



MARRIAGE ETHICS *For* SINGLES

A 31-DAY DEVOTIONAL

FAITH A. OYEDEPO

MARRIAGE ETHICS FOR SINGLES

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INTRODUCTION

Dear reader, I want to congratulate you for downloading this Devotional. After your salvation, one of the most important choices you will make is who to marry. As it is often said, the next worst thing after hell fire is a bad marriage. I know you may have heard about blissful marriages and you may be wondering if it is real or just a fantasy because the popular opinion in society today is that two people cannot live together without fighting.

I want to tell you with confidence that it is real. Marriage can be a success! By downloading this Devotional, you have taken one giant step towards this reality!

This e-book is for male and female singles and the aim is to prepare you for a successful marriage. This is why you will be seeing topics concerning marriage, choices before marriage and daily male and female relationships.

To get the best out of this Devotional:

1. Read it daily. Make out time to read a topic a day for 31 unbroken days, committedly.
2. I have made the daily message(s) short. Go over them at least twice, see how each applies to your life/relationship and make sincere changes where needed.
3. If you are in a relationship, share it with your partner. At the end of each day, you can discuss whatever you have read.

My prayer for you is that your marriage will be purposeful, exciting and fulfilling, thereby making God proud!

Remain Ever Blessed!

Faith A. Oyedepo

Day 1

WHERE IT ALL BEGINS

In the beginning God created...

-Genesis 1:1-

Some people think a successful marriage begins from the various activities during dating. Others think it's from your relationship with the person when you first start dating. On the contrary, a successful marriage begins from your preparation as a single, before you ever get to know, meet or choose your marriage partner.

It begins with your mindset towards marriage, knowing what you want and what it takes to get it. It starts with your positive thoughts, which come from your discovery of God's intention towards marriage from His Word. As we all know, our thoughts control whatever becomes of us. That is why the Bible admonishes that you guard your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life (Proverbs 4:23).

I believe that before God created everything we see today, He had the perfect picture in His mind. That was why He could speak the Words into reality. His mind had produced it from the beginning. The truth is, your mind is able to bring everything that you need, just the way you want it; but you must think right!

Therefore, **if you want a peaceful, fun-filled and loving home, create that picture in your heart and let it guide your choices each day.** Don't becloud your mind with the evils you see elsewhere, comparing your home to that of others in the world, who go through numerous challenges. Yours can be different; but first, your mind must be reoriented. It all begins in and with you!

Remain Ever Blessed!

Day 2

THE BEAUTY OF SINGLEHOOD

But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord.

-1 Corinthians 7:32-

When I was single, there were some of my mates whose only aim in life was to be married. They saw marriage as an achievement, thus, they made it their priority. Nothing else was attractive or had meaning to them except marriage. For this reason, they failed to develop themselves in other areas of life. They had completely misplaced priorities and as a result, they don't have much to show for it now.

Life is much more than marriage. In fact, it is important to get your bearing in life as a single lady because at this time, it is much easier to be focused. As a single, you must understand that God seeks a closer and more intimate relationship with you. This closeness is the bedrock of your future (Daniel 11:32). Personally, I have found that the closer you are to God, the more you see the need to draw even closer to Him.

Also, while single, your strength seems to be at its peak; this is why it is the best time to discover yourself and your purpose on earth. You have to be careful at this stage because it is the time when many youth go astray. At this stage of your life, you have the opportunity to develop relevant skills, make life-changing decisions and accomplish personal goals.

It is the time you have freedom to serve God with all your being – spirit, soul and body. You don't have to give yourself emotionally and physically to another man but rather whole-heartedly to God. You can be involved in as many Christian activities: fastings, fellowships, seminars, help ministries, etc. The truth is, if you cannot serve God while you are single, it will be difficult to do so when you get married, because of the various marital responsibilities. Therefore, **do not spend your single years wishing and waiting to be married; instead, make it count, for generational impact.**

Remain Ever Blessed!

Day 3

DOES VIRGINITY EQUAL PURITY?

But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

-Matthew 5:28-

In recent times, purity has been mistaken for virginity. It seems to be taught that once sex has not taken place, that person is “pure”. We forget that our thoughts and words also determine our purity. Involvement in certain actions which don’t necessarily go “all the way” but cross certain boundaries (as understood individually, knowing that our body is where Christ resides) also defile the body.

To really get what it means to be pure, let’s define it using the symbol of water. No matter how clear a glass or bowl of water is, if there is the tiniest particle in it, it can be considered harmful. Similarly, it does not matter if you are still a virgin (represented by the glass), even if only your mind (represented by the water) is corrupted (represented by the particle), then you are defiled.

I use the mind in this analogy because every act begins as a thought in the mind. Before you tell a lie, steal, or lay in bed with someone who is not your husband or wife, you must have thought about it. When you let it linger, it may then translate into action. This is why I would paraphrase the above scripture as “if anyone looks at the opposite sex lustfully, he or she has committed adultery or fornication in the mind.”

So, it is not about whether or not you are a virgin, but whether or not you remain pure. Let purity be your state of being. It requires the constant cleansing of your spirit, soul, and body (1 John 3:3). God is pure and in Him there is no filthiness. He has called you to be pure like Him and has given you the power to do so, through the help of the Holy Spirit.

From today, therefore, shun those impure thoughts! Flee from every appearance of evil or any defiling habit. Also, mind the friends you move with, what they talk about, watch and do. More so, guard yourself with the Word of truth, so you don’t get swayed by every wind of doctrine. Remember, you are precious in God’s eyes, and you deserve the best.

Remain Ever Blessed!

