

Course 124:
Christian Marriage & Family Life
An apostolic teaching of the Global School of Ministry - UK

Preamble

The Highest expression of Unity on earth is Marriage

We all are work in progress as Paul stated in Philippians 3:12-14. To use the words of Jeremiah, we are like clay in the hands of The Potter. Three key instruments that the Great Potter, even Abba Father, utilizes to perfect us into the vessels He ordained by His determinate counsel are: The inner workings of The Holy Spirit who searches our hearts, minds and attitudes to reveal where we have fallen short of His glory. Secondly, the Lord uses what we have passed through to teach us His ways when, after passage of time we are able to, by the workings of the same Holy Spirit see how poorly we handled situations. Thus convicted, repentance is occasioned and we are able to move forward wiser and better. The third instrument is the Word. The Word has extreme capacity to search out and bring substantial transformation in our lives.

Hebrews 4:12-13

King James Version (KJV)

12For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

13Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

For this reason, we need to be open continually to the ministry of the Holy Spirit, our experiences and The Word of God. It is needful therefore for us not to allow our past to trap the future! That is to say, whatever our experiences have been in the area of marriage, we must not allow our personal perspectives derived there from to filter the Word or constrain the work of the Holy Spirit. As sons of God, our attitude is: 'Lord, your Word is true'! Therefore, we will allow our lives and experiences to be dealt with by the Word while we are yet alive so that we will approach the end of the age and His soon appearance without avoidable baggage and fear. The Blood, after all is still powerful enough to deal with every sin and infraction against the ordinance of The Kingdom. This is to say: if any of us experienced bad patches or downright 'failure' in marriage, knowledge of the Truth will not condemn us but will enable us to discover the truth that sets free. John 8:32,36.

Jesus laid out the degree of unity He called His Church to operate in John 17 verses 11, 20-23. The truth is that we are yet to scratch the surface of that vast mandate which is very possible, by the Grace of God through the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Let us explore greater depths of marriage as the highest expression of unity in this present phase of The Kingdom.

Contrary to religious texts, not everyone is created to marry. There are some people God has given the special capacity to be fulfilled without marriage. There are others who have not developed the capacity to bear the pressures and challenges inherent in marriage. A careful reading of Matthew 19:1-12 and 1 Corinthians 7 indicates that it is far better for such saints to keep off marriage because they cannot pay the price.

That was the grand secret of the success of Paul. Saints, it is far better to be single for Christ than to make a mess of oneself and destiny in the quest for marriage! Hard saying? Please bear with us!

For those who are ordained to marry and for those who have allowed the Lord to process them and make them ready to at least enter in, marriage is not a partnership for purpose of meeting some pressing needs be they emotional, conjugal, social or financial!

Marriage is a union! It is the dissolution of two beings into one new personality and identity both in the courts of heaven, the Church and where a sense of righteousness still prevails, before the Law. ‘...They were both naked and were not ashamed’ as quoted in Genesis 2: 18-25 indicates the degree of intimacy and oneness that should drive this sacred institution!

Sacred indeed, it is for which cause God deemed it the only basis of illustrating the union between Jesus Christ and the Church He betrothed with His own blood! Ephesians 5:21-33 should be read regularly.

Introduction

God has a clear definition of marriage and its significance in the life of mankind. On creation morning, God found it necessary to make a woman out of man. This was after none of the creatures were found suitable as a help meet for Adam.

Genesis 2:18-25

18And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.

19And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.

20And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him.

21And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof;

22And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

23And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.

24Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

25And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

In so doing, it was the plan of God that Adam and Eve would constitute the first family on earth to exercise the original mandate of man. In other words, God found Adam insufficient of his own self to fulfil the awesome mandate of mankind!

Genesis 1:26-28

26And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

27So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

28And 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.

Lesson 2

Sustained Attacks on Marriage from Without and within!

Unfortunately, the institution of marriage has been under sustained attack by the devil and his cohorts. Human kind has created through individuals and governments across the world, various concepts and interpretations of marriage. Unpleasant as it may sound, human beings have a right to accept or reject the God and Bible concept of marriage. This discourse of marriage offers a Christo-centric perspective based on the Book of Life – The Holy Bible which documents the mind of God.

Coupled with an extremely perverse and self opinionated generation, this sacred institution has been disfigured by permissive preaching and teachings fostered by ministers with various agendas. Some are in the habit of preaching their personal experiences rather than the Word of God.

One of the reasons the enemy is attacking marriage is that through it, godly seed which will make decisions for the Lordship of Christ and live as citizens of The Kingdom of God are raised here on earth.

Saints must also realise that in the whole of eternity, the time spent on earth is the only one where marriage is valid and permitted. If God ordained that marriage is to be practised here on earth, as His sons, we need to frustrate Satan's plans to make the institution irrelevant.

Matthew 22:23-30

23The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him, 24Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.

