







#### TRIBUTE

A TRIBUTE TO MY WIFE OF 25YEARS DR.  
RACHEL ABEL DAMINA

## I

proposed to Rachel over twenty five years ago. When she said yes to my marriage proposal, she was also saying yes to the call. And for twenty

five years, has been a loyal and supportive wife, and faithfully obeyed with me the call

of God on our lives. Rachel's consecration to God and her devotion and dedication to me has been one of the main stays of my Ministry.

The work was not always easy for us. We had to endure times of "hardness as soldiers of Christ" (2 Timothy 2:3). It was during these times I saw the wisdom of God and the depth of commitment Rachel and I had made years before to God and to each other. Because she and I always worked together as a team in our marriage and Ministry, we stayed strong riding the call of God upon our lives, even in hard times, and by God's grace, have remained steady and determined through the years to fulfill the call and finish the work God has given us to do.

We have had great times of joy and laughter, and times of tears. We have had disagreements, and agreed to disagree, but in all of these, she always held up my hand because of her confidence in me, due to her great confidence in God. Anytime I felt the Lord taking us a certain way in Ministry, she encouraged and supported me. It wasn't that I was always right in every decision I made, because I wasn't. But Rachel supported me even when I missed it, and the Lord caused our Ministry to grow and prosper.

Of course, we know that unless the Lord builds the house, they labour in vain who build it (Psalm 127:1). God is really the only one who can bless a Ministry and make it

the success it should be. But a wife can make or break her husband in his call in life. She has supported me in my call. Without her cooperation and support, I could not have done what God gave me to do.

Rachel is that virtuous woman. My ministry is her ministry, and my success in life is her success too. The bible talks about giving honour to whom honour is due, and so it is with love and gratitude that I honour my precious wife, Rachel. May she be eternally fulfilled in life and, as Proverbs 31:31 says, may "...her own works praise her in the gates."

As we celebrate 25 years of marriage, there is so much to celebrate. I write this book in honour of my wife Rachel, and of all her sacrifices and support of me. In many worlds if it were possible, I would marry her over and over again.

our relationships. The scripture above says that marriage is a mystery, but it's demystified when you understand the relationship between Christ and His Church.

The son of God is come and has given us an understanding as believers in the light of Christ. Marriage, family life and relationships become well established once we see them in the light of Christ.

The Psalmist says, "*If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?*" Psalms 11:3. That question has been answered in the New Testament. For believers, our founda-

tion is a person - Christ, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." 1Corinthians 3:11.

So in Christ, our foundation is already laid for every aspect of our lives, including relationships, marriage and family life. This foundation is guaranteed.

*"I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation"* Isa 28:16

That sure foundation is Christ Himself in the believer.

*"...Christ in you, the hope of glory;"*  
Col. 1:27

There are no buildings without foundation, in similar vein, there are no lasting relationships without foundation. A foundation is what a building stands on, marriage cannot be built on nothing, and there must be a foundation over which every lasting marriage must be built. Like in all cases, feelings are temporal, they change with every passing moment as our environments and natural circumstances change. You cannot build anything that will last as a believer on feelings. It is true that feelings play a part in the decision making in marriage, but feelings never last in anything. Your decision as a believer will only remain solid when it rests on the word of God.

Marriage was not intended from the beginning to function without God, it cannot function by itself. When we travel back in time, and get into the thinking of God about the institution called marriage, we will fully grasp God's mind about it, and thereby draw the full benefits, and blessings of it.

Marriage is an institution initiated by God. It was not man's idea. God made the decision and put it in place in Genesis. It is the blessing of God and there are great benefits in it. God never sets up anything without a purpose, but we can only draw the blessings in marriage when we fully understand the institution itself and God's purpose for it. Marriage between believers in Christ, like every other relationship, must be built within the context of the word of God. We can only know the purpose and benefits of marriage when we get back to its origin and tap into His thoughts about it. Our focus is to subject all relationships to the word of God, because that is the only way we draw maximum blessings in every relationship.

In over thirty years of ministry, my wife and I have dealt with issues between couples in relationship. We have both counselled and prayed with married people, and those intending to marry. We have stepped into marital issues with the word of God, and have relationships fixed back, and brought joy back into them.

A lot of time, people are so natural that you wonder why they think they can solve problems without God. I have heard people make statements like, "Just forget about Jesus in this matter, let's discuss about this issue as natural people without bringing Jesus into this matter, let's talk about issues as human beings, and remove spirituality from it..." This statement is common among couples when they have misunderstandings. People being most of the time natural, want to solve marriage problems in a natural way, so make statements like, "Just put yourself in my shoes, or imagine my present condition." Well, even though a person may feel cheated or abused, we will not tackle issues of relationships between believers in Christ on a natural platform.

We are born of God, and our manual of operation in this life is the bible. As believers in Christ, we cannot forget about Jesus when dealing with any issue, we cannot throw away the word of God and solve our problems some other ways. There are no other ways for Christians to deal with issues, or to improve on marriage. Jesus is the main Man! He is the only way to solve whatever misunderstanding, and to give more light on marriage.

### **Knowing Jesus – Solid Foundation for Marriage**

*"When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."*  
Col. 3:4

You do not have a different life from Jesus, once you take Jesus out, you have nothing left. Jesus is the focus of everything including relationships. Remember the encounter of the two disciples of Jesus on the road to Emmaus in the evening of the resurrection, Jesus got their attention by getting them back to the word of God from the writings of Moses, the psalms and all the prophets, showing them things concerning Himself.

*"Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all scriptures the things concerning himself."* Luke 24:25-27

Jesus called them fools for reasoning outside the word of God. That is exactly who we are when we think to solve problems outside God's word. Jesus took them back to the scriptures, went through the writings of Moses, and through the psalms, and all the prophets, expounding unto them things concerning Himself. He wanted them to see Him in the scriptures, to know Him in the scriptures, and to relate with Him on the basis of what is written in the scriptures. Jesus is the focus of all things. The bible says, "And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him

*should all fulness dwell.*" Col. 1:17-19. We cannot do without Him! Jesus is the crux of the matter, He is before all things and by Him all things consist. All fulness dwells in Christ, so it is not palatable to deal with any issue without Him, because all things were created by Him, and for Him. Col. 1:16. Believers in Christ can only know about marriage, and deal with marital issues within the framework of God's word.

### **The Jesus View**

I did not subtitle this as "The Jesus View" to reduce the import and the importance of what Jesus says here, but to be contextual in understanding what Jesus is saying. Jesus, at this time ministered under the law, because He was born under the law. The bible says, "*But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.*" Gal. 4:4-5.

Because Jesus was born under the law, He strictly ministered under the law. There were things Jesus could not be strong against because they would be a violation of the law. He ministered under the law, He operated under the law to redeem them that were under the law to bring all of us to sonship. Once redeemed from under the law, you become born as a son of God. You cannot be born a son of God under the law, you must be re-

deemed from being under the law to be born a son of God.

Under the law people were servants, but God, in His plan of creation, did not intend that we should be servants, sin made us servants. The law was the instrument that sin used to subject mankind to bondage. Jesus came under the law to deliver them that were under the law that they and all of the human family would receive the adoption of sons. Jesus gave them that answer under the law, He could not outrightly rule out what the law said about it, but pointed to them the deficiency of the law in regard to that institution. Jesus addressed the issue of marriage both as it was set from the beginning, and as it was contained in the law of Moses.

Many of the marital issues discussed in the bible are mostly answers to questions. Marriage as a subject is not discussed in the scriptures, and noteaching on it like you have on faith, love, grace etc. Both Jesus and Paul responded to questions people asked them about marriage, and in the answers to those questions, we decipher God's mind on the subject of marriage. For example, the questions people asked Jesus about divorce motivated Him to answer in the light of God's plan for marriage.

There are things we will be discussing here that may not go the way we have learned over the years about marriage and relationships. People assume a lot of things, some

of which are not helpful at all. For the first one thousand years of the Church, there was no wedding in Church, that is why the bible doesn't say much about marriage. For example, there is really nothing like a Christian marriage. But there are Christians in marriage. Marriage is God's institution for all humans, Christians inclusive, and has been long in existence before Christianity. Christians draw their conduct in marriage from the word of God and people who do not know God have had wonderful marriages that lasted a life time, because marriage is for all people under all cultures.

Through the questions that the Pharisees and Sadducees who did not believe in the resurrection, asked Jesus, we draw some insight into marriage from his response to them. This was not a teaching by Jesus on marriage, but an answer to a question by a specific people living under a particular culture, guided by the law of Moses. Jesus attended a marriage ceremony in Canaan of Galilee, but did not specifically teach on the subject of marriage. Jesus' view was completely based on the plan of the institution of marriage from the very beginning.

#### **Marriage In The Beginning And Under The Law**

*"The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not*

*read, that he who made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder. They said unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but in the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be fornication, and shall marry another, committed adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." Matt. 19:3-9.*

First, let us understand that this question was asked as a temptation, it says; "The Pharisees came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him...." So, asking the question itself was a temptation. "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" They knew the law, they knew the commandment Moses gave them, why the question? They had always wanted to catch Jesus in disobedience to the law of Moses so that they would have a cause against Him to put Him to death. It was not a question to prompt them to know God's position about marriage but to catch him in a fault against the law of Moses. They wanted to know if he would give them a direct answer of yes or no, but Jesus went back to the beginning. Look at it this way, why

would these people want to put away their wives just for "every cause"? A man could wake up in the morning, give his wife a divorce certificate, then go get another wife, whom he will treat the same way over time. Why were these people having such a callous heart? The reason is simple; there was no God in them! They had long left the covenant, and were just about religious practices which they felt Jesus contravened.

In His answer, Jesus asked them, "*Have ye not read, that he who made them from the beginning, made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?*" Jesus says here that the originator of marriage did not have divorce in mind when He instituted it. He said a man should cleave to his wife, and the two of them should be one flesh. "One flesh" there refers to sexual union in marriage. God did not intend from the beginning that any marriages should end in divorce. When Jesus said "*In the beginning it was not so*", He was referring to Genesis, where it all began. Jesus' answer would be incomplete if He did not get back to the law of Moses, because He was answering a question in relation to the law of Moses, and He was speaking to the practitioners who adhered to the laws of Moses. Jesus gave the Pharisees a comprehensive response to the question of marriage and divorce both in the law, and as it was intended from the beginning. So, divorce was not, and

it is still not in the thought of God concerning marriage.

All the teachings of Jesus gets back to the beginning. It is when you travel back to the beginning that you will be able to clearly see the intent of God. As pointed above, on the road to Emmaus, when Jesus met two of his disciples on the evening of His resurrection from the dead, He took them back to Moses. Jesus told this Pharisees what God said in the beginning, but they brought the law of Moses that gave them the right of divorce. They said, "...*Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put away?*" Divorce had become legal by the law of Moses, all a man needed to do was to write a letter divorcing his wife, and he was free to take another wife. The Pharisees saw this as a right that men had in Moses, so they thought to tackle Jesus via the law of Moses.

The law of Moses discriminates against women, everything in it supported the man's view over the woman. Jesus did not argue with them about what was in the law but told them that Moses did not line up with God's initial plan of the beginning. He told them it was because of the hardness of their hearts, the callousness of their hearts, that Moses allowed them to do so, else, it was not originally so. In His answer to this question, Jesus put the responsibility of sustaining marriage on the shoulders of men. He told them that in the beginning, God commanded the man to leave his father and mother, and

cleave to his wife, and two of them should be one flesh. They were rather putting their wives away instead of cleaving to them, that was contrary to what God instituted from the beginning.

There is both a legalistic and grace approach to marriage, just like there is a legalistic and grace approach to prayer and other subjects of scripture. The letter of divorce the Pharisees were talking to Jesus about was the legal requirement for divorce. Moses had given them a right to give their wives divorce certificates and send them packing at any time of their choice and for any cause. Once any man had any reason to be displeased with his wife, all it takes is to give her a divorce certificate, and the marriage was over. They had practiced it, and wanted to continue to practice that, but they wanted Jesus' endorsement on that. Do not forget that the intent of that question was to tempt Jesus. They wanted to find something against Jesus in connection to their cherished tradition, culture and laws.

Let me for emphasis sake repeat this so that it sinks in. The way marriage as an institution was created and designed by God was never to accommodate divorce; divorce was never a part of it. Divorce should not even cross the mind of a believer in Christ, there is no provision for it in the word of God because it was not part of the thought of God for marriage. The Church has become so enmeshed in divorce more than even the world,

this ought not to be. If we are thinking like God thought from the beginning, we will not think divorce. Should couples stay in marriage at all cost? I will answer all that in the course of this teaching. But let's get the first things first, let's get into the thinking of God about this institution, its purpose, laws and how to maintain healthy marriages.

Having been married twenty five years, I should have some experiences to share on how to have a good marriage, because I have one. But my intention here is not to give you my experience as the yardstick for a successful marriage, because my experiences might not fit into your case or some other person's situation. We will rather dig into the word of God, and see what God tells us about conducts in our relationships, with God and with one another. It is in adhering to those that we can develop good and healthy marriages.

Jesus told these folks that divorce was not part of marriage, that it was because of the hardness of their hearts, the callousness of their hearts, that Moses allowed them. God did not intend that marriage should have any dimension of legalism, Moses just accommodated that by giving them a law because of their callous hearts. Jesus presented three things to these people; first He took them to Genesis and showed them what God said from the beginning, secondly, He told them about what Moses said to them and why he did that, and thirdly, Jesus told them an exception to the rule under the law of Moses,

which was fornication. In the New Testament, fornication or adultery does not form the basis for divorce, that one was given by Moses under the law. Jesus taught it because it was part of the law, and He was preaching under the law. There are no provisions for divorce in the New Testament, none of the writers of the epistles make fornication or adultery the basis of divorce. Divorce was never a part of God's plan for marriage. We shall be looking at these things in more details in this book. The second part of the question about marriage came from the Sadducees who did not believe in the resurrection. You have to understand that the bible is not written in chapters and verses, they were put there by translators for easy references. So, the book of Matthew, like every other book in the bible, was written as one book. The Pharisees and Sadducees followed Jesus everywhere He went. Though they had differences in their beliefs, they had one common purpose concerning Jesus. The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection and in angels, but the Pharisees did. That was one of their major differences, but when it came to Jesus, they thought He destroyed their religion, and sought to put him to death. The issue of judgment and eventual sentence must be legal, so unless they got Him contrary to the law of Moses, they would have no cause against Him to bring Him to justice. So this next question, came from the Sadducees.

### **Culture In Marriage**

*"The same day came the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him, Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother should marry his wife, and raise up seed for his brother. Now there were with us seven brethren; and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother: Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. And last of all the woman died also. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her. Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven." Matt. 22:23-30*

This scenario was created for the purpose of asking Jesus a question about the resurrection. These guys did not believe in the resurrection, they thought to ask a question that would ridicule the idea of the resurrection of the dead. They also wanted Him to say something contrary to what the Pharisees believed. If this were a thing that actually happened, then one would consider these brothers foolish. In fact, in Africa, that woman would be taken for deliverance, because she must be a witch. What kind of a stupid family would watch themselves die like that? This however was not an actual event. The Pharisees and Sadducees came up with things just to get Jesus to say something

contrary to the laws they believed to accuse Him. Now, let's follow the scenario created here as though it was a fact. Seven brothers had one woman as a wife one after the other. That was only possible because the culture of the people allowed that.

In this case, Jesus did not say anything wrong about these seven men that had this woman as a wife. It was the culture of the people that said when a brother dies, his brother would inherit his wife and raise up children for him. I do not know why a person that had already died would need anyone to raise up children for him, a dead man does not need children. Jesus was not against that either, He also did not invalidate the second to the seventh marriages the woman had. They were legal, she simply married seven times to the same family. Why did Jesus not condemn that culture? There are many cultures like that in Africa today, when a married man dies, any of his male siblings that is of age is chosen to inherit the wife. The woman doesn't have to love him to accept him, culture demands that she accepts him as a husband, and treat him the same way she treated the husband that died. He is as much her husband as the one that died. She had no choice but to submit to that culture. God does not have any problem with that, at least Jesus would have talked against it if it was as in. This story shows the place of culture in marriage.

In some culture, a woman would wear black clothes for one year or more to mourn her husband, in another culture, she will shave her head. It is culture, so whether a believer accepts that culture or not, does not mean she's done evil. Culture is the chosen way of life of a people, it is not necessarily sinful. Marriage is not a Christian institution; marriage is an institution that men and women enter into for relationship and to have children. Whether the people involved are Christians or not, marriage still stands. Different societies have different approaches to marriage. In some societies, women pay dowry to marry men, but in most societies, it is the other way round. In other societies, money is not required to be paid as dowry. They bring flowers and entreat the parents of the woman to give their daughter in marriage. All the parents of the woman want is the assurance that their daughter will be properly cared for. Once the parents of the woman are convinced that you can deal well with their daughter, they make no further demands. In many other societies, animals are given as dowry etc. However a society deals in marriage, it does not reduce the relationship in any way or any sense. Marriage is marriage, there is nothing Christian or non-Christian about it.

The bible is not a book about marriage, it is a book about Christ. Believers in Christ draw their way of life in marriage, and in all other relationships from the bible. When believers

in Christ decide to enter into this human relationship of marriage, there are scriptural instructions on how believers ought to behave in marriage. We saw that the Sadducees brought their culture into the marriage question that they threw at Jesus, but Jesus used that to talk about life after the dead. He went to address the core reason for their question, which was the issue of the resurrection of the dead. He brought another dimension to this, He said marriage is earthly and it does not have eternal value. He said in the resurrection, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but all are like angels. So, marriage ends with this life. There is no husband and wife in heaven, there is no gender in the spirit realm. The question was, since seven of them had her, who was her real husband? And the answer Jesus gave was that, in the resurrection, there is no marriage; that people are like angels in heaven. There is no case of gender after this life, because there are no male or female spirits.

