

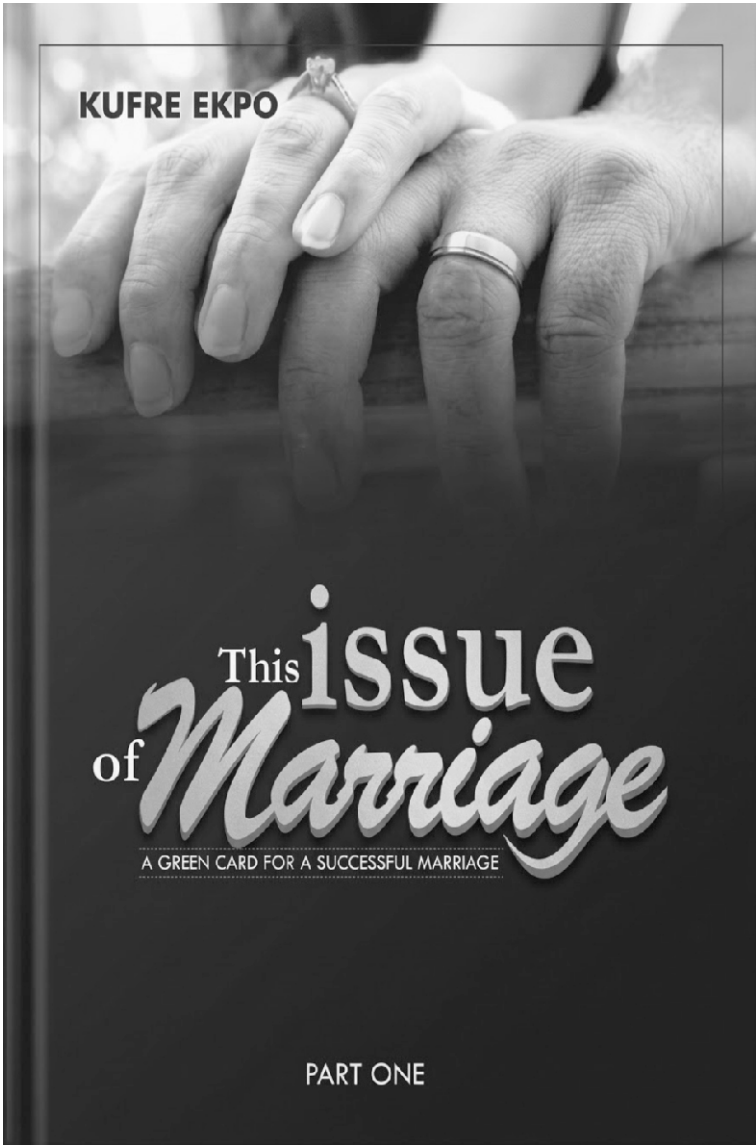


KUFRE EKPO

This **issue**
of ***Marriage***

A GREEN CARD FOR A SUCCESSFUL MARRIAGE

PART ONE



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of *Marriage*

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PART ONE

This Issue of Marriage

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Thank you!

DEDICATION

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO GOD FOR HIS GLORY
AND TO ALL WHO HAVE AND WILL EVER HAVE
ANYTHING TO DO WITH MARRIAGE

PREFACE

The book THIS ISSUE OF MARRIAGE is a GREEN CARD for finding your marriage and having a sustainable home. It is published in two parts, one and two. Part one deals on Getting a Life Partner while part two centers on the Family. It gives a step-by-step approach on what it takes to go through marriage successfully, beginning with the choice of a partner and advancing to living well in the home. It is made for singles and couples who desire to choose a life partner and nurture a comfortable living condition for themselves.

Often times, people offer RED CARD expressing emotional rejection, but here comes a GREEN CARD that portrays calm and acceptance. RED CARD implies the negative tendencies, bad signals and attitudes displayed by people to frustrate others in their relationships or while taking steps to make their choices. This GREEN CARD however, denotes the positive tendencies and attitudes meant to assist an individual in the process of making the choice as well as help a marriage thrive successfully.