25Now 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: 26Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. 27And last of all the woman died also. 28Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her.

29Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. 30For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.

It is important to ascertain the mind of God on this pivotal institution. A slew of questions beg for answers. We shall ask each question and allow the Holy Spirit to use the Word to show us clear and unambiguous answers.

What really is marriage?

Marriage is the spiritual, social and legal union between mature males and females based on the perfect will of God for the purpose of fulfilling His divine purpose for the couple.

There is possibly no other creation of God and practice of humankind through which great fulfilment for males and females in the realm of the soul and body are achieved than in and through marriage!

In spite of the great attractions and benefits of marriage, not all humans are called and equipped to engage with it. This may sound strange yet is so true! Acceptance of this truth will spare so many people unnecessary heartache arising from getting involved in what they had no chance of succeeding! Let us hear what Jesus has to say on the subject matter:

Matthew 19: 10-12

10His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry. 11But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given. 12For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.

The Apostle Paul was used to bring forth one of the most detailed treatise on marriage in 1 Corinthians chapter 7. Note the major issues raised in the following verses:

1 Corinthians 7

1Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman.
2Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.
7For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that.
8I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, it is good for them if they abide even as I. 9But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.
26I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, I say, that it is good for a man so to be. 27Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife. 28But 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. 29But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none;

32But 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: 33But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. 34There 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.
36But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of her age, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not: let them marry. 37Nevertheless he that standeth stedfast in his heart, having no necessity, but hath power over his own will, and hath so decreed in his heart that he will keep his virgin, doeth well. 38So then he that giveth her in marriage doeth well; but he that giveth her not in marriage doeth better.
39The 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. 40But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment: and I think also that I have the Spirit of God.

Lesson 3

How binding is marriage: a union, a partnership or an arrangement of convenience?

Marriage is a binding union in which the former individuals give way to emergence of one new personality – the couple. It is a binding union which arises from the consummation of a spiritually sound and lawful relationship forged by God from among a consenting male and female.

Marriage is not a partnership of convenience for emotional, sexual or financial satisfaction. It is not designed to be a relationship of convenience which can be dissolved when things are not working as planned. No less a person than Jesus Christ Himself offered a very robust exposition of marriage in the Gospel according to Matthew.

Matthew 19:1-12

1And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judaea beyond Jordan;
2And great multitudes followed him; and he healed them there.
3The 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?
4And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female,
5And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?
6Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.
7They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?
8He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.

9And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.
10His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry.
11But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given.
12For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.

What are the core spiritual, social, psychological, emotional and economic issues concerning this institution?

Men and women are given to fantasies and suppositions. One of them has to do with the notion that once married; a couple will enter the realm of great favour and 'enjoyment'. While it has been proved for most people that marriage does indeed release the Presence, Power and Favour of God, the plain truth is that there are also storms, difficulties and challenges inherent in two hitherto separate individuals who are brought together in marriage to be one. Denying these challenges will only lead to failure!

Marriage is not a minor pact to be entered into without deep prayer, total consecration and proper preparation. It is recommended that those who intend to marry be assisted through teaching, training and mentorship to understand the broad range of issues which conduce to a successful marriage. Local Congregations and their Pastors will do well to invest in preparing intending couples before they tie the nuptial knot. The hasty entry into this sacred institution is certainly not of God.

It is recommended that intending couples add to their faith, the following frank benchmarks of whether they are truly ready to get into the union or whether they need some more time to prepare. A wise saying of anonymous origin says: Proper Preparation Prevents Poor Performance! Let these questions be frankly asked as part of the courtship process so that presumptuousness will not be branded as 'faith'.

- Spiritual maturity – saints should experience sanctification of soul and body before marriage so that they can love God with all their heart as well as their spouse. Sanctification provides divine enablement to bear the weaknesses of each other and the grace to invest in the well being of each other without selfish motives.
- Social – those to marry must prepare socially by obtaining instructions on how to live as part of a community. Basic social dispositions as courtesy; dress sense which fits into each other and similar issues are all important.
- Psychological – those who want to marry need to also prepare psychologically to bear the pressures involved otherwise they may fall apart.
- Emotional – emotions also need to be developed to a certain degree ahead of marriage. Undeveloped raw emotions can sap strength from a spouse.
- Economic – it is easy to claim to be living and acting in faith and ignore prevalent economic issues. While those who wish to marry should not walk by sight, they should also avoid presumption. That is why courtship should precede marriage. Courtship should include frank honest discussions of the prevailing economic situation. An intending couple can ask themselves whether to marry now for instance or wait in view of employment, accommodation or other economic realities which cannot be wished away. The idea is not to be fearful or walk by sight but to be practical. This is a practical institution.
- Financial – The intending couple need to know each others earnings and to what extent they can fund their preferred lifestyle and adjustments they need to make, if necessary. There should be no shame in

opting for a quiet wedding, for instance if the resources are not available. Never borrow to finance a wedding. It does not make sense to lay out a huge budget for a one day event (wedding) only to spend many years struggling with the after effect.