Marriage does not really take place in Church, it takes place between families. When families accept the union of their children and exchange gifts, marriage has taken place. Marriage can take place anywhere. Where a pastor has time, he can even join the intending couple in marriage the moment families accept their children's proposal to be in marriage. In fact, when two consenting adults agree to be in a marriage relationship, nothing stops them from getting married.

Though people want fanfare as part of marriage ceremony, it does not add to marriage nor reduce anything from it. Believers however come to Church for marriage to declare their submission to spiritual authority.

The church they submit to will then speak a blessing over the couple. Some people choose two different days to celebrate their marriage. One day for traditional marriage, as we call it in Africa, during this period, a lot of cultural things take place. After that they choose another day to come to Church for their marriage to be blessed by their spiritual head. These are just the choices that individuals make, your marriage is not any less if you did not do the marriage inside a church building. Where marriage takes place or how it takes place does not add or reduce anything from the marriage.

Marriage is marriage, however it takes place is not really important, once you are married, you are married. But for believers in Christ, we subject everything we do to the authority of God's word, we do not draw our practice from the world, because we are not of the world.

In Jesus' response to that question; He said they thought the way they did because they did not know the scriptures, nor the power of God. It is because of the same reason there is a very high marriage failure rates in the Church. You cannot relate with God and experience His power in your life in any

area that you do not know what He says about that area. For example, you cannot experience victory without knowing what God says about victory. You cannot receive divine healing without knowing what God says about it. The knowledge of Christ holds the solution to all human problems. Jesus told this Sadducees that as long as they were without the knowledge of the scriptures, they would be without the power of God, and Jesus calls that error.

### **The Christ Factor**

*"For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two, shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church. Nevertheless let everyone of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband."* Eph. 5:31-33

After giving certain instructions that has to do with Christian conduct that should be imbibed in marriage, Paul says he was actually talking about Christ and the Church. The entire teaching about submission and reverence in marriage contained in this scripture and Colossians was actually about Christ and the Church. For any person to understand marriage within the Christian context, that person must understand Christ. In this instruction, Paul shows us that the understanding of Christ is the primary requirement in understanding marriage.

How much of Christ that you know reflects in how well you deal with your spouse. You cannot love your wife as Christ loves the Church if you do not know how Christ loves the Church. A woman cannot reverence the husband as the Church reverences Christ if she does not know Christ. So, on both sides, the Christ factor determines the kind of relationship existing between a husband and a wife.

Marriage cannot function properly within the Christian context without the knowledge of Christ. The instruction is not complicated, as we will see it in more details a little later, if wives and husbands understand Christ, marriage will be a pleasant relationship. When your wife or husband stays away from Church services, it is a future bomb disaster for the family. Nobody has the ability to love until his focus on Christ is stable. If Christ is not your focus, you certainly will not have him involved with your life and marriage.

When the bible is strange to you, you cannot abide by its instructions. When both partners are exposed to the teaching of God's word, the bible becomes very relevant at the time of need. This instruction by Paul covers all areas of living, not just about marriage. He however used marriage to illustrate this truth, so that these Christian virtues can be applied in marriage to make our relationships as believers strong and effective.

James shows us how we can be effective as believers in Christ by focusing on the word of

God. He says we should not be forgetful hearers but doers of the word, because there are consequences when we do not practice the word of God.

*"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any he a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."*

James 1:22-25

This is an important instruction in the word of God, it holds the key to successful Christian living. This instruction, like every other instruction in God's word is not complicated. "... *be a doer of the word...*" Practice the word of God, that is how to get involved with God and His ways. Go beyond hearing good teachings and do what He says in the covenant. When you hear God's word and fail to practice it, you are deceiving yourself. Even on the natural platform, you are only effective and efficient in what you practice. You won't win races in competitions without practice; you won't be skilled in any profession or act without practice. You only become an authority in what you have practiced over time. Practice gives you experience, and makes what you practice to become a part of you.

Practicing the word of God is the only way to become skilful in the word of righteousness. It is great to hear the word of God, but it is not enough to just hear the word of God. Nothing happens in your life because you hear the word of God. Things happen when you do what you hear. God's power is released in our lives and for our sakes when we do the word of God. The instruction is that you do not be a forgetful hearer, you are expected to also act on what you hear so that it becomes a part of you. Hearing is important, it sparks up the fire, but doing what you hear activates the power of God to work in your life and on your behalf.

How will you describe a person that looks at himself in a mirror, but cannot remember how he looks like, and keeps mistaking himself to be someone else? How could anyone forget how he looks like? The bible tells us that when you do not do what the word of God says, you are just like that man that sees himself in a mirror and forgets his looks, and starts thinking that he looks like some other persons. You are mentally agitated to think like that. But when you look into the perfect law of liberty, when you continue in it, and you are not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in all his deeds he says. Many of us want blessed marriage relationships, we want blessed families; children that are blessed and exceptional, but we do not practice God's word. Things do not work that way, your marital

or relationship blessing is dependent on your corresponding action to the word of God. The revelation of Christ is necessary for a godly and blessed marriage.

The Christ dimension is the anchor that keeps all marriages stable. Though marriage is a natural relationship, yet, it was an institution created by God between a man and a woman, not only to produce children but to fulfill the will of God on the earth, which is to subdue it. When a husband or a wife's eyes are not focused on Christ, the storms of life will rock their boat, bad circumstances will destroy their union. For a healthy marriage, both husband and wife must know Christ. What you behold is what you will reproduce. Whatever you think of God is what you will eventually produce in your relationship. If you think God is irrational, and does unthinkable things when he enters a certain emotional mode, you will act the same way. It is essential to know God's way of being, so that it can be replicated in your life and relationship.

The images of the marriages we have is the reflection of the ones we saw from parents, neighbours and friends; most of which did not reflect the character of God or the teaching of God's word. But as a Christian, you must allow the word of God to regulate your everyday life, including your marriage. We are first Christians before we are husbands and wives, we are first Christians before we are fathers and mothers. You cannot be a

wife or a husband to a Christian if you are not a Christian, unless under a situation that both of you married as unbelievers and you later became a believer in Christ.

Some believers have the idea that they can marry just any person they want to whether born again or not. A Christian that thinks like that needs to have his mind renewed with the word of God. You can only marry your kind, you cannot marry another kind and be successful. The bible says evil communication corrupts good manners. It is evil communication that corrupts good manners, not good manners that sanctifies evil communication. There is no relationship between darkness and light, no fellowship between a believer and an infidel. When you do that, you go contrary to the teaching of God's word, and that is disobedience. You certainly do not expect to prosper when you act against the word of God.

The idea that you will believe for the salvation of your spouse after marriage is a deception. Salvation involves the will of the person, and no man has authority over another man's will. People choose to receive Christ or not. Even Jesus does not break into people's lives; He stands at the door of our hearts and knocks. Someone has to wilfully open the door of his heart before He comes. If Jesus who is Lord respects human will, you surely are in deception to think of marrying an unbeliever with the hope of believing for his or her salvation thereafter.

### **The Pauline Answers**

Just like Jesus, Paul responded to questions on marriage that the Corinthian church asked him. That church had a lot of carnal problems. They were either debating among themselves who the greatest preacher of their day was or talking about things sacrificed to idols. That church was full of carnality, they lived like natural people. Paul responded to their question on fornication, and went on to tell them how to overcome that.

*"Now concerning the things whereof you wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband." 1Cor. 7:1-2*

We see here that they first wrote Paul a letter asking him about the issue of fornication. They wanted to know how to be free from it. It was in this church that a man took his father's wife away from him. He did not only sleep with her, but took her for a wife. In this church, they lived as though they were not born again people, amazingly, no church had more manifestations of the Spirit than the Church in Corinth. Paul said they came not behind in the operations of the gifts of the Spirit.

As I pointed above, the books of the bible were not written in chapters and verses. When Paul wrote this epistle to the church in

Corinth, it was one whole letter. You cannot therefore conclude on anything by reading only the chapter that talks about the subject under consideration. For us to have the full import of this, we must read the pre-text. That means, we have to travel backward where the thought was first conceived and spoken. In this particular case, we have to get back to chapter six verse eighteen.

*"Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his body."* 1Cor. 6:18

Take note of what Paul says here, he did not say that "...he that committeth fornication sinneth against the Lord." He says anyone that commits fornication sins against his own body. We will address this later in this book, put this thought somewhere in your thinking until we get to that point. To avoid fornication, Paul admonished them that every man should have his own wife and every woman her own husband. In chapter eleven of his first letter to the Corinthian church, Paul begins to deal with the marriage issue more extensively.

There are no scriptural detailed instructions on the institution of marriage. There is nowhere certain details are provided on how to marry, how long to under study one another before you figure out whether you are compatible to marry or not. These are all man made ideologies some of which are neither helpful at all. You can relate with some-

one for one thousand years without knowing that person.

The bible says no man knows another man except the spirit that is in the man. "*For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.*" 1Cor. 2:11. You have no means of knowing everything about anybody. Every aspect of all relationships is faith based, and faith has to do with our obedience to the word of God. There are guide lines in the word of God for Christian conducts, we can draw inspirations from these spiritual guidelines. Through the responses of spiritual leaders like Paul and Peter, we can draw out some instructions that are of great spiritual help for us to have a successful marriage.

We must keep reminding ourselves that marriage is not only within the Christian fold, there is marriage in the secular world, there is marriage in all traditions and cultures. Men determine the kind of marriage they want to have. There are basically three ways we engage in marriage as determined by the society: we have what we call traditional marriage, this one is practiced based on different cultures and traditions. There is also the court marriage, this is the legal aspect. Certain laws operate the court marriage, which means you do not divorce without going through laid down legal requirements; you do not just walk away.

There is also what we call Christian marriage, we give it this term because it is contracted between Christians, and joined in subjection to the Church authority. Traditional marriage does not believe in the principles of court marriage, and though subject to debate, court marriage does not also defend or accept the practices in traditional marriage as legally binding. People that marry in Church do not really consider both traditional or court marriage as marriage enough. Tradition is the commandment of men, so Church people do not accept it as complete enough for Christian marriage.

It is true that tradition is the commandment of men, but marriage is the institution of God operated by men. God does not operate marriage, men do, and however they choose to do it, it is acceptable in the sight of God. That is why God says, if you married in unbelief, and now you are a believer in Christ, you should not leave your marriage because your husband or wife is not yet a Christian. And that your godly living can lead to her or his accepting Christ as Lord. Why would God say people should not necessarily leave their marriage after becoming Christians?

Those marriages were not conducted in consideration of God's word. They should naturally be discarded once people become believers in Christ, you may reason. But God says people should not necessarily walk away from marriages they entered into when they were not believers in Christ. God respects

marriagchhowever menchooseto enter into it,  
He gave man the right of his choice, and he  
does not come down to change things even  
when those choices were not within His will.

### **Man Responsible for His Choices**

You see, according to Moses vision, God could have stopped Adam from eating the forbidden fruit; Adam's action did not surprise him. He saw when Eve was talking with the serpent yet He did not intervene or alert Adam. God saw and heard Sarah asking Abraham to sleep with Hagar her maid. He knew the consequences of that action but He did not stop it. God established the institution of marriage, but He is not the one running it, men do. Even if God does not approve of the way man runs marriage, He will still not stop it. After Adam and Eve sinned and hid themselves in the garden, God came down to look for them. God did not call them because He did not know where they were, He called them so that they would know that they had left the position He kept them. There are things God cannot stop, because He has given man the authority and the mandate to stop them, He won't turn around and violate that authority, that would be wrong, and God cannot sin.

God always, and at all times, acts in love. He does not stop us from doing what we choose to do, but there are consequences for living on the wrong path of life. He told Adam that if he ate of the fruit of that tree, he would

surely dic, Adam ate and he died! There are results for all choices that we make in this life, some results are pleasant some are unpleasant. You are not an accident; your present circumstance did not just happen. You are living in the result of the choices you made in the past. If you want a better future than your today, you have to make better choices. It is not up to God to change things in your life and relationships, it is up to you to make the right choices, choices informed by the word of God. You are not going to succeed in anything by chance, you are going to succeed by making the right choices and implementing them.

As believers in Christ, we must keep reminding ourselves of our true identity in Christ, every marriage's focus should be Christ. We are believers in Christ, so we must see ourselves in Christ not in ourselves or in our traditions. Christ is our mirror, what we see is what we reflect in our everyday life. The only culture we have as believers in Christ is the fruit of the spirit as contained in the book of Galatians. "*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering (forbearance), gentleness, goodness, faith (faithfulness), meekness, temperance (selfcontrol): against such, there is no law.*" That is our culture, when we bring these into our marriages, we have a blessed home. There would not be any issue with any marriage if husband and wife allow God's word to rule in their hearts. We are born of God, and the love of God has been shed

abroad upon our hearts, we should have no problem with the love walk.

The marriage institution was established by God, but operated by men. In God's thinking, man has the capacity to choose what is good for him, so He does not reject your choices, but gives you His word to help you make wise decisions that will bring joy and tranquility in your life here on earth. If you want an enduring marriage, if you want a blessed marriage, you cannot ignore God's word, but make decision that brings the Spirit of God in operation in your life on daily basis. Your choices today, creates the future that you will eventually have. Choose the word of God, and live life the way God intended.

*many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ."* Gal. 3:26-28. There is nothing like male superiority over women in all aspects of Christian living. God did not create the woman to be inferior to the man, she is not less than her male counterpart.

The word "head" here is the word authority. God wants us to know these three levels of authority. The authority of every man is Christ; and the authority of the woman (not every woman, but the woman) is the man (not every man). What this is actually saying is that the authority of a woman is her husband. Everyman is not the authority of every

woman, a man is the authority of his wife, not other people's wives or other women in the Church. The first part of that scriptures says, the authority of every man is Christ. Christ is also the head of the Church which women are part of. *"And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things, he might have the preeminence."* Col. 1:18. Jesus is the head, the authority of the Church. So the husband is the head or authority of the woman, the same way Jesus is the head or the authority of the Church. To understand how this authority works between husband and wife, we must first understand how it works between Christ and the Church. To also understand how that authority works between Christ and the Church, we must understand how it works between Christ and God.

Paul was not just teaching about marriage here, he is teaching us the word of God which believers should apply in their marriage. Further in Corinthian, Paul shows that at the end of it all, Christ will submit all things to God, that God may be all in all.

*"Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rules and all authority and all power. For he shall reign, till he has put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he sayeth all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him."*

*And when all things shall be subdued unto him,  
then shall the Son himself be subject unto him  
that put all things under him, that God may be  
all in all."*

1Cor. 15:24-28

In this scripture, we have the picture of how God set out the operation of authority. Jesus, the Son, is not a slave of the Father. He is as much God as the Father is. Jesus is not a separate being from the Father, He is the union of God and man. Paul had earlier taught us that God is the head of Christ. "Christ" refers to the perfect union of God and man, who needed to be anointed to exercise spiritual power. God does not need to be anointed, but Christ means the anointed one. How is God the authority of Christ? We see that more in the Gospels. Jesus Himself tells us that He did nothing until He heard from the Father. He did not act on His own, He took no decision on His own. Whatever He did, He followed instructions from the Father.

*"I can on my own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: my judgment is just; because I seek not my own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me."* John 5:30

Jesus Himself tells us how submissive He is to the Father. Because He only acted on the words of the Father, He functioned in the Father's authority. It is really amazing to hear these words from Jesus. We have all along been taught that Jesus could do anything by Himself, after all He is the Son of God. But to hear Jesus say that He could on His own do

nothing is quite amazing. He emphatically says He does not seek His will, but the will of Him that sent Him. He says later in the book of John that, "*Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.*" John 14:10. Jesus did not speak His own words, He spoke God's words. Because He spoke the words of the Father, He functioned in the Father's authority.

Jesus was obedient to the Father, He took no decision of His own, and because of that He had the full backing of heaven. That is how authority works. When you are under authority, you lose your will to the will of him that has authority over you. At the end of it all, Jesus will deliver all things to God, even the Father, that the Father might be all in all. Once we understand how God is the head of Christ, it becomes easy to understand how Christ is the head of the Church, and how a husband is the head of His wife. The same way God is the head of Christ, is the same way Christ is the head of the Church, and it is the same way a husband is the head of his wife. Husband and wife relationship is the natural interpretation of spiritual authority. There is no contention of supremacy between Christ and God, God says it, Jesus says whatever He says. He did not go anywhere that the Father did not sanction.

How is Christ the head of the Church? He administers the Church, and the Church de-

pends on Him for everything. Nobody can access the Father outside of Christ, He is the supreme head of all believers. The Church makes no suggestions to Christ on how to live or function, He rules, but not as an emperor but as a loving and caring Heavenly Father. Love does not subject people's wills but gives them the right of choices, Jesus is not an emperor, He is not a dictator. He never forces anybody to do anything, He gives you the right of choice to make decisions that you choose, but He gives you His word to help you in decision making. Whatever choice you make, heaven backs it.

When the Church is obedient to Christ, the Church walks in spiritual power. Christ is the authority of the Church, therefore, the Church has access to His authority the same way He has access to the Father's authority. That is why Jesus gave us His name to use in prayer and to use as a weapon against the forces of evil. Because we are under His authority as the Church, we can as well put that authority into operation in our lives. A believer cannot make bad choices and expect God to bless them. Though you have a God given, blood bought right to make choices, you do not make choices outside God's word and expect God to bless them, because when you do that, you are in disobedience. Having said all these, we can now look into the marriage authority in some more details and see how to draw maximum spiritual blessings from it.

## **The Husband Is The Head Of His Wife**

In a marriage relationship, scripture after scripture shows that the husband is the head or the authority of his wife. Besides the scripture that we just studied in the book of first Corinthians, let's look at other scriptures that shows us how Christian marriage really is.