It serves as a GATE GUIDE or PASS, on how to enter a marriage and settle therein, reducing

the risk of being denied basic understanding and approach to the union.

A good beneficiary and user of this GREEN CARD shall require less effort to handle the common challenges that may arise before and after marriage, given his or her pre-informed position on marital issues that may attack to frustrate genuine or honourable intentions concerning the selection of a life time companion.

Like a Phyto-Defence, it arms the reader with body guards and personal assistants on how to approach marriage as a lifetime project and serves as security at the post while entering into the life-long relationship, and provides caution to check on the signs and signals of positive and negative attitudes toward the choice of a partner.

It also serves as an immune booster against threats and undue influences from the environment during and after the process of marriage.

The emergence of this book was informed by the alarming rate of marital vises and challenges facing intended and already existing couples

based on the steps they took during the process of their marriages and, or behaviours they have exhibited while in the union . It was borne out of the sincere desire to assist potential spouses surmount the problems that has frustrated many Christians in their marriages, and is expected to prepare an average expectant spouse on how to approach the marriage process step-by-step with prayer, with the hope that the grace of God shall locate His children.

The Church has been the ultimate platform to x-ray the basic issues in marriage and which has also provided measures to solving them without prejudice. Since marital challenges will never cease, it was necessary therefore, to diagnose into these issues that have transformed themselves into night mares and also provide a godly approach for safe landing.

WHO SHOULD READ THIS BOOK?

This book is written for an average individual who is concerned about marriage. An average person who is concerned about marriage may be one who has at least one of the following descriptions:

1. someone who has ever been bothered over the alarming rate of marital crises

including rejection, fights, divorce, separation, disappointments, etc.

2. A person who has ever been challenged, deceived or heart broken in the process of choosing a spouse.
3. An individual who has been humiliated or neglected by someone or family due to the effect of a wrong marriage.
4. One who may have become afraid of marriage due to the negative treatment experienced by his or her parents, relations, colleagues, neighbors, etc.
5. A person who desire to marry and settle down peacefully, building and sustaining a good home.

It does not really matter if you are a Minister, Counselor, Church elder or professional in the field of love, marriage is different. Therefore, as a coach, you also need to be coached since marriage is a continuous process without graduation gowns or certificate of participation.

A good marriage is a lifelong pleasure, capable of transforming anyone into a dancer throughout the scenes. But a mistaken marriage is like rot in the bone that consistently hurts without a cure.

CONCERNS ABOUT MARRIAGE

*"Now concerning the things whereof ye 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..."*

I COR. 7:1-5

INTRODUCTION

There will never be a time when marriage will not have interesting issues in the life of people here on earth. Different cultural backgrounds tend to generate several issues in marriage which tend to compound human problems. This book is an attempt to address most of the outstanding issues relating to marriage in our societies which we have come to see and have lived with. These issues begin even before marriage is contracted, they cut across the periods of marriage preparations and go ahead to affect us even in our homes as couples.

The purpose of this book is not to compound our problems, neither is it to mock or make nonsense of our mistakes, rather, it will serve as a guide towards correction, thus enhancing a better living standard in the home. The ideas presented here should make things clearer in an attempt to warn and help us solve certain inherent problems and should also prepare Christians unto satisfaction in their marriages.

These issues also existed in the city of Corinth, making the people to raise concerns about marriage. In response, Paul said, in 1 Cor. 7:1-5, as he responded to their concerns, complains,

arguments, fears and beliefs.

"Now concerning the things whereof ye 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..."

It is obvious that some of them had certain perceptions about marriage just as the disciples had while talking with Jesus. Marital concerns of such causes anxiety, worry and joy together, thereby suggesting the need for adjustment in perception, beliefs and actions. In the book of Matt. 19:3-8, people argued and questioned Jesus about marital concerns, of which in His response, the disciples added that if things are like this, it was not good for a man to marry.

