are looking for someone who meets the profile of your parents.

ii. Social Security Marriage

It is marrying for the state or stature of the other, and the advantages it brings in one's professional life and status. There are people who have not accomplished anything in life and they want to use their marriage to prove that they have accomplished something.

iii. Emergency Marriage

An emergency marriage is linked to some form of pressure. It is when a man and woman have not had time to develop their courtship but want to unfortunately get married. A true relationship is built with time; impatience is a sign of immaturity. In an emergency marriage, something rises up that gives the people the mind-set that they must marry at all cost; for example, pregnancy or in a case where one of them has to travel.

iv. Self-Esteem Marriage

It is people getting married because of low self-esteem or inferiority complex. It is when someone thinks they need a new start in life; so they need to get married to feel accomplished. Marriage does not establish your identity; you should have an established identity before you get married. You do not change after you get married. Marriage amplifies whatever you are. Getting married will not make you what you are not.

v. Fantasy Marriages

Many young women think that they are in a category in which, unless they get married, they are Cinderella, suffering and caught up in the basement of life not able to do anything. Your life does not start when you get married. You need to bring life to your marriage, and not focus on bringing marriage into your

life. Many do not bring life to their marriage because they have lived their life so miserable, waiting for someone to come and pick them up and as a result, they do not know how to live in the marriage.

Be someone who knows how to live. That is why it is important to be founded in the Owner of life, because you cannot build your relationship without the life which He alone can give. The Giver of life, God, is the only one who gives you the ability to contaminate your own days with life; to impart your marriage and relationship with the life He gives. God is the only one who enlightens love day after day because the power of love is in God and God is love. The power of love in a relationship resides in the one who gives love and the one who is love.

vi. *Peer Pressure Marriage*

Most of the time, when we see our friends, classmates, brothers and sister getting married, we get into the pressure of also wanting to get married. Paul the apostle said, comparing themselves with themselves, they were not wise (2 Cor. 10:12). You should get married because you want to, not because someone else is getting married. You get married when your spirit is appeased with the decision; when there is union between your soul and your motives, union between yourself and your spirit, union between your motives and the purpose of marriage, and when you are free from considering what others may think about you or do.

vii. *Next-Step Marriage*

This is when two people who are friends decide that they need to go to the “next level.” Friendship does not equal to marriage. Just because there is a platonic relationship between a man and woman does not always mean it has to end up in marriage.

viii. *“Charismaniac” Marriage*

It is marriage based on visions, prophecies and dreams; it is counterfeit marriage. When God brought Eve to Adam in the Garden of Eden, Adam still had the right to choose.

ix. *Desperation Marriage*

It is when, after waiting for long, you say yes to whosoever comes your

way first. Impatience is the sign of immaturity. Many people make permanent choices because they get impatient, as a result they get into desperation marriage. When you say someone is your husband or wife, every form of objective thinking is taken away.

x. *Mutual interest marriage*

Many people, unfortunately, get married for mutual interest. It is saying *now, I have someone who will legally satisfy my sexual desires, cook for me, and take care of my parents and children.*

xi. *Seduction Marriage*

This is when a man or a woman portrays something that they are not. Before you get married, there must be transparency of personality. When you are getting married, the person you are getting married to needs to know every part of you. They must not have the impression that your public self is your only self. The word of God says that Adam and Eve were naked but were not ashamed. Marriage is the capacity to be naked and not ashamed. Naked and not ashamed means you can expose yourself to your spouse without being ashamed of it.

xii. *Emotional Marriage*

When you meet someone with whom you feel accepted, there will be an emotional high. The statement 'love is blind' is true, but this refers to eros love and not agape love. When a man wants a woman, he sees nothing else; he is actually in love with and desiring something about her and not necessarily the woman herself. Real love becomes unconditional, but eros love, which is the physical love that inflames passions and sensual desires, does not. Many times people have this emotional high and think it is love and all that is needed for love. Feelings are not permanent. When you love by faith, emotions are activated but you are not led by the emotions.

xiii. *Recomposed Marriage*

This is when someone gets married, gets divorced, then goes to destroy the marriage of another person, and takes over their wife or husband. This does not mean people cannot remarry after divorce; there are clear parameters where

remarriage is permitted. If someone is divorced for legitimate reason, he or she shall remarry. In a case whereby you want to snatch somebody's wife or husband, God will never be on your side; it is not a marriage God permits.

Section Three

Communication and Conflict Resolution in Marriage

“And if you marry, you have not sinned, and if a virgin marry she has not sin nevertheless, such shall have trouble in the flesh but I spare you.”

1 Corinthians 7:28-KJV

Paul teaches us that when you get married, you will have trouble in the flesh and because each and every one of us has tendencies to carnality, there are problems with marriage. Problems in the life of a Christians is an indication that he is walking in the flesh.

A theologian in the Catholic Church, St Francis Xavier, prayed the following prayer:

‘Oh God, grant me the courage to change the things that I can change and the serenity to accept the things that I cannot change and the wisdom to know the difference.’

It is not everything in your marriage you will be able to change. It is a remarkable reality that people seldom change positively after they get married. They might change negatively, but after someone has gotten married, seldom do they change for the better. They no longer see it a necessity to hide the things they were hiding when he was just revealing his public self to the person he wanted to marry. You cannot change your mate after you are already married. This means you will have to learn something called acceptance. You need to learn to accept your spouse. God’s love is acceptance. God has accepted us in Christ Jesus just as we are. His love is not based on the fact that we should first change, but He loves us as we are, and He is not going to leave us as we are.

There are major sources of problems in marriage all over the world. This is because of the different cultures, levels of education and religious beliefs. Man was created for relationships. When God created man, man’s first relationship was with God. His second relationship was with woman then they had children, and man’s third relationship was with children. Then their children had children and society was formed. The common characteristics of these relationships is communication: God spoke to man, man spoke to God; man spoke to woman, woman spoke to man; man spoke to his children and his children spoke to him. The quality of our relationship is determined by the

quality of our communication.

Communication is to relationship what blood is to the human body. Without the flow of blood in the body, there will be death. The signs that a relationship is dying is the inability to sustain quality communication, because there are people who can speak all day together on the phone and they hide the fact that they cannot be deep with each other. All they mention are superficialities. Quality communications determine the quality of the relationship. Those who have had the opportunity to have quality communications become closer, whether it be in your relationship with God, with your wife or with your children, or in the Church.

What do you do with someone if you have an opportunity to be with them for just ten minutes? The quality of the communication you have with them will determine whether your relationship is going to increase or decrease. If you do not bring quality information, your relationship will not increase. Communication is defined by the exchange of information between people. Where there is no information, there is no communication; there is no understanding. Where there is no understanding, there is no relationship. Communication is not just speaking; it is a combination of three things:

Ø What we say

Ø How we say it

Ø When we say it

What we say is the content of what we desire to be communicated. How we say it is the intonation of the voice, the temperament in which it is said, and the body language which is adopted when it is said. When it is said speaks of the timing of the conversation. In communication, you speak when someone is disposed to listen.

Isn't it interesting that most of the time it is not exactly what you say that is communicated? For example, you could say "I am sorry" in a way that indicates arrogance, lack of contrition or un-repentance. You can say the same statement with the intonation of humility and sincerity. The choice of words is important but that is not all. Communication needs these other elements to be effective without which what you are saying may not be taken into consideration. It may be overlooked and communication thus becomes

defective. When communication is defective, it gives room for misunderstanding.

Misunderstanding is a serious problem for a couple because there is a lot of talking done but no communication. There is a wrong deduction over the things said. This proves that communication needs to be learnt. Communication is important because it does not just require hearing verbal words, but it is an impartation of the person speaking. It discloses to you the person talking. Once you learn communication, in listening to a conversation, you can detect someone's strengths and weaknesses. You can know what they value; you can understand their belief systems and their visions just by listening as a result of understanding communication. There are various kinds of communications:

3.1. Verbal Communication

“For in everything we offend all, if any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.”

James 3:2-KJV

“Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.”

Colossians 4:6-KJV

Paul and James teach us something about the power of speech. The tongue is the instrument God has given us to express the content of our heart. James describes it as being the most deadly part in the human anatomy, with the greatest potential of doing hurt, which means that in every relationship it is going to be the problem. Paul takes this a step further and says we need to salt, to disinfect, our tongue. Salt was used as a disinfectant two thousand years ago. When Paul relates salt to the tongue, those who read that letter knew that Paul was associating the power of the tongue with human waste. If you could physically see some of the things you say, you would see human waste. Is your tongue ministering grace?