Day 4

MISINTERPRETING CLOSENESS

...both the inward thought of every one of them, and the heart, is deep.

-Psalm 64:6-

Relationships can be very interesting, because the heart of man is very deep and it is impossible to know what someone else is thinking. Many have fallen victims of misinterpreted relationships and some others have cried of heartbreaks when there was no real heart-to-heart involvement in the first place.

There was this story of a beautiful young lady who worked with a gentle and God-fearing boss. He was so nice to her and would encourage her whenever she needed it. He was the complimentary type; so, it didn't cost him anything to pay her compliments when she did something exceptional, or even when she looked nice.

This young lady, regrettably, misinterpreted his kind gestures and thought he was interested in her. When he eventually gave her his wedding invitation card, she was very heartbroken. This, among others, is an example of why you must never assume a relationship. That someone is being polite and friendly does not mean that he or she is interested in you. A relationship should be consciously established by both parties.

When you feel that someone is getting too close to you or fond of you, it is wisdom to politely ask for a definition of your relationship. This way, there will be no confusion. Moreover, the biggest clarity you need is from God. So, as long as you are not cleared on both aspects, your relationship still remains platonic (Song of Solomon 8:4). You will not miss it, in the name of Jesus!

Remain Ever Blessed!

Day 5

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.

-Genesis 3:23-

These days, it seems like everyone just wants to be married. While it is good to desire that, many are not bothered about what comes after the wedding- issues such as feeding, children's welfare, payment of rent, etc. All they care about is that they must be married or at the least, have a partner.

These days, some husbands have abandoned their financial responsibilities to their wives. This was not ordained from the beginning. The man was commanded by God to till the ground which involves physical and mental effort. This command was never given to the woman, that is, Eve (Genesis 2:15).

Incidentally, some men don't want to be responsible but they desire to be married. You must understand that the God-ordained duty of a wife is to be a "help meet". That means, there must be something for her to help you with. If you are not doing anything productive that requires the additional strength of someone else, then you absolutely do not need a wife (Genesis 2:18).

To begin your work, you need a purpose. You need to work at why you exist. Remember the definition says "Using physical and mental effort". So, if you are not physically engaged in something, you must be mentally engaged in something productive. You don't really need to start with a "white collar" or monthly 100,000 naira job; you can start small and watch God increase you through your diligent and dedicated service. The principle is this: **No work, no wife.** So, put your hands to work!

Remain Ever Blessed!

Day 6

WHERE DOES YOUR CONFIDENCE LIE?

*But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD,
that I may declare all thy works.*

-Psalm 73:28-

When it comes to finding a life partner, many people claim to be trusting God. They make statements like “I am waiting for God’s choice because I believe that is the best for me.” However, when they see someone that matches their God-given description, they go to their pastors, friends or mentors, asking them to examine whether or not that person is God’s choice for them.

This creates the question, “Are you really trusting God or the judgment of others?” From my understanding, when you trust God for something, you look first into His Word prayerfully to find answers; and when you do, you hold on to what you have discovered.

So, what you find in the Scripture and what the Holy Spirit says to you become your guide to receiving your answers. The situation where you have to meet with your pastor should be for confirmation of what God has spoken to you, not to hear God for the first time through him or her.

If you are indeed sure that your confidence is in God and not in what any man says, then you should seek Him yourself and hold on to whatever He says to you. Remember, what actually holds value is not what you are given, but what you personally find. Gone are the days of running after seers and fortune tellers; it’s high time you knew God personally because that’s what guarantees you a glorious and stressless future (Psalm 118:8-9).

Remain Ever Blessed!

Day 7

CHOOSING A LIFE PARTNER

Can two walk together, except they be agreed?

-Amos 3:3-

From my studies, I discovered that the basis upon which people make their choices of a life partner is multi-dimensional. It is based on physical, intellectual and spiritual dimensions. Once they sense a bond in any of these realms, they often conclude that such a person would make a good companion.

While they are not totally wrong, choosing a life partner should not be based on just one, but on the three dimensions above. As important as the physical consideration is, your choice should not be based on that alone, but most importantly on spiritual as well as intellectual realms.

It's not wrong to admire someone's beauty, complexion, appearance, oratory ability or academic qualification; but a marriage built on these will soon end in disaster because these, on their own, cannot build a lasting and peaceful family life. More so, likes and dislikes change over time. What seems perfect for you today might become childish and old-fashioned tomorrow. So, why not hang on to something that will last a lifetime.

The most important thing to look out for, therefore, is your spiritual bond. Is he or she a born-again Christian? Who is God to him or her or how does he or she feel about God? What relationships does he or she have outside of the church? The spiritual position of the person you intend to get involved with determines how much the marriage will flourish. You must not be unequally yoked! (2 Corinthians 6:14)

Thus, **in your quest to find a life partner, be spiritual in your approach and don't forget to employ the help of the Holy Spirit.** He is your best guide to the truth. You will not miss your place in your marital destiny!

Remain Ever Blessed!

Day 8

THE RIGHT MOVE

Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren.

-1 Corinthians 6:8-

Mike, a spirit-filled brother is engaged to Ann, who although spiritual, doesn't see anything wrong in wearing make-up, jewelleries or fitted dresses. Mike does not appreciate this very much because he'd rather have her be more moderate in her appearance. In another instance, Ayo, a good friend of Mike, chose to get married to Ibukun who is less bothered about the way she looks, even though he prefers a lady like Ann who is fashion-conscious.

Now, both brothers found something in these ladies which made them unwilling to let go; yet, they would have preferred that their spouses-to-be dress the way they like. They both eventually got married and decided to make these women fit into what they believed in or desired. Failure to change would amount to insubordination, quarrels and possibly, divorce.