Whereas these concerns have been on the increase in the world of today, some people have become uncomfortable with certain proceedings, believes and actions that many have caused issues in their marriages, this book has come your way to address most of these concerns that have generated tension and unrest in several homes.

Marriage is honourable and the bed undefiled... Heb. 13:4

THE STRUGGLE FOR MARRIAGE

Why is the struggle for marriage so interesting to people of our culture, country, church, family, etc? This is true not only to Christians but to every other person in the world. I have seen people struggle with marriage to the extent of harming themselves and others. People have had to lose so much resources in their quest for marriage while some kill or get killed in this struggle; marriage is such an interesting thing.

Many parents have become tensed up just because their children have not married, ladies and young men have become so desperate in order to satisfy their targeted marital expectations. Some have gone to the extent of hurting several feelings provided marriage is contracted in their favour. The struggle for marriage is so alarming such that parents tend to push out their children to the world for marriage thereby exposing them to danger at the expense of their well being. So many people trade their souls just to get married and satisfy a temporal need at the expense of eternal life.

However, getting married or living peaceful in your relationship is not a thing of struggle, nobody struggles into marriage and gets it right.

It is not of the strong or most skillful, neither is it of the rich or wealthy. Marriage is appointed of God. Therefore, take a deep breath, study these lessons prayerfully and believe that grace can locate you once again.

"So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy" Rom. 9:16

THE NEED FOR MARRIAGE

In an age when so many people question the need for marriage, it is helpful to remind ourselves why this was the first institution God created. Marriage is at the centre of God's purpose for mankind which may be stated as follows:

Reproduction

If we must reproduce and multiply as God intended, then marriage must take place. A strong purpose for marriage is to multiply a godly legacy. God blessed the man and the woman He created and said to them, "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth". **Gen. 1:28**

Companionship

If there must be a reliable companion of the opposite sex, a family companion, a confidant,

nothing else could suffice except marriage. Marriage is God's provision to meet our deep longing for a close and intimate relationship. He puts a man and woman together and uses their respective strengths and weaknesses to make them stronger as a team. It is in marriage that God calls people to put aside their selfishness, commit themselves to another person unconditionally, and assume responsibility for others, Gen. 2:18.

Recover and Complement

Husbands and wives are hardwired to complement each other. Getting married implies discovering your missing rib which is bound to complement your weakness. It is said that a man is incomplete without a woman and vice versa. To this intent, people strive to find and replace their "lost rib" thereby complementing one other. This is a struggle so interesting to experience, I Cor. 11:11-12, Gen. 2:21-25.

Gentle and Responsible

To some, marriage is a call into the forum of responsible and gentle men. Perhaps it may earn them some degree of respect in the society and grant them access to some responsible positions in life. Maturity is the first attribute that should be seen in a husband and a wife and this

must reflect in their actions, communication, temperament, etc. marriage is actually for men rather than boys, it is for women, not girls.

Sadly, many have not understood the divine significance of marriage, hence they struggle ignorantly because they have not even understood what marriage really is.

*Marriage is honourable and the bed undefiled,
Heb. 13:4.*

CERTAIN IDEAS ABOUT MARRIAGE

There are certain ideas people have about marriage which are not true. First of all, marriage, people think is a contract; this is not necessarily true. Secondly, a lot of people think marriage is about the standard or quality of the ceremony that goes with it, where people only come to dance and jubilate; in that case, marriage would have necessarily been a party or dance hall. Thirdly, some people think that marriage is only about child bearing, therefore, they could jump into it and bear children in the morning, afternoon and evening without the ability to provide for them, thereby contributing to economic breakdown in the society. Fourthly, there are those who perceive marriage as a bed of roses not knowing that even roses have thorns.