We all need to disinfect our tongues in order to minister grace and not death. There is a principle called ‘garbage in, garbage out’: what you put in, comes out. What you meditate about your spouse will come out in the form of words. Many times people are meditating on their hurts and they meditate on the negative aspects of their spouse and the result is that words come forth to hurt. We need to learn to speak; we need to learn how to present issues and we need to learn how to answer, guarding our anger and responding without trying to be the winner in the argument.

You need to learn to solve all your differences and all the things that could be a source argument in your marriage. If you want to get married and you have not yet had an argument with the person you want to get married to, it is not a good sign. Arguments reveal different points of view. They are necessary to synchronize your worldview. That synchronization takes place when you resolve your conflict after the argument. After an argument you need to go back and find out what was the source of the argument and try to resolve it at all course. You need to learn the timing of your words.

‘To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: a time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;’

Ecclesiastes 3:1, 7-KJV

Silence is powerful because it cannot be misunderstood or misinterpreted. In every conflict, there needs to be a redeemer: the person who takes it upon themselves to save the situation. One of the ways the situation is saved is by allowing your spouse to express their grievances. When your spouse speaks, even if it is in anger or in a state that is unpleasant, you need to train yourself to stay silent and listen.

In every enterprise, there are occasions where the employees are given the opportunity to express their grievances. If not, all of the workers could go on strike. When the wife gets angry, she deprives her husband of sex. When the husband goes on strike, he does not eat the woman’s food and spends all his time out of the house.

When your spouse starts speaking to you expressing their grievance, it is time to hold yourself and listen. Sometimes they may not have a legitimate complaint but they want to evacuate friction. Arguments are important; it does not mean that there is something wrong with the marriage. However, when the arguments become repetitive, then there is something wrong.

“The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth and addeth learning to his lips.”

Proverbs 16:23

Sometimes silence must be kept, even when you know how to give the answer, for the answer to be given at a time when it will be appreciated. Esther had a situation of life and death. There was a death sentence over her and all her people. (Esther 3:9-13). She kept her silence for three days. She made her husband to eat for three days and then at the end of those three days, her husband himself asked her to present her request. Her request could not be denied. It is called timing. You may be thinking your spouse does not listen to you, but the reason he is not listening to you is because you bring your communication at the wrong time. As a woman, once you do not understand timing, you will have a problem with your husband.

3.2. Non-Verbal Communication

“Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men”

Isaiah 29:13-KJV

Verbal communication is not enough even when it comes to God. It is possible that you talk with God from morning to evening and you are not communicating with Him. This dimension of communication is called nonverbal communication. When communication is from the heart, it can be discerned through voice intonation and verbal language. Body language and voice intonation are important because you are able to know whether your wife is disposed at a certain time to listen to you. We live in a modern world with its realities. Sometimes your wife may not be available to listen to you at a given time. There might be various factors, including stress, fatigue or preoccupation with other things like work. You need to know how to discern their body language. There is a posture your spouse takes when they are tired, worried or afraid.

There are ways you can attract the interest of your spouse to what you want to say, including non-sexual touches; you do not just touch your spouse when you want to get into sexuality.

Holding of hands, kisses, hugs, are ways of demonstrating non-verbal communications and can take your spouse out of stress to be disposed to what you want to tell them. The tone of your voice is also very important.

“A gentle response defuses anger, but a sharp tongue kindles a temper-fire.”

Proverbs 15:1-MSG

Do not answer wrath with wrath; answer wrath with a gentle response and listen with humility. If you cannot do that, you keep silent and answer the grievances later after the wrath is gone. When your spouse is presenting their grievances to you, try to maintain your face muscles relaxed and do not express

annoyance.

As a wife or the weaker vessel, you should be mindful of your choice of words; do not seek to say anything with the intention to hurt your husband. Personal insults should be avoided at all cost. Never mention divorce or compare your relationship with someone else's in an argument. Do not make threats, or say things like, '*I knew this marriage would not work*', because when you are in anger, the things that you say register. When you feel anger rising, it is better if you quietly leave the room. This is called anger management.

3.3. Listening

“Wherefore my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath”

James 1:19-KJV

If you are slow to speak, you will be slow to wrath. You need to listen, and to be slow to speak means you need to be quick to hear. This is not just applied when there is a conflict. Whenever your spouse is speaking to you, your body language should show that you are listening to the conversation. Do not just give them your ear, but your whole body. Listen without interrupting. Allow the person to finish what they have in their mind; maintain eye contact. Try not to show signs of boredom and do not be selective in your hearing. A selective hearer is one who only listens when they think something is of importance to them. Do not also be a defensive listener. A defensive listener is one who only listens to something to trap the spouse later.

Listening is an art and what men need to understand is that listening is an act of attention. When you are listening, you need to be attentive. If you must be selective, be selective without being defensive or insensitive. When you are listening to your wife, try not to listen to her hurt but listen to what she is saying.

3.4. Five Ways to Reinforce your Communication Life and your Love:

i. ***Words of Affirmation***

Women are people in need of affirmation. They are the weaker vessel and they need to be in a sense of security. You should never be tired of saying how much you love your spouse. As a man, learn not to speak provocative words to your spouse when she is angry. When the children see how much the parents love each other, it creates a sense of security in the home. Your children need to see you both telling each other how much you love each other.

ii. ***Spend quality time together***

Quality time is not necessarily quantity time. You need to have a time when both of you just focus on each other.

This is not about sexuality now but about just being together, not necessarily talking about something. It may be for a long time as well as it may not.

iii. ***Give Quality Gifts***

Love is expressed by giving quality gifts. Quality gifts are given by both the wife and the husband. You need to find things that your spouse loves. Pay attention to the things they pay attention to when you go out and you can later surprise them with those things. Gifts do not just mean things. It may be a letter; it may be a card. We write letters to express our love and admirations. Also giving our time is one of the most important ways of communicating love.

iv. ***Physical touch***

Non-sexual touches are to be learnt. Learn, for example, how to massage the feet of your spouse. Nonsexual touch to express love stimulates neurons in your brain responsible for memory. Every time you pick up your child, embrace them and love them, those moments are being stored in your memory and theirs as well.

v. ***Service***

The woman is not the only one to do the cooking. When you as the husband

recognize that she is tired, you can tidy up the room; especially when she is pregnancy.

There is nothing wrong in a man serving a woman as long as the woman does not abuse it. If you get married to the right person, they will not abuse it.

The man is supposed to learn to help his wife, especially on the days he is free. Under grace, service is voluntary and a privilege. When the wife serves, it is a privilege and not a right, likewise the husband.

In all communications between spouses, you need to learn to forgive and forget for everything. Forgiveness is essential for the survival of your marriage. I find it very interesting that many people can speak more politely to an outsider than an insider. How do you address outsiders? How do you address your boss? The Word of God teaches us that Sarah called Abraham her lord and because of this, she is worthy of commendation. Sarah called Abraham her lord with sincerity from her heart.

Speak frankly about issues and do not be hypocritical. Speak frankly but speak the truth in love. Truth without love is destructive; love without truth is deceptive. You need to learn three miraculous words: 'I am Sorry'. This can solve all the quarrels. It is a sign of humility and the ability to acknowledge your faults.

3.5. Legitimate Cases for Counselling

i. *Continuous Quarrels:*

As a couple you need to be committed and faithfully serving in a church under people you consider to be your spiritual parents. This will serve in cases whereby you need counselling from a spiritual authority. This may include a case where there are continuous quarrels and problems on a particular issue, which you cannot solve on your own. Both parties must recognize the people considered as spiritual parents.

ii. *A case of adultery:*

You need to be in a church where you can trust that your Man and Woman of God can keep your secrets. Love covers all and adultery is an issue that you need to protect yourself and your spouse from. If you do not go for counselling, it will build into distrust, chronic unhappiness and depression.

iii. *Physical Violence:*

When there is physical violence, there is already a danger to life and you need to go for counselling. You cannot solve it on your own. Violence can be predicted when sharp abusive words are used during conflict.

iv. *Prolonged separation between you as a couple:*

In a case where one of you travels to another country and the other is unable to join the spouse for one reason or the other, this could bring problems in the long run. You need counsel on how to maintain your marriage in a long run.

v. *Interference from in-laws:*

This is something you need to receive wisdom on how to manage. Avoid having problems with your in-laws. You need to maintain a good relationship with your parents and with the parents of your spouse.

vi. *The exhibition of certain bad habits by your spouse:*

For example, addictions e.g. alcoholism, drugs, homosexual tendencies etc.

vii. *Continuous Financial Constraint:*

When there is continuous financial constraints in the marriage, you need your Man or Woman of God to bless you. As a married couple, you are supposed to be blessed. There is not supposed to be stress in your marriage.

viii. *Childlessness:*

You need to know that your God is a God of the impossible. Do what is required to be done medically, and even if it is impossible in the scientific world, there is nothing impossible with God. Christ has purchased us. If only you recognize that you are no longer living for yourselves, and that you are in Christ and Christ lives in you, and that you are givers of grace, you will give yourselves another chance. It is never too late for God. He has intended that we should be happy.