*"For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church: and he is the saviour of the body."* Eph. 5:23

The husband is the head or authority of the wife, the same way Christ is the head or authority of the Church. It is not any different, and it should not be seen differently. As the head of the Church, Jesus is the Saviour of the body-the Church. Same principle applies to the husband, he is not an emperor, he is the saviour of his wife. Because the husband is the authority of the wife, the wife shares in his authority and glory on an equal basis. You see, whatever Jesus can do in the name of the Father, we can do in His name. As He has access to the Father's authority, so we have access to His authority. In the same vein, the woman has access to her husband's authority, she has right to function in that authority. Whatever submits to the husband submits to her. She can and should act on the behalf of her husband at anytime and in any place. Marriage gives her that right.

Marriage is not just partnership, it is a union of two people that become one flesh. Some see themselves as just partners, and everyone tries to play his or her role in the partnership. It is not just a contract, it is a union of man and woman, same as Christianity is the union of Christ and the Church. Some men think that their wives have no say in the decisions that affect the family, they feel being the head means they are all in all, a woman is just to do whatever they command. In fact, to them, a woman is more of a subject than a part of them, she is more of a sex slave than a wife. All our Christian life and relationship is built on love, and there is no love in that kind of behaviour. Even God invites us to come and reason together with Him. So that kind of behaviour is not part of godly living, it's of the devil. A wife is not a subject of the man; she is as much part of him as he is part of himself. The man is to cleave to his wife not to dictate to his wife.

Let's have a more graphic examination of God's instruction about husband and wife relationship as contained in the fifth chapter of Ephesians. The instruction in this scripture as in many other scriptures were not given solely for the purpose of marriage, they are for our general conducts as believers which are applicable to our everyday life as believers.

*"Giving thanks always for all things unto*

*God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore, as the Church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their husbands in everything. 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 the water by the word. That he might present it to himself, a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hateth his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church. For we are members of his body, and of his flesh, and of his bones." Eph. 5:20-30*

This gives us a comprehensive view of God's thought about our relationship with Him, and how we can draw from that and apply it to one another and also apply that in our marriage. He began with the general fundamental rules for all believers by commanding us to submit ourselves one to another in the fear of God. That also means that a husband can submit to his wife in the fear of God. We see here that as regard the Christian faith which both husband and wife belong to, submission is both ways. The man submits to

his wife the same way the woman submits to her husband. This has to do with the way we treat ourselves in the Lord. When it says we should submit ourselves to one another in the fear of God, it is not saying we should be afraid of God, but that we should do that in reverence to God. When we do that, we show respect to God. In verse thirty, he tells us the reason. The reason is that, "...we are members of his body, and of his flesh, and of his bones,"

When we submit ourselves to one another, we show reverence to the body of Christ. This is not just about marriage, it is the required general conduct for all believers. Husband and wife who are believers in Christ are not exempted from this holy requirement. So, before we start to talk about wives to submit to their husbands, let's understand that submission to one another is a general rule for all believers. Remember, nobody is inferior in a marriage, just like nobody is inferior in the body of Christ. We are one with Christ. The new creature was not created to be the inferior type of Christ, he is filled with the same life, and nature of Christ. Once again, remember that we are members of His body, and of His flesh, and of His bones.

#### **Instructions that Aid Husband And Wife**

From this lesson of submission, Paul instructed, "Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as unto the Lord." Not any less, submit the same way you submit to the Lord. He went on to say that as the Church is sub-

ject to Christ, so should the woman be subject to her husband in everything. How is the Church subject to Christ? Until a woman finds that out, she might not be a godly woman in relation to the husband. Christ is the total authority of the Church, so is the man the total authority of his wife. Remember, wives are only to be subject to their own husbands, not all men. It does not say wives should be subject to their pastors or prophets, they are to be subject to their own husbands. A pastor should not exercise authority over another man's wife, it is not part of God's word.

The authority of a man over his wife is the reflection of the spiritual authority of Christ over the Church. A wife is expected to respect her husband and to be obedient to his decisions, the same way the Church respects Christ and obeys Him.

When the bible says wives should be subject to their husbands in everything, that does not mean a wife should be subject to her husband in ungodly things. If a husband is a fraud, a wife should not be a subject of that. "Everything" there means everything within the will of God. In this area of submission, men like to pick what they feel favours them and lord it over their wives. But we must remember that we are believers in Christ, no one is in servitude in a marriage. A wife is not under any obligation to be subject to her husband when he is about unrighteous acts, she should not be a subject of abuse. There is

no love where there is abuse. Wife beating is demonic, a woman should not be subject to that. There is no marriage where there is abuse, and abuse can be both ways.

Women sometimes find it difficult to submit to their husbands, especially when they are more educated or earn more income than their husbands. The bible does not say wives should submit to their husbands if they are richer, or because their husbands are stronger. The instruction is for the woman to submit to her own husband as unto the Lord regardless of what he has or has not. An obedient woman can never losethe love of her husband. Paul taught along the same line in the book of Colossians.

*"And whatever ye do in word and in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God, and the Father by him. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them. Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord. Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged. Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers; but in singleness of heart fearing God: And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men. Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ." Col. 3:17-24*

Both the husband and wife are responsible for a successful marriage. Once people are

married, they must adhere to the teaching of the scripture to maintain the right attitudes in their relationship, however they married is no longer the issue. They must be united in their services to God and to one another to fulfil the word of God. These instructions are for all people, for all races, for all cultures and for all times. In all these scriptures, Paul ties the relationship in marriage to the Christian faith.

Believers in Christ, have only one lifestyle, the Christ's lifestyle. Whether married or not, we are to act like Christ because we have His life and His nature in us. These Christian virtues are to be reflected in our marriages and in our homes. Wives are commanded to submit to their own husband as it is fit in the Lord. This is a specific instruction to married women, they are to SUBMIT to their OWN husbands! There is no universal submission, you submit ONLY to the man you are married to, not to all men. Their submission to their husbands is within the framework of righteousness. Their submission has to be according to godliness.

In these two scriptures in Ephesians and Colossians, Paul taught regardless of culture. Culture is dynamic, it changes, but God is consistently constant. God's word is His breath, it reveals and expresses His nature and character. We are never like God until we are what He says. These two scriptures are for the purpose of teaching and showing believers in Christ how to lead a successful

marriage and to fulfil the purposes of God on earth. Before people are husbands and wives, there is a fundamental relationship between man and God which supersedes the relationship between a man and his wife. You must be fully persuaded of your identity in Christ before you are able to reflect that in marriage. Your marriage reflects the quality of the relationship that you have with God. A man that does not know how Christ treats the Church won't know how to treat his wife. The same thing goes to the woman that does not know how to respond to the love of God. If you do not know how to reverence God, you will not know how to respect and reverence your husband.

These two scriptures in Ephesians and Colossians are not teaching on marriage. Like I stated elsewhere, the bible has no teaching on marriage. Paul is teaching believers how to live as believers in their marriages. He is showing us that our way of life as believers in Christ should reflect in the way we treat one another in marriage. The bible does not contain a specific teaching on marriage because marriage is cultural. Different people have different cultures, the western world have different culture from Africans. Even in Africa, different tribes have different cultures and practices in the way they go about their marriages. People submit themselves to whatever culture they are marrying in.

Culture is man-made, and the scripture has nothing against any culture because mar-

riage is for men. God does not condemn any one of these because marriage is an institution operated by men. There is no marriage after this life, but believers in Christ have a way of life that must be lived within these cultural institution called marriage. We must live worthy of the vocation whereunto we are called.

In both of these cases, Paul first talks about our Christian virtues such as developing an attitude of thanksgiving, humility, the fear of God, forgiveness, love before he came down to instruct that married believers should reflect those virtues in their relationship with one another. These are fundamental issues that must be eventually reflected in our marriages. Love, humility, forbearance, forgiveness, singing to yourself in psalms and hymns, making melody in your heart, etc, are things required of all believers. You do not need a marriage "school" or some marriage seminars to have a good marriage, all you need is to keep the rules that you would still keep if you were not married. The same basic rules of being a believer.

How you see yourself in Christ gives you the platform and the grace to function in the love of God and express that towards yourspouse. Paul was very detailed in this teaching, he addresses not only married people but believers in Christ. He talked about husbands and wives, he talked about parents and children, and he talked about servants and their masters. He is actually addressing relation-

ships as concerning all believers in Christ. When believers take these instructions, and apply them in their marriage, they excel both on the natural platform, and in the course of the vision as given them of God.

### **Understanding Authority and Responsibilities**

When Paul wrote to the Church at Colosse and Ephesus, he wrote to both men and women in those churches. It was not only to the women that he talked, he told the men what to do to get the best from their wives and from their children. He commanded them by the Spirit of God saying; "*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the Church and also gave himself for it.*" It is certainly not easy to give yourself for anything, that is why love is a sacrifice. Because Jesus loved the world, He sacrificed Himself for the human family. Jesus is the Saviour of the Church, to save her from everything that she may need to be saved from.

The bible tells us exactly how Jesus treats the Church; He nourishes the Church, He cherishes the Church, and He protects the Church from all forms of evil. Jesus sanctifies the Church, the Church does not sanctify itself. There are no believers in Christ that can relate with God in purity without the cleansing power of the blood of Christ. in fact, He made His blood a propitiation for sins. The Church is too far from perfection by itself, but Jesus cleanses the Church with His blood,

and presents the Church without blemish in His sight. It is Jesus that both sanctifies and presents us holy and perfect in His sight.

The bible calls the believer the temple of God. "*Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?*" 1Cor. 3:16. Well, if the Spirit of God dwells in us, then it is the Spirit of God that takes the responsibility of keeping us clean. The bible teaches that we are the habitation of God through the Spirit. Anyone living in a house is responsible for keeping the house clean. Since Jesus lives in us, He is the one responsible for keeping us clean. Not only that, He is responsible for everything that concerns us. We are only cleansed and sanctified, through the washing of the water by the word.

Jesus prayed to the Father to sanctify us through His word. "*Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.*" John 17:17. It is Jesus that separates us from the world to Himself, it is He that keeps us holy. It is Jesus that nourishes us with spiritual food through the ministry gifts He sets in the Church. He presents us to Himself a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle. Jesus rests all His perfection on the Church, and treats us as though sin never existed in our lives.

This is the requirement God has for all believers in marriage. God wants husbands to treat their wives as He treats the Church. Wives are not without faults, they are just as you are. God wants all husbands in Christ

to act like Him. At the end of it all, Paul calls it a great mystery, then he pointed he was actually speaking about the Christ and the Church, nevertheless, husbands should love their wives. Well, marriage will remain a mystery until Christ is revealed to you.

### **Understanding God's Character for Effective Authority**

As I stated earlier, you are not able to treat your marriage right if you have no understanding of eternal salvation. As long as you think that God has a dual nature, sometimes He does good when He is happy with you, and sometimes He does bad when He is angry with you; or sometimes He blesses, and sometimes He curses, you will not be able to live the Christian life. When you think like that, you are mentally agitated, and double minded, and that will reflect in all your relationships including marriage.

God is not an off and on God, He is always faithfully standing for and by us. He said He will neither leave nor forsake us. Whether we are good or bad, He is for us all the time. He is our defense and our salvation. He calls, saves, sanctifies, keeps, and blesses us. That is the far reaching effect of the love of God. It is an unconditional love, it requires no works to complete it. That is how God instructs husbands to deal with their wives. Just the same way you are not without fault, your wife will not be without fault. But the key thing here is for you to love your wife, to nourish her, to

cleanse her from all faults, and see her as perfect in your sight. Other people can see something else in her, but you are commanded to see perfection in her.

You do not treat your wife because she treats you fine and respects you, you treat her well because God says you should do so. You do not have to be rational about things when it comes to your wife, or even with any relationship, you do not have to easily pick offence because you ego is crossed by anybody; you are a believer in Christ, and you imbibe the right conduct as commanded of us in God's word.

Your wife is your wife, not your servant, you do not treat her as a servant or a housemaid. You are commanded to treat her with regard and respect. However you treat her is how others will treat her. If husbands and wives truly keep to the instruction in the word of God, we will have no divorces in the Church. All divorces in the Church come from one or both people in marriage living in disobedience to one or more of these instructions. When believers do not live like believers, what happens to the world happens to them. The bible's instruction on maintaining the right authority in the family is explicit. The authority of every family is the father, he is responsible for what goes on in a family. It was Eve that first ate of the forbidden fruit, but when God came, it was Adam He first called and asked why He did what he did. If the eating of the forbidden fruit had stopped

with Eve, there wouldn't have been a fall. The fall was not because of what Eve did, but what Adam did.

### **Fathers and Children**

When Paul was addressing the relationship between children, and parents, he specifically spoke to fathers in relationship to their sons. He says in Colossians; "*Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.*" Col. 3:21. He did not mention mothers in this scripture! In Ephesians, he teaches in the same manner, he says, "*And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*" Eph. 6:4. In these two scriptures, being two witnesses, Paul zeroed the relationship between parents and children to fathers.

Before Jesus intervened in the situation of the boy possessed by a deaf and dumb spirit that was causing him epileptic seizures, He first asked the father of the boy. "*And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child.*" Mark 9:21. Jesus asked the father of that boy when he started having seizures, He asked perhaps because He did not have any spiritual manifestation at that time, and did not have word of knowledge or discerning of spirits in operation to know.

Many of us think Jesus operated in the gifts of the Spirit all the time, but He did not. He was going to cast out that spirit from

that boy by speaking the word of faith, commanding the dumb and deaf spirit to leave. He thus told the father of the boy that if he believed, he would have his desired result. He said to the man, "...If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." Mark 9:23. That means a father can believe on the behalf of his children. The father is the spiritually recognised authority in a home. Husbands are not just heads of the wives, but the authority in their homes.

#### **The Role of In-Laws and Relations**

The bible gives no instruction on the role of in-laws in a marriage. The man is commanded from the beginning to leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife, so that the two of them shall be one flesh. For the man to cleave to his wife and the two of them to become one flesh, it means the woman too must leave her father and mother to cleave to her husband and become one flesh with him. There will be no cleaving if the woman holds on to her parents. So, it is not just the man that leaves his father and mother, the woman also must leave her father and mother.

In-laws are recognised in scriptures, the bible talks about Peter's mother in-law that was in his house sick. "And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of fever. And he touched her hand, and the fever left: and she arose, and ministered unto them." Matt.8:14-15. There must have been a

cordial relationship between Peter, and his wife, and his mother in-law for her to be living in his house. Peter brought Jesus to his house, and his mother in-law that was sick was healed by Jesus. She arose and prepared a meal for them to eat. That certainly was not the first time for her to enter that kitchen to prepare food. She did assist her daughter in the kitchen! But there was no indication that she played any particular role in the relationship of her daughter and her husband.

Jesus' disciples practically sacrificed their families to be with Jesus, they were always in company of Jesus. If the mother in-law was interfering in the daughter's relationship with her husband, it would have been obvious. She would not have just gotten up from a sick bed and joyfully entered the kitchen to prepare food. What was her daughter doing? But there was a cordiality and joy in that family, so she just did what she normally did.

In the book of Acts, when forty men bonded themselves together with an oath never to eat or drink water until they killed Paul, it was Paul's sister's son that revealed that secret to Paul. "*And when Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into the castle, and told Paul.*" Acts 23:16. For that boy to enter the castle and reveal the wicked plans of those forty murderers, there was a cordial relationship between Paul and his sister's family, and his nephew. It was a risk that boy took to save his uncle from those forty blood thirsty men.

There was also the case of Barnabas and Mark, John Mark was Barnabas' nephew. "Aristarchus my fellow prisoner saluteth you, and Marcus (Mark), sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom you received commandments: if he come unto you, received him." Col. 4:10. Paul and Barnabas parted ways in their second missionary journey because of John Mark. John Mark had left them half way into their first missionary journey, but now wanted to follow them in their second missionary journey but Paul would have none of that. Barnabas however insisted on taking his nephew along, so Paul took Silas and sailed one way, but Barnabas took his nephew John Mark, and they went the other way.

It is interesting to see Paul talking about John Mark here and sending to Colosse, a church he never visited. John Mark became the first writer of the Gospels, the book of Mark. There was a cordial relationship between Barnabas and the family of John Mark to have accommodated such a great relationship that God honoured to put down in writing, the book of Mark, through John Mark.

Though relationships with in-laws can be cordial and beneficial, in-laws have no right to interfere with the authority of any marriage. All authorities in the home is vested in the husband. He is the priest, the leader and the head of the family. When we recognise this truth, we step up our spiritual authority as believers because we are in obedience to

God's instructions. The instructions are easy to understand; wives to submit to your own husbands as it is fit in the Lord, and for husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it. When a wife submits as unto the Lord and the husband loves as Christ loves the Church, God inhabits that family, and blesses it.

We have seen all kinds of relationships we get involved with as humans, we have seen relationships between husbands and wives, children and their parents, servants and their masters; we have seen relationship between siblings, between in-laws, cousins, nephews, and so forth. There are no specific roles any of these other relationships play in the relationship between husband and wife. The man remains the head, the valid authority over his family and over his wife. Even if the wife earns more than him financially, it does not and should not affect his function and position as the authority of his wife.

### **The Authority and Responsibilities of the Husband**

Every woman coming into a marriage must understand that she is coming under the authority of the man she is getting married to same way as we come under the authority of Christ at the new birth. So, if you are married to a man who does not know Christ, you come under the control of the world, and of Satan. At marriage, a woman answers the name of her husband. Name signifies

authority, and because she answers the husband's name, he has authority over whatever comes under that name, and she shares in the authority of the man, same way we share in the authority of Christ at new birth. They can reason together as a family, but the man's decision stands being the head of the union. That is why a Christian sister should not get married to an infidel, that is like coming under the authority of Satan.