Fifthly, I have seen a lot of people think of marriage as a mere show and display of beauty in fine clothes not minding the fact that the beauty of marriage is more in the character. Also, to some others marriage is only about lust for the opposite sex and the consciousness to satisfy sexual desires; hmmm... these people would better have been sex machines in order to keep their marriage going. What about some who see it as a game between "boys and girls" in school who suddenly see things change in the course of time. I cannot fail to include those who see this as a do or die affair in life thereby bidding all pleasures to grab it.

When people harbour wrong perceptions about marriage, they will surely generate issues that people will talk about when they eventually get into it, so what then could marriage be?

TERMS AND CONCEPTS

Marriage

Marriage is the "legal relationship" between a husband and a wife, note the term legal relationship here, meaning there could be relationships that are illegal. It is the state of being married, which implies that one is not married until he or she is married. You do not

assume to have been married, so you must know when you are involved in it. It is regarded as the ceremony in which two people become husband and wife, this definition identifies the fact that marriage involves a ceremony. Marriage must take place before the ceremony because you cannot celebrate what you don't have. Therefore marriage is different from marriage ceremony and there is nothing like traditional marriage, marriage is marriage and ceremony is different from it. The above definition shows that when two people are married, they become husband and wife.

Issue

A topic of discussion; An issue is an important topic that people are discussing or arguing about. It could be a key, sensitive or controversial issue or it may be a common thing that people do not understand but are interested in. We often hear people say, this is a big issue, we need more time to think about it. People often get confused or divided on issues but they must talk about it whether they understand or not. Marriage has several issues that people talk about, consciously and unconsciously, directly and indirectly. In fact, people have had to meddle into people's businesses, causing them pains and wounds. The

interesting thing here is that people must talk because issues are worth talking about.

Problem or worry; An issue is also a problem or worry that someone has about something. Often times we hear statements like, why are you making an issue out of this? Or, this marriage is a big issue for me.

Marriage has many issues which creates a lot of concern for people. Often times people are denied sleep just in the name of marriage, but I must say something very interesting here; God never established marriage as a problem, rather, man has complicated marriage for himself because of selfish interest.

"Lo, this only I have found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions."

Eccl. 7:29

THE ORIGIN OF MARRIAGE

Marriage is the oldest institution in the world, a divine union that begins a family, as a matter of fact, marriage is older than death. Its origin can be traced back to God in the Garden of Eden. The first marriage in the world took place between Adam and Eve, first people on planet

earth. It was a very interesting experience because this marriage was different from any other marriage conducted in the world. It was ordained by God when he saw that it was not good for man to stay alone. He made him to forego one of his ribs for the purpose of having a help-meet; God saw that it was good (Gen. 2:18-25).



ISSUES ON MARRIAGE AMONGST CHRISTIANS

There are so many issues that have come up in the process of contracting and sustaining marriage among Christians. Some of these issues compound human problems and postpone their evil days. Basically, these issues exist in three categories including, the premarital period, the period during the marriage process and after the marriage proper. A careful consideration on them all reveals how miserably humans have jeopardized their God given opportunities meant to bless them. This list may vary depending on cultures and traditions in different communities and families, and even Church doctrines.

1. **Shotgun wedding (also shotgun marriage)**

A wedding that has to take place quickly just because the woman is pregnant, which

implies putting the cart before the horse. This is why we wed people and in less than nine months, we hear of delivery. Therefore, the church marriage counselling committee must sit up, investigate intending couples and ascertain claims.

2. **Cohabitation**

The act of a man and woman living together and having sexual relationship without being married. Sometimes, it may result in having children out of wedlock as well as complications if one person falls sick and probably dies. This may be assumed by some people as marriage, but it's very obvious that cohabitation cannot be marriage. That your properties are in someone's house does not mean you are married to that person, because you are not married until you are married. This is a serious issue that has to be checked.

3. **Exorbitant Marriage List**

Most lists of marriages have become case studies and reference points among people. Parents and most times relations tend to manipulate items and inflate the cost of marriages, thereby causing

displeasure and disharmony between couples. Marriage is not about the money spent, rather, it is the honour accorded the family of the bride and process cannot be exhaustive; it will last for a life time.