Lesson4

How can a Christian know the will of God concerning who to marry?

There are many ways God speaks to His own. Jesus said that His sheep hears His voice and will not be deceived by a stranger.

John 10:16,27

16And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.

27My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

Saints do not need to wait for marriage before they form the godly habit of knowing how God speaks to them and recognizing His voice. Once saints come into the family of God, one of the best things they can do for themselves is to yield to the Holy Spirit to train them in how to recognize and obey the voice of the Lord. Recognizing and walking on earth according to the will of God is possibly the highest expression of true love of God!

These are various ways God speaks. As you walk with the Lord and grow in Him, He will guide you through life – choice of career; time for career change; when and where to travel; who to do business with and similar decisions. When it is time for marriage, God will not suddenly start to speak to you in an unfamiliar language and method. Therefore, it is wrong to, for instance, to suddenly desire to know the will of God through dreams when that has not been the way He leads you! That is a sure recipe for delusion by Satan and familiar spirits!

These are various ways God speaks. There are much more other ways so this list is not exhaustive.

1. God speaks to some people in an audible voice.
2. God also speaks through burdens He lays on hearts.
3. God speaks through revelation. This includes Prophecy from Prophets; prophetic release from other saints. It also includes Word of Knowledge and Word of Wisdom.
4. God also brings revelation through dreams, visions that may be vivid or clouded. The vivid ones may not need interpretation while the cloudy ones may need interpretation and counsel.
5. God speaks when the Holy Spirit ‘quicken’ scripture and make it come alive to address a need or offer accurate direction.
6. God speaks through providential circumstances. This happens when He orders the steps of saints to cross paths with other people and supernaturally connects them.

Psalm 37:

23The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.

24Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand

7. God speaks when He plants a supernatural, pure love in the heart of a brother for a sister or vice versa. This is agape love and has nothing to do with physical attraction neither is it sexual in focus. It is deep and cannot be shaken off, even if one tried to.

8. God also speaks when He plants a ‘knowing’ about His will in the heart of His saint.

God, the Only Match Maker!

It needs to be said that God can use fellow saints or relatives to introduce singles to each other. But that must not be the basis of marriage. Those introduced to each other need to prayerfully hear from God and get His approval before proceeding forward! God is the only true matchmaker and whoever takes His place may usher in sorrow!

The Four benchmarks for testing every 'revelation'

There are four critical benchmarks for confirming the choice of a suitor no matter how you assumed you heard from God.

Using Romans 14:17-18, these are the first three:

1. Righteousness: When the thought of the other person comes to mind or when conversing, is there a sense of right standing with God? On the other hand, is there a feeling of been engaged in a dirty and spiritually unacceptable endeavour? Give heed to this benchmark and ascertain if it is the green light(to go forward), amber(caution to stop and pray further) or red light (God is not in it if you feel deep down in your conscience that God is not in the endeavour! Whoever will seek to sleep with you to prove virility or ability to procreate before proceeding with marriage has simply violated this critical benchmark! Hebrews 13:4 warns unequivocally along with several other scriptures like 1 Corinthians 6 that sex before marriage is absolutely forbidden in the Kingdom. We are warned to abstain from all appearance of evil, including those in courtship visiting each other alone at ungodly hours or travelling together.

1 Thessalonians 5:22

22Abstain from all appearance of evil.

2. Peace: Do you have profound peace within you when you contemplate the journey into marriage with the person? Are you rather scared, worried or anxious? If there is no peace, stop altogether. Never proceed with a marriage proposal when this vital benchmark is absent or violated.

3. Joy: Is there a spirit of joy deep within you that the brother or sister is going to be yours for life? On the other hand, do you feel sad? flat? Low? Sullen? If you have no joy but seem to 'tag' along because of what you can see – money, fame, beauty, security, you may be walking into a living hell! Joy is a vital fruit of the Spirit and indicator of the Kingdom! Galatians 5:22; Romans 14:17-18.

Isaiah 12:3

3Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.

The Last Benchmark

4. The last benchmark with which to know assuredly whether God is in a marriage proposition or not is the presence of love. If God is in it, there will be an initial spark of love which grows as both individuals share their testimonies, hearts and hopes. True love, as 1 Peter 4:8 says will cover a multitude of sins. It will overlook what other people may consider as 'deficiencies' in height, weight, colour, education, family background, financial inadequacy and a host of other things which can put any one else off. Those who want to get into marriage and those who are already in should constantly read 1 Corinthians chapter 13: 1-13 to evaluate where they are in the spectrum of charity/love and prayerfully seek the Lord to perfect their love for one another.

Lesson 5

Scriptural Directions concerning roles of husbands and wives.