A sister that has developed in the Lord, should not get married to a carnal Christian who has little or no knowledge of God, because as soon as a woman marries, she comes under the authority of her husband and she is commanded to respect and honour that man. There is no need getting married to a man that you cannot submit to, there is no way you can respect such a man. As a Christian sister, you must get married to a man that you will have no problem of submitting to him. If you are educated more than the man, and you feel your education can be a hindrance to your submission to him, and that you cannot be subject to his authority or decisions because of his low mental capacity, you really need not marry that man.

The same thing goes in the area of finances. If you think that you are too rich, and will not find it easy to submit to the man that has proposed to marry you, it is good not to marry that man. You may end up as the commander in chief of that family, and it will rob you of your spiritual well-being. Natural

things like education and age should not actually be the consideration in marriage, but when people are not fully developed in the things of God, the flaws in them manifest in a mega way.

Once we stay within the confines of God's word, we receive both insight into the truth that will bless our families and lift us up in all things. Both husband and wife must recognise the word of God as the final authority over their affairs and relationships. There is a blessing that is released over the family - when the husband takes his position as the authority over his house. Sometimes he needs to say "no" to his wife. That "no" must be spoken in love, and because he has a better vision for the family. Eyes are located in the head, so every man must have a vision for his family that the wife will help him to fulfil.

Eve was a help meet to Adam, she was to help him in keeping the garden, but she unfortunately took the lead and things went wrong. Had Adam said "no" to Eve, there would not have been a fall. The time that the man says "no" to his wife should not be interpreted as dictatorship but rather it should be seen in a good light. This however does not mean that the man should always violate the rights of the woman because he feels he must exercise his authority over the wife. Husbands do not exercise authority over their wives, they lead them to the right path of life. God never makes anybody god over another person, there is no love in that. The woman

shares in the authority of the man as well. Remember, they are both heirs of the grace of God, nobody is inferior in marriage.

There is however the side of this truth that I want you to see. The bible says the man was not made for the woman, but the woman for the man.

*"For man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman but the woman for the man. For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head (her authority) because of the angels. Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman, but all things of God." 1Cor.11:8-12.*

This does not mean in any way that the woman is inferior, and therefore her decisions must be ruled out all the time. The wife should see the decision of the husband as her decision, because they are both heirs of God together. The word of God makes it pretty clear here that the woman was taken out from the man, that she was created for the man; she is therefore required to respect that authority and also function in that authority. One of the benefits of respecting that authority is the receiving of angelic services, God says she should respect and reverence that authority because of angels, who are used to operating in levels of authorities. Not so that angels do not punish them, but so that they

do not lose the protective cover of God over them and over the family that is provided through the angels. God took the woman out of the man and joined her back to the man as his helper. The man is the reason for the woman, but he cannot be all by himself without the woman. That is the wisdom of God. The man was not created for the woman, but the woman for the man. A wife finds all her relevance in the husband, that is where God keeps all that honour, her treasures and her natural being. He lifts her up when she is obedient to the law that established them as husband and wife. The husband becomes the store house of the wife, and the family, that is how God sets the order. God says a brother that does not provide for his home is worse than an infidel.

*"But if any provide not for his own, especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and he is worse than an infidel." 1 Tim. 5:8.*

A brother is expected by God to provide for his family, when he fails to do that, he has denied the faith. That is how serious God takes the responsibility of a man over his house. You do not exercise this authority by shouting on your wife and children to prove that you are in charge. You do so by taking full responsibilities in providing and caring for your family. Your entire family as a man depends on you for both provision and protection.

If anything goes wrong in the family, even if the woman caused it, God will hold you responsible. God even expects unbelieving husbands to provide for their families. Your authority in the house as the head of your family should not be seen in ruling out the desires of your wife and children, that might as well be a sign of irresponsibility. As a husband, you need to always confer with God before making any decision, and also sharing that decision with your wife before implementing them.

This teaching on decision making is only within the framework of the family. When it comes to the things that have to do with God or the Gospel, husband and wife do not have to have a conference before they decide to obey God. The same way Christ is the head of the man, is the way Christ is the head of the woman, as long as she is a member of the Church. Decisions that has to do with God and the Gospel, husbands and wives do not make such decisions jointly. Spiritual decisions are personal decisions. For example, a wife (who got married in unbelief before she received Christ) can intercede for the salvation of the unsaved husband but she cannot get born again for him or when there is a need to support the Gospel of Christ financially. A Husband and wife do not have to agree on what to give individually. Each person in the Church has a personal responsibility to keep with God for the advancement of the kingdom. A husband does not

have authority over his wife's obedience and subjection to the Gospel of Christ.

The husband's authority is exercised only within the framework work of the family as a natural prototype of the authority of Christ over the Church, it does not rule out the authority of Christ over his wife as a member of the Church. In the family, leadership rests on the shoulders of the man. God expects him to play the leadership role that will advance the course of that family. Whenever the woman takes leadership, what happened in the Garden of Eden when Eve did, repeats itself. It brings in a foreign spirit into operation in their lives and affairs. As the woman is of the man, even so the man is of the woman. God created them to be together. Both the woman and the man are of the Lord, they both belong to God. This understanding is necessary for an effective and productive marriage.

Understanding the marriage authority gives you the platform to build a great marriage. It keeps you in the right path to life, and enhances your spiritual productivity. Nothing accidentally becomes great, people make conscious commitment to create a great future. Once authority is not respected, everything goes wrong. Just think about running the red light everyday, you will either kill or hurt someone, or kill or hurt yourself. The red light authorises you to stop, and wait for the green light. If you keep violating that, you will find yourself dead, or kill someone or answer to the authority you are violating.

There are red lights in life, you do not run them, you obey them.









we shall be dealing with issues that arise because of certain ways we act in relationships. We will deal with other types of relationships but let us begin with the "relationship in marriage".

The first relationship in marriage we read of in the bible is right at the very beginning, that is, the relationship between Adam

and Eve. The bible however does not give us much details about that relationship. Paul says very little about that in his first letter to Timothy.

*"For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in transgression: Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if she continue in the faith and charity and holiness with sobriety."* 1Tim. 2:13-15

That is all the epistles tell us about Adam and Eve, the first human relationship in the universe. Adam was first formed, then the woman was taken out of him. Adam was the reason for the woman, she was created from him both to depend on him and to support him. This is the rule with which God creates, you depend on the source that you were created from. Man's body was taken from the earth, he must therefore depend on the earth for his sustenance. Man's spirit came from God, he must therefore depend on God for his spiritual sustenance. Eve came from Adam, she must therefore depend on Adam for her sustenance. Adam and Eve's relationship is the natural prototype of God and man's relationship.

Though not so much is said about Adam and Eve's relationship, we can draw from the events that led to the fall that Adam was irresponsible, he did not take the lead, was therefore easy for him to fall into disobedience. Adam was not deceived, but the woman

being deceived was in transgression. That is quite instructive! Adam did what he did on purpose, he was not suffering from lack of knowledge. He was not in the dark about what God said. God told him that the day he ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he would die. It is inconsequential who gave it to him, he was not to eat of it period! He was to keep that tree for God. Whatever he needed to know about good and evil, God was there to tell him, he was not to be exposed to evil. God could tell him everything about Satan if he needed to know, God knew what the man needed, He created him. Adam did not need to know about an inferior, cast away spirit that was called Satan, he was too superior for the devil, and needed not to bother about him. Adam was to do what God told him to do, that was the only way he could function in God.

From all indication, Adam did not communicate the words of God to Eve accurately, we see that in the response of Eve to the serpent. Apart from providing the right leadership, there are quite a number of things Adam did not do right. So, we can see that, in that relationship, Adam did not play his role as the head of his family, he suffered from negligence of duty. We know the consequence of that action, the world is passing through the pains of it. Sin entered into the world because Adam did not provide leadership in his relationship to his wife. He failed to do what God asked him to do, and the world is living in the

result of that disobedience today. The consequence is death! Satan is killing with sickness and disease, he is killing with all kinds of disasters, and using man's wickedness against his fellow man to bring pain, sorrow and death.

### **Deal With Anger**

The second relationship among humans we see in scripture is between Cain and Abel. In this relationship, we see the first application of sin in human conduct. The sin of anger devastated a once cordial and peaceful relationship between Cain and Abel.

*"And in the process of time, it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering. But unto Cain and to his offering he had no respect. And Cain was very wroth and his countenance fell. And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why hast thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him." Gen. 4:3-7*

These were two siblings raised in the same home and exposed to similar knowledge. They learnt about offering from their father, Adam. They must have been taught what the right and acceptable offerings to

God was. From the question God asked Cain when He said; "*If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?*" shows that Cain knew the right offering to give God but chose to bring the wrong one. Cain became angry with his brother Abel. There was no basis for getting angry with his brother because it was not Abel that advised him to give the kind of offering that he gave. Cain opened himself to wrath, and that destroyed the once good relationship that existed between him and his brother.

John in his first letter to the Church shows how Satan took advantage of Cain and ruined him. Cain had no reason for killing his brother, he could make another offering that would be pleasing to God. This is what John says;

*"Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his works were evil, and his brother's righteous. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him."* 1 John 3:12-15.

When anger took over Cain, he became the property of Satan. He could no longer listen to God in spite of God's warning and counsel, he went ahead and killed his brother. John says Cain was of that wicked one, anger turned him into Satan's property. He hated

his brother over what he was not responsible for. All he needed to do after his offering was rejected was to go and make the right offering. Why kill his brother? Anger takes away all the good sense of reasoning, that is why the bible says we should give no place to wrath. That spirit always seeks for accommodation in the hearts of men to turn them into Satan's property and be used by the devil for destruction.

In the writings of John, he makes these distinct spiritual forces very clear; hate and love. Where there is hate, there is death, but where there is love, there is life. These two forces play major roles in all relationships. When Esau became angry with his brother Jacob, all the good relationship they had for over forty years went like air out of a punctured balloon. Jacob ran, and ran and ran. Esau wanted him dead, because he felt cheated. Though Isaac felt Jacob deceived him, yet it was within the workings of God, as Esau had no respect for spiritual things. The bible describes Esau as a profane person. Profanity is disrespect for spiritual things. All that Esau wanted was food, he did not care about any birthright. It was clear that Jacob was spiritually smarter than Esau, he knew what he wanted. Jacob was not after the cows, the gold, the sheep, or any of the things that constituted the wealth in that family. He was after the blessing, but Esau really did not care about any blessing, he wanted food!

May I say here that food has taken away the future of many people. That was what Satan used against Adam, and attempted to use against Jesus. Some ministers and young spirit-filled believers have thrown away their values for food and material things. Satan uses food as a bait to trap people. Lots of people are like Esau, they do not really value their spiritual lives, it means nothing to them. The bible says some people's god is their belly, all they want is food. Once it has to do with food, they can give anything including their wives and daughters. Women have shared men with their daughters for money, this is disgraceful, and should not be even mentioned in the body of Christ. Some people lose control over food, cannot fast, not even for one hour. You should be able to give up anything for the sake of your spiritual value. Food, the bible says is for the belly, but the belly is not for food. You should not allow food or lust to run your life, have some control over your appetite. The bible says to whom you yield your members you become servants of. Yield your members to the word of God, after all, Jesus says, a man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

The first "no" that you must know, and always say is "no" to anger. Anger is a very devastating and destructive manifestation of sin. God came down to warn Cain, and to counsel him over his anger against his own brother, but Cain still went ahead to kill his

brother. In all relationships, especially relationships that are intended for marriage, the first sign of danger is anger, and you must avoid that with everything it will take. For a productive, healthy, and sustained relationship, unmanageable anger must NEVER be part of it. You cannot and should not manage uncontrollable bad temper, avoid anyone that has bad temper with everything in you. If you marry a man that is easily given to anger, you are marrying a fool. The bible says anger rests in the bosom of fools.

*"Do not be hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools."* Eccl. 7:9

Anger is a hasty and destructive spirit, you do not fellowship with a man that is easily given to wrath. All through the bible, we see the devastating effect of anger on people. After the flood, Noah was drunk and laid naked in his tent. One of his sons by name Ham saw his nakedness and went to call his brothers. This is how the story went.

*"And Noah began to be a husbandman, and planted a vineyard: And he drank of the wine and was drunken; and was uncovered within his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers without. And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness. And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him. And he said,*

*Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant.” Gen. 9:20-26.*

This was an accidental thing, Ham certainly did not know that his father was drunk and was laying naked in his tent. It could have been Shem or Japheth that entered that tent at the time. Ham saw his nakedness by accident, and went to tell his brothers. Shem, being the oldest, and Japheth did the right thing to cover their father's nakedness. But when Noah came out of his drunkenness and knew that his son Ham saw his nakedness, he cursed Canaan, who was Ham's son. What did Canaan do that he cursed him? Anger takes away all sense of responsibility. The curse of Canaan remained for generations.

When Jacob was blessing his children before his death, Simeon and Levi were left out of the blessing because they killed a man out of anger because the man raped their sister. Jacob cursed their anger. *“Simeon and Levi are brethren; instrument of cruelty are in their habitation...for in their anger they slew a man, and in their selfwill, they digged down a wall. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.” Gen. 49:5-7.* They lost out of the blessing of their father because they gave in to wrath.

Parents have spoken cursed words on their children out of anger. Children are raised to believe and trust their parents, when those

cursed words are spoken over children, they believe them. This puts them in danger of the curse, because their faith in their parents activates the curse to function in their lives. *It is a great responsibility to raise children, because parents are the first mentors for their children.* Whatever children see at home when growing up remain with them for life. Parents ought to speak words of grace, of faith and encouragement before their children. When husbands and wives exchange bad words in front of children, they leave those words in the memory of the children for life. Husbands and wives curse one another in rage, and they hope for a great future in that relationship, this ought not to be. When you curse, you tear your life apart. The bible warns us about speaking cursed words, because of the effects of cursed words.

*"Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Doth fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh. Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. 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."* James 3: 10-16

This scripture is highly instructive, you do not use the same mouth that you use to bless with for cursing others. Cursing people does not operate the power of God, as God does not back the cursed words men speak, but Satan takes advantage of them to destroy people's lives. It does not demonstrate the love of God when people curse others. Even if those curses come to be exactly as they were spoken, it does not mean Godempowered them to produce the results it did, Satan used the words of the curse to produce that result. The Spirit of God does not operate the curse, Satan does. When men speak cursed words, they exhibit ignorance and foolishness. That wisdom is devilish! Where strife and envy are, there is confusion and every evil work. Believers ought to bear with one another not to be cursing one another.

The cursed language will ruin every marriage, we cannot be engaging in that and hope for a great marital bliss. The bible says we are God's workmanship created unto good works. *"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."* Eph. 2:10. Cursed words are not good words, we are not created for them, and we should not walk in them. The bible admonishes us not to be overcome of evil, but to overcome evil with good. Some of the major requirements in spiritual leadership is for a man not to be selfwilled, or soon angry, or given to filthy lucre. We must stay out of

anger at all cost. The bible says the wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God.

*"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."* James 1:19-20.

Man or woman, anger has no place in a good relationship. Anger bears a venom that destroys people and relationship. There is no decision taken out of anger that is right, for the wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God. The bible tells us to be slow to speak, and be slow to wrath. Anger is not a virtue, it is a very destructive sin that must be avoided at all cost. The bible says; *"And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever."* Isaiah 32:17. If the wrath of God does not work the righteousness of God, then it takes away peace, quietness and assurance. When there is anger, there can be no peace, no quietness, no assurance and no rest.

### **Anger and Pride, Satan's Access**

Anger and pride are the two most destructive things in relationship. Pride goes before the fall, the bible says. Where there is pride in a relationship, the end will be the collapse of that relationship. Problems created by pride and anger change faces and phases, you never get to solve them. Pride does not easily accept correction, it must ruin that relationship. The bible says, *"Make no friendship*

*with an angry man; and with a furious man, thou shalt not go.*" Proverb 22:24. Do not date an angry man! Anger is not predictable, you should not go out with an angry man. An angry man is vindictive, because anger goes with pride. A person that does not forgive is very dangerous, because he will someday seek revenge.

*"Be angry, but sin not: let the sun not go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil. Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. Let not corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying that it may minister grace to the hearers. And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice."*

You give place to the devil through anger, that is Satan's access road into people's lives. Anger is expressed through words, it grieves the Holy Spirit when we speak words that are devoid of grace. We are a grace generation, our words ought to be gracious to all irrespective of who they are or what they do. When we speak words that proceed from anger, it brings Satan into our environment. So the bible says, when you get angry, do not sin. Do not speak the wrongs out of rage, it will cost you more. People speak things out

of anger, and regret them later, but words, once spoken, cannot be taken back. You must be able to control your emotions! Nothing supernatural happens in relationships, because men in relationship determine what happens in that relationship. Every relationship turns out the way people in it acted, whatever they put in is what they get from it. It is men that are involved in relationship with one another, so even prayers cannot change the results of what they invest in it.

All problems in relationships are man-made, they can therefore be resolved by men. The biggest problem of man, which was sin, was solved by man. By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin. God became a man and solved the problem of sin once and for all. Anger is a major issue in relationships, so we must get rid of it. To be successful in anything, you need emotional stability. So God provides us with the wherewithal to deal with this emotional issue called anger. For us to successfully get rid of all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and all evil speaking, and malice, we must learn to be slow in words, especially when things do not seem to favour us. You must realise that anger is always a reaction. You can choose not to react destructively to bad words or unpleasant situations. Anger is one of the manifestations of the flesh.

Before you walk into any relationship, especially the one that you intend to end in a marriage, you must watch out and check the

area of anger. It does not really hide, just do something stupid and check it. After marriage, when all the feelings and sexual urges are satisfied, you will certainly do something stupid, and that may stir up the roaring lion called anger to destruction. Check anger out, and do so on purpose, it is one of the ways to keep away from a failed marriage. Check it in the area of money, and in the area of opinion, and in the area of relationships with others. If you are a woman, check it out in the area of male friends, let your intending husband know that you have male friends (not fornication partners, you are not to be in fornication), and if you are a man, check the woman you want to marry in the same areas as well. Let her know that you have women friends, and let her know them. Check anger in all areas, if your intending husband or wife runs checks on your phones and picks up quarrels, you need to watch that. Every man will have friends or acquaintances that are females and every woman will have friends and acquaintances that are males.