While it is not wrong to hope or pray for a change in a person, it is totally wrong to get married with the hope of totally altering someone's life. In fact, it's defrauding him or her. Marriage is a choice; it is neither a commandment nor Christian expectation. So, you must be sure of your compatibility, in even minute areas, before you decide to get married to someone.

Don't choose a life partner because of a small thing, when you know you have a challenge with a major aspect of that person's life. Remember, marriage is for a lifetime, and you might not be able to cope if there are major challenges.

No one is in the position to change another person. It is the duty of the Holy Spirit to convict and transform and He does that for Himself, not for you (John 16:7-8).

So, as you prepare for marriage, consider your beliefs and what you are comfortable with. Then, keep watch in prayers, for someone of similar qualities. Remember, like attracts like. So, if you are attracted to the opposite of what you want, then you must watch it. You will not miss it, in the name of Jesus Christ!

Remain Ever Blessed!

Day 9

MUST THE CHURCH BELL RING?

And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.

-Matthew 3:15-

Some people have asked, having gone through family introduction and engagement, “is it compulsory to also be wedded in Church?” I would say “Yes!” Don’t ever be tempted to overlook your Church wedding or accept the norm that getting married in church is unimportant.

A Church wedding affords you the privilege of having your marriage consummated in the presence of the host of heaven, a cloud of witnesses and angels, God being the Chief Guest of them all. This reinforces your commitment to each other and, also, to God. Many marriages break-up today because they have not come to terms with this truth.

Marriage is a covenant relationship between a husband, a wife and God. God is the One Who holds it together and we know that a threefold cord is not quickly broken (Ecclesiastics 4:12). As long as God is involved, you form a strong cord that the devil cannot break except you permit him. If you understand the place of God in your marriage and the fact that He is your main “In-law,” you would accord Him the honour by letting Him witness the union.

This is not to say that getting married elsewhere is wrong, but to help you understand the honour and dignity you have when you are wedded in Church. You are worth more than you think; so, take the right steps to please God in everything you do.

Remain Ever Blessed!

Day 10

ARE YOU A CONTRIBUTOR?

Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.

-Proverbs 27:17-

Sometimes ago, a young man came to me for counsel. He was in a relationship that was heading for marriage, but along the line, that relationship was challenged. In the course of our discussion, I realised that the major issue was that the contribution was one-sided. He did the constant prayers, bought the gifts, made the calls and all the lady did was receive the attention and care. This put a strain on the relationship, because the man was feeling unloved. Eventually, they went their separate ways.

It is important to enter into a (godly) relationship as a contributor, not a burden. Give your time, energy, knowledge and spiritual work to that relationship. What you take into it determines what you get from it.

Don't keep looking for gains, instead, be the impact you want to see. Constantly bear in mind that what you make happen for others determines what God makes happen for you. **What contributions have you made to the relationship you are in right now? Have you been a true friend? Have you been able to strengthen his or her walk with God? Have you impacted your partner positively: emotionally, spiritually and otherwise?** If not, then you need to tighten your girdle and start making contributions.

Beware of selfishness! Stop taking undue advantage of others. Refuse to join the company of those who keep milking others, without giving anything in return. Love is all about giving and you must be able to sacrifice something in order to make a positive difference in the life of another person (John 3:16, 13:34). The best time to start contributing is now.

Remain Ever Blessed!

Day 11

THE OTHER SIDE OF LOVE

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten...

-Revelation 3:19-

Some people mistake love to mean that your spouse will always agree to all that you do and say. It is important to note that it doesn't always work that way. Love also corrects, rebukes and chastens. In fact, anyone who claims to love you without correcting you either does not know the meaning of love or does not love you, after all.

Love does not necessarily say "Yes" always; there are times when love must say "No". This does not mean that the love your spouse has for you has decreased, rather you should understand that he or she is after your welfare. For instance, as much as Jesus loved Peter, He rebuked him at a point (Matthew 16:23). That rebuke wasn't out of anger, but love.

As a couple, if any of you is ill-behaved, rude or have a negative aspect that would affect your relationship, you must be ready to chastise in love. My husband and I are very practical in demonstrating our love for each other. There are times when he corrects me on my dressing, relationships and decisions. This does not mean he is trying to lord it over me, but he wants the best for me.

The truth is, it is only those who are truly after your progress and peace that would be bold enough to correct you. However, this does not mean you should nag, be abusive or rude to your spouse. It calls for being your brother's keeper and ensuring that you "wash" each other to the point that you are without spot or wrinkle (Ephesians 5:26-27). All corrections must be done in Christ's kind of love. Receive wisdom for success in your marriage, in the name of Jesus Christ!

Remain Ever Blessed!

Day 12

YOUR WIFE, YOUR CROWN

A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband...

-Proverbs 12:4-

When you look at the rate of infidelity in marriages today and then listen to the excuses some people make, it can be extremely mind-boggling. Some men make statements like “My wife does not dress appealingly enough”, “Her hair is always untidy”, or “My wife never knows how to put on just a little make-up to cover those pimples!” My question to these men today is, what effort have you made to make her look the way you want?

A king is incomplete without a crown; but the way his crown actually looks tells you a lot about the king's person and the kind of authority he wields. The same principle applies to your wife. The way she appears in public and how well she looks altogether tells a lot about you.

If the Bible says your wife is your crown, and you understand that your authority is incomplete without her, it will tell in the value you place on her. Remember, the Bible enjoins the man to deeply, completely and honestly love his wife; and that love and submission go hand-in-hand. A woman who has receives true and pure love from her husband is naturally bound to submit. When this happens, your marriage becomes blissful and enviable to all.