4. **Child Bearing**

Delay in childbearing or childlessness can cause disharmony and unfaithfulness in marriage. The concept of witches and wizards may come into play in this situation, thereby mounting pressure on the affected couple. Spiritual adultery and other vices are forces that may influence a Christian in this circumstance. This is an issue that has affected families and has rendered so many marriages useless.

5. **Pressure from Relations**

This is a situation whereby parents or relations pressurize their children to marry and give them grand-children thereby exposing such children to danger in their choices. Pressure from relations can also be for other reasons aimed at satisfying the wishes of the parents.

6. **Sex to Track Down**

This is a situation where people especially the grown-ups start indulging in sex to track down the sex partner and lure them into marriage forcefully. They injure their conscience (moral governor) in the attempt to cover up in marital satisfaction. Most of them suffer distrust and rejection in the long run and end up in complaints and break-up, thereby adding to the tension already in the grown.

7. **Wealth and Pleasure**

Most people see money and wealth in their desired partners and rush into marriage with them only to be disappointed when the reality of life reveals itself. Some wives tend to look down on their husbands if they see themselves more buoyant than the husband, also, when some husbands become financially grounded, they tend to look outside neglecting their responsibilities in their wives. But you must note that whatever attracts you outside (if good) can be made available inside, instead of having to go search for it.

8. **Church Wedding**

Some people see Church wedding as being unscriptural and sinful. This they establish and teach others to believe same because in their understanding, the Church has nothing to do in the arrangement and execution of a member's marriage. This is an issue that has affected the Christendom and has affected many families in their bid to please God and man.

9. **Idolatry**

Most customs require or compel Christians to carry out practices that are considered idolatrous, thereby injecting a feeling of unholiness which may tend to affect their relationship with God. This can shake the marriage foundation as well as endanger the lives of the couple and their entire family. It may also affect the faith of those concerned.

10. **Arranged Marriage**

This is one in which the parents choose a husband or wife for their children and persuade, force or cause them to marry against their wish. Some arranged marriages may also be by the knowledge of the couple but will surely create

problem since the couple do not know themselves.

11. "Mbudodo" PLC

An act of luring someone into sex on the pretext of intended marriage. This is very common nowadays among youths and people who may not have been ready for marriage with that particular person.

12. Playing Smart

This is a situation where people scheme out their friends and colleagues in order to take their place in a relationship or marriage. This happens mostly to people who are seriously desperate to contract a marriage despite the odds.

13. Prolonged Engagement

This happens when engagement is kept unnecessarily longer than should be expected thereby exposing the partners to unforeseen challenges capable of endangering the relationship. In this case, actualizing the promise of getting married is delayed much longer than favourable, hence certain frictions, dissatisfaction and hidden disloyalties may hinder the marriage process.

14. Rushing into Marriage

This is a situation where people display hastiness in taking decisions concerning who to marry, or fail to make necessary investigations in the process of marriage. Most people tend to regret after the real nature of the persons in question come to play.

15. Undue Publication or Labeling

Here, some people prefer always going with one person (of the opposite sex) to the extent of being noticed with them without the understanding of the people around them. They keep and prefer friendship with such people to the detriment of their future life. If there's nothing special about the person you have singled out to relate with, why parade them around for everyone to see?

16. Marrying a Corpse

This is a practice where families insist that a young man marries the corpse of a lady whom he impregnated and who has died before the marriage process is completed. This issue has almost become a practice unquestioned in several customs.

17. **Higher Purchase or Learner's Permit**

Here a young man does not have money and items needed to marry, therefore, he goes into agreement with parents to pay at convenience, not minding the after-effects of such action in the event where something goes wrong. They may stay together for years and in most cases, may raise children without fulfilling their marital rites, and may end up transferring this legacy to their children who may suffer for what their parents did.

18. **Contract**

This involves contracting a person to act as one's wife or husband for a certain period in order to satisfy certain desires such as childbearing, political ambition or official appointments.