### **Uncontrolled Anger, Unpredictable**

The results of uncontrolled anger are unpredictable, you cannot manage it in a relationship. Families have been destroyed because of uncontrolled anger, marriages end up in divorce because of bad temper. Many children's lives have been wrecked and futures destroyed because of bad temper. You hear the man saying, "I do not want the marriage again, leave my house, I am tired of your

insubordination, I am not putting up with this anymore..." He walks away in anger not minding the woman he is destroying, and the children that will be thrown into frustration and confusion. The children become divided over mummy and daddy, if they are young, they start crying and begging daddy not to let mummy go and begging mummy to stay back and be patient, yet the man is yelling and rolling out insults and name callings. The man callously and selfishly walks away tearing down the comfort and the security of his children that would enable them rise to their fullest potentials. The children are now the ones at the receiving end, and the man goes to find another woman.

These things happen at both ends, women have wrecked their marriages too, they could not be patient enough with their husbands, and start sleeping around with richer men. A woman's attitude and relationship where money is concerned must be checked too. A woman that demands beyond your ability and tries to enforce that demand will look for it from other men even after getting married to you. Women have walked away from their husbands into the arms of strange men. Women have destroyed house furnitures and electronics in the heat of fit of anger. Once anger takes hold of a person, any evil thing can happen. Women have stabbed their husbands to death with knives, some pour hot water, boiled oil or even acid on their husbands because of anger and jealousy. When

people lose control of their anger, they get into pride and ego, they make silly or evil decisions without counting the cost.

Women have walked out of their marriages without considering the consequence of their actions. They think that their parents will continue to deal with them like they did before they got married, but it does not work that way. You cannot leave your husband's house and your father and mother that are still in marriage continue to treat you as though nothing went wrong. If your mother acted like you, she would not have still been in her marriage, they had their rough times too, but she chose not to walk away. When it dawns on them that their parents would no longer meet those needs they used to meet in their lives, they start to regret their actions. Many young beautiful girls that should be in their husbands houses are still on the queue waiting for husbands, because they lost their relationships to temper. When anger manifests, beauty flies away with the wind. The bible says beauty is vain.

*"Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised." Prov. 31:30.*

When a woman has no control over the words that come out of her mouth against her spouse, she will not succeed in maintaining that relationship, she will lose it. The bible says in Proverbs chapter fourteen verse one that, every wise woman builds her

house, but a foolish woman tears it with her hands. When you are unwise, you give yourself to wrath, and thus, make foolish decisions.

There are no relationships without conflicts, yours will not be an exception. If you hear someone say they have never quarrelled or have misunderstandings in their relationships, do not believe such stories, they are lying through their teeth. It is like saying that they have never sinned since they got born again. If you try to make such "testimonies" the yardstick for your marriage, you will ruin both your life and your marriage. All human relationships go through certain conflicts and misunderstandings, but it's wisdom that builds all relationships. You need the wisdom of God to flourish in all things.

Wisdom is defined as the right application of knowledge. The knowledge of the word that we need to keep all relationships strong and effective has been made available to us, we need to apply that to our everyday life. When a woman rains insults on the husband, either one or both of these two things will happen, she would be either forced to leave the marriage if the man is a peaceful man or be physically abused. It is foolish to look for something that will hurt your husband or wife, and say or do it, that marriage will collapse.

You certainly do not want that in your relationship, you do not want to end up being

forced to raise your children by yourself as a single parent, or have them raised by another man or woman who may rather see them as enemies than children. Divorce is bad, it affects everything and most especially children. Divorce does not fit into the program of God, it is not part of God's plan for marriages. Nobody celebrates divorce, you can never see invitation for divorce ceremony. This is because no one is proud of divorce, it is more of failure than success. Nobody wants a relationship that will end up in a divorce! It becomes only necessary when lives are threatened, or certain confirmed immoral actions are taken place to bring shame and destruction, as nobody wants a relationship that will bring death or destruction. Abuse is not part of love, and it should not be apart of any relationship, either in a marriage or any type of relationship. Your first point of call for a relationship that will bring fulfilment in your life is to check the area of temper.

### **Love Is the Way**

All relationships must run on the strength of love. Whether it is relationships between husband and wife in marriage, or relationships between employer and employee, or relationships between children and parents, between maids and their mistresses, between siblings or friends, between you and your neighbours, or contractual relationships; all relationships are fueled by love. Always ask yourself how love can handle

your situation. Think deeply when you are confronted with unpleasant situations; ask yourself what Jesus would do if He were in your shoe. Do not rush to take decision or even say anything without finding out what Jesus' reaction would be if He were in the same situation as you. When you let love run its full course in your life, there will be no occasion of stumbling or let alone falling.

Whether in a marriage relationship or other relationships, you are to conduct yourself first a believer in Christ, you should not be found in an action that will bring shame to the Church of Christ and to the name of Christ. Christian conduct must be imbibed in all relationships, that is why God gave us His word. We are not to live by ourselves, we are to live by the word of God. As I said earlier, abuse should not be part of any relationship, it is not acceptable by any law. Masters have no right to abuse their servants, married women have no right to abuse or mistreat their maids, employers have no right to abuse their employees, and husbands have no right to abuse their wives and vice versa. There is no provision for that in the word of God or even in the world that is controlled by secular spirits. You can go to jail for abusing your spouse in countries where laws work. Abuse is not just about beating your spouse, people use their privileged positions to sexually abuse others, it is not right before God and before man. Wife or husband beating is a manifestation of the activities of demons, it

is not a normal occurrence. Let's see further instructions in the word of God on how husbands and wives ought to live together and bring glory and honour to God.

### **Respect**

*"Even as Sarah obeyed Abraham; calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as you do well, and are not afraid with any amazement. 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." 1Peter 3:6-7*

This scripture tells us that Sarah obeyed Abraham, and called him lord. That word translated "lord" means master. Sarah treated her husband, Abraham as lord. That is not surprising because the bible tells women to submit to their own husbands as they submit to Christ. It is saying the same thing. It is within divine requirement for a wife to give full respect and reverence to her own husband. Respect is a manifestation of love. Sarah obeyed Abraham, she never questioned any of Abraham's actions in his obedience to God. When God called Abraham, Sarah did not hear God speak with her husband, but she followed him without question. When Abraham told her to lie in Egypt that she was his sister in order to save his life, she did not quarrel about that, she accepted to lie, not necessarily because she wanted to but because the husband said so.

They went to Gerrar and Abraham made the same demand of her to lie to Abimelech, the king of Gerrar, she obeyed. All Sarah said when Abraham asked her to do something was "yes my lord". She was obedient to him, and see where that obedience took her. Today, you cannot talk about Abraham without talking about Sarah. They are both heirs of the grace of life together.

Whatever ahusband is, the wife is; they are together. Whatever the man has, the woman has it one hundred percent just as him. There is nothing that belongs to a man in marriage that does not belong to the wife. The man's house is the woman's house, the man's cars and properties are the woman's cars and properties, wherever they are in the world. The same authority the man has over anything and everything, the woman has. They are in marriage, and have become one flesh. The woman lost her name when she got married to him, she now answers, and is known by his name. She is living in him just like the Church lives in Christ. That is marriage! If you do not want your wife to equally own what you have, if you want your brothers and sisters to inherit you, and take charge of what you have, then do not marry. If you get married, you must leave your family and cleave to your wife. Your wife and children are your primary responsibility, every other thing is secondary.

Peter went on to say that husbands are to live with their wives according to knowledge.

What knowledge? The word of God, deal with your wife according to what God says not how you feel. You do not have to feel good to treat your wife right. Whether you are in the centre of your greatest trial, you do not speak harshly to her or mistreat her, you are required by God to treat her right all the time. You are to treat her as though she is weaker than you. She might not necessarily be weaker than you in the natural, but you are to act as though she is weaker than you. Treat her as an egg that will break if it falls to the ground, treat her with all sense of respect and responsibility. You are heirs of the grace of life, the blessing of this life, together.

When you are not in peace, it will hinder you from prayer. So, to live in harmony is vital to our prayer life. To treat your wife as a weaker vessel, to love, nourish, and cherish her is a requirement for peace.

### **Honour**

The other thing Peter talked about is honour, he said a husband should treat his wife with honour; to give her respect. When you open the car door for your wife, it is not that she is not strong to open it, it is just that you are honouring her. It is honour that makes a man to serve his wife. People that do not know anything about honour will see you as being weak, and probably mock you. They will think your wife is your boss, but it is not so, it's called honour. It is honour that makes you to feel like doing it for

her, not weakness. When you help to carry anything for your wife, it is not that she cannot carry that thing, it is you honouring her, that is what is expected in a marriage. This generation knows nothing about honour, that is why we fail in almost all areas of life. The bible enjoins us to live in honour of one another. Honour is both ways just as submission is both ways. There is so much teaching on honour in the bible, there is a lot in the epistles about honour that we do not even tap into. Jesus honoured people, look at the way He conducted Himself before Pilate and before the Highpriest. He did not speak rashly against them even when He was mistreated and being lied against. Both Jesus and Paul conducted themselves with the great sense of honour before the political and spiritual authorities of their time. They showed respect to them even though they knew decisions were being taken against them.

Honour is a needed way of life among believers. Husbands ought to honour their wives, and wives must also respect and honour their husbands. In relationships, honour is not only an important attitude but a necessary requirement for a successful and blessed family. Children ought to honour their parents, give them the necessary respect and right treatment they deserve as your parents. As long as your parents are in this life, even if you are one hundred and fifty years old, they still deserve your honour and respect. The bible teaches that when you

honour your father and your mother, you will live long on the earth.

*"Honour your father and your mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest live long on earth." Eph. 6:2-3.*

God expects us to honour our parents and to honour one another. In fact He asks a question about His honour as a Father. "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is my honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear (reverence)?..." Malachi 1:6. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for dishonouring their parents because of their tradition. Honour must be taught and preached with all grace, because this generation is missing out in the area of honour. If husbands honour their wives, they won't abuse them. They are both children of God! Once you realise that your wife is your sister in the Lord, you will treat her with utmost respect. Slapping that woman on the face is slapping your sister on the face, and it is also slapping Jesus on the face, because she is a part of the body of Christ. You ought to treat her as God's daughter, while she also treats you as her brother and God's son.

When we read the story of Abraham, who is the Father of us all who believe, we see a meek and obedient man that did whatever God demanded of him. He was an honourable man. He treated his wife well even when she had no child for him. One of the

reason God gave for calling him was that He saw that he would train his children right. He had no child yet, but God knew that Abraham would live before his children right, he would teach them the principle of faith, and that his seed would always triumph in life. How true it was, Isaac was such a faith man, he sowed in the middle of drought and reaped an hundred fold. He became richer and mightier than a whole nation that the king, Abimelech had a truce with him for fear. Jacob walked away from the family house with just a staff in his hand. He became wealthier and richer than all the wealth and riches he left behind. In case you think Jacob as the bad one, watch him bless his children before his death at one hundred and forty seven years. He leaned on his staff as he spoke words of authority that would come to pass on his children after his demise. That was faith in action! Abraham truly trained his children to live and function in faith.

Let's take a cue from Abraham's relationship with his wife Sarah. It was Sarah that suggested that Abraham had a child for her from her maid. It was not Abraham's idea, she came up with the idea and she organised it. Later when the maid now had Ishmael, she began to mock her and Sarah became hard and harsh against her. At the end of the day, Sarah demanded that she be sent out of the house with the child. Abraham did not like it, he wanted his son. This was a man that had been barren all his life, he now had two

boys, and the wife demanded that the older son and the mother were sent out of the house. Abraham was totally displeased with that demand, but honour demanded that he yielded to that request, more so, it was not within the will of God that he had that child.

It wasn't God that asked him to have a child with Hagar, Sarah's Egyptian maid, it was Sarah that took the decision because she was impatient to wait any longer, so she could as well take a contrary decision and send Hagar away with her child now that she had her own. Abraham exhibited the same behaviour that Adam did, he listened to his wife without finding out God's will about their wives demands. They both obtained death as the result. From Abraham's action of listening to his wife and having a child with her maid, we have Al Qaeda, Islamic Jihad, ISIS, Boko Haram, Al Nasura, and a host of other terrorist murderers. Had Abraham asked God, God would have shown him the result of that action, and he might have avoided that. I am not saying that a man should obey his wife to do a wrong thing because he wants to honour her. Any action that is contrary to the wholesome truth is a sin, we should not be in disobedience to God because our spouses make such demands. Our relationship with God is superior to our relationship in marriage, so we must subject the demands from one another in marriage to the word of God.

This is however what I want us to see, God told Abraham to do what Sarah demanded



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and send Hagar and her child away. Why would God back Sarah's demand knowing she led Abram into that mess? God never holds a wife responsible for what happens in a home, He holds the husband responsible for every wrong decision or bad action. The man is the head of this home, whatever he judges to be wrong and disallows can never happen. God knew that Eve first ate of the forbidden fruit. He knew that Eve gave it to her husband to eat of it, but it wasn't Eve's eating of the fruit that brought sin and death, it was Adam's eating that brought sin and death.

**Deal With Others As God Deals With You**

As a believer, you have to treat people nicely whether they are born again or not. We must be gracious toward others, because that is the nature we received from God through the new birth. The message of grace which we preach should produce in us graciousness. We must realize that we too are not good by ourselves, it's been God's grace that has been keeping you. God forgave us our sins and still treats us with kindness, we ought to be gracious to others. If God loves and accepts you the way you are, you should love and accept others the way they are. God loves us without conditions, we should act the same way. God does not base His love for us on our behaviour, we should not base our love for others on their behaviour.

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God first loved us even when we did not know Him, He protected us when we were still actively involved with sin. The bible says God commanded His love towards us while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. God did not wait for us to be good before He went to the Cross for us! We are to act as God because we are His children, we don't have to treat people nicely because they were nice to us, there is no sacrifice in that; everybody will treat those that were nice to them nicely. Being judgmental of others is ungodly, if God were to be judgmental of us, we won't function in His kingdom, we would be doomed. But we are only able to do this when we understand and receive God's love.

The bible asks us to pray for those that persecute and despitefully use us, that we should pray and bless them. *"But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the good and the evil, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust."* Matt. 5:44-45. How much simple could this instruction be? Yet grossly we disobey it because we feel our enemies will take advantage of us if we obey this. Our attitude towards men should reflect God's attitude towards us. When we act like God, Jesus says we are acting as His children, but if we act differently, and begin to curse others, we are certainly not acting like God.

As there are different individuals, so are there different problems in their relationships. People have different needs, but the word of God is the answer to all the needs in the body of Christ. We need to see people in the peculiarity of their problems, and give them bible based counsel to overcome those problems. Relationships, especially the one that is intended to lead to marriage must be properly understood, and the red lights properly noted and avoided. People, being humans, can do very stupid things, and when the results come staring them in the face, they begin to feel rejected and lonely.

Believers in Christ ought to bring God into every decision they intend to make. As the choice of a spouse is a lifetime choice, you need the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and counsel from spiritual leadership before making such a decision. It does not mean you do not have to be asking people whether you should marry this person or that person, you should know what you want and choose as you wish, but make that choice within the framework of the word of God. You cannot be a born again man and choose an infidel for a wife or husband, that is automatically a wrong choice. You cannot be a spirit filled believer and choose to settle with a man or woman that does not believe in speaking in tongues and all that goes with it. You cannot be a Charismatic and marry a Catholic who does not believe or have a clue about what you believe.

In the Church in Corinth, there was this man that took his father's wife and brought her with him to church every service. He was not an unbeliever, he was a born again man, a brother. Either his father had many wives and he decided to take one from him, or his mother died, and the father married a younger woman and he went to seize her from him. This brother was living with that woman and coming to church with her. The amazing thing about that was that, nobody in the church saw anything wrong with that. Paul was surprised that nobody thought that brother did anything wrong. Paul who was not around at the time, took a decision about that brother and instructed that he should be excommunicated from church, and have disciplinary actions taken against him, that he may be ashamed of his action and do the right thing. Paul even instructed that nobody should have fellowship with him.

Paul judged that the man be handed over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh so his spirit might be saved (1Cor. 5:4-5). Paul did not hand this guy to Satan, he was a brother that was living in error. Whatever reason he had for taking the father's wife away from him, was unacceptable, but Paul did not hate him, he wanted him to be saved from that evil behaviour. He was a born again man, he would go to heaven; that was why Paul added that his spirit might be saved in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Greek word translated Satan in this scripture actually means accusation, it does not refer to Satan, the devil. Paul was like telling the church not to absolve him of that behaviour, they should not protect him from accusation that he was facing as a result of his action. If he is exposed to shame on the account of that behaviour, he may repent and do the right thing. In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul admonished that the brother be received back in fellowship. It is obvious that the brother repented of his action, but because he was denied of fellowship, he was overburdened with sorrows. Paul instructed that the Church should receive him back, and added that "*Lest Satan should get an advantage of us, For we are not ignorant of his devices.*" 2Cor. 2:11.

Though this brother did not live right, the Church did not really condemn him, the Church authority represented by Paul put him under church discipline, which is required of all churches. When a brother or sister does something that will bring shame to the local church where the person belongs, the person should be put under church discipline, and the entire church members should be united about that. Church discipline is not hatred, it is for correction. When people bring shame to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, we cannot continue to expose them to spiritual responsibilities that will make the world and the rest of us feel it is alright to

continue to act disrespectfully towards God and towards the local assembly.

For instance, if the choir leader or any leader at all in church takes advantage of the female members under him and starts sleeping with them, he should be placed under church discipline, and be made not to take such a leadership role until such a time that church leadership sees a change in him. It is not hatred, it is love. Members should not go behind and talk with someone placed under church discipline insinuating that the church leadership hates him. It is not love, it is a disregard to church leadership. All of these actions are manifestations of our love for one another. Let me repeat, church discipline is not hatred, it is correction so that your life can be straightened out.