3.6. Conflict Resolution in Marriage

‘But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, and devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.’ James 3:14-18 (KJV)

Offenses will always come; you may have a reason to be offended, but you do not have the right to be offended. Offense is poison; it is also called the root of bitterness. You need to avoid the trap of being offended in marriage because when you get offended, you begin to blame your spouse for all that is going wrong in your life. Strife is always as a result of selfishness, it is wanting to put yourself first.

The wisdom of this world should never be mistaken for heavenly wisdom. Offense is as a result of being selfish and trying to live by the wisdom of this world or the counsel of other people; it is trying to live by what you think is acceptable according to the norms and values of society.

Any place where you find strife and selfish ambition, you will discover chaos and evil thriving under its rule. James says strife or offenses will open the door for every evil work. Poverty in the household, sickness, broken relationships, all start when there is strife between the husband and wife. When there are unresolved issues in the family between husband and wife, their prayers will be hindered. If you want the fruits of righteousness in your marriage, you will have to pursue peace. You need to pursue peace for prosperity to remain in your household.

There are ten major domains all marriage experts say are the major sources of conflict in marriage:

i. *Communication*

The woman has a different understanding from that of a man. Her inclination towards her right brain which is emotionally developed makes her to hear how something is said more than what is said. The man on the other hand, through his left-brain, inclination, focuses on information, logic and reason.

When a man wants to get an information across, he is not focused on how it is said. The woman does not interpret the information but she interprets her feeling and the sensation of how it has been said. Due to this, there is miscommunication. There are issues that need to be confronted in a marriage. For this reason men should be conscious of their tone and mode when they are trying to say something that is confrontational. He should learn to speak when his tone and mode are favourable.

The woman on her part should not try to express how angry she is through her words, but she should use her words to express information. When you as the wife are angry, it is not time to speak because anger brings out the worst part of you. Do not allow your anger to destroy the best part of you. Equally, learn not to express your anger on your children. Do not seek to express emotions when communicating, seek to express information and you will realise that the differences between male and female will be resolve.

Communication is not just with words, but it is also in service and random acts of kindness towards your spouse. Gifts are a form of communication. When your spouse is angry, bring something back home as a gift; do not just apologise with words. Let the message you communicate in that situation be Christ-oriented and avoid accusations.

ii. Sex

Marriage experts and psychologist say over 45% of women and 55% of men say they are not sexually satisfied and fulfilled in marriage. God created the psyche of a man and woman differently. Their modes of communication and anatomy are different. When it comes to sexuality, they have differences.

There is a difference between having sex and making love. Men view women as being objects when it comes to sex, from which they get their pleasure. In lovemaking, the woman is to come first and she is supposed to receive pleasure from you, the man, and in receiving, she gives back. Psychologist and sexologist say you can bring a woman to the boarder of orgasm merely by speaking. With the woman, penetration does not equal orgasm.

It takes the woman a longer period of time to get out of the ordinary to the mood of love making. The man gets her there by conversation and romance. Lack of patience and understanding will make the man think his wife is not

interested. Women need a man who can speak, cherish and love. As a man, you need to be patient and communicate with your wife to know her better and help her grow progressively so that she can enjoy her sexual life. In sex, you are supposed to give pleasure instead of seeking to receive pleasure. This will help bring your wife to the place where she finds pleasure in sex.

iii. *Money*

If you are to prosper as a couple, it will require that you tithe, sow, invest and build the ideas God gives you. Blessings rest on families; you are more blessed as a family than you will ever be blessed as an individual. You need to apply the principle of the gospel when it comes to prosperity. If you will trust in God, His blessing will rest upon you as a family.

iv. *Temperaments*

Temperaments cause many conflicts. You need to know your spouse's temperament and learn to live with it.

v. *Children*

This can be considered in three domains

- Pregnancy
- Raising children
- Step children

As a married couple, nothing can stop you from having children if you want to. A delay in pregnancy should never be an issue that brings pressure in a marriage. Pressure can prevent a married woman from getting pregnant.

Raising children is an art you learn as you go along. This means that many times, there will be the conflict of ideologies on how either parent thinks the child should be raised.

vi. *In-Laws*

Regulate the interference of in-laws. You need to know that you did not marry into the family but you have formed the third family. Your in-laws are your adoptive parents but you need to regulate interference because if there is too much dependence from the in-law, and all the money only goes to the in-

laws, there will be problems. It should be mutually regulated on both the side of the husband and wife. **vii. Profession**

Both husband and wife need to be professionally active. **viii. Domestic work**

Decide on whether you are going to get a house help or take care of the house.

ix. *Violence*

You need to be careful when you see that your arguments are becoming violent. A Christian husband should never lay his hand on his wife and vice versa.

x. *Infidelity*

Violence and infidelity in a marriage are two legitimate reasons for divorce and re-marriage. When you get in to a marriage and you realise that there is unrepentant, consistent violence, if you leave that marriage and get a divorce, you will have God's blessing.

Also, if there is consistent, unrepentant infidelity, your life is at risk, because your spouse can be a carrier of an STD. You have the right to divorce them with God's blessing.

Nevertheless, these two issues must not necessarily lead to divorce; we need to believe in restoration and restitution. As a woman, to protect your marriage, you need to know what your husband wants. If not, your husband will look for the most accessible person, which could be a co-worker, to listen to him.

As a man, never have a female confidant. You do not share secrets with people of the opposite sex, neither do you speak life projects with people of the opposite sex. Do not allow yourself to be vulnerable.

Lack of trust is the reason for conflicts. Trust is built with time and the best time to establish trust in a relationship is before the marriage. When a relationship is built on trust, you can withstand any obstacle and challenge. You need to trust your husband or wife because of who they are in God.

Section Four

Happiness in Marriage

As Christians, one of the ways we are to evangelize the world is by our happiness. **Demosha Carion** wrote a book ***The Happiest People in the World***. In his book, he traces the key conversions of the charismatic movement. He said these key conversions took place as a result of unbelievers observing the happiness of believers. Our happiness should minister to the world. With the epidemic proportions of divorce in the world, having a faithful, happy marriage in the face of the world is a witness for Jesus Christ. That is why, in order to honour and glorify God, we need to learn these things, apply them and live them.

4.1. Sexual Happiness in Marriage

“Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled; but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.”

Hebrews 13:4-KJV

If you are not married, you are not in the confines of the designs of the practice of sexuality. Nothing is truer when it comes to abuse in sexuality. Abuse has been rampant regarding sex in our generation. Sex has been so misrepresented in the world today that Christians perceive sex as something dirty. It is God who designed sexuality. He is the one who put all the nerve endings in the reproductive organs. If He did not want pleasure to be produced by it, He would have not done so. This means He has an intention for sexuality.

One man - one woman is not an archaic notion for the 21st century. The reason why it is, for those who have embraced secular humanism and other postmodern concepts, is because they have not understood the purpose of sexuality and they are trying to find sexual happiness through the multiplicity of partners. Sexuality is God's idea. He ordained it to bring joy and happiness.

Sex is not just a physical act. The Lord Jesus Christ said a man should leave his father and mother to be joined unto a woman, cleave with her so that the two shall become one flesh. Becoming one flesh does not just mean two different people with two different views coming together; but it also talks about the sexual life that they are entertaining in their relationship. Sex, when properly fulfilled in the confines of God's ordained purpose, will enhance love between the husband and the wife because sex, as God ordained it, is not to receive pleasure but to give it.

Psychologists, as well as other Christian family specialists, have said the quality of your sex life is the thermometer of the state of your mind in the relationship. The thermometer is graded this way:

- Newlyweds: strong relationship; sex will be frequent, at least once a day; happy relationship.
- Typically happy marriage: once a day or every other day.
- A harmonious marriage: after the first two years. For working couples,

four to five times a week.