19. **Lack of Medical Understanding**

Ignorance of seeking medical advice during the process of a marriage can cause a problem. Couples may end up marrying spouses with the wrong genotype such as AS, SS or uninformed health status including blood group and HIV status. This may lead to serious

complications such as having sickle cell babies or transfer of virus ignorantly. If you relate sexually with someone and later find out that the person is HIV positive, you are already at risk of contracting the virus.

21. Obong-Odoho

This involves prophesying and contracting marriage on any two people in the church, thereby forcing them to be involved with each other. Some are made to perform some sort of "assignments" in the intrigues of finding a partner in the process.

22. Ebot Usongenyin

Being penalized to give a goat for impregnating her before marital consent is given to the family of the lady.

23. Same Sex Marriage

This is marriage between any two people of the same sex irrespective of the fact that in marriage, God created them male and female. Lesbian or gay marriage is gradually gaining grounds in several countries and has generated serious tension in the world.

These issues are predominantly engaging singles in the desire to choose their would be spouses. Most times, the role that some parents and families play in the process seem to raise additional complications for couples during and after their marriages. If not carefully checked, they may however become challenges that are bound to frustrate the marriage process or even complicate matters in the home. Therefore, In order to arrest the problems and reduce the tendency for further complications through the issues mentioned above, one may need to allow for the process of marriage which may naturally check some of the excesses as well as hidden deceits capable of disgracing those whose intentions are honourable.



THE PROCESS OF MARRIAGE

The process of marriage involves an interesting experience, so if you would love to nurture your marriage to a state of enjoyment and peacefulness, it is necessary to go through the required steps. This process may help you test certain things and prove if they are in their right places or whether they are manipulated under pretence just to lure you into something undesirable. It could help to check and reduce some mistakes thereby ushering you into this divine union with confidence that God is in control.

I Thess. 5:21; I Jn. 4:1; Heb. 13:9.

...Take it to the Lord in prayer...

*"Except the Lord buildeth the city, they that labour,
worketh but in vain, except the Lord watches over the
city, the watchman watches but in vain"*

Psa. 127:1,2

Prayer is the key to everything we plan to do, therefore it is wise to tell God about your desire and listen to Him. You need to ask Him to provide the guidance and make things clearer each step of the way. Approach God before you start and let Him choose for you, rather than presenting your choice to Him for approval. Tell God how you want to go by it and request His will in your decisions; let there be a sign showing that He is with you and be prepared to either further, withdraw or halt whenever you notice anything. Never rush the steps because God can always check to see if you are listening. Don't assume what will happen in any of these steps, rather, know the options available and surrender to God's will even if it hurts temporarily. Prayer is highly needed each step of the way.

Now let us follow the steps gradually and prayerfully with diligence, and understanding, expecting the wisdom of God to lead the way.

1. **Assessment or Evaluation**

This is an opinion or judgments about somebody that has been thought about very carefully. It involves evaluation which is a detailed assessment of whoever is involved. The first step

in the process of marriage is to assess, evaluate and understand who you are going to marry. Be sure to involve your natural senses in this step and be careful to look inward to see what your life pleases. Assess what attracts you to that person and evaluate how such a thing will last in life. It could be complexion, height, body features, facial looks as well as gestures. It may as well be religious life, talent, inward character and virtue. Choose from what attracts you and not what attracts your friends, because "beauty" they say, lies in the eye of the beholder!

Marriage assessment could be sub divided into three parts to include:

- **Self-Assessment**

The real marital assessment begins with yourself, therefore, before you think of assessing anyone else, you must first assess yourself. If you do not understand yourself, it will be difficult to understand people properly. If you need a tall, short, fat, honest or dedicated partner, check yourself first to see if you are qualified for such. This will help you know if you deserve to be married. Have you thought to consider if you can tolerate someone as you would want someone to tolerate you? Begin with yourself and be honest about it, then God will link you up with someone

who can complement you. IICor.13:5; Matt.7:12.