The married state is ordained to be one of bliss: heaven on earth, if both spouses are committed to understand and walk in the divine precept! This has nothing to do with accumulation of material stuff or 'enjoyment of the flesh'. It has to do with the satisfaction of locating the missing half and becoming 'complete' in Christ and in each other.

Saints in marriage must remember that the high standard of God for marriage is indicated by the fact that it is the institution used to illustrate the relationship of Christ with His beloved Body, the Church!

In marriage, transparency and accountability are basic to fulfilment. The couple must be able to communicate their deepest hearts to each other in a way they cannot do with others. To be in marriage and have a best friend outside is to court disaster and control that may injure the union.

Genesis 2:18-25

Within the context of the mind of God expressed clearly in the Holy Scriptures, there are some specific roles assigned to both the husband and wife. These roles are not to be observed conditionally (if the other party does their own share), but as acts of obedience to God who is the author of marriage and outworking of 1 Corinthians 13:1-8 and 1 Peter 4:8 degrees of true love to each other.!

The Husband is to:

1. Love his wife sacrificially, willing to pay whatever price it takes for her to become all that God ordained. In doing this, his reference point is not other men but Jesus Christ and his propitiatory death for the Church out of love. That means he must set his heart to overlook her faults and focus on her strengths.

Ephesians 5:25-35 (Please read all of the text for context)

25Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

2. Provide a reliable covering to shelter his wife from all manner of temptations, trials and difficulties she would have faced if unmarried. This security is critical to women. To function validly as the head of a woman, a man should win her trust by his reliability. Ephesians 5:23

3. The man should never be bitter with his own wife, no matter her faults. He should stand in the gap to pray for her process and growth in grace and do that sincerely, create the enabling environment for the Holy Spirit to transform her. This involves avoiding arguments; words, attitudes and actions which make her defensive and unwilling to grow in grace. Colossians 3:19

4. In order to be the man God ordained him to be, the husband must 'leave' Father, Mother, siblings and relatives behind. He cannot carry them as baggage into his new nuclear family and expect the wife to 'understand' and 'accept'. Both parties will do well to recognize that God is using them to extend humanity and the frontiers of the Kingdom on earth and both of them alone will be accountable to God for how they apprehended and pursued His vision for marriage as a union in which every 'third party' is inherently an intrusion. Ephesians 5:31

5. The man is charged to dwell with his wife in knowledge, treating her as the weaker vessel. This speaks of deliberate effort to alleviate pressure and make things easier for the woman whose constitution is more tender. It is significant that God did not create Eve from the rough earth but rather from the rib and flesh of Adam! This speaks of refinement in the constitution of women – the basis of their tenderness and meekness which should be preserved and not shattered! 1 Peter 3:7

The wife is to:

1. Submit to her own husband as unto Jesus Christ. This is the highest expression of love. In other words, she has to relate to the husband through the prism of obeying and pleasing Jesus Christ in everything. A careful reading of Ephesians 5:22-33 and Colossians 3:18-21 reveals that this is basically what God wants from women. When a woman does this with all her heart, there is no more law to be added! Unfortunately, submission is the very thing Satan tempts majority of women to withhold from their husbands. It is interesting that women can submit joyfully to their Pastors and bosses and even female friends and withhold same from the ONLY person other than God!

Ephesians 5:22-24,35 (Please read all these verses for context)

22Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

Colossians 3:18 18Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.

2. Honour her husband with all her heart using Sarah and Abraham as a model. This should be unconditional, notwithstanding the state of the husband spiritually, socially, financially or otherwise.

1 Peter 3:1-6 (Please read all the verses for context).

1Likewise, 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;

Both husband and wife are commanded to:

1. Submit to each other – Ephesians 5:22. Submission in the finest sense needs to be mutual, out of love, not compulsion.

2. Make their bodies exclusively available to each other, for holy copulation, recognizing that it is sin to do otherwise. Neither ministry nor need to abstain because of fasting is permitted to be made an excuse to unilaterally deny a spouse the pleasure of the body. It is wrong to apply principles of worldly sex education and use them to make of none effect, the clear word of the Lord. Saints are to beware how they go to Egypt to learn its ways!

1 Corinthians 7:1-10 (Please read all for context)

3Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband.

4The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife.

5Defraud 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 incontinency.

3. Keep third parties out of the marriage. They should prayerfully work out differences in opinion, perspective, style and mannerism. Reporting each other to other people, except to their spiritual leaders, for the sake of counsel to resolve issues is discouraged.

4. Respect, honour and celebrate each other. Spouses must be the chief cheer leaders for their companions! There must be a mutual inclination in this regard reflecting in tone of speech, attitude, and willingness to support each other through difficult patches of life, which are inevitable.

5. Teach and exhort each other. As the Day of the Lord approaches, more and more pressures are bound to come against saints in their ministries, businesses and workplaces. Spouses must learn how to edify and encourage each other rather than being additional pressure points. Lifting the spirit of each other is an investment which can turn the home into an oasis of love in the midst of a hostile world.