- A marriage that begins to stumble in the pressures of life: once a week, probably Saturday or Friday night.
- A disharmonious marriage: once a month.
- A marriage that becomes co-existence: once in six months.
- When a marriage reaches a point of breakdown: once in eight months or once in a year.
- When the marriage is at the point of virtual divorce: They can go a year and above without sex.

A proper sexual life is important to God because He designed sex for your happiness as a couple. Sex has been ordained only for married people and if you are married and not enjoying it, you are disappointing Him because He ordained it for you. When a relationship is healthy, there are signs, just as there are several vital signs to good health. Healthy sexual relationship is a sign that the couple enjoy each other. It is a sign that they share themselves.

If there is lack of quality in sexuality, it is a sign that closeness is being lost. Quality sex creates focus in a marriage. Sex permits the couple to bring serious issues that will affect their lives on a table. After the act of sex, all the endorphins released in the body take away all the stress, so that sensitive issues can be aborted with trust and confidence. There needs to be communion before and after the act. After the act there are things you need to say to each other that will register in your minds. It is also one of the ways of ending quarrels.

One of the communities with the lowest divorce rate in the world is the orthodox Jews. This is because they have a teaching that says before every argument, go and have sex and if after the act you still want to argue, then continue the argument. Sex is not just for procreation. Husbands and wives must thus learn and decide to have a quality sex life because you are committed to the institution of marriage before being committed to your wife. In that institution, God ordained sex for you.

Sex is prayer with your wife. That is why in the Old Testament, the Biblical word for the act of sex is “to know”; ‘Adam knew his wife’ (Gen. 4:1). Sex is to the couple what prayer is between the believer and God. Failing to have a

quality sex life is disappointing God in the institution of your marriage.

4.2. The Four kinds of Sex in Marriage as revealed in the Word of God

“Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence; likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife has not power over her own body but the husband, likewise the husband has not power over his own body, but the wife. Defraud you not one the other except it be with consent for a time that you may give yourself to fasting and prayer and come together again that satan tempt you not for your inconsistency.”

1 Corinthians 7:4-5-KJV

Sex, to the world, is what you take; but in Christ, it is what the husband gives the wife and what the wife gives the husband. To fraud is to hold back what you are not supposed to hold back. To deny your wife or husband sex is called sexual fraud. To deprive yourself as a person who is married from sex, is tormenting yourself.

4.2.1. Dutiful sex

To deprive your spouse of sex is sexual fraud. The wife has no power over her body, just as the husband has no authority over his own body. If the man wants to abstain from sex for the purpose of prayer, he needs to first of all ask the wife's permission and vice versa. When it comes to the aspect of sexuality, without your spouse's consent you cannot refrain saying you are praying or fasting. You are committing fraud. If you are to refrain for a while, it should be but for a time (1 Cor. 7:5). The expression “for a time” in the Greek means it will not exceed a week; it is for a brief period. Adultery could be solved 85% of the time if only dutiful sex is practiced.

In this area of dutiful sex, it is common to understand that the wife may be uninterested. Men have a greater sexual desire than women at a given time. This is because they are visual in their minds. But women do not have this same mind; a woman is not visual, she is emotional. She is looking for the atmosphere, the environment and the mood.

Based on this understanding, we therefore cannot exercise power over the other's body, but to understand that it is a duty towards God to offer yourself to your spouse. Refusing sex to your spouse is like refusing to pay your tithes or

refusing to pray. It is failing in your marriage institution.

Passive sex is not advised. One of the ways that a couple can fulfil their sexual life as a duty is for the man to prepare the atmosphere, and for the woman, to win the attention of her husband always, to make herself attractive for her husband; put on a good nightdress, comb your hair, renew your underwear always. Both parties need to equally work on personal hygiene.

4.2.2. Pleasurable Sex

“Drink waters out of your own cistern, and running waters out of your own well. Let your fountains be dispersed abroad, the rivers of waters in the streets; let them be only your own and not strangers with you. Let your fountain be blessed and rejoice in the wife of your youth. Let her be like a loving hind and pleasant role, let her breast satisfy you at all times and be thou ravish always with her love. “

Proverbs 5:15-19 (KJV)

Sex is first of all a duty then it becomes pleasure. Sex as pleasure is that two individuals decide to have fun. These are investments to be made at least once a month. You choose a time where you are just there for yourselves. It is a deliberate choice, whereby couples choose to take a bath or shower together or dinner together. God uses this to describe that a man and a woman who are blessed will have a happy sex life, in which they are pleased. The man will not need to go out to meet with a stranger.

4.2.3. Exciting sex

As a couple you need to create variety. You were not always called to be as a missionary otherwise you are going to lose interest.

“And Ruben went in the days of wheat harvest, and found mandrakes in the field, and brought them unto his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, give me, I pray thee of thy sons mandrakes. And she said unto her, is it a small matter that thou hast taken my husband? And wouldest thou take away my son’s mandrakes also? And Rachel said, therefore he shall lie with thee tonight for thy son’s mandrakes. And Jacob came out of the field in the evening, and Leah went out to meet him, and said, thou must come in unto me; for surely I have hired thee with my son’s mandrakes. And he lay with her that night. And God harkened unto Leah, and she conceived, and bare

Jacob the fifth son.”

Genesis 30:14-17-KJV

A mandrake is a plant which has highly aphrodisiac qualities. Ruben found this plant in the field and brought them to his mother Leah. There were two wives in one marriage but Jacob loved Rachel. Rachel was supposed to spend the night with Jacob, but she proposed to Leah to give her the mandrakes her son Ruben brought for her and Leah would be the one to spend the night with Jacob. Leah accepted to that; but Jacob loved Rachel because she took the mandrakes so that together with Jacob they would eat and both be aroused, so that it would not just be a normal meeting but a meeting that will satisfy her husband's sexual desire better.

“When a man hath taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war, neither shall he be charged with any business: but he shall be free at home one year, and shall cheer up his wife which he hath taken.”

Deuteronomy 24:5

In order to have a happy marriage you need dutiful sex, pleasurable sex and exciting sex. It is necessary as a couple to travel at least once a year out of the country or visit a region of the country; to get to a place that will bring excitement into your lives. During this time, you have to leave what is familiar.

4.2.4. Sex for Reproduction

When a couple decides to have a child, sex is a little bit different. In some cases it may require planning. It is always advised that the first year of your union be taken to know one another before you have a pregnancy. If you do not want to have any children within the first year, you could find a certified, family doctor and choose your birth control option. When you eventually choose to have children, there is sex for reproduction.

Men who want to be fertile should avoid tight nylon under wears. When you are having sexual relationships for reproduction, the missionary position is the best position to take. During this time, the woman should avoid post-coital douche; she should lie down and give time for the process of fertilization to take place. It should not be something that causes stress; you should keep on doing it

month after month, with the consultation of your doctor and the power of the Holy Ghost.

4.2.5. Sex during Pregnancies

Pregnancy is not some sort of sickness; which means that pregnancy does not necessarily mean that sexual relationship should be suspended; but there are precautions. The man should find a comfortable position and he should be gentle. Deep penetration should be avoided and after delivery there must be abstinence from four to six months in order for the wife's uterus to be back in place again.

The reason why couples face problems in their marriage is simply because of their sex life. Sex is an important part in the daily life of the couple that should not be neglected. Once you are grounded in the purpose of God, sex will help keep your link with your husband. Koinonia is like a sexual relationship between a man and a woman. Our intimacy with God is higher than a sexual relationship. If we therefore need to communicate with God daily in fellowship, sex is another way of communication between husband and wife.

When you are a purpose-driven couple, purpose will stimulate your sexual life. When you look towards the same direction and you both are driven by the same goals, there will be stimulation in your sexual life. When God ordained marriage, He gave them authority to have dominion on the earth. As a couple, to walk in this dominion mandate, you need to have a healthy sexual relationship. Lack of a sexual relationship with your spouse means you are not walking or sharing the same purpose.

4.3. Things That Matter to Both Genders

(Recipe for a proper marriage)

4.3.1. What matters to women?

i. *Hygiene*

“My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand. His head is as the most fine gold, his locks are bushy, and black as a raven. His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set. His cheeks are as a bed of spices as sweet flowers: his lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh. His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl: his belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires. His legs are as pillars of marbles, set upon sockets of fine gold; his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars. His mouth is most sweet; yea he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.”