Your crown remains of immense value to you. It announces your kingship and makes you a point of reference to generations yet unborn. Henceforth, show that you value your wife by taking care of her needs, providing for her and the family as a whole. No matter how much she may be earning, your respect will be weightier when you also work to take care of her and her needs (Ephesians 5:25-28).

You can always go out of your way to make her look beautiful. Buy her good and quality love gifts, no matter how little, and she will appreciate you for it. Treat her like a queen, and you will in turn be treated like a king. The love you profess to your wife can clearly be seen in her disposition and that includes her appearance. Be a true king today by showing care to your “crown”.

Remain Ever Blessed!

Day 13

THE SAFEST WAY

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

-Ephesians 5:25-

It is not a surprise that God gave the responsibility of love to the man. The man is the head of the home and so should have the greater responsibility to love like Christ, which is above everything else (1 Corinthians 13:13). More so, the Bible says to whom much is given (in terms of strength, wisdom, wealth, possessions), much more is expected.

However, for every commandment of Scripture, the grace to keep to it diligently has also been made available. So, **it is very possible for a man to love his wife as Christ loves His church.** Christ's love for the Church is unconditional; it is not determined by situations or circumstances. Jesus' love is not egocentric; therefore, it is not boastful, proud or selfish. In fact, love compelled Him to desire greater works for His Church, more than He Himself could do while on earth (John 14:12). Likewise, husbands need not feel threatened by the success or earnings of their wives; rather, they should support and encourage them to always achieve the best.

Love is shown in your humility, which does not imply that you are a weak or lesser man than you are. Humility gives you more respect and increases your barns. Often times, men initiate the actions in the home through their character. They either show love or hatred; and their wives naturally follow suit. So, **if you want your marriage to be filled with love and excitement, you must initiate the action of true and sincere love, the Jesus kind of love.** Then, your wife and family will naturally follow suit. Remember, your love breeds her submission.

Remain Ever Blessed!

Day 14

THE TRUE LOVE NATURE

With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

-Ephesians 4:2-

The relationship between Christ and the Church is synonymous with that of the husband and the wife. Just as Christ loved the Church, the husband has the responsibility to keep loving his wife.

As it is popularly said, marriage is a place where we learn and practise what we have learnt. So, understand that just as you are learning, your wife also is in the school of marriage. It is your duty to help her through it, by teaching her ways in which you both can be satisfied in your marriage, without being angry or resentful of each other.

You don't have to be too touchy when your wife makes a mistake. Remember, she is only human and her actions you see as mistakes might be her attempt to please you. That is why you must correct in love. Jesus never sends us out of the Church when we make mistakes; instead, He draws us closer so we don't get farther away. Similarly, don't evict your wife from your home, because of a misunderstanding.

More so, even when Christ chastises us for any wrong done, He does not withhold His blessings from us, because the Bible says His gifts and callings are without repentance. So, you don't have to stop providing for your home, buying gifts for her or performing your duties as a husband because your wife offended you. First things first; talk with her and work on sorting it out. God's love is unconditional and so should yours.

As a man, you were created in the likeness of God, so your love and attitude towards others, especially your wife, should be after the similitude of God (Ephesians 5:25). You will not fail God, in the mighty name of Jesus Christ!

Remain Ever Blessed!

Day 15

MY BROTHER'S KEEPER

Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.

-Romans 14:13-

I am sure that when you hear the phrase, “Brother’s keeper”, your mind goes first to a friend, neighbour or colleague. People do not often think that they should also be their “spouse’s keeper”. That is, helping them do the right things so they can, in turn, serve you better.

Some people go as far as tempting their spouses, with the excuse that they want to know if they really love them, or whether they are strong enough to withstand such temptations. When eventually such spouses fall into these traps, they are labelled as “not strong enough”. On the contrary, such situation would never have occurred, in the first place, if you had not put “a stumbling block in the way of your brother.”

Someone rightly said that when you tempt somebody with a particular thing, there is a likelihood that the person might fall. When they do, it’s not their fault but yours because they might not have thought of it, if you didn’t bring it their way. This is a sensitive subject but it is important to note this: rather than judging or setting traps, why not pray for your partner against those things you are afraid of (James 5:16).

Commit your fears to God and help him or her through those behaviours you think may be harmful to your marriage. **Remember you are in it together, and if one person fails, it affects you both.**

Remain Ever Blessed!

Day 16

CAPABLE HANDS

Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands.

-Proverbs 31:10&13-

Sometimes ago, God said to me, “Faith, you are born a blessing not a burden!” I wrote down those words in my Bible, so I would remember them always. You may ask, “What if that Bible gets missing?” Well, I took a step further to write it on the first page of every new Bible I got, and more importantly, on the pages of my heart; because I am determined to be a blessing to my generation and not a burden.

It is very important to know that as good as marriage is, in the plan of the Originator (God), there are responsibilities that must be accepted in order to produce the desired results. Marriage is good when the people involved are willing and obedient to work hand-in-hand. As a woman, if you don't take the responsibility of being the help God intended you to be, you will end up a liability. Responsibility is the price of greatness.

Yes, the husband is the head of the home and, therefore, must provide for the members of his family; but as a help meet, you also have to be productive (Genesis 2:18). I have observed that no man wants a wife that would be a burden to him. Every man wants a woman that would be an asset and not a liability. If a woman is not productive, she would invariably be a burden to her spouse.