6. Contribute to the best of personal ability in Christ to offset inevitable expenses. In these days, many women are increasingly getting better jobs and better pay. They should humbly submit it all to the family account. Where a husband earns lesser pay, he should not play games with that. All of his earnings should be joyfully submitted to the family purse also. Spouses who love God and each other must see the necessity of having everything in common. Ideally, there should be a single account. But where the necessity of work demands that employees run personal accounts, both spouses should have access to the bank cards of each other and behave responsibly with them. No spouse should take advantage of the love and transparency of the other to play games with money!

7. Husbands and wives have equal stake in the care and upbringing of the children. Both should joyfully exercise the graces and capacities God blessed them with and tolerate the inabilities or weaknesses of each other. For instance, the spouse who is more cerebral should joyfully oversight the after school education of the children and not nag the other. The one who can wake up earlier should

joyfully render the service of preparing the children for school and not nag the late riser. Tolerance and forbearance are virtues which will do both individuals well.

The Holy Spirit witnesses expressly that some saints are taking offence at these plain truths in the Word because of their personal experiences! This is an extraordinarily dangerous state of mind! Please never subjugate the Word to your personal experience or preference! God is ever merciful and can forgive us any failings as long as we are honest with Him.

Lesson 6

In True Christian Marriage, both husband and wife are to:

1. Submit to each other – Submission in the finest sense needs to be mutual, out of love, not out of compulsion. Each spouse should submit to the other in the areas of strength so that they can complement and become all that God ordained. Whoever cannot submit cannot lead. Period!

Ephesians 5:21

21 Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

2. Make their bodies exclusively available to each other, for holy copulation, recognizing that it is sin to do otherwise. Neither commitment to ministry nor need to abstain because of fasting is permitted to be made an excuse to unilaterally deny a spouse the pleasure of the body. It is also wrong to apply principles of worldly sex education and use them to make of none effect, the clear word of the Lord. Saints are to beware how they go to Egypt to learn its ways! Adultery is out of the question for saints and no party should in any way facilitate the entrapment of the other by Satan through denial of legitimate pleasure in and with each other.

1 Corinthians 7:1-10

1 Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman.

2 Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.

3 Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband.

4 The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife.

5 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 incontinency.

3. Keep third parties out of the marriage. They should prayerfully work out differences in opinion, perspective, style and mannerism. Reporting each other to other people, except to their spiritual leaders, for the sake of counsel to resolve issues is discouraged.

Ephesians 5:31

31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.

4. Respect, honour and celebrate each other. Spouses must be the chief cheer leaders for their companions! There must be a mutual inclination in this regard reflecting in tone of speech, attitude, and willingness to support each other through difficult patches of life, which are inevitable.

5. Teach and exhort each other. As the Day of the Lord approaches, more and more pressures are bound to come against saints in their ministries, businesses and workplaces. Spouses must learn how to edify and encourage each other rather than being additional pressure points. Lifting the spirit of each other is an investment which can turn the home into an oasis of love in the midst of a hostile world.

6. Contribute to the best of personal ability in Christ to offset inevitable expenses. In a previous age, men had exclusive responsibility to care and provide for their wives who stayed at home rearing children. Things have changed and these days, many women are increasingly getting better jobs and better pay. They should humbly submit it all to the family account. Where a husband earns lesser pay, he should not play games with how he spends it on the excuse that his wife has too much. All of his earnings should be joyfully submitted to the family purse also. Spouses who love God and each other must see the necessity of having everything in common. Ideally, there should be a single account. But where the necessity of work demands that employees run personal accounts, both spouses should have access to the bank cards of each other and behave responsibly with them. No spouse should take advantage of the love and transparency of the other to play games with money!

7. Husbands and wives have equal stake in the care and upbringing of the children. Both should joyfully exercise the graces and capacities God blessed them with and tolerate the inabilities or weaknesses of each other. For instance, the spouse who is more cerebral should joyfully oversight the after school education of the children and not nag the other. The one who can wake up earlier should joyfully render the service of preparing the children for school and not nag the late riser. Tolerance and forbearance are virtues which will do both individuals well.

8. Tolerate, forbear and avoid thoughts, words or deeds which hurt their spouses. This is about being proactive for good of the family. It is also important that spouses must grow in grace with regular encounters with God in The Word. With renewed minds and transformed hearts as they submit to the Holy Spirit, couples can grow in the Lord and leave childish things like arguments, debates, quarrels and competition behind. Bearing the burdens of each other therefore become veritable means through which they grow in the Spirit!