Songs of Solomon 5:10-16

You need to be distinguished amongst the multitudes. Wear clean, well-laundered clothes. Shave yourself before going out. Take care of your facial hair and oral health; use a mouthwash for a fresh breath.

The lady in the passage speaks of her husband having the best perfume and smelling good. It is important for a man to know that the woman loves to see him healthy and good-looking. If you want more kisses in a marriage, you need to focus on your oral hygiene. The woman loves it when her husband is radiant and handsome always.

ii. *Communication*

“My beloved spake, and said unto me, rise up, my love my fair one, and come away, for, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone”

Songs of Solomon 2:10(KJV)

A woman loves communication; she loves companionship. She loves to listen to her husband. She wants him to laugh with her. Communication will enhance your sexual life. Spend time with her during the day so that you will not be a stranger to her in the night. Choose what you discuss with her; speak about

the purpose of God, things that are funny, that will cause her to laugh during the day.

iii. Availability

“I am my beloved’s, and his desire is toward me, come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages. Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth: there will I give thee my loves.”

Songs of Solomon 7:10-12(KJV)

The woman loves your availability; she loves doing things together with her husband. From time to time, go to the hairdresser’s with her, do the shopping with her, and travel with her. Carry the basket for her in the supermarket; buy something for her while there. Visit her parents together with her. Sexual life is something we work for; if all this is done, a woman will always desire you. Learn how to give pleasure more than to take it and while giving pleasure you will have pleasure in return. Learn to love what your spouse loves.

iv. Companionship

“As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.”

Songs of Solomon 2:3

Every wife loves the companionship of her husband. She loves it when her husband’s activities revolve around her. She wants to share in his time and activities. The man should take out time daily to have a moment of intimacy with the wife because the woman always wants him present beside her. Make her feel important in your thoughts and in your decisions. Make her present in your choices and activities. This is what will enhance your marital life.

As a man, you need to create a single world for both of you. Always ask her point of view about the decisions you want to make. Discuss family issues, talk about the gospel; talk about something that has blessed you. Speak about the children, about her family and your family; ask her how she spent her day. In so doing, you will be a seal over her heart.

v. *To Feel Loved*

The Bible says men should love their wives while the wives are submitted to their husbands. God, through apostles, knew how important love is for women. That is why He instructs the women to respect and the men to love. The security of the woman is found in the man expressing the love he has for her. The more you express your love, the more she feels secured under a banner. When a woman does not feel loved, or if the man does not express his love in a regular way, the woman loses her sense of security.

vi. *Tenderness, appreciation and care*

“His left hand is under my head and his right hand doth embrace me.”

Songs of Solomon 2:6 (KJV)

The left hand under the head speaks of the tenderness, appreciation and care. It speaks of how you say what you say. It speaks of daily support in the companionship of the husband.

4.3.2. What matters to men?

i. *Hygiene*

“Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.”

Songs of Solomon 4:16

As a woman, you need to know that sex is your husband’s garden as seen from the poetic account of Solomon’s romance and marriage with a Shunamite maiden. Cleanliness means you need regular medical care. You need a doctor who will take care of you always. The garden always needs to be refreshed, the perfume should be clean. As a woman, your responsibility is to make sure that whenever your husband wants to come into his garden, he smells a fresh perfume. There needs to be a daily renewal of your underwear. What you put on to cover that garden should be something attractive.

Every woman has a natural body odour but you need to take care of yourself by cleaning yourself properly especially after using restroom. The mixture of urine and your natural secretion will produce an unpleasant smell.

The man wants the wife always beautiful and pleasing. Most women, after marriage, do not care about their beauty. They no longer dress in an attractive

way. Once you are married, your effort to make yourself beautiful should double. Take care of your hair, wear attractive clothes, and use good hair products pleasant fragrance that will attract your husband.

ii. **Appearance**

“Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, thy neck with chains of gold.”

Songs of Solomon 1:10

Jewelleries are very important for the woman. Your lips need to look attractive and you need to take care of your breath because men love kisses and fresh and pleasant smelling breath can arouse him. Men love to see their women beautiful and pleasing. Make yourself beautiful with jewelleries and use a variety of perfumes so that you do not get in to the habit of routine. Men do not love routine. Double your efforts in what you were doing before you got married. Always keep yourself up to date and show your value to your husband.

Men also love a woman’s response during sex. Tell him you love him and that you are pleased by what he is doing. As a woman, you determine the habit the man has when he comes around you. Sex is communication; so there must be activity and response.

iii. **Seduction**

“Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck.”

Songs of Solomon 4:9

Use your eyes, smile and hands to seduce your husband. The way you look at him communicates to him. This will help give you more pleasure in your marriage life. The purpose of marriage is that there should be happiness. You need to keep and increase that happiness. Put on attractive lingerie and nightdress, something that will reveal the beauty of your body; something that will cause him to look at you.

iv. **Discreet Woman**

My love is like a dove, hiding in a cleft, she is discreet in her appearance and way of living.

Songs of Solomon 2:14

The wife should not always superimpose her presence in the private space of her husband. She makes herself desirable in the house. She does not show her face when she is not needed, she does not make her voice heard when she is not needed. She is not concerned by the things she is not asked for. She speaks wisely and she does not speak too much, otherwise her voice will lose its importance. She treasures her voice so much that when she speaks, her words communicate wisdom and love to the point that when she is not there, he desires to hear her voice. She is mindful of how she presents herself to her husband. She is mindful of her appearance which is supposed to be always neat.

These details can make a difference between a very passionate and romantic life in the marriage and a cold, passive and inactive life in the marriage.

Section Five
The Family, the Fruit of Marriage

5.1. The Christian Family

“I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints”

1 Corinthians 16:15 (KJV)

Paul points out to the Church in Corinth a family as an example, because they had addicted themselves to the ministry to God's people. Strong marriages produce strong families and strong families produce strong churches. The family is the link between our present and future. All we have must be transmitted to our children through our family. Success is not success unless there is a successor. Our children are the heirs of our legacy. All we are, know and have must be transmitted to our children. The forum for the transmission of all that we are to our children is in the home.

In the Church, we find Christians who want happiness without submission to the Lordship of Christ. There is no way a home can be kept together by the mere recognition of the human headship of a man. There must be a superior, invisible authority, that when things go wrong in the house, everyone knows that he is the one holding the family together.

The Christian home exists for ministry. That is why we must recognise that marriage is not first and foremost based on love. The plan of God is the first factor and it will continue to rekindle love, romance and passion in your marriage. Every believer is a saint, every saint is a minister. Everyone must be involved in one form or another of ministry. This is the purpose of the household.

The Christian family is the forum for the transmission of all that we are and all that we have to our children. It is in the Christian family that identity is forged in our children. Most people do not know who they are because their identity issues were not resolved in their households.

5.2. Naming your Child

It is the parents of a child who are supposed to name their child. The naming of a child is not a onetime act conducted after the birth of the child; it continues throughout the child's life. As a parent, you are supposed to discern the plan God for your child and set him or her on course. God chose Abraham because He knew he would reveal His ways to his children. Abraham's choosing was due to his qualities as father. God chose Abraham because He knew Abraham would transmit what God has revealed to him to his children.

The only thing you do not get to choose is the family to which you are born; likewise your children. The children you have are given to you as gifts from God. The only relationship that you possess that was a direct result of your own choosing is your marital relationship. That is why we need to learn to receive the children God gives to us with rejoicing and thanksgiving.

5.3. Six Characteristics of Strong Christian Homes

i. Commitment to each other

When God created man, man was created as a spirit, possessing a soul and living in a body. That same model of spirit, soul and body reoccurs in the household. Just as it is the Spirit that is joined to Christ, and the life of the Spirit is administrated through the soul to the body, the husband is the head of the home; the wife is the administrator of the husband to the children. This is the description of the structure of the government of the household.

The father is the head, but the father's decisions are administrated through the mother. The mother has to have the following phrase on her lips: 'your father says'. This is because the father cannot superimpose his own authority without the administration of the mother. Authority is not respected in homes today because the father wants to speak directly on every issue. When the voice of the mother does not reflect the voice of the father, there is a divided government. Commitment in a home begins with the mother and the father first then from the mother and father to the children. In every government, we also have crime and punishment.

How do we implement discipline in the household?

There are various phases of a child's life and the administration of discipline in each phase is different. Parents are not supposed to start beating up a child when they are still a toddler. God has shown us how to raise children, which is through His dealing with man in the different dispensations.