There are many things your hands can find to do. All you need is a will and commitment to work. You don't need all the money in the world to start a profitable venture. What you need is an idea and the heart to work. I always have a pen and a piece of paper to write down ideas, wherever I am, as they drop in my spirit. As God speaks to you or as certain things drop in your spirit-man, don't procrastinate; work at it immediately!

Not everyone would enjoy a white-collar job, there are many other things you can engage in to make your hands profitable. You have been endowed with a lot of potentials that must not waste. A virtuous woman is productive, creative and industrious. As you engage your hands today, I see God increasing and prospering your family!

Remain Ever Blessed!

Day 17

SELFLESSNESS IN MARRIAGE

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

-Galatians 6:7-

Some people are so selfish that even when married, they tend to still live as if it's all about them and nobody else. The "Me, myself and I" attitude has destroyed so many homes today. Marriage is built on selflessness and courtesy, not self-centredness. In fact, at the instance of your saying "I do", you should let go of self to accommodate your partner's needs and happiness. The truth is: It is your selflessness that brings you fulfilment.

Jesus, our perfect example, despised the shame of dying the death of a criminal just to free us from the bondage of sin. He relinquished His throne to live on the earth, because of His love for us. So, why can't we make sacrifices for our spouses and families? Some people would rather go after their passion, without considering its effect on their families. Some even go as far as loving the comfort of their "personal space", thereby leaving their spouses' feelings unattended to.

If wives must be selflessly submissive to their husbands, then, it is expected that husbands must love unconditionally. **Selflessness means treating your spouse the way you expect to be treated, not minding if it is reciprocated.** If you desire to be loved, you must sacrificially show love. Love does not insist on its right; rather, it seeks to serve. The commandment of love to the man is to be courteous and respectful, not to be rude, bossy and arrogant. Likewise, submission means being selfless (Ephesians 5:22&25).

Marriage should not be built on you having all at the expense of others; you must also consider meeting the expectations of your spouse. That's what true love and commitment entails. Your marriage is meant to bring you tremendous joy, but it depends on your selfless commitment to it.

Remain Ever Blessed!

Day 18

HONOUR YOUR SPOUSE WITH YOUR WORDS

...let the wife see that she respects her husband.

-Ephesians 5:33 (ESV)-

Respect is not all about kneeling to greet, using words such as “sir” or “ma” or speaking so highly about someone when in their presence. It is truly exhibited in the way you treat or talk about someone, in their absence. In fact, being good and gracious to someone in their presence while doing the exact opposite in their absence is called eye service; and that is high level of disrespect.

So many people are guilty of speaking negatively of their spouses, especially in the midst of family and friends. At times, it is a way of gaining sympathy, which unknown to them sells their families out. At that instance, you might gain the sympathy you crave, but the outcome is that your spouse loses his/her respect. This easily makes you an object of mockery and you may also lose personal respect amongst these people.

Your best option is, therefore, to communicate with your spouse, commit him or her to prayers, constantly seek his/her good, and at all times, speak words of edification. It is better for others to see your spouse as the best and envy you, than for you to be used as a case of pity. If your partner is honoured, you would be honoured too.

For instance, if you laugh while in a conversation with a friend, can your husband be certain you aren't laughing at him? If you can't make him feel secure with you, then, you are not honouring him. So, it is high time you honoured your spouse in your conduct and conversation. **Remember, honouring him is also honouring God and when God is honoured, He blesses.**

Remain Ever Blessed!

Day 19

BE A HOME KEEPER

*To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands,
that the word of God be not blasphemed.*

-Titus 2:5-

You might have heard that success is not about getting up the ladder, but effectively sustaining your stay there. It is not enough to build a godly home, it must be sustained. This is because once good is not always good. It takes a conscious and concise effort to maintain a quality home that will be envied.

You must bear in mind that the outcome of your home, whether good or bad, does not depend on God, but you. You are solely responsible for its success or failure and to make it a success requires hard work and determination. When you play your part in building your family, God will be committed to fulfilling your desires.

To sustain your home, you must be ready to fulfil your marital responsibilities. Many pastors' wives, probably because of the responsibilities of the church and the demands of members, neglect their first point of duty, which is their home. Most times, people don't listen to what you say as much as observing if you practise what you say.

You should be able to keep your home far from the devourer. This you do by making it conducive for the Holy Spirit to dwell. You must ensure peace and tranquillity by your willingness to respect the leadership of your husband, even if you think your anointing is greater.

Also, as a woman of substance, you must apply wisdom to your daily living (Proverbs 14:1). This will help you know when to talk, when to be quiet, where to go and how to react, at all times. Having the full backing of God as a minister's wife, I know that you cannot fail! May your family life results be unquestionable!

Remain Ever Blessed!

Day 20

GIVEN TO HOSPITALITY

Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.

-Romans 12:13-

At women fellowship meetings, I often encourage them to be hospitable, within and outside the home. One of the women testified of how a visitor came to her house when her husband travelled and all she had was the money he left for housekeep. As such, she did not have enough to give the visitor for transportation fare. She had to sell off some foodstuff to be able to provide for the need of that visitor.

Before he left, he made some prophetic declarations and one of it was that God would surprise her. True to his word, the following week, God began to visit her home with provisions - financial, material, foodstuffs etc. A house that didn't have enough became a place of abundance, because of hospitality.

That explains a few of the benefits of hospitality. **"To be hospitable" means to be friendly or generous both to strangers and familiar faces.** This is one important key in marriage and life in general, because by the Abrahamic blessings that we inherited through Christ, we are called to be blessings to others (Galatians 3:13,14,29).