Galatians 6:1-2

1 Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

2 Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

9. Consciously align with The Holy Scriptures and trust the Holy Spirit to work out the state love and true unity which should hallmark true Christian marriage which is a union, not a mere relationship. When spouses consciously reject division, dissension and things which dissipate their spiritual strength, the Lord enables them to begin the necessary process of becoming one in thought, word and deed. Once the couple reject the worldly concept of marriage, accept and repent of their individual and collective sins and submit to the Holy Spirit to enable them attain the standard of God in the Word, the journey can begin! They 'see' the need for unity and the glorious possibilities of becoming aligned in spirit, soul and body. This deep hunger translates into love thoughts, words and attitudes which translate to a new 'Kingdom type' marriage! The scriptures below and their potent possibilities in Christ are attained first within the context of true union between a man and a woman who are brought together by the match making skills of God Himself!

John 13:34-35; Matthew 18:19-20; 1 Corinthians 13: 1-8

1 Corinthians 1:10; 1 Peter 4:8

Lesson 7

God, Divorce, Separation & Re-Marriage –Part 1

At this stage of our discourse, the valid question may be asked concerning saints in this present dispensation of The Kingdom “ can a Christian marriage be voided? If so under what conditions?”. The rate at which divorce has overtaken saints is clearly scandalous and effectively degrades the witness of the Church before the world. Irrespective of our personal opinions, it is important that we go back to scripture to locate the mind of God on this critical matter and seek His help to recover.

The Word of God is unequivocal: Marriage was designed by God as a permanent union which produces a new personality – neither the man nor the woman as they were in their single states but a brand new reality called ‘the couple’! The encounter of Jesus with the people in Matthew 19:3-9 is explicit.

Storms may arise and any one of the spouses may step on each other’s toes because of the frailties of the human nature and extra baggage accumulated in the soul (mind, will and emotion) arising from family background, training, education, exposure and challenges encountered in the single estate with people of the opposite gender. These may result in negative strongholds, stereotypes, defensive reflexes and other thought patterns, attitudes and speech patterns which may cause strain on each other. However, saints who truly sought and married according to the will of God and who love each other truly are able to walk through and work out these issues by the help of the Holy Spirit and where necessary seek and obtain sound spiritual counsel.

In two separate sections, Jesus laid bare the attitude of divinity to the vexed issue of divorce.

Matthew 5:31-32

31It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement:
32But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

Matthew 19:3-9

3The 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?

4And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female,

5And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?

6Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

7They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?

8He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.

9And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

It is instructive that Jesus defined the mind of God concerning marriage in clear terms that have no grey areas, subject to private interpretation. Jesus made two references to the Old Testament when answering the religious leaders. The first was in Genesis Chapter 2 when marriage was instituted by God as the first institution on planet earth. The second was the Law which God instituted through Moses to ensure that the hard hearted people had some restraint in separating from their wives – issuance of a written bill of divorce (Deuteronomy 24: 1-4).

Genesis 2:21-25

21And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof;

22And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

23And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.

24Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

25And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

The language used by Malachi to describe how offensive divorce is in the sight of God is very strong:

Malachi 2:15-17

15And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth.

16For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously.

17Ye have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied him? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of judgment?

Divorce is occasioned when a man or woman goes into sexual relationship with a third party. It happens to be a permissible ground on which a saint can seek annulment of a marriage, if he or she is unable to forgive '70 times 7' as Jesus defined elasticity of forbearance to Peter (Matthew 18:21-25).

There appears to be ground to believe, as some theologians suggest, that Jesus was even speaking of 'fornication' – the sin of sexuality immorality involving any of the parties betrothed but not yet formally wedded. In which case, the sinning party has nullified the basis of marriage in the first place as would have happened to Mary but for the intervention of the Angel Gabriel who explained to Joseph that she was pregnant by the operation of the Holy Spirit in Matthew chapter 1:18-25.

From a New Testament point of view, adultery, evil as it is, can be forgiven by a true saint in marriage. However, taken together with other scriptures, the injured party is expected to forgive and accept back the sinning spouse if true repentance took place. If repentance was not real and deep, the injured party may be permitted to seek permanent separation.

From a scriptural point of view however, the one who is seeking divorce needs to know that 're-marriage' is clearly forbidden by Jesus! When people divorce therefore, they should consecrate their bodies to Jesus, be married to Him for life and allow the Holy Spirit to use them to manifest the grace and goodness of God. By allowing Satan to make divorce the plague it is today, saints have unwittingly defaced a core pillar of the Kingdom of God with worldly graffiti!

1 Corinthians 7:10 - 11

10And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband:

11But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.

From a divine point of view, the two married individuals become 'One Flesh' and are indivisible!

Ephesians 5:31

31For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.

Lesson 8

God, Divorce, Separation & Remarriage -2

Separation: what conditions can occasion separation and what options exist for the couple?

If a couple are genuinely born again and are yielded to The Holy Spirit, they will be able to work through differences and difficulties.