When God first went to Abraham, he called Himself El Shaddai. From the time a child is born to the point where he reaches the age of accountability, which is when he becomes conscious of his nakedness, your relationship with him is an "El Shaddai relationship", which means tenderness of simply showing him love, making them confident that they are loved and accepted. When they make a mistake, you need to show them it is a mistake.

When he enters the age of accountability, throughout his teenage years, you relate with him as Yahweh related with Israel. This is when God gave the law. It is at this stage that you bring out the understanding of right and wrong

and you have to instil a system of discipline in the household. This system of discipline is not the cane; using the cane should be the last resort for hideous crimes; for instance, if he or she insults a parent or in the case of theft etc.

Parents need to introduce a system of reward for academic success, responsible behaviour or kind gestures in a home; for example, if a child arranges his room. They also need to implement rules and regulations in the home.

ii. Enjoy spending quality time together

Quality time is not quantity time; but you need to make sure you spend quality time together as a family. You need to have a weekly family time whereby you can either watch a movie or plan a vacation.

iii. Communicate freely and openly

The reason why many children, when they come to the age of adolescence make mistakes is because they do not see a counsellor in their parents. That is why as parents, you need to learn to speak openly and freely with your children about life and issues of life. A child has the right to criticise the parent if it is done in a free and open manner. There are two types of criticism, constructive and destructive criticism. Children have the right to constructive criticism.

iv. The open expression of love and appreciation

Love needs to be expressed in a home. Learn to demonstrate love towards your children. Learn to tell them how much you love them and how much God loves them. Learn to appreciate them and tell them how beautiful or handsome they look. There needs to be an open expression of love and appreciation. When children grow up in a home without affection, there will be insecurity and no sense of destiny.

There is no greater failure than to fail in your home. No matter how successful you are in life, if your children do not partake of your success in your character, you have failed in life. Your family is where ministry starts. If you are a minister of the gospel, you are not a professional pastor who simply goes and preaches sermons on the pulpit and it is not lived in your own house.

v. Maintain close relationships with one another in crisis situations.

If one of your children commits a crime or fails in an exam, it is not time for you to remember all the terrible things they have done. Failure can remain an event if it does not affect your attitude. It becomes a lifestyle when it affects your attitude. If you make your children feel they are a failure because they failed their exams, they will become a failure.

vi. *Spiritual commitments*

Your children will not remember you for what you say but for what you do. You cannot speak to your children about Christ unless they see it. If they do not see it, they are not going to live it. As a parent, avoid making negative comments and criticizing church authorities because it will affect your authority as parents in the home.

5.4. Three Models of Parenting;

i. *Parenting by default:*

It is that which has least resistance on the part of the parents. Once children recognise that they have the power of choice that their parents were supposed to have over them, things go wild. That is why as parents, you need to be observant. If a child brings good grades from school, surprise him with a gift. Do not only wait for occasions like his birthday.

ii. *Parenting by trial and error*

This is when you begin to listen to counsel from other parents and try to apply their model of parenting in your home.

iii. *Revolutionary Parenting:*

It is leading by example, love and instructing. You do not ask the children to do something you do not do. As Christian parents, we ought to teach the basic principles of the gospel to our children. If we do not know them, we cannot transmit them. The principles of the gospel are different from emotional and behaviour modification principles. The Bible should be what upholds what is transmitted to a child.

As a parent, you need to be the example of what you are teaching your children. You need to be a reference. Teach them to be faithful, let them know that God is their defence and teach them to learn to control their tongue. Let them get to know the prevailing purpose of the Lord in their life so that they will grow in confidence, strength and trust in the Lord.

5.5. Putting Asunder the Marriage Institution?

“What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”

Mark 10:9-KJV

The greatest source of human joy as well as human pain is found in relationships. The traditional interpretation of this verse means, when two people get married, let no one come between them to separate them. The silent implication is that it is God who put together all who get married. This is not the case. Mark 10 is not talking about the two people God puts together, but the institution of marriage He has put together. It means you that have gotten married are not supposed to put asunder the institution God has put together. He is talking about two people disagreeing between themselves and getting divorced.

Marriage is meant for life; it is not a contract, it is a covenant. A contract is an agreement between two people, but an engagement that cannot be exacted without God declaring that it is so. A contract is about deeds but a covenant is about life. A contract is about doing; a covenant is about being. The value of a thing depends on its rarity. You are never going to obtain a God-kind of marriage simply by going along with the crowd. If your marriage is to be precious, it has to be rare; it has to be based on what is not common.

You not just getting married to the other person, but both of you have gotten into an institution called marriage. Entering in to this institution is like a priest being ordained into the priesthood. You will either live by design or by default, by faith or by fate, by choice or by chance, by preparing or repairing.

i. *Sex Addiction*

There are people who try to put asunder the institution of marriage by sex before marriage. Sex is more than a physical act; it has a psychic as well as a spiritual implication. When God created Adam in Genesis 2, He created him in His image and likeness. He took woman out of the side of man, which means it was a division of the image of God within man; masculine and feminine issue, positive and negative charge.

The reason why people are attracted to sex is because the act of sex between

the husband and the wife is the image of God restored in that union. It is the source to renew the bond of love that exists between the two. Paul said sex in the marriage is important; it is God who created it. It is so important that the husband is not to defraud the wife and the wife is not to defraud the husband.

Unfortunately, people have become so sexualised before the context of marriage that they do not experience it from God's perspective within the marriage. There is a psychic bond between people when they have sex.

ii. *Emotional Enmeshment*

Emotional boundaries are crucial in helping us to enjoy healthy relationship and avoid unhealthy or dysfunctional relationships. Enmeshment is when people feel like their wellbeing is not complete unless they are meeting their partner's needs all the time. God's love is not cantered on self and needs. If the relation between God and Himself is the relationship upon which every other relationship is found, it means love is not centred on need. Your relationship with your spouse is not based on what you can get out of them. You need to learn to see your spouse for who he or she is.

iii. *Financial Partnership*

Most people get married for financial partnership. It is advisable that a man and woman be financially productive before marriage.

iv. *Escapism*

For men, it is called the complex for rite of passage; for women it is called the Cinderella syndrome. Men think the rite of passage between being a youth and being an adult is getting married. Marriage does not make you a man; you must become a man before you get married. Marriage will only amplify what is already in you. Maturity is one of the pre-requisites of being married. If you are not mature in your mind, psychology and perspective of life, you are not ready for marriage.

Women think they are in such a misery until someone comes and takes them away from their misery. If you think getting married will take you out of misery, you are getting into that marriage with high expectation based on low preparation.

v. *Neediness*

It is called a poor self-image in marriage. There are men who want a mother and not a wife. Women who want a father and not a husband.

5.6. The Priesthood of Parenting

“For if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?”

1Timothy 3:5-KJV

Paul is giving the qualification of a bishop. The bishop is the highest authority within the local jurisdiction of the Church. He is the “episcopeo”, which means he is the one who oversees. Episcopeo means to see into; “epi” means upon or to superimpose; to be above. The bishop is the one who is above and who sees into all the matters of the Church. Paul says a bishop is one that “ruleth well” his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity. The bishop has to preside over his house with his children kept in a behaviour that is approved. In those days, it is a bishop who was appointed to rule over the Church and his qualification was that if he rules his house well, he can rule the Church of God.

The sacred nature of the family was lost the moment Martin Luther put out marriage as a sacrament. He defined marriage as a civil union and this made marriage to become secularized. Today, protestant doctrine has taught us that marriage is purely civil and secular; it has nothing to do with a sacred mission from God.

Paul says that before you are ordained to be a bishop, you must first of all be someone who is married and that marriage is the first ordination to raise children and to raise a family. This means you are a pastor of a house when you can raise your children and teach them the faith and when you observe the behaviour of your children as a result of you teaching them the faith, you are a candidate for the episcopacy.

This tells us that the family, in the mind of Paul is not a secular part of the Church that has nothing to do with ministry. Marriage is an ordination by which you bring forth the family to be part of the Church and your role as parents within that family is to be a priesthood within that household.

In the early church, the husband and the wives are pastors their home. The house is the local church of the local church. Your marriage is an ordination to be husband and wife in the institution of marriage and to be parents. You are

ordained to be parents, you receive the grace to be sanctified as parents in order that you raise up the children properly.

This would mean parenting is much more than just raising children to bring them to a point where they succeed in life. If we are interested in the Christianity of our children in the same way as we are interested in their success, the Church will be a very different place today. You cannot be an effective Christian in life without being a successful Christian. Parents were ordained to teach their children the faith with precepts and examples because children do not just learn what you tell them, they are observant.