One of the catalysts for hospitality is brotherly love. That is what propels you to reach out to others and give them a helping hand even without any prior knowledge. It could be expressed through giving a cup of water, a listening ear, a friendly smile, or even just a warm handshake. It is not really in the amount but in the manner it is given.

Hospitality brings honour and dignity. In fact, in my home, we learnt early that hospitality is commended by God and our watchword has been that genuine and sincere hospitality brings great rewards. So, as you give in to hospitality today, in every aspect of the word, not minding the size of your giving, or the status of the person or group you are helping, you will not miss your rewards, in Jesus' name!

Remain Ever Blessed!

Day 21

THE ACT OF GIVING

She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.

-Proverbs 31:20-

The above verse of the Scripture shows that a virtuous woman is generous, merciful and sensitive to the needs of others. She is a willing and cheerful giver of her wealth, time and strength.

Are you dedicated to the welfare of your household? God does not unreasonably expect more than the ability and strength He has given you. When it is time to work, go about it diligently (Proverbs 31:15). Never let a day end without defining clearly what you have accomplished for that day. If your type of job gives you extra time, invest that time! Don't waste it away.

Being a homemaker, that is, at home full-time, should not be an excuse for idleness. A wise man once said, and I believe it very strongly, that, "The greatest factory where the most important product on earth is manufactured is the home." This is true because the home is where the next generation of human beings are developed.

Be a homemaker with a difference! Let your spouse and children feel your impact. Be up early, tidy up the house, prepare good meals, and get your children and husband's clothes ready. Be diligent at your chores (Proverbs 22:29). Above all, let your home be an example for others to follow.

Remain Ever blessed!

Day 22

OVERCOMING FAMILY PRESSURE

Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

-Matthew 6:27-

Having a family to watch your back, as well as show you much care and love, is a wonderful experience. It gives you a feeling that you are not alone and that you always have people to fall back on whenever you need such help. At the same time though, some family members may be a pain in the neck.

They have a special way of "driving home" or expressing what they want, making you feel so pressured as to do what they demand. Have you ever been confronted with quizzical looks asking you questions like, "When is it happening?" "When are we meeting him or her?" "All your mates have done this and that, what is happening to you?" The list goes on and on. These are questions that may make you want to rush into something you are not prepared for, or do what even you don't expect yourself to do.

First, you should know that these pressures, most of the time, are out of love, care, and concern; so the way you handle them matters. You should know your purpose, have laid out goals and a time frame to achieve them as backed up by God. You must also be clear on what you stand for and be firm about it; then, others will respect you for that.

When confronted with pressures, always try to remain calm. Do not be anxious for anything, as anxiety can lead to wrong decisions. More so, never base your decisions on people's suggestions. Weigh and evaluate them alongside your goals and purpose. By so doing, you can work with the valued ones and discard the unnecessary.

Very importantly, you must not panic or give in to worries because of pressures. Worries make you sorry at the end, as they only bring depression, possibly making you settle for less. It also keeps you blind to what God has in store for you, because you may stay glued to your past or present situation.

At all times, aim to keep your hope alive and keep your emotions in check. Remember, whether you succeed or fail in any task is first dependent on how you handle it.

Remain Ever Blessed!

Day 23

WATCH THAT TONGUE

Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.

-James 3:13-

Human beings are naturally vocal. We were created with the ability to express ourselves in words, and we tend to do this more with those closest to us. That explains why people get hurt in close relationships, more than in casual ones. Our words can either edify or destroy; it is never neutral. This is why you must train yourself on speaking the right words at all times, especially, to those closest to you.

I am sure you would have heard people say that a particular person does not know how to talk. In most cases, this statement does not refer to a dumb person, but someone who is careless with words. In marriage and life in general, if there is anything you must learn how to use, it is your tongue.

Some people have lost their marriage as a result of careless words. They said things they didn't mean and those words worked against them. Some have even made "ordinary" statements which have ended up being fulfilled negatively in their marriage. Your tongue is powerful; it can either build or destroy (James 3:5-6). However, the good news is that you can control it through conscious exercise of watching what you say, as well as when and how you use your words.

Someone once shared a tip on how she controlled her tongue and this will help you also, if you follow it. **Whenever you are tempted to speak, ask yourself the benefit of those words to the person they are intended for. If you can successfully defend this, then you are on your way to speaking aright.** If your tongue would not stand against you on the day of judgment, then you must use it rightly. Receive help, in the name of Jesus Christ!

Remain Ever Blessed!

Day 24

A BALANCED APPROACH TO LIFE

Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.

-Philippians 4:5-

Recently, as I read from Proverbs 31, a newer revelation began to unfold. I have read that chapter numerous times; but as always, there are new virtues, morals and lessons to pick from the Bible. I realised once more that the virtuous woman referred to in Proverbs 31 had a balanced life. Her career, family and business were in order.

Now, don't think the Bible was referring to a particular person; in that case, she would have had a name or an identity. The true identity of this woman is in her works. This means that everyone would be recognised by his/her works. So, the qualities referred to in these verses of the Scripture are not unrealistic, but highly attainable.

One attribute I would like to lay emphasis on from this chapter is that everyone has the ability to create a balanced life for themselves. Although the virtuous woman is referred to as a career woman, she is also an industrious business woman with a very successful family life.

Today, many people find it difficult to handle the various segments of their lives. They mostly place the less above the more important. This is why many families suffer from neglect and lack of care.

Your major responsibility is to your family; every other aspect of your life is secondary. The virtuous woman had a family that was well catered for, yet other areas of her life did not suffer. Although you are expected to aim higher in life, your family must not be deprived because of your ambition to be successful.