Colossians 3:12-17

King James Version (KJV)

12Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;

13Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

14And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

There may be situations where all efforts by one party are frustrated by lack of cooperation by the other person. When this is so, physical separation of a couple may be inevitable while prayer and wisdom is applied to resolve the differences. This approach is valid where certain conditions exist. These include:

- Domestic Violence and Abuse which may lead to physical pain
- Consistent perversion which defiles the conscience of one party
- Threat to life
- Threat to mental and emotional stability
- Habitual Infidelity

Separation should not be sought lightly. It should only be effected when the couple have exhausted private dialogue and sought counsel but still are unable to find common ground.

Those who are separated this way should be open to the inner workings of the Holy Spirit who alone can still engender forgiveness in their hearts and acceptance of each other. The healing process may take months or years and should not be rushed out of a religious spirit.

It must be emphasized that from a God point of view, re-marriage is not permitted.

1 Corinthians 7:10-11

10And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband:

11But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.

The Three Scriptural Grounds for Re-marriage

There are only two clear grounds for remarriage in the Holy Scriptures and one that is inferred:

1. The first is death of a spouse.

Physical death effectively nullifies a marriage. The surviving spouse is expected to mourn, pray and make necessary adjustments in lifestyle.

It is advised that though the living spouse has the right to remarry, it should be done with two broad guiding principles, namely

- Respect prevailing sentiments concerning what is deemed appropriate period of remaining single before seeking companionship again. If a surviving spouse rushes into marriage within say three to six months, he or she may by so doing cause offense to friends and family and create occasion for gossips and speculations which can bring reproach to the name of the Lord. This principle of charity towards other saints is established in these scriptures: Romans 14 and Romans 15:1-7.
- Where there are children already grown up, the surviving spouse must give serious thought to whether bringing in a new person may shatter or bond the family. Sensitivity to potential impact of the decision to re-marry on the children should be weighed carefully and taken to the Lord in prayer. The voice of God should be the ultimate guide and He never fails to lead rightly. The point is that even when God gives the green light to re-marry, a saint still needs His wisdom on how to navigate the issues.

1 Corinthians 7: 9, 39

9But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.

39The 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.

2.The Second is where an unbelieving spouse rejects a saint simply because of Faith in Christ Jesus! This rejection can come on two planes:

1. Spouses married as un-believers. After some time, the husband or wife is saved to the consternation of the unbelieving spouse. If the unsaved insists on rejecting the saved because of his/her faith, the person who was rejected is regarded as having been cut loose. He or she is regarded as single and can marry.
2. Spouses married as believers. In the course of time, one party can backslide or apostatize and consequently reject the spouse who is still standing strong in Christ. The saved spouse is charged by 1 Peter 3: 1-6 to accept and accommodate the unsaved or backslider.

1 Peter 3:1-6

1Likewise, 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;

2While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.

However, if the backslider or apostate rejects the saved or cuts him or her loose, such a saint can validly seek re-marriage. This is only on the ground that he or she played no part in nullifying the marriage.

1 Corinthians 7:12-16

12But 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.

13And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him.

14For 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.

15But 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.

16For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?

3. The Third ground where re-marriage may be inferred but not expressly approved is when a marriage breaks down because one of the couple is irredeemably engrossed with immoral living, unwilling to get help for deliverance. In this case, the immoral life practically nullifies the marriage. The offended party can seek counsel and prayerfully determine what the will of God forward is.

Matthew 19:9

9And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

The one who has exhausted forbearance with the sinning spouse or who has a valid concern that sexually transmitted diseases can wreck havoc on the family has not sinned if he or she regards the marriage as 'dead'. It was 'killed' by the immoral conduct of the one who got joined to a stranger and Jesus has expressly stated that he or she who is under no yoke!

Repentance and Restitution

Thank you for receiving the Word of the Lord in these days when marrying and giving in marriage has negated the witness of the Church before the world. Let us allow the Word, not our personal opinions, to shape our attitude to life. If any of us has fallen short of the standards of God, repentance, not offence and debate is the way forward. The power of the Blood is still flowing and is able to cleanse saints of any sin, as long as we come to Abba with a broken heart and contrite spirit. Where

necessary, restitution should be made. However, saints should seek counsel from those who subscribe to Truth before taking any steps. Some situations are so complicated that only the wisdom of God can show the way forward.

Lesson 9

Family Life and The Kingdom of God

Marriage and by extension Family Life is designed to mirror the Kingdom of God here on earth. The divine nature of marriage which is revealed in the miraculous union of two hitherto separate persons to become one flesh is a wonder to behold. The dominion mandate of mankind on earth is intrinsically tied to the concept of family. Without family, there will be no procreation and mankind would have died off long ago.

Essentially, Family is designed to mirror the beauty of corporality in oneness, a cardinal principle which defines God as One yet in the concept of 'us'. The picture of the God that is one yet three personalities better known as Father, Son and Holy Spirit was laid out from the very first chapter of the Holy Scriptures and remains so till the last chapter.

Genesis 1:26-30

26And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

28And 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.