All relationships can grow, all relationships can be helped to bring about great blessings. All marriages between believers can be blissful, but we must bring all relationship in subjection to Christ. Whatever we do in word or in deed, it must all be to the glory of God. Do not forget that God is love, there is no hate in Him. Whatever He asks you to do, however He wants you to treat your spouse, it is all for your own good. Christians have no other way to live but to live by the word of God. Wives, submit to your own husbands as fit in the Lord, husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it, that He might cleanse it by the washing of water by the word, so ought men to love their

wives. The instruction is simple, our obedience to it will bring tremendous blessing to us.

### **Locating A Life Partner - Equal Yoke In Marriage**

One of the key ingredients in relationships is to ensure it is an equal yoke. *"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?"*

2 Cor. 6:14 KJV

It's critical not to sentimentally marry one with adverse or extremely contrary spiritual convictions. The Prophet Amos, on the importance of agreeing, *"Can two walk together, except they be agreed?"* Amos 3:3. Since man is a product of influence, you either attract or repel. Overtime, you might end up badly influenced by your partner in marriage hence the need to ensure God's wisdom guides you through it all.

*"Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners."* 1 Cor. 15:33

For those that are yet to marry, but considering marriage, there are important things you must know. You do not rush into marrying just anybody, because marriage between believers is a lifetime proposition. First of all, you must know how to locate or find a life partner within the context of the word of

God. The bible is our only guide, we must submit all things to the authority of God. Let's look at what Paul wrote to the church in Corinth in this regard.

*"The wife is bound by law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord." 1Cor. 7:39*

### **Man's Choice in Marriage**

"She is at liberty to marry whom she will..." That is the statement I want us to look at in this scripture. That means marriage is based on what a person wills, it is your choice. There is nothing like seeking the will of God about it, God has given you the right to marry whom you choose to marry. You are free to marry whosoever you want to marry, but in the Lord. Marriage to an unbeliever should not even cross the thinking of a believer in Christ, we have nothing in common with unbelievers. It is disobedience to get involved with unbelievers in that area. In the Church, you can marry any sister or brother that you choose. If you talk to one and she rejects you, thank her, and move on to another, keep moving until you get the one that accepts you. There is no particular sister or brother that you must marry, anybody in the body of Christ can be your spouse. You choose whom you want, but within the body of Christ. You do not keep worrying over someone's decision not to marry you, it is the person's

choice and you must respect people's choices.  
Just move on, someone will accept you!

There are however people within the Church that God warns us not to have anything to do with them, you should never enter into a marriage with those kinds of people, though they are called believers. You do not even pray about such people, nor give them a second thought.

*"But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. 1Cor. 5:11.*

You cannot keep company with people exhibiting any of these behaviours; the bible says you should not even eat with them, not to talk about considering marriage with them. If a brother is talking with you, and at the same time talking with other sisters, mark him, he is likely to be unfaithful to you. Anyone that sleeps around, man or woman should be avoided. Covetous people and drunkards are not marriage materials, avoid them, do not even let them come near you. God does not want you to have anything to do with an extortioner or a fraud.

The bible calls them brothers, they are not going to hell, but on this earth, you do not need such people. Covetous people are eyeing people's things, they easily steal, and that will put the family in trouble.

You cannot trust an extortioner with money!  
Paul went ahead to say,

*"For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without, God judgeth. Therefore put away from among you that wicked person."* 1Cor. 5:12-13

There are these kind of people among believers, they are not outside. Paul calls them wicked. An extortioner, a fornicator, a drunkard, a covetous person is a wicked brother or sister. A brother that lives in such obvious sins should be avoided.

Another type of people that believers are not to get involved with in marriage are people that cause divisions in the Church.

*"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which you have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."* Rom. 16:17-18.

These kinds of people do not submit themselves to the wholesome words, they are not willing to commit themselves to the teaching of God's word as revealed in the New Testament. They always have their own views on what is preached or taught in church. They have sweet tongues, and with fine speeches, they deceive the simple. Anyone that does not subject himself to sound doc-

trine should be avoided, that person is dangerous, he cannot be trusted.

Another type of people to avoid are those that do not submit to church authority. How people talk about the pastor of the church they attend can show you what kind of people they are. When people do not esteem their pastor, they are dangerous for anyone to be around, as when a problem arises in marriage, they would not listen to the counsel of the pastor, in fact, the pastor will not be part of their consideration. Paul says; "*And if any man obey not our word by epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.*" 2Thess. 3:14-15. This guy is a brother, but he is not subject to the word of God. That is certainly not a person you should consider for marriage. Such people do not submit to spiritual authority, nobody can correct, advise or rebuke him. The whole essence of Church is doctrine, when a person cannot give himself to the doctrine of Christ, he is a dangerous man. Relate with him as a brother, but for your well-being on the earth in marriage, you do not get involved with such people.

Another type of person you should not get involved with in the area of marriage is a person that sees material gain as a sign of godliness. You have to realize that ungodly people can be abundant in material things as well. "*Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that*

*gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself."*

1Tim. 6:5. People that think money reflects spirituality are described as men of corrupt minds, they are destitutes of the truth. Material things do not define a believer. Jesus says a man's soul does not consist of the abundance of the things that he possesses. What you have do not add up to make who you are. You are not made of things! Material things are never a measure of spirituality. A man that has Jesus, can have any other thing at anytime! Do not follow a materialistic person, he cannot avoid covetousness.

These are the types of people that a believer should not get involved with in a marriage relationship. A believer must avoid these set of people when it comes to the area of marriage. They are not unbelievers, they are part of the body of Christ, but have not yet given themselves totally to the word of God, there is still carnality in them. You do not want your marriage to end up in a divorce or some dangerous situations, so you cannot tangle with these kinds of people.

### **The Question of Dating**

People want to know for how long they should date before marriage. In the first place, it is sad to note that dating in today's world is a word construed for sinful relationships; going out with someone and exploring all emotional and sexual intimacy to see if you are compatible to marry. That is a sinful way of life, we do not practice sex before

marriage in the body of Christ. When you are still too young to marry, it is not advisable to get engaged in sexual activities in the name of dating, it will be a distraction for you, and will ruin you. Stay away from such unhealthy relationships.

*"Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled..." Hebrews 13:4*

People like to relate for sometimes to get to know one another properly before marriage. The irony is that, you really do not get to know anybody even if you relate with that person for one thousand years. Once a person is ready to marry and have agreed with their choice of partner, they should inform the church authority for accountability, "*for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.*" Hebrews 13:17.

The church authority is not a stamp that you must marry against all odds, under proper counsel, the relationship can still be dissolved as in the case of Joseph. A vital thing about Joseph was his discretion. As a single person, you must learn to be discreet.

*"When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost." Matt. 1:18*

The word, " **espoused**" is engagement or period of courtship. It is the Greek word,

"**mnesteuo**", which means to ask in marriage, and it was obviously done in an accountable manner, so every person knew. It was not a hide and seek. That is where many ladies get cheated, heartbroken and hurt.

Accountability in marital relationships is very fundamental. It helps you to set healthy boundaries and discipline, and have your heart protected. You must have emotional stability before marriage. Joseph was emotionally stable; he never had sex with Mary in experiment to see if she is good. Observe what he decided.

*"Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily."* Matt 1:19

He handled it with discretion, and avoided putting her to shame and public ridicule, irrespective of his disappointment, until the angel re-assured him, after which he took responsibility as the father of Jesus. A man must have maturity enough to handle crisis.

You must depend on the guidance of the Holy Spirit and walk by faith in the choice of a spouse. Even those that are hypocrites and will like to pretend, no one can quite hide bad character, somehow it will show in some measures. If you are diligent, you will always know some things that are not obvious to others. The Holy Spirit will show you things that you need to know about the person you

want for a spouse, that does not take months to come by, it takes staying with God to know.

You may however not find oneindividual that will fit hundred percent into the picture of the kind of partner that you want, no one is absolute in this life. You need to exercise your faith in God in everything. As a believer, you mustdiscoveryourselfinGod first. That is your lifetime assignment on earth. The period of your relationship to get married is not the time to check your sexual prowess, it is the time to get better acquainted with one another and discuss your future.

### **Age Bracket in Marriage**

When there is a relatively huge age gap between a man and a woman, it might not be advisable inmany instances to get married. Though there is no scriptural hindrance to that, but marriage is usually best when people are within the same age bracket. In the Old Testament, there were men that were far more older than their wives. There's no law against marrying an older person if that is your choice. But lots of time, when much younger women marry men far more advanced than them in age, they lack the experience to deal wisely with them and that leads to unpleasant results. Most of the time, when much older people choose women much younger than them for a wife, they are prone to expose them to sexual activities outside marriage. This attitude is unacceptable in the body of Christ. Sex outside mar-

riage is a sin, we do not have such practices in the Church.

When a man is forty or fifty years and is still unmarried, he is either a widower, or he had a divorce or he has a huge personal issue that hindered him from marriage. So, if you are willing to marry such a person, there will be the need to discuss and get to know his history in the area of relationship with other ladies. A person cannot be that advanced in age and still be single ordinarily, there must be a reason, which you must find out as an intending spouse and find his reason acceptable before you go ahead to marry him. You do not jump into marrying him just because he is successful. If he is divorced, find out why, and be satisfied with his answer. If he is a widower, it is still good to know about his relationship with his late wife, that will give you an insight into how he will treat you.

If you are forty or fifty years old, you sure do not need a wife that is in her twenties. You will soon be seventy when she is still much young. That will open the door for sexual immorality for her because the urge for sex declines with age, you may not meet up with her sexual demands. You will soon expose your young wife to sexual temptations, and it will bring you difficulties at old age. It is more blissful to age together as husband and wife.

Relationship between a man and woman should not take years before marriage. It is

unhealthy to engage in long courtship before marriage. If you are not yet ready for marriage, do not engage in any relationship with a sister or brother. Do not waste someone else's time! There are men and women all over in the body of Christ, when you are ready for marriage, you will find one and get married. You do not have to be going out with a lady in the name of marriage for years, when you are ready to marry, find a wife in Church and marry.

As young men and women, invest your youth in the services of Christ, that is the investment that you would be glad you did. Do not allow someone to distract you from your relationship with Christ, and drag you into some unpleasant behaviours that are regrettable. Bury yourself in the things of God, you will never regret your life in your latter days.

Dealing with relationships is a spiritual responsibility. As a believer, you have just one way to go, that is the love way. You do things the way God does them, you see things the way God sees them, and you respond to things the way God responds to them. That is the way believers live. While you live your life to please God, you will never lack any good thing in this life. Your life will be the blessed one, you will fulfill your days on earth with joy unspeakable. believers. The love walk is not optional, it is our only way of life. Every Christian family must be consciously built on the love of God "...And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath

*given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour."Eph 5:1-2.* We are able to love like God because the love of God has been shed abroad in our hearts. Jesus tells us that the same love with which the Father loved Him is the love which He has given us.

*"I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. Father, I will that they also, which thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold me glory, which thou hast given me: for thou hast loved me before the foundation of the world... And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me, may be in them, and I in them."*

John 17:23-26.

We are not perfect like Christ until we love like Him. It is our love life that unites us with Him, because that is His life in us. Love is God's life in the believer, we are known by love not by judgment. Jesus said those words shortly before He went to the Cross, love was the most important thing in His heart when He was about to leave this world. He tells us that God loves us with the same love with which He loved Him. When we function in that love, we enjoy His glory. The love Jesus gave us is the same love He received from the Father. Every believer must develop in the love of Christ. No family can function right and fulfill the purposes of God on earth

outside the love walk. What reveals that we know God, and that we have His life in us, is our love for the brethren. The bible says;

*"We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and we know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."*

1John 3:14-16.

Walking in love towards the brethren is the enabling law of the New Testament. We must understand the love of God as explained in Paul's first letter to the church in Corinth in the thirteenth chapter. That scripture gives us the detail description of the character of God's love. When we are not in the love of God, we are in death. The family cannot be built on anything and be successful outside the love of God. We pass from death to life when we love the brethren. When you are not in the love of God, you are in hate. There is no other place to be outside this two; you are either in love or in hate. When you are in hate, the bible says you are a murderer. These are very strong words, because no one wants to live with a murderer. But anyone that does not know the love of God is capable of doing every evil work. John puts it bluntly, he says such a person is a murderer and there is no eternal life abiding in him. Eternal life

does not function in hate, it only functions in the love of God.

The teaching in the book of Ephesians that Paul used to explain how the relationship between a husband and a wife should be was based on love. This love is called "agape", it is a love that we use to esteem others. That love is the opposite of selfishness. Selfishness is what is destroying this world today, but when believers in Christ walk in the love of Christ, it uproots selfishness in its entirety. So Paul tells every wife to submit to her own husband as the Church submits to Christ. Submission is not possible without the love of God, because submission means to be in honour and reverence of God.

You are not in submission when you disregard the word of God. Submission is not the feeling of love, the emotional feelings that a woman has for the husband is not what builds a family, it's the willingness for husband and wife to esteem one another above themselves that brings the power of God into a family. If husbands and wives can take time, to study the thirteenth chapter of Paul's first letter to the church in Corinth, and practice that scripture, they will walk in the blessings of God in a major way. That love removes fear, it "deletes" selfishness; it is meek, forbearing, kind and merciful, does not wish anyone evil, not proud, boastful or arrogant. Agape bears all things, believes the best of others and it is not easily provoked. It does not seek her own, but the best of others. That

was what brought salvation to mankind, Jesus did not seek His own will, He submitted Himself to the will of the Father. He gave Himself for us, not for Himself, that is what is called love. Think about a family built on this kind of spiritual power. That family will always have the presence of God.

Jesus was not afraid to share His position with us as God's children, He did not hold unto the exclusive right as the only begotten Son of God. Love made Him to bring us into that exclusive privilege and share in His glory. He said the glory that the Father gave Him, He has given it to us. Love made Jesus vulnerable, He held unto nothing as His exclusive rights and privileges. He brought us into union with Him, that we might be one with Him, and one with the Father. He brought us into the same status as He. He did that because He loves us. He said greater love has no man than that a man should lay down his life for his friends. God calls us friends! How else can we understand and see that God loves us with a kind of love that we can never find in this world? God's love is beyond human comprehension. He loved us and died for us when we did not know Him. The bible says God commends His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. He loved us first, and He gave Himself for us. So, when the bible says wives should submit to their own husband as unto the Lord, it was written with the understanding that could only be possible when wives walk

in this supernatural love towards their husbands.

After this, Paul turns around and instructs husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it. Husbands are to do for their wives what Christ did for the Church. Everything God did came out of His love, and what God will ever do, and always do, will be from love. Why? God is love, there is no hate in Him. There is no any other way God will act outside love. If we do not understand the love of God towards us, we cannot apply that love towards the brethren, and certainly, we cannot express it in our families. Marriage between believers in Christ is built upon these two fundamentals of submission of a woman to her husband as she submits to Christ, and the husband loving the wife as Christ loves the Church and gave Himself for it. This has been the focus of our study.

Human loyalty can be very shaky, only God's faithfulness is reliable and enduring. But we as God's children have the capacity to be trustworthy. A woman that wants a blessed marriage must learn the act of submission to Christ first before she is able to submit to her husband. We submit to Christ by submitting to God's word. A woman must practice submission by submitting to Christ before marriage. A brother that is looking for a wife should look for her in the Church. If she is not submissive to Christ, she cannot be submissive to her husband. A sister too should

do the same, a man that has not received the love of God cannot love you as Christ loves the Church, and gave Himself for it.

A man can take a woman out, travel with her to another country, buy things for her, have sex with her, and still kill her. Sex or gift do not define love. You can have sex with someone that you really do not love, because sex can come from sexual pressures, not necessarily from love. Women mistake romance to mean love, but that does not necessarily reflect love. It could be a part of it, but there are more serious issues connected with marriage than romance.

Every Christian home is built on love and mutual respect, but no one can love without understanding and receiving the love of Christ, you must have experienced the love of Christ before you are able to reflect it to someone else. You are expected to forgive as Christ forgives us not as you feel. No one needs to apologize to you before you forgive, you just forgive because forgiveness is in your nature as a believer. You do not forgive after people repent, that was what was obtainable under the law of Moses, but over in the New Testament, forgiveness is always there before anybody commits any offence. We have forgiveness in Christ, it is not after we sin and repent that the forgiveness becomes available, the forgiveness is already in place before we fall into any sin. In Christ, we have redemption, and the forgiveness of sins. Eph. 1:7.

Forgiveness of sins is a gift, it was not that any of us deserved it, it was not because we repented that Christ died for us. It is the same thing in the kingdom of God, we do not have to wait for people to apologize before we forgive them, we forgive even when they do not think or feel they have done us any wrong. We do not wait until we are offended before we think whether we should forgive or not, we must make forgiveness an integral part of our daily Christian walk.

In a Christian family, no one is inferior between a husband and a wife, both husband and wife are heirs together of the grace of life. There are times that a wife earns more than the husband, that should not be a reason for her to disrespect the man, and also should not make the man jealous, and make him to be quarrelsome. There is nothing wrong if a wife provides for the extra comforts of the family. Some women come from privileged homes, they are definitely in a better position to provide for the need of the family, that does not mean the man is irresponsible. If a woman for example inherit billions from her father that has passed on to the other side of life, the husband may not have such money, so there is nothing wrong for the woman to make that inheritance available for the benefit of the family. This should be not a source of quarrel or misunderstanding at home.

A husband should not get envious of the wife's income and want to dominate her as

a proof that he is the head of the wife. Nobody has a right to dominate another person in any relationship, we are to rule together exhibiting mutual honour and respect. You do not seize your wife's income to use it as you choose because you are the husband, it is ungodly to do so. Where there is love, such attitudes do not come up because there is no selfishness in the love of God.