You are to create a friendly, loving and peaceful atmosphere for your family, which begins with your availability and readiness to balance all aspects of your life. Never have a lopsided approach to life; always create a balance to avoid regrets. When you begin to enjoy the dividends in the future, you will be grateful to God for it.

One way you can create a balance is to be hard working. Be active in all areas, but set your priorities right. "Hard work" means that you approach your business diligently, intelligently and thoroughly, not leaving any stone unturned. If your life must be great, then you must decide to be balanced (1 Corinthians 9:25). You will not fail in any aspect of life, in Jesus' name! Remain Ever Blessed!

Day 25

A GREAT TEACHER

The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.

-Psalm 19:7-

When you hear “It’s testimony time” in services, what goes through your mind? Is it just another segment of the service or story time? Do you utilise it spiritually and mentally, deriving lessons to receive the same order of breakthroughs? Personally, I take testimonies as God’s way of saying to me, “I’m set to give you an even greater breakthrough than this. I am willing, I am able and I am ready!” I hope you positively adjust your thought pattern on them today. Let me help kick-start it by sharing one of my testimonies with you. I pray that you draw wisdom from it for your own marriage.

There was a time my husband and I wanted a change of school for our children. We had already agreed on one, but I saw a different school which I preferred. My reasons were that the proprietor was spirit-filled and most of the teachers were Christians. So, I believed it would be a much better learning environment for them.

I told my husband about my discoveries, but he did not immediately see why I wanted that particular school; especially after we had initially agreed on the previous school. Rather than arguing my way out, I used my knowledge on submission and the weapon of prayer, and told God that His will be done on the matter. A few days later, my husband willingly agreed to the new school I proposed and that ended the issue.

I could have chosen to argue my way to a favourable response but that would have destroyed peace for the moment and maybe even for a longer time. In the end, maybe I wouldn’t even have gotten a positive result. In essence, therefore, you must realise that **you don’t need to argue your way through things; you can prayerfully present your reasons and submissively listen to your partner’s view**, while you both pray for the best choice.

Arguments, fights and disagreements are only loopholes for the devil to operate in your home; hence, you shouldn’t give room to them. You can always reach a conclusion peacefully; especially, on your knees.

Remain Ever Blessed!

Day 26

WINNING OVER AN UNBELIEVING SPOUSE

For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?

-1 Corinthians 7:16-

A person's character is important at all times, not just to you but as an influence to those around you. There are many instances of unbelieving spouses who were won to Christ by the character of their Christian spouse. They might have been preached to by several others but remained uninterested in changing, until they saw Jesus in reality through their spouse's behaviour.

For instance, a woman who had an irresponsible husband had prayed, fasted, nagged and done all that she knew to do; yet, he did not change. At a point, it seemed that the more she prayed, the worse he became. So, she contemplated divorce. She was on the verge of making that decision but she decided to ask God again for His will concerning her marriage.

She complained bitterly to God, justifying the reason why she had to take that decision, while also asking for His grace and mercy. Then God told her that although her husband had not been who he should or could have been, the change for her family had to begin with her.

She didn't understand why she needed a change. After all, she was not the one misbehaving. However, her character had not been encouraging either. In the past, she had been so angry with her husband that she unintentionally began thinking negative thoughts towards him. Those thoughts then developed into words she spoke to him. The strength in those words further added to the negative behaviour he exhibited.

Her first step towards change was, therefore, to think aright, speak words of blessings and change towards her husband. She did this alongside prayers of faith for his transformation. Shortly, she began to see the change she desired. This can be your story; know that there is hope for you! (Job 14:7) **Do your part by adjusting your actions to provide a more suitable environment and I know with the help of God, your home will become blissful!**

Remain Ever Blessed!

Day 27

DON'T KEEP MUTE

...but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up.

-Ecclesiastes 4:10-

Many are victims of their present predicaments because they kept mute about it. They think endurance is worth the pain of correction or reproof. This causes problems because, in actual fact, the call for help is not a sign of weakness but strength. If it is done in the right way and with the right people, it helps to prevent devastating circumstances and provides wisdom to handle the situation.

Many people are confronted with various challenges in their homes: ranging from abusive husbands, to lack of care and support, infidelity, struggling with wrong habits and even emotional torture; yet, they keep mute and refuse to seek help or godly counsel. You must understand that there are situations you cannot handle alone; you need someone that is experienced, especially spiritually, to go through it successfully (Proverbs 11:14).

This help can only be found if you come out of your shell and ask for it. No one can read your mind, so don't expect others to know exactly what you are going through without speaking out. God did not create you in isolation. He has placed helpers around you to share your burdens; so make use of them.

However, you must note that it is not everybody you should run to for help. Ensure they are proven godly individuals with proven results of positive counsels. Also, be sure that the counsel is in line with God's Word to ensure you are on the right track. That issue must not consume you; you will overcome, in the mighty name of Jesus Christ!

Remain Ever Blessed!

Day 28

PARTNERING WITH GOD

For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God.

-Hebrews 3:4-

I started praying about my family early in life. I used to and still do pray for my husband, his career, ministry, his walk with God, my children, and the choices they need to make in life. I realised that no amount of knowledge gathered could surpass God's backing on my family.

God is the Builder of every successful home, but He would not just invade your home to take over. He is not a man that would forcefully collect your land, build whatever he likes on it and even rent it out to you at a costlier rate. He expects you to, first of all, ask Him to take over and then hand Him every necessary document, before He takes over. When He does, all you need is to sit back and enjoy His leading, following every step obediently (Psalm 23).

You don't know everything about your spouse, no matter how long you may have been married. But God knows him or her completely, even more than they know themselves. Similarly, your children are yours but they are God's craftsmanship and He fashioned them specially for a particular purpose. This is why you need to partner with Him, to help ensure His purpose for your family is fulfilled.