Assessment of the Expected Partner

Take time to assess whoever you are interested in without sentiment or lust, this is very important in the process of the choice. Realize that this takes place once in a life-time. A mistake in marriage is probably the mistake you live with throughout your life, unless God intervenes, therefore, involve your senses correctly.

- **Assessment of the Environment**

Your marriage environment refers to the family which you are about to choose from. Know the family, understand their way of life, know the parents and find out certain important things about them, such as: how do they endure themselves? Their flare for life, beliefs, religious life, etc. One must be careful here because some behaviors of parents may not be the child's way of life, hence, one will only need to check and know before moving ahead.

Note: these assessments can be completed without formal knowledge of the person in question, which may avoid complications such as, building of undue expectations, anxiety and hazardous outcomes.

2. **Approach or Dating**

This is an arrangement to meet the person you are interested in at a particular time. It is an appointment to disclose intention or know the feelings of the other person about what you think of him or her. Dating on its own is not a bad word, but the intention therein may make it immoral thereby misapplying the meaning of the word. This may take several times and trials which could yield positive or negative results. A relationship could be established at this point with honourable intentions.

Avoid lonely places in dating; rather, make it so open that your intentions are not misinterpreted. Avoid empty promises in order to entice, instead, let your true nature be displayed and be ready to ask and answer simple questions which may border on age, family, education, career, likes, dislikes, etc, and be sincere about them.

Pretence is likely to show up here in order to win one's heart but this shall not last. You are free to disclose your interest without promises, this stage does not require promises, keep it till the right time.

3. **Courtship or Engagement**

Engagement is an agreement to marry

somebody or the period during which two people are engaged. Courtship is the time when two people have an important relationship before they get married. Basically, people use this opportunity to prepare, know each other more and get to understand what their relationship needs. Sometimes, people use rings to engage each other, meaning that a promise has been made. You must be sure of someone before any engagement is made. Before you give or receive an engagement ring, you have to be very *careful* and there is no time most suitable for engagement ring, but it depends on those involved.

People use this time to really study each other, open up and show commitment. Medical examinations are advised at this stage. Courtship should not be too long, therefore be prepared before you move into it, it should be devoid of sex to avoid cheapening ones personality or generating unhappy feelings in the case of any disappointment. Try and avoid sex until the right time, this is only proper.

4. Introduction and Consultation (nkong-udok)

The couple having known themselves well, open discussion and introduction follows. At this stage,

these people are bold to open up and introduce themselves to their families, friends and counsellors for the marriage requirements and counsel. This is a moment that parents come in fully to know and understand what has been going on around their children. They should be very wise in order to advise and put their children right. Children should also give their parents the freedom to investigate on their own part and give their observations in the process.

After a period of courtship, the family of the groom-to-be will visit the family of the prospective bride, to be introduced, and to state their intentions. The groom-to-be will usually visit with immediate family members, if the nuclear family is not available, any elderly relation or family friend could be acceptable. Once this is done, the family of groom-to-be will leave and return at an agreed time. This period will give the bride's family the opportunity to investigate (if necessary) and also prepare for the next stage.

5. Interaction and Cross-Examination

Marriage requirement list is usually introduced here, giving the two families an opportunity to interact and to know each other more. The nature of approach here depends on both

families and the living standard of those involved; it is an interesting stage because what you agree on here will be binding on you. Most families use this time to test if the man is capable. Some young men leave this stage never to come back if the requirements are too much, thereby leaving the family in suspense. If an agreement is reached, the process moves into the next stage.

6. Consent and Declaration (Mbup)

Upon agreement on (5 above), parents will declare their satisfaction to further the process, presentation of the items (nkpo mbup) will be done. Then the parents will make open declaration before the two families about their acceptance to go forward. Note that marriage has not been contracted at this stage, therefore those involved should be conscious that marriage rites has not yet been done. They need to keep themselves away from complications and prepare for the next stage. The misconception that "mbup ado ndo" should be checked at this stage until marriage requirements are fulfilled. This itself is an issue.