God chose Abraham because he knew he was the kind of man who would teach his children the things God will reveal to him (Genesis 18:19-KJV). When we give the treasures of the gospel to the children and command them to be identified with the Church, God says we are ruling our house well.

The reason why every major move of God had to be lost in each generation is because the role of the family in the ecclesial life has been lost. The greatest failure you can ever have is to fail to command your children the faith. A father is one who infuses the mind of another with his spirit to cause him to see from his same point of view.

5.7. Living Together

Marriage is a foundational relationship. The family is built from the marriage relationship and the children can only be built to the degree to which the father and mother have a strong relationship. Living together is learnt, it is not cohabitation. Cohabitation means two people living with the mind-set of 'benefits'.

Living together is the French phrase, 'savoir vivre'. In the Greek, 'gamos' is word from which marriage is translated. The English word gem is also taken from the Greek word gamos. Precious stones are formed as a result of coal put under pressure over thousands of years. If God uses the word gamos to describe living together as husband and wife, it means there are going to be pressures you are going to encounter. There is a clash of cultures, histories, understanding, tribe, language when you get married. In order for a couple to fuse together as one, those differences will need to have an encounter. That is why when you get married, you are not supposed to live apart. The first 100 days are days you are supposed to live together as a couple.

Living together involves a fusing of mentalities and souls. The life of the soul is the life that you lived prior to your marriage, the life you lived without taking into account someone else's life. Prior to your marriage you were by nature selfish. When you get married, there has to be a change. This adjustment will require time, and many times it is painful because marriage will expose to you how selfish you are.

Living together is to fuse your souls together. The Word of God says, you become one flesh; this is not just talking of the one act on your honeymoon; but becoming one flesh is a process. It is all around what is called gamos, a fusing of the husband and the wife together.

It has been proven that for the first five years, there is no intimacy in a marriage. Intimacy means, "*into me see.*" It means that you see into a person and you are at rest with who the person is without fear or insecurities. For there to be intimacy in a union, there are two huddles that have to be overcome, one in the masculine and the other in the feminine.

The huddle that has to be overcome in the feminine side is the fear of being abandoned and in the masculine side, it is the fear of being controlled. When a woman is brought into a man's life and they become husband and wife

and he has that fear of being controlled, while the woman has the insecurity of being abandoned.

The husband responds to the perceived threat of control by blaming and the woman responds to the perceived threat of abandonment by shame.

Communication is the bloodstream of a relationship. Just as a doctor would ask for a blood sample if he has to establish patient's diagnosis, the first thing to consider to diagnose the state of the marriage is the communication life.

i. Communication

Communication is two sided. Men are visual, they focus on what they can see but women focus on what they can hear. If a man is not looking at you when he is talking, he is not listening to you. But a woman can pretend that she is not listening, but she is indeed listening.

Communication is two-sided but in this communication, men are visual while women are audial; this means there will be different responses from both sides when communication takes place.

Communication is the exchange of the mind to express oneself. It is not just giving information to another person about what you want them to know but it is expressing yourself. To express yourself we need to understand the three factors of communication.

What you say

What you say refers to the choice of words and sometimes both parties are very guilty of making poor choice of words to express themselves. The choice of words we use in an argument matters. We need to avoid using absolute phrases like, 'you always do that'. What men crave from their spouses even more than sex is respect; whatever a woman say to her husband with the disposition of respect, she will have attention. What the woman wants even more than money is the man's attention.

How you say it

How you say it involves your tone of voice and your body language. You may be saying the right thing with the wrong attitude and wrong disposition.

This is when nonverbal communication should be combined with verbal communication so that what you are saying should not be misinterpreted. An example of nonverbal communication is touch. Touch is a powerful instrument of communication. Before you enter into a conversation that is fruitful with your wife, you need to bring all the defence mechanisms down and this is not just about what you say but how you say what you want to say. As a man, you need to avoid being sarcastic to your wife because women harbour what you say.

When you say it

This speaks of timing. Sometimes it is not in the heat of an argument that we should give our point. You need to know when to say what you say. Many times women choose the heat of an argument to begin to raise all their frustrations. You need to know what to say, when to say it and how you say it. In a union, we need to learn to be confrontational in a non-confrontational way; learn diplomacy. The right thing said at the right time in the right way will make a right impression.

“Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.”

Colossians 4:6-KJV

Your speech needs to be seasoned with grace, this is because lives are healed by words in the same way that lives can be destroyed by words. Communication is not just to resolve conflicts but to express oneself at all times. If you are not continually expressing yourself with your spouse, you will become victims of disaffection. We communicate our love in various ways. Communicating love has to do with signs and gestures.

ii. *Giving of gifts.*

Giving gifts is important because it expresses love. The heart is refreshed when you receive an unexpected gift from someone you love. You can give without loving but you cannot love without giving. You cannot honour without giving; honour is not just with words. Gifts express that you are thinking about the one you love and demonstrate that you are there for them.

iii. *Affectionate touches*

Everyone has a human aura. Everyone has a right brain and left brain.

There is a positive side and negative side and through the neurons flow electricity; circuit or magnet. Man is a living magnet. We all emit a magnetic field and that is what is called the human aura. When you hug somebody, those two auras go into one space and there are certain properties you collect from the person's aura in which you step. We all have a breathing rhythm and particular heart beat rhythm. When a husband and a wife live together, their heart begin to beat at a particular breathing rhythm and the breathing rhythm begin to adjust one to the other; the two even begin to resemble.

To resolve issues successfully in a marriage, there are three things you should do sincerely: you need to express regret, accept responsibility and make restitution. Be the redeemer in the relationship.

5.8. Avoiding Disaffection in a Marriage

Most men do not get into an affair with another woman because they want to have sex. The majority of men get into affairs because they are looking for an emotional connection with someone of the opposite sex.

That emotional connection a husband or wife has with somebody else who is not their spouse is because of disaffection. This happens when the husband or wife do not feel that same affection they had for each other when they got married. So they go out and look for someone else to re-kindle it.

To safeguard your marriage, you need to avoid disaffection. When disaffection takes place, firstly, there is distancing; a lot of focus begin to go to your job or the children. The second sign of disaffection in the heart is negative evaluation, and thirdly, there is self-preservation; mis-presenting your spouse to your children. As a husband or wife, when your spouse begins to avoid you, it is an indication that there is something wrong. The things that lead to disaffection include:

i. Stress

The hyper activity of today means most marriages are living under pressure. Stress can be work-related, domestic or family.

ii. False and unrealistic expectation

When people enter into a marriage with a false and unrealistic expectation, when they are not fulfilled, there is disaffection; an example of such people are those who think marriage will complete them.

iii. Resident Evil

This refers to people who have evil intentions for getting married to someone.

iv. Selfishness

Selfishness will diminish the affection within a union. In a marriage, what belongs to your husband belongs to you and what belongs to you belongs to your husband.

v. ***Fear of Living Past Experiences***

When you are a victim of a relationship that did not succeed and finally find yourself in one that has led to marriage, when something happens in the marriage, some people get affected psychologically; they become afraid due to their past experiences and give up. You need to learn how to fight for that which is precious: your marriage.

vi. ***Speed:***

Intimacy in a marriage is not something that is forced, allow it to flow naturally. Intimacy is knowing your spouse's faults and knowing them as they are.

The couple can however solve the issue of disaffection through.

1 **Dialogue**

2 **Re-evaluation:** You need to evaluate whether you have progressed or regressed.

3 **Seek God together:** As a couple, you cannot rededicate your life to Christ without your marriage benefiting from the renewed focus on Christ.

4 **Counselling:** Seek counsel from spiritual parents.

Love is a choice, and feelings will follow your choice. Love is a person and you need to make the choice to love someone.

Section Six
The Divinely Established Order of the Family

Every family must possess a clear vision from God. Vision means a revealed plan of God. Life is a mission and only those who know where they are going accomplish progress. You must first determine your destination before you are able to make progress in any way.

As a family in the Church of Jesus Christ, you must have your mission statement and your mission statement is determine by where you are located in the ecclesial life. You need to ask yourself the questions, *why are we located here? Why did God plant us here? What are we supposed to accomplish as a family?*

The Church is in need of more Aquillas and Pricilas (Romans 16:3), more couples who serve God and whose sole passion is to take the gospel forward. We need more households such as described in Romans 15 and 16. Households that will dedicate themselves to see the gospel go forward.