"Partnering with Him" means searching through scriptures to find His will for your family, praying constantly for that will to be accomplished, obeying every Word to the letter and ensuring your family does the same (Matthew 7:24-25). As a co-labourer with God, you have been endowed with the ability to labour appropriately in His Vineyard and your labour is not in vain. Therefore, as you take up the responsibility to work diligently with God to bring your family to His glorification, you will not fail, in the name of Jesus Christ!

Remain Ever Blessed!

Day 29

HOW MATURE ARE YOU?

And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from MAN, made he a WOMAN, and brought her unto the MAN.

-Genesis 2:22(Emphasis mine)-

I have heard too many ways people describe one another as immature. But what really is maturity, especially, in relation to marriage? From my years of experience, I believe it is your ability to handle situations rationally, firmly and spiritually. It is, appropriately, behaving emotionally and physically like an adult; not overdoing things, but also not "underdoing" them. It is your ability to handle issues moderately, with little or no supervision.

Maturity is both physical and psychological. I won't dwell on the physical part, because I believe most people are more physically mature than they are emotionally or psychologically. Your emotions involve your feelings, whether they are positive or negative; the way you react to situations, how you reason, your communication pattern and your relationship with others. It is what comes from within. That is why it is said that maturity is not determined by one's age; it is a thing of the mind.

One who is mature would assume responsibility for his or her actions and take up the welfare of his spouse and children. You wouldn't be rash in taking decisions and you will be in control of your emotions, as a mature individual. You won't transfer aggression to your spouse or children, but will deal with them wisely, according to knowledge. **A mature person tries as much as possible to balance every area of his or her life, so that loopholes, if any, are unnoticeable.**

The purpose of marriage is to create, in all areas of life, help that is suitable, adaptable and complementary. So, it is to improve your life and not leave you worse than you were, beforehand (Ecclesiastes 4:9). Therefore, for you to show maturity in marriage, you must be responsible enough to fulfil God's purpose for your life first, and then for your family. It is taking up every God-given role with seriousness and godly fear.

Remain Ever Blessed!

Day 30

STOP, BEFORE YOU SAY “YES”!

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

-2 Corinthians 6:14-

There's this young lady I would like to call Stacy. She was a dedicated and fervent Christian who met a brother in the church and, within a short while, got married to him. Shortly after the wedding, she discovered, through his attitude to her and the things of God, that this supposedly spiritual brother wasn't born again. It was just a facade he used to get her attention; by this time, she was already deep in the "mistake".

Marriage is a serious business that must not be taken casually. As a Christian, you don't just see a brother or a sister and agree to get married, without ascertaining their spiritual stand. You must be sure he or she is born again before you say “yes” to any proposal. The reason people are challenged today is that they are unequally-yoked (2 Corinthians 6:14).

You must understand that it is not about a man or woman being in church and serving in a unit, but how well he or she loves and reverences God. One easy way to ascertain this is to be highly spiritual. If you are spiritually sensitive, you will not fall prey to any deceit, because the Holy Spirit will reveal it to you beforehand.

You cannot afford to truncate your destiny in order to follow the “trend of marriage”. More so, your marital journey is so long that you cannot afford to spend it in regret. So, **aside other parameters you use to judge whether or not a person is right for you, let spirituality be your watchword and it will save you a whole lot of stress in the future.**

Remain Ever Blessed!

Day 31

LOOK BEFORE YOU LEAP

Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things...

-Luke 21:36-

Marriage is not just a stage in life, a mere level to attain or an honorary award. It is what you must consciously work at, watchfully and in prayers, to see that you are successful in it. "Being watchful" means you have to critically study the character and lifestyle of your intended spouse before finally tying the knot.

While it is true that you cannot know everything about a person, you can, however, draw on substantial things which can help you draw conclusions. By drawing conclusions I mean, to arrive at points that can help you decide whether or not you can spend the rest of your life with this individual of such character.

Being involved with a person in marriage must not be for the sake of filling any vacuum; you must open your eyes to reality. Don't be blinded by immaterial things, because marriage will open your eyes to deeper realities and at this stage, it might be too late to make amends. Understand that divorce doesn't erase the damage, it just tries to repair but it cannot be like the original. It is, therefore, in your best interest to avoid having to patch up your life in marriage; you must take your time to watch.

Look out for the minute details. It will surprise you to know that those seemingly little things today are what pose threats to future marriages. Do as much as you can to correct those faults today, and if you are certain that you can't live with them for the rest of your life, then, there is no rule that says you have to manage. Relationships that are managed don't last long; it is only those that are stable that stand the test of time. Remember, it is never too late to be right. Look now before you leap!

Remain Ever Blessed!

CONCLUSION

At this point, I will like to say that a successful marriage is not a myth. Don't be discouraged by what you see and hear in the society. A successful marriage takes two people, a man and a woman, who desire it and are ready to take responsibility to see it actualised. That is why the best time to start taking steps towards successful marriage is now, while you are still single.

I have for 31 days, by the help of the Holy Spirit, touched vital aspects and discussed crucial matters that you need to understand now and when you are married. This is because you can only perform based on the level of your knowledge. Therefore, take responsibility for what you want. Let this book remain on your phone, tablet or computer and read it over again.

On a final note, ensure you do not read it alone. Share it with your partner and examine yourselves so that you can make necessary changes. If you are not in a relationship, you have the chance to prepare while you wait for "the one".

I am excited for you and I await your testimonies!

Remain Ever Blessed!

Faith A. Oyedepo



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