It is possible for the wife to be the Managing Director of a company where the husband works as a Secretary or even in a lower position than that. That is not a curse, it is a blessing, we should all want our wives and husbands to be successful. A Christian home must reflect the kindness and mercies of God. If we keep ourselves in the love of God, Satan will have no access into our marriages to destroy them. Believers must live like believers, we should not imbibe the culture of those that are without Christ into our marriage. We are of God, because of that, we overcome the world, because greater is He that is in us, than the devil that is in the world. Love is the overcoming power of the believer. The bible says when we walk in love, there is no occasion of stumbling in us. "*He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.*" 1 John 2:10. Love never fails because there is no death where the love of God operates.

### **Dealing With Conflicts In A Family**

In every family, there are conflicts. Christian homes are not exempted from conflicts, but because we have the love of God shed abroad in our hearts as believers in Christ, we are in better positions to resolve issues easier and quicker than those that are without the love of God in them. If you spend time with the word of God, you will build godly values that will produce better results in your life and marriage.

Things do go wrong in all human relationships. For example, things can go wrong between a pastor and his congregation. A pastor can use sharp rebuke to correct things among members that are not living according to sound doctrines. Things can even go wrong between men of God. There was great contention between Paul and Barnabas over John Mark. The contention was so sharp that they parted ways; Barnabas took John Mark, his nephew, and sailed to Cyprus, and Paul took Silas and they went the other way. It does not mean that they were not men of God, or that they did not hear from God. Things do go wrong among believers. There was a division in Corinth over Paul, Cephas (Peter) and Apollos. The Church was divided along those lines. Some said they were of Paul, others said they were of Cephas, and others said they were of Apollos. It was a sign of carnality as Paul rebuked them over that line of thinking as none of them died for them. Yet, things do go wrong among brethren. In the same vein, things do go

wrong between husbands and wives, and between parents and children. There can be argument and tension between a husband and his wife, it does happen.

In all situations however, we must never learn from the world to resolve issues, we must be cautious of the world and her system. We are in the world, but we are not of the world, we are citizens of heaven. The bible says our citizenship is not of this world. Believers should not copy the world, rather, we should renew our minds with the word of God. The things of the world do not fit into our thinking as believers. We do not see things with the eye of the world, we see things in Christ. Some practices may seem harmless when we see them through this lust controlled world, but they are certainly not good for us as believers in Christ. The world sees nothing wrong with advertising sex, but that is not our way, a believer should not be dragged into such things. We do not tap ideas from movies, magazines and newspapers. The bible teaches us to be circumspect, we do not learn from people whose values do not agree with the word of God. In similar vein, we do not resolve issues in our families like those without Christ do. We do not drag ourselves to the elders of the village to resolve issues, we find solutions to problems in the word of God.

There are four major areas in marriage relationship where conflicts can arise. These four areas are: Faith or Belief, Sex, Finances,

and raising Children. We will look at them in light of God's word and see how He designed that these areas of conflicts be resolved in the spirit of love and forgiveness.

### **Faith or Belief**

This faith based relationships issues arise from people that married as unbelievers, and later either of them became believers in Christ. It is not the norm in Christian marriage to have them as the scripture is clear about who a born again person should marry. This particular situation does not apply to those who out of their disobedience and disrespect for God, breached the instruction to get married to unbelievers. There is no relationship between darkness and light, no communion between Christ and Belial, no fellowship between him that believes and an infidel.

The bible tells us to come out from among them and be separate, and touch not the unclean thing. Unbelievers are unclean, a child of God should not even think of considering an unbeliever for marriage, it should not even cross his thinking whatsoever, there is no basis for that. A lady should not justify marriage to an unbeliever because of desperation or greed, the results are not pleasant in all cases. No lady should come under undue pressure for marriage because of age, nor should parental pressures make you desperate to get married to an unbeliever or someone that is not your choice of a spouse.

Poverty induced pressure should not force you into what you would not do if in a better condition financially.

In Paul's first letter to the Corinthian church, we have light on how to handle the issue of diverse faith in marriage. Like we have been learning all through this book, our whole lives as believers depend on the word of God, that is the mirror that we see ourselves in and know who we are and what is expected of us.

*"And the woman who hath an husband that believe not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy. But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hast called us to peace."*

1Cor.7:13-15

You do not dissolve marriage on the basis of faith or belief. If you got married in unbelief and you become a Christian, you should not on the basis of that walk away from your marriage. You should not put your wife or husband under undue pressure because of faith. You do not send your wife away because you are now a born again Christian and she is not. We do not do that even if she belongs to another faith. Even if your husband is a cultist, you do not leave him because you are now a Christian, you must love

him and submit to him as required of you in the word of God. Your presence as a believer in Christ sanctifies your unbelieving spouse, you should not be afraid to live with him or her if that person is pleased to live with you. Your presence as a believer destroys the power of Satan, so you do not have to be afraid of what Satan can do to you. Satan has no authority over you in such situation. But the unbelieving can leave, in that case a brother is not under bondage, he or she can get married to another person; but you do not force her or him away because of faith or belief. If you do not think you can dwell together, it is not an issue of faith, it is an issue of character.

There is nobody that a believer cannot stay with once in obedience to the word of God. You do not resign from your work because you are now born again, so you do not resign from your marriage on the basis of that. If you were married to seven wives, you do not put any of them away because you are now born again. If all of them choose to live with you, you do not send any away, they are legally your wives, so they remain your wives. You are not under any scriptural obligation to put any of them away. Bring all of them to church if they will follow you to church, you are accepted by God with all of them. The only thing you cannot become is a bishop, which is actually an administrative office. You are a brother, and that is the most important thing. Seven wives will not take

anybody to hell, since Jesus did not demand that he should put away six of his wives before he could be born again, he does not need to put six of his wives away before he goes to heaven, that demand or practice is religion, it is not in the word of God.

*"Like wise, 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; While they behold your chaste conversation couple with fear (reverence)." 1Peter 3:1-2*

Your character will win your unbelieving husband. You do not even have to preach to him, just behave the right way, one day, he will follow you to church. Do not refuse to be in subjection to your husband because you do not believe in what he does, he is not a believer, what he does is a reflection of his nature. Nobody rejects love, when you reflect Christ, He attracts people to Himself. Religion is the only thing that drives people away, but when we practice the love of God, we draw people to Christ.

*"Whose adorning let it not be the outward adorning of plaiting of hair, and of wearing of gold, and of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." 1Peter 3:3-4*

This is not saying a good woman should not put on gold or plait their hair, as that would mean they should not also put on clothes. You know that is not what God is saying. God is talking about a meek and quiet spirit which is more than money. You can put off your clothes, but cannot put off your character. You can do any make up, but once your character comes under question, your make up means absolutely nothing. This does not in any way suggest that a woman should not make up or wear good clothes, it is rather saying that character is more important than clothes, makeup or jewelry.

A believing wife will not win her unbelieving husband by wearing gold and by make ups, but by a chaste conversation- good character. Respect and honour keep marriage more than beauty and sex. Beauty is transient, the pleasure of sex is transient, but respect and honour last longer. When you inculcate the word of God in your heart, you form values that will cause you to live heaven's life on earth.

### **Sex**

This is another area of conflict between husbands and wives at home. When there are sexual problems in a home, it generates many other problems. Husbands and wives do not come for counselling and talk about sex even though it may be the main source of their problem. People shy away from discussing sex, yet it brings multiple problems

in marriage. When the bible says the two shall become one flesh, it is talking about sex. Sex is part of the fellowship between husband and wife, in fact, it is the fellowship that must be faithfully attained by husbands and wives in their closet. Sex is the most intimate relationship between a man and a woman, and that should only be practiced within the context of marriage.

*"Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto his wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath no power of her own body but the husband: and likewise also the husband has no power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your inconsistency."*

1Cor 7:2-5

Husbands and wives should have access to each other's bodies freely. Using sex as a weapon or a bargaining table by a woman is not of God. A husband should have free access to his wife's body and a wife free access to her husband's body at any given time. In marriage, husbands and wives do not have authority over their bodies. What Paul is addressing here however is beyond sex; Paul is addressing respect. Once again, when the bible talks about the two becoming one flesh, it is talking about sex. You do not become

one spirit with anyone through sex, that is why a believing wife can have sex with an unbelieving husband and not be defiled, she does not become one spirit with him through sex. *Rather, the woman sanctifies the unbelieving husband.* Even if the man is a practicing cultist, it will not have effect on her spiritually, she cannot be corrupted by that. The unbelieving partner is sanctified by the believing partner not the other way round. The idea of sleeping with someone to corrupt the person spiritually is a fallacy, Jesus emphatically says the two shall become one flesh not one spirit. If you are born again, you were born by the incorruptible seed of the word, sex cannot corrupt a believer spiritually. Every sexual activity outside marriage is an abuse of sex, sex was not designed to be practiced outside marriage.

Sex is an issue where there is no respect between husband and wife. If there is a reason for which you cannot have sex, sit down and discuss it. You need the consent of each other to abstain from sex. You must agree for the time to stay away from each other for the purpose of prayer or whatever purpose or reason that is acceptable to both of you, and come back again so that you do not give Satan the room to tempt you. Paul said, in order to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. There are sexual temptations out there, and no one should deny that. If you keep staying away from each

other sexually, you expose yourselves to sexual temptations. Paul tells us that in order to avoid that, sex should be a usual practice between a husband and a wife.

### **Finances**

Finances is another area that brings conflict into a marriage, where the matter of finance is not addressed properly, it can become a source of serious misunderstanding in a home. The bible says;

*"But if any provide not for his own, specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and he is worse than an infidel." 1Tim. 5:8*

The phrase "his own" indicates that it is expected that a man should provide for his family. The word "provide" here goes beyond finances, it also includes providing time and security for his family. If you do not provide, the bible says you have denied the faith. Let me add here that certain situations may arise where a husband that has been providing may not adequately provide for some time, and thus the wife may step in to meet the needs of the family.

A husband may lose his job, and that period in which he is seeking for other things to do in order to provide for his household, may be a difficult time for him. Where the wife works and from her income meets the family needs, she should not dis-respect the man

because of that. There is nothing wrong in the woman meeting the family need at the time the husband is passing through financial trials. That is not irresponsibility, it is just a phase that people can pass through.

A father needs to invest in the future of his children, where he fails to do so, he will have unpleasant results thereafter. When children grow without parental care and responsibility, they learn from the world and come up with behaviours that will cost the parents much more in their latter days. It is necessary for parents to spend on their children to give them the desired future. Because of this therefore, husband and wife must plan their finances to meet up with the demands of children's education and social wellbeing.

Both husband and wife must learn to sit down together and plan their finances. One or both of them may have aged parents that may be put into consideration where their money is concerned. One of them should not be selfish about this, but due consideration be given where the need arises. Jesus says nobody builds a house without counting the cost, this means planning is a necessary part of building a lasting relationship. Hiding money from one another is not helpful. If you can trust yourself with your bodies, what is money? Women must fight greed, they should not seek to squander family fortunes on the table of greed. A wife should not be competing with other persons wife. Your husband must not buy you the type of

car your neighbour's husband bought for her, he is not your neighbour's husband. There is the need to check greed and covetousness, otherwise, a woman might give in to immorality to get money. Immorality destroys marriage, as trust is destroyed. That should not be in any Christian relationship.

Husbands and wives need to plan their finances, so you do not buy what you do not need. Your spending must fit into your income and budget. Learn not to borrow for spending, it is unwise to do so. Do not get yourself indebted because you want to be like others, do not go for what you cannot afford. As a believer in Christ, you have been born into a living hope, what you do not have today, you will have tomorrow, there is no need to get indebted over material things. Godliness with contentment is great gain. Husband and wife must be content with what they have, and believe God together for a more blessed future. Nagging over money is an irresponsible act. Fault finding is also another irresponsible act, none of these is necessary when faced with some financial difficulties. Everybody passes through a phase of insufficient funds, nagging does not bring money, it creates tension and destroys hope.

### **Raising Children**

This is huge area where conflicts can come into a marriage. Parents must have plans for children in place before they start bring-

ingthem into the world. This must be part of the discussion as people plan for marriage. Raising children is the greatest responsibility for husbands and wives. When you have children, youhave twodistinct responsibilities, you are a husband and a father or a wife and a mother. These two are critical. A wife should not abandon her family responsibility and go to church for prayer meeting! You do not abandon your husband and children under the cover of spirituality. Same goes to the father, both are responsible for the future and the protection of the children. Having children should not be automatic in a marriage, it should be based on plan and agreement. Parents must create time for their children and invest in them.

The responsibility of raising children is much more than giving birth to them. You do not need to have children if you are not ready to take care of them, children in marriage are not a must, they are achoice and theymust come within a plan. If youare married and you do not have children, it is not a curse, you can goto an orphanage to adoptchildren if you want, you do not have to be sad over it, and allow it to steal the joy of your marriage. Just enjoy your marriage, it is the gift of God. People decide not to have children, it is their choice, others want just one or two children, it is all within their convenience. Whatever decision husband and wife agree on about their children, in laws should not interfere with it.

The real work is in raising children and investing in their future. If you do not invest in your children today, it will cost you much more in the future than the investment that you will make today. When you leave children to be raised up by themselves ignorant or house-helps, they learn from the world, you get in the latter times of your life what will give you the trouble that you never thought was coming. To avoid Satan from taking advantage of your children, you must invest in them and keep them in the right path. Do not perpetually leave your children for maids, when you give your children time, they will turn out to be a source of blessing both to you and to the society. Your children will continue to honour you throughout their life time when you treat them right. Parents owe children, physical, financial and moral support; the children in turn owe their parents responsible behaviour and honour. It is an act of ingratitude for a child that the parents invested in, gave him or her all the necessary attention, and all moral, spiritual and financial support to turn to some shameful acts that brings shame and disgrace to the family. Children must consider the parental care and commitment that the parents gave and be of responsible character.

Parents should take care of their children based on their financial capability, they should put children in schools that they can afford. Husbands and wives must learn to live within their means, you do not have to

copy someone else. Stay in a house that you can afford the bills. Where the income of both of you cannot support a particular decision, husband and wife should forgo such decision. How to raise children should not be a source of quarrel, where children should go to school should not bring fight or disagreement. School is school, school does not make people. Treat children within your capacity, children know when their parents have them at heart.

These are the four major ways that constitute the cause of misunderstanding between husbands and wives in a marriage. Once we bring everything under the subjection of Christ, we live peacefully.

### **Live In Peace By All Means**

We must do everything within our ability, and by all means to live in peace with one another. This is a necessary requirement for an enduring marriage. We must always seek for peace and reconciliation. The bible says, "*Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man can see God.*" Heb. 12:14. Avoid bitterness, anger, malice and unforgiveness, do everything you can to be in peace with all men including your spouse. Seek counsel from your pastor, and follow all the paths of peace no matter the offence or situation. The bible says; "*For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, , and his lips that they speak no guile. Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and*

*ensue it.*"**1 Peter 3:10-11.** This is the bible way of living successfully on the earth. Do not become irrational and speak words that you won't like their results, it is a regrettable road to follow. Seek peace, and pursue it.

Where you seek all peaceful means to resolve issues and it seems to get worse, do not get deterred, give yourself to prayer. We have a right to pray and seek divine intervention in all situations. Prayer is the most potent weapon we have as believers. Confront bad situations through prayers. All problems have their roots from the spirit world, prayers enables us to get to the other side and deal with situations. We can change things and ourselves, through praying in the Spirit. Speak words of faith over your family, deny Satan the right and the means of infecting your relationship with unforgiveness and bitterness. You must fight on your knees, and fight the good fight of faith without relenting, because it is a fight that you must win. You won't lose the battle when you give yourself to the word of God and to prayer.

There are lots of marital and pre-marital breakages in the body of Christ. People break marriages without any recourse to their Christian faith. They divorce, remarry, divorce again, remarry, and the circle goes. This is not good for the faith that we profess. Things do not necessarily change because we change spouse, we need to get back to the word of God and change our approach to life issues. Whatever makes you to divorce

does not go with the divorce. Any problem that you do not overcome will keep you in bondage, you will divorce, and divorce, and divorce, you will still not find the answer to your situation. Divorce is never an answer to marital problems, you do not really have a better marriage after the first divorce, because the problem really does not go with a divorce. There are pastors that have divorced four to five times, and have still not settled, this is not good for the body of Christ. Pastors must consider the flock of God and be patient with their spouses. Nobody is perfect, including the person seeking for divorce, there is need of patience in the Church.

Marriage is a blessing, a man of God should be an example of a good marriage not example of how to divorce. One of the requirement of spiritual leadership is that a man of God is able to rule his house well, having his children in subjection with all gravity. "...*One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?*" 1 Tim. 3:4-5. A man of God must learn to forbear with his wife and children for the sake of those that believe in his ministry and call. He should sacrifice all things and seek peace at all cost. That also goes for the Christian woman, you just do not walk away from your marriage because you feel offended. Where are you going to? Whatever your husband did that makes you feel like walking away is common

to all men. There is nowhere to go in this life that you will not deal with men. Divorce does not pay anyone with good, it destroys all labour and hope.

### **What If My Best Is Not Enough?**

Having said all these, I want you to know that marriage is not a life and death situation, it is not a death sentence. In his first letter to the Corinthians chapter seven, Paul says when your spouse dies, you are free to marry another person. But you may as well choose to remain single. Marriage is not compulsory, the greatest teachers of marriage, Jesus and Paul were not married. You do not have to be married to be successful. Paul says, "*I say to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn (with lust). But to the married, I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: But if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled back to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.*" 1Cor. 7:8-11. You can stay single if you want, it does not mean you are a failure, it is just a choice.