6.1. The Established Order in a Home

“Let all things be done decently and in order.”

1 Corinthians 14:40-KJV

The word decency is derived from the word peace. Our Father is a God of peace and equally the God of order. Order is defined as a divinely established arrangement based on authority, rank and honour. Wherever authority, rank and honour are not taken into consideration there is dishonour and where there is dishonour there is disorder and where there is disorder there is no peace and no prosperity. Our God is a God of order, a God of arrangement in authority, rank and honour.

In the ecclesial realm of the Church, as well as in the family, God has established a divine arrangement that we have to take into consideration. The servant of the Lord must not strive for where there is strife there is every evil work. It is a man's responsibility to seek to maintain order in the home.

Order in the home is in three domains: the divinely established order of God in a family is first of all in relation to the church, then in relation to the domestic life, thirdly in relation to finances.

6.1.1. In Relation to the Church:

God called all families to worship Him. In Genesis 18:19, He chose Abraham for he knew Abraham was a man of such quality and character that he would instruct his children in the way of the Lord. This implies that God expects us to instruct our own families in all matters of our faith and practice. This is the first responsibility that has been given to parents.

Marriage is a sacrament; it is a mystery of the gospel. When you are married in the Church, you are ordained to be husband and wife, and ordained to be parents. You receive the ordination to be the pastor of your children and your family is the local church within the local church. In matters of doctrine and faith, the Church has given you the right and tremendous responsibility to teach your children in the way of the Lord and practice the faith at home.

It is in the home where your children learn to pray, reverence the things of God, learn to honour authority and acknowledge all they are supposed to

acknowledge as Christians. It is called the priesthood of the family.

God defines Himself in the context of family to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. When the Church is introduced to us, Paul calls himself a father. The Church is called a household which in Greek means family. At home, we are presented with the relationship that is born out of the most intimate relationship between human beings, a husband and a wife and that relationship is between a father, mother and their children – the family.

The family is an ordinance of God. An ordinance is a sacrament and mystery of the gospel. Out of the marriage flows the family. The family is sacred to God. Whatever wants to come against the institution of marriage to redefine it, to secularize it or to distort it, will eventually distort the family. Dysfunctional families are a fruit of a dysfunctional relationship. In the Church today, we find people who think it normal to live together before getting married; people who bring forth children before getting married. These are not the ordinances given to the Church. The sacrament of marriage is established to bring forth the family.

6.1.2. In Relation to the Domestic life: The Honour of Submission

‘Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you. But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.’

1 Corinthians 11:1-3 (KJV)

Paul is talking about an established arrangement of authority, honour and rank. He is talking about order in the family and in the Church. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Eternal Son of God, He is co-eternal, co-substantial and coequal with the Father. He is God to the same extent to which the Father is God. The Father and the Son are inseparable, yet distinct. With their equality they are so distinct that the Head of Christ is God the Father.

Rank is not necessarily established on the basis of superiority. It is not established on the basis of position. In Christ, there is an equal status; there is equality between the Father and the Son but at the same time within that

equality between the Father and the Son, there is rank and the Father is the Head of the Son. The Son submits to the Father although they are equal. The Son honours the father, and because the Son honours the Father, He submits to the Father.

Using this illustration, Paul comes to say that the head of woman is man. This is not because man is superior to woman; it is a voluntary submission. She does not have to, but she chooses to; honour. Grace gives you the opportunity to honour God. Under grace, to serve is a privilege because it is not required.

The honour of submission is that you are not required to do so, yet you do it. People take their equality as a means of dishonour. For a wife to submit to her husband is an honourable thing and it is honourable because she is the equal of her husband, just as the Son is equal to the Father, but the Son chose to submit to the Father and so the Father commits all things to the Son.

It is the same with the husband and the wife, the wife voluntarily submits to the husband and the husband is to commit all things to the wife. Marriage is the death of two wills and the birth of one. God transforms our will by redefining proprietorship. We need to understand that what we have is not our own; all that is the husband's belongs to the wife and all that belongs to the wife belongs to the husband.

God allowed Christ to administrate all things knowing that He and Christ were one and that their will was one. The wife is supposed to voluntarily submit to the husband and the husband is supposed to entrust the wellbeing, welfare, and the administration of the home to the wife.

The woman was made to be compatible and suitable unto man (Genesis 2:21-23-KJV). Even with God in Adam's life, God saw that Adam was alone. This means that we were created for companionship. The phrase "compatible to man" means woman is equal to man. She is created with the capacities to be a helper, encourager, companion and an amplifier. The divinely established order is that the husband decides where they are going and the wife decides how they get there.

You need to be a Proverbs 31 woman, if you intend to get married. She wakes up early, she is able to establish contracts and win lands for her husband. She is able to bring in things from afar for her husband and she is the praise of her husband. Learn how to entrust projects without expecting anything in return.

See those projects as investment into the trust of the union.

“Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives”

1 Peter 3:1, 7-KJV

In a case where two people get married before they come to faith in Christ, Paul admonishes us that if there is one partner who believes and the other does not, the one who believes should not separate from the other on that basis. If they do not hear the word, your submission should be able to convert them. This would mean if a man is married to a woman who is an unbeliever, the way he treats her should be able to convert her to the faith.

6.1.3. In Relation to the Financial Realm

In the marriage, there is something called commonwealth. Commonwealth means that all of the resources within the household are for the purpose of the household. All of the resources you possess exist for the purpose of building the household. The husband and wife are stewards of what has been entrusted within the household. Building the household together will eliminate every selfish tendency that wants to come up.

We present the common good of the household, in maintenance and investments. Never start your life where expenses exceed income. A sign that expenses exceed income is that there is never a reserve. If there is no reserve after your expenses, it is an indication that your expenses are too high.

6.2. Giving as a Family

Marriage does not mean that your ministerial life should diminish. The reason why God ordained us to be couples is so that we can fulfil His assignment and His mandate. One of the ways a household is present in the Church financially is through the tithe.

Family represent household in tithes. When Abraham heard there was a priest called Melchizedek in the earth, he goes to present to Him the tithe of all (Gen. 14:20). Your tithe is the testimony that you acknowledge that Jesus is alive. If there is no increase of income, you will not have something to tithe. Your tithe is acknowledging that He is the source of your income and resources. In the New Testament, the tithe was called the thanksgiving offering. This is because the tithe was thanksgiving for the income that they received.

We need families who want to see the mission of the Church go forward. Families need to get involved in the ministry of the Church, not just to see the mission of the Church advance, but also getting involved – not just putting in your money but putting in your time and service. In this manner, you are observing the order of God because you are acknowledging the Church and your participation in the Church.

6.3. Serving God as a Couple

As a couple, you need to rededicate yourselves to God's plan for your life because the pressures of life are always going to come to distract you. You must not forget that God did not only bring you together so that you should live together, but He brought you together to serve Him.

There is no greater privilege than that which is to serve God with your spouse; he or she might not be in the same level with you but will have something that you do not have. This will help you learn to appreciate the wisdom of God in the other. There is no one who is higher or more spiritual than the other but God has joined you together and you are one flesh. You need to value the voice of God through your spouse. Among couples, there is nothing more powerful than the prayer of agreement.

When a couple is focused, and looking in the same direction, grounded in the purpose of God and their heart's desire is first of all to fulfil the purpose of God, everything they pray together for will come to pass. The reason why things do not happen in the life of some women is because they do not agree with their husbands. This does not just refer to verbal agreement but something that comes from the inside which you both desire to have, first of all for God, then for you and your children. If this is the reason why you come to God in prayer, there will be nothing lacking and nothing missing in your lives.

Nothing can strengthen your marriage again and again than the purpose of God. It is time for you to know what God's purpose is for your relationship. Are you just choosing based on your heart's desire? God will give you the desires of your heart if they are compatible to His purpose.

Conclusion

God defines Himself in the context of family to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The family is an ordinance of God and out of the marriage flows the family. It is time for the Church of Jesus Christ to restore the sanctity and dignity of marriage in our society. It is time to build strong families and a stable society. It is time for us to build strong homes; a forum for the transmission of all that we are and have to our children because they are the heirs of our legacy.

When the couple is grounded in the faith of God, their faith will be effectual. Marriage in itself is a force. Your marriage will determine what you will experience in the five spheres of your life and the life of your children. God wants to use families as the basic context where He will define His purpose on the earth. A Church built on strong marriages can never fail.

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Prosperity by Grace

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