7. Marriage Proper and Rites

At this stage, marriage rites are fulfilled, hence, blessings, pronouncement and proper handover

is done. This always comes after dowry has been paid. The two families play very important role here, since this is the high point of the process. It may be done with special ceremonies depending on the partners involved. The ceremony is not the marriage itself but rites fulfilled and consents of the parents together with the two people involved mark the beginning of any marriage.

Please compare the Bible examples when Abraham chose a wife for Isaac in Gen.24:1-67. He told his servant that the Lord shall send His angel to accompany him in the process of choosing a wife for his son. This implies that where the process is done according to God's will, an angel or the spirit of God accompanies the party in order to check for mistakes and administer correction and also look out for any pretense or hidden plans that may be detrimental to the child of God in future.

Notice that he commenced with prayer saying, "Lord God of my master Abraham, make me successful today and show kindness to my master Abraham." He allowed God to be in total control of the process, making sure that he always checked to see, notice, and experience what the will of God was. He made sure there was a sign

to show clearly that his decision was approved by God. When the woman appeared, fulfilling all that was expected, in silence, the man watched her closely to learn whether or not the Lord had made his journey successful. He immediately traced her to her root for confirmation, introduction and formal marital rites by the parents. A complete process for marriage can be seen here, very interesting and worthy of acceptance. She was blessed by her parents with full consent after the process had been successful.

David paid for his marriage requirements in I Sam. 18:23-27 to Saul, his father in-law, within the stipulated time. Then Saul gave him his daughter Michal in marriage. Note here that the father released his daughter upon full consent and fulfillment of marital requirements. Also, Jacob served for fourteen good years before getting his wife in Gen. 29. He obeyed the rules just to be sure that acceptance was granted before marriage was granted.

Parental blessing is a necessary ingredient in the process and this will surely make for your progress and success in your marriage, so note and follow suit. May God make you successful as He did to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.



MARRIAGE CEREMONIES

John. 2:1-10

In this section, we will talk specifically on marriage ceremonies not marriage itself. A ceremony is the celebration while the marriage is what happens every second, minute, hour, daily, weekly, etc, in the legal union called marriage. No type of ceremony is divine; therefore, the ceremony is not the marriage. Whereas marriage ceremonies are very important, it should always be 'cut' to size according to what the couple can afford and I think people should attach more importance to their marriage than they do to the ceremony.

There are basically three types of marriage ceremonies common to any culture and these you must understand so that you could choose what you want.

1. Traditional Marriage Ceremony

This is marriage conducted according to the customs and traditions of the people. It is the most common in our communities and certain traditions are really emphasized. Sometimes you see the traditional women, men and youth groups display their demands, according to their customs. Most times traditional foods take the order of the day, cultural displays and traditional groups may take their turns without being left out depending on who the parents or the celebrators are. It may be low-key or under wide publicity depending on their capability. Upon satisfaction of the expectations, a formal rite is done and the couple is pronounced in the open to ensure approval and blessings. This is very important in any culture as it seems to be done in order of the culture of the people involved.

2. Marriage conducted in a licensed place of religious worship

This involves the celebration done by the people of a particular religious believe, ranging from Christianity to Islam and other religions. Some people try to differentiate between wedding and marriage, so I must make it clear that the word wed means to marry. These two words can be used interchangeably because they mean the same thing. If you are married, it means you have wedded, marriage ceremony means the same as wedding ceremony. In the church

setting, Christians gather and conduct a Christian's marriage according to church arrangements; they sing, pray, admonish, etc and request or invite God's divine presence into the union. This is essential because it helps Christians submit themselves totally to divine will. The problem with this is that "unbelievers" also do it, thereby making some religious men think that the practice is wrong. It is worthy of note here that a practice is not wrong just because "unbelievers" do it, rather, because such practice contradicts the will of God. Christians must not run away from their responsibilities to support each in this divine union just because others have started it. Wedding in the