Paul says if the unbelieving one wants to go, let her or him go, a brother or sister is not under bondage in that case. What that means, is that in such a situation, a brother or sister can remarry. So, if your Christian faith offends your spouse and he or she chooses to walk away from the marriage, you

do not have to force her to remain, you may let the unbelieving one go, and you are free to get married to another person. Paul says this is so in order to be at peace with others. Now, this is in a situation where people married as unbelievers and one partner becomes born again, while the other becomes uncomfortable with that and chooses to walk away.

Another situation is where there is domestic violence. Should a woman live with a husband that is prone to destructive anger? Violence is not an acceptable way of life. We have seen spouses killed as a result of domestic violence. Women have poured acid and water on their husbands causing irreparable damages because of jealousy. This is certainly not of God. But the question is, should a brother or sister remain in a marriage where there is abuse?

First of all violence is an indication of demonic presence. As believers, we have authority over demons spirits but we do not have authority over human will. When a partner chooses to open himself or herself to the spirit of violence, we may not control the action that might follow. Marriage is not by force, where your life is threatened, you cannot continue to live under constant threats to life. A man that beats his wife is a very weak man. Wife beating is not a show of strength, it's a manifestation of weakness. Strength is seen in our ability to restrain from acts of violence when provoked. To lose

your emotion and get into violence shows how weak you are.

A partner that is under threat of life due to the spirit of violence may not remain in that marriage, God has called us to peace. You do not have to be in a marriage that neither gives you peace to serve Christ, and that might cause untimely death. In the case of perpetual violence therefore, a man or woman may walk away.

### **Marriage Not A Death Sentence**

However, many still wonder if marriage a life sentence such that as earlier seen I must walk in love and ensure and insist the marriage remains. First and foremost, marriage is not till death do you part. That phrase is coined by men to exemplify the sanctity and fidelity which should exist in marriages. It's noble, appealing and desirable for all.

However, like most human innovations, it must be carefully weighed else it turns into prison chains. God has called us to liberty. Some have said "*what God has joined together let no man put asunder*" They many times misquoted Jesus.

*"Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."* Matthew 19:6 KJV

He referred to the institution of one man and one wife not that individuals can't leave. That will be explained later in the book. As

earlier noted there are instances where marriages end.

Firstly, when a Spouse dies.

*"The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord."*

1 Corinthians 7:39 KJV

Widows abound in scriptures and they were not buried with their spouse.

*"And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day."*

Luke 2:36-37 KJV

Even Abraham married again at such an old age after Sarah's demise.

*" Then again Abraham took a wife, and her name was Keturah. And she bare him Zimran, and Jokshan, and Medan, and Midian, and Ish-bak, and Shuaah."* Genesis 25:1-2 KJV

With plenty kids! Sarah, Hagar and Now this... Moses by reason of his fugitive lifestyle had to marry more than once.

*"And Moses was content to dwell with the man: and he gave Moses Zipporah his daughter. And*

*she bare him a son, and he called his name Gershon: for he said, I have been a stranger in a strange land." Exodus 2:21-22 KJV*

Then again much later he had to marry again.

*"And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman." Numbers 12:1 KJV*

Mariam and Aaron were jointly judged for criticizing his remarriage. Also Jesus acknowledged a woman who had married several times.

*"For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly." John 4:18 KJV*

Five! it doesn't make it a good and godly example but Jesus didn't call them her live in lovers but husbands! In fact, he made a distinction between living with a man and being married to him. She was married five times. Jesus said so and acknowledged it. Take note Jesus went and stayed in the woman's area same day despite her horrible marital experiences. She became a witness for Christ despite having been married five times and with an illegitimate relationship, she believed Jesus and received forgiveness and I believe straightened out. Never allow marital failures or challenges paralyze your ministry and potentials.

*"The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?...And many more believed because of his own word;"*

John 4:28-29,41

No other woman in the four gospels did this much in the work of ministry! We shall treat this later. So, marriage at times can go different ways. We have examined a dead spouse. Also, a spouse that has chosen to depart makes the marriage done and dusted and the other partner is not bound to be waiting for the rest of his or her life.

*"And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, let not the wife depart from her husband:"* 1Cor.7:10 KJV

*"But and if she departs, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife."* 1 Corinthians 7:11 KJV

As a ground rule, never seek separation or divorce, seek reconciliation, both husband and wife. Notice Paul doesn't give specific reasons which occasion this. He gives exceptions.

*"But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell*

*with her, let her not leave him.”* 1 Corinthians 7:12-13

In this case a marriage between a believer and nonbeliever. Note the key words “if he or she be pleased to dwell” You can’t force a union. You can desire, pray but can’t upturn another’s will. Where a partner leaves, the other spouse is no longer bound to him or her anymore. Leave could mean, remarry, separate etc.

*“But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace.”*

1 Corinthians 7:15 KJV

Not under bondage. However, Paul doesn’t encourage remarriage!

*“I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, I say, that it is good for a man so to be. Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife.”* 1 Corinthians 7:26-27 KJV

Neither is he asking you never to.

*“But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless, such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you.”* 1 Corinthians 7:28 KJV

You haven’t sinned! Now the narrative seems like it speaks of unbelievers. By strict rule of context, it will presuppose this is only al-

lowed when it's between a believer and a non-believer. However, bible interpretation rules give the latitude to examine other contents of scriptures which deal with the same subject or personalities. For example, the term carnal is used for none believers only, technically.

*"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."* 1 Corinthians 2:14  
KJV

The natural man is the unbeliever.

*"For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God."* Romans 8:6-8 KJV

He is carnal. However, some believers are such referred to in their conduct.

*"And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?"* 1 Corinthians 3:1, 3 KJV

Though an oxymoron yet the behavior is judged like that of an unbeliever. The Corinthian brother was so treated.

*"It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore, put away from among yourselves that wicked person."* 1 Cor. 5:1, 13 KJV

The issue wasn't adultery even though that's a sin but open rebellion and an unremorseful attitude. He's called wicked. And association withdrawn. Same as those who live without accountability.

*"And if any man obeys not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed."* 2 Thessalonians 3:14 KJV

We are told to condemn such conduct as if they weren't saved folks. The spouse of such fellow will be put in such a situation here! Hence the need to marry a person who doesn't hold the Word and the church in utter contempt. Lovers of money and corrupt folks too.

*"Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself."*

1 Timothy 6:5 KJV

So, we have instances believers are treated like the unsaved. To further buttress this within the marital institution, irresponsible men are to be seen like this.

*"But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."* 1 Timothy 5:8 KJV

Worse than an unbeliever, denied the faith. Very strong words. Where the erring partner disregards the word and lives in open rebellion, and has shunned wise counsel and keeps living in sin, we can't treat him as a believer even though he is one. We still see him as brother not an enemy.

*"Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother."*

2 Thessalonians 3:15 KJV

So he or she MUST be rebuked, disciplined and dealt with accordingly.

*"Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction."* 2Cor. 13:10 KJV

A man not for lack of resources yet refuses to take care of his home is an unbeliever in conduct. A woman who abandons her marital duties too. A licentious man or woman not amenable to correction too. Now to another issue. A violent spouse, who abuses his wife or husband is a persecutor. Don't stay in the house praying. Run for your dear life.

*"Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the house-top not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes."* Matthew 24:16-18 KJV

Jesus himself hid from his persecutors. Paul ran, in some instances, he was hidden away.

*"But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him. Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket."* Acts 9:24-25 KJV

Leave such a home or at best, separate. If men who knew dying for the gospel had rewards, yet fled, what reward will you be getting for getting killed by a spouse? You can pray elsewhere but not in a house you receive scourges like a lamb taking the sin of the world away. Let me stop here. In such instances where harm is evident, it's stupid to stay in such a home. It's not do or die. You weren't sent to this world to marry.

*"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."* James 1:5 KJV

But don't pray where he or she is. Do it elsewhere or else your answers to the prayers will be received when you are dead! There are instances where marriages might be difficult to continue. We must never judge people's

marital challenges presumptuously or hypocritically.

### **Weathering the Storm**

Great men and women have suffered terrible marriages. Great women of God and men make wrong marital choices but this must never be a death sentence nor used to stifle them in ministry. There are several unserious believers with no marriage failures, they don't serve God or the local church, so of what use is the romantic haven? Even in hell today are men and women who had marriages that never broke up.

If a person walks away from a marriage because of domestic violence, that person did not leave by choice, the person was forced to leave. If he or she finds another partner that he or she wants to live with, he or she may marry that person. There is no law that says the person should remain single for the rest of his or her life. Anyone that has given himself to the Lord cannot be controlled by the spirit of violence. A brother or sister must not remain under the threat to life in order to keep the marriage. God has called us to peace, not to violence.

Another situation is where a spouse is involved in infidelity. Should a marriage end in divorce because of sexual sins?

Sexual sins, whether it is adultery or fornication should not be a part of any relationship.

When the Pharisees quoted the law of Moses from the twenty fourth chapter of Deutronomy to Jesus in connection to divorce, Jesus told them that it was not like that from the beginning. Though He admitted the position of the law in the area of fornication, yet He referred them to the beginning, and told them that God intended that a man should leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and the two should become one flesh. What that implies is that, though Moses gave them that because of the callousness of their hearts, divorce was not part of God's plan for marriage.

We also saw that in the attitude of Jesus toward the woman that was caught in the act of adultery and the Pharisees brought her to Him, He did not respond by condemning the woman. They were there to tempt him and they had two things in mind. If Jesus told them to stone her, they would say He did not come to save sinners as He claimed. If He had said they should not stone her, they would say He broke the law of Moses. Though Jesus did not condone what she did, His attitude toward her was that of forgiveness.

In the case of adultery, three people are actually involved; the person that commits adultery, God, and the spouse of the person in adultery. Adultery is a sin! There is no justification for that, yet it does happen. We must face the fact that believers in Christ do get into adultery just like they do in any other sin. It is good to face this issue once and for

all and get insight into the word of God about this.

*"Meat for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. No the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord: and the Lord for the body... Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication, sinneth against his own body."* 1Cor. 6:13, 18.

Anyone that commits fornication sins against his own body. Fornication is a sexual sin that an unmarried person commits with someone else. Adultery is the sexual sin that a married person commits with another person married or not married. Both of them are acts of infidelity.

A man in marriage does not have power over his body, his body belongs to his wife, same with a woman in marriage. All of us for the body of Christ. We were bought with a price, the bible says we should glorify God in our spirits and our bodies which are God's. So, in case of adultery, the person sins against God, and against his spouse who owns his body. The question is; Does God forgive adultery? Sure! God forgives all sins except one; the sin against the Holy Spirit. The sin against the Holy Spirit is the rejection of Christ, it is also called unbelief. When a person commits adultery, he or she has not sinned against the Holy Spirit. If Jesus, who died for us, can forgive adultery, why wouldn't we forgive the sin of adultery committed against us? Adul-

tery therefore is not a basis for divorce under the New Testament. We must learn to forgive all sins that Christ forgives, and He forgives all, except the sin against the Holy Spirit. What a spouse owes his unfaithful partner in a marriage is forgiveness.

Adultery is bad, it should not be practiced in any relationship but it is not an unpardonable sin. Most time, it is not the person that commits the sin that grieves the Holy Spirit, it is the person that refuses to forgive that grieves the Holy Spirit. When a spouse becomes bitter and unforgiving in the case of adultery, she or he tears the marriage apart. It is not the sin of adultery that destroys marriage, it is the unforgiving spirit that destroys marriages. We must learn to forgive all sins and be at peace with one another.

Another situation is the case where a marriage is entered into under deception. Let's say a lady had her womb removed because of her past life, but she never disclosed it before marriage. After marriage, she did not get pregnant but still kept it a secret, and keeps bribing doctors to give results that declares her medically perfect. If the husband finally finds out, should he divorce her?

This kind of situations are rampant, people have married others with HIV in them without disclosing their status, that is a murderous spirit. People have lied to women giving them wrong image of themselves just to marry them. People have gotten married to others by deceit, and that ought not to

happen in the body of Christ. Deception is Satan's way of life, believers in Christ should not be part of it.

Anything that is entered into by fraud or deceit is not of God. This kind of situation is completely unacceptable. A person should tell the truth about himself to the person he or she intends to marry. If such a person told the partner everything before marriage and he or she chooses to get married, they should not divorce because of that. But where a person entered into a marriage through deceit, there was never a marriage in the first place. But the spouse may choose to remain in the marriage with her if he wants to. Every believer has the capacity to forgive all offences. But in the case of deceit, there was no marriage, it was fraud, a brother or sister may not be bound to that.

Marriage between believers in Christ is a life time proposition; divorce should not be a part of consideration in marriage. When a husband and a wife bring themselves under subjection to God's word, nothing can destroy their marriage.

### **Bouncing Back**

Many hardly know how to pick themselves up when thunder strikes in their marriages. As vital as marriage is, it's not eternal, neither is it spiritual (except the parties are andmake it so). Mistakes and tragedies occur.

Wrong marital choices, break aways etc. Paul aptly discusses these scenarios.

*"But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases : but God hath called us to peace." 1 Cor. 7:15 KJV*

Again, he promotes peace but then the other spouse may be adamant and still leave. What does Paul counsel? He gives two options but places premium on one. Stay single or remarry.

*"I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, I say , that it is good for a man so to be. Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife. But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless, such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you." 1 Corinthians 7:26-28 KJV*

He gives preference to singleness whilst respecting the choice to remarry in such cases. No church should treat divorcees or those with marital failures like lepers. It's very anti-Christ. There's life after marital failures. Paul's solution for all, single, married or remarried, is to stay fervent for the Lord.

*"But this I say, brethren, the time is short; it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none;... And they that use this*

*world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.* 1 Cor. 7:29, 31 KJV

His obvious preference for singleness is for the unmarried, which can be as a result of the departure of the spouse or decision not to marry at all or death of a spouse, his preference is mainly for the purpose of service with less distraction.

*"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. But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband. And this I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction."*

1 Cor 7:32-35 KJV

The distractions however are within the context of these explanations. Good marriages can help one's spiritual life and cause you to serve the Lord more. An example is Priscilla and Aquila.

*"And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome;) and*

*came unto them...And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly." Acts 18:2,26 KJV*

Priscilla was a teaching gift and a spiritual woman. "Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus." Romans 16:3 KJV

Greek scholars opine the construction tends to her having a more prominent position. But not everyone will have such marital comfort in the work of ministry. A sister in Christ mustn't be so judged by her marital status, yes, she mustnot be seen as loose or light but never be classified as been unhealthy because she is either unmarried or separated or divorced, same with brothers too.

*"Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and alms deeds which she did." Acts 9:36 KJV*

Her marital status wasn't considered but her spiritual life, her ministry.

*"I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea: That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also." Romans 16:1-2 KJV*

She was a servant for the church, no mention whether she's single, married or otherwise. Same as men. Jesus is a clear example, same as Paula and Barnabas too.

*"Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?"* 1 Corinthians 9:5 KJV

It's argued Paul must have been separated from a wife since he was a Pharisee. Some disqualify other believers from holding leadership roles because of failed marital relationships. They quote Paul,

*"A bishop then must be ...the husband of one wife"* 1 Timothy 3:2 KJV

*"the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly."* Titus 1:6 KJV

Let's even assume their interpretation is correct. A divorcee who remarries is still a husband of one wife! But then, stricter interpretation sides with the term "one-woman man" nothing at all about prior marital failures. More importantly if having a wife and kids is the pre-qualification for leadership. Paul, Barnabas, Timothy and even Jesus are illegitimate leaders!

The issue is good conduct, which we have addressed earlier. A good Christian can experience marital failure. A good pastor too. It's

ridiculous to destroy people's ministries and service for such reasons. Whilst acknowledging the importance of good conduct in marriages, where exceptions occur we can't judge beyond scriptures. Ministry is possible after marital challenges. Widows have served the Lord, remained single and a blessing too.

*"And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.*

Luke 2:36-37 KJV

A prophetess, full of the spirit. Served God for 84 years! She didn't go for deliverance, casting out "spirit husband" or "marital cobwebs" or some of these horrible, dehumanizing things done to ladies, which are merely cultural demands disguised as spiritual issues. She served the Lord.

*"Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day."* 1 Timothy 5:5 KJV

We had unmarried young ladies too edifying the church.

*"And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy."*

Acts 21:9 KJV

And the woman at the well

*"The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?...And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did. So when the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days. And many more believed because of his own word; And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.* John 4:28-29, 39-42 KJV

She became a preacher witness for the gospel. OH, what joy we would have if we stopped making people's marital challenges the yardstick for their spiritual usefulness. Getting married is good and exciting. Not getting married isn't a curse. Losing one's spouse through death shouldn't end your life. Losing one's marriage isn't because you missed God and He hates you too.

**What Really Matter – Count Down to Eternity**

In all these instances, all the parties should simply know what will count in eternity isn't how romantic you are, have been or maritally solid but souls won for Christ, discipled for him and nurtured in his name. Wedding ceremonies are humancelebrations, worth nothing in eternity

*"For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven."* Matthew 22:30 KJV

It's not heavenly.

*"For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark,"* Matthew 24:38 KJV

But look at this.

*"I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance...Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."* Luke 15:7,10 KJV

So if you think your mission on earth is to populate it with kids, have a rethink. God wants reborn men to fill the earth, that's what He told Man (in Christ).

*"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

Jesus brought it into much more light.

*"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."* John 1:12 KJV

Whilst the blessing to procreate naturally is blessed, stays and stands and is of God, the higher purposeto have born again men should weigh more on our hearts.

Go ye....and give birth to spiritual children, preach the Gospel, mark 16:15; Make disciples Matthew 28:18-19. If along the way you find a good spouse to fulfil that with you, blessed are you and if you don't, blessed are you still. Work and work to stand before Jesus, to hear Him say...

'Well-done Faithfull servant (soul winner / discipler)' not wife or husband, enter into the Joy of the Lord so Like Paul, you can end well and say, "*I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith*" 2 Timothy 4:7 KJV.