With the mandate to 'be fruitful, multiply and replenish the earth', God set men and women off to marry by the same principle in which He established the first couple: that of reliance on Him as matchmaker and to be lost in each other.

Genesis 2:18-25

This course is replete with biblical instructions to the couple on how to live. We now turn our attention to how the practice of Kingdom life within the Family demonstrates the nature and interests of the King and His Kingdom. As the couple live together – outside the 'klieg lights' and in the privacy of their mutual 'nakedness', the depth of Christ in them become manifest as they become lightning rods through which God allows Satan, demons, the world and self to expose their true spiritual depths.

As children emerge to create family, there are additional opportunities to demonstrate the faith we have in Christ and the strength of the Kingdom within us as well as the weaknesses which need to be addressed. Responses to the weaknesses, ideas, dispositions and uniqueness of various individuals in the family will speak volumes of the depths of grace at work in each and all.

The Christian home as counter balance to the pull of Satan, the world and self.

Two factors become of great price in building healthy Christian families: love and unity. Love does not just happen, considering the selfishness of the human soul. Love is taught and 'caught'. As parents back up their teachings and exhortations on love with love actions to one another and the children, the message will sink in. As the family loves in unity, bearing and forbearing with each other and placing interests of others first, they are able to bond together in such a way that the home becomes, as it were, an oasis of affection and acceptance to which all members resort with joy, even if there are material limitations! Just as in the Kingdom of God, the Christian Family is a haven for demonstrating that there is room for all to shine according to their God given abilities! No one can or should withstand the manifestation or star of anyone else!

To be sure, saints must recognize this simple truth: though parents are saved and even in ministry, the children come into this world with the nature of Adam. This nature manifests as self or the old man.

The life of parents will be the first epistle of Christ they will read which, alongside with teachings and prayer at the family altar reveals the need for a personal encounter with Christ. Coupled with a loving atmosphere and Christian ethos they are taught and learn, there is a huge reservoir that they imbibe even before they go to school. More than any other facility, Satan uses schools -where children spend about 8 hours a day during term time for between 11-15 of their most impressionable years- to try to recruit them into his kingdom.

Daily meetings at the family altar for prayer, bible study, exhortation, testimonies in which all are encouraged to demonstrate gratitude and thankfulness for even the smallest of blessings and acceptance of a family mission statement which everyone buys into will seal the atmosphere of love and unity that all parents desire.

Discipline needs to be infused to prepare the children to live with a sense of responsibility which will stand them in good stead as they grow up. For discipline to be effective, children must be taught what it means and why it is important to obey their parents and submit willingly to their authority.

Parents cannot on their own strength accomplish the tall order above. That is why they must persist in growing in grace so that they can demonstrate Christ likeness to the children in attitudes, speech and responses to issues of life. Parents also need to be fervent and persistent in prayers for the children and confess their expectations rather than be swarmed with consciousness of the mistakes and failings of the children.

Parents need to take all biblical demands on their office seriously so that the children will not deem them as hypocrites. A parent cannot be living in immorality or addicted to substances such as tobacco, alcohol, hard drugs; engaged in cursing and abusive behaviour towards spouse, children or other people and expect preachments to do otherwise to cut ice with the children. They live what they 'see' first before what they hear – because of their impressionable minds.

To create the necessary atmosphere for the children to grow, parents are charged to avoid speech or actions which can damage the children or even lead them into premature rebellion:

Ephesians 6:4

4And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Colossians 3:21

21Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.

Responsibilities of the Children.

The children have specific responsibilities ascribed to them. These include obedience; submission; proper stewardship of family resources and effective utilization of opportunities for education and training commensurate with their ages. As they grow to the age of 8-10, the children are expected to open their hearts and consciously receive Jesus as personal Lord and Saviour and begin a life-long walk with them. Children are also expected to follow their parents to places of worship where they increase in the grace of fellowship first learnt and practiced at home.

They should also open up to additional works of grace including sanctification and Baptism in the Holy Spirit. As they learn and are activated, the gifts and callings of God begin to manifest. Parents should not force them into any particular moulds but rather create the enabling environment for the children to be exactly what God ordained them to be which is manifested in the spiritual gifts, things they are passionate about, talents they exhibit and what they talk about. As children learn how to pray and hear the voice of God, they are able to navigate through life by divine guidance. Let us see some of the specific scriptures on responsibilities of children.

Ephesians 6:1-3

1Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.

2Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise;

3That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.

Colossians 3:20

20Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.

1 Timothy 5:4,8

Conclusion

Saints, let us invest in making our families the oasis of love, unity and God consciousness they ought to be in this last chapter of the human age. We owe God and ourselves the responsibility to yield to the Holy Spirit to work this out in and through us. Nobody has arrived in this regard. Even where things seemed to be out of joint, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the King of glory is still sufficient to bring about a manifest turn around! With God, all things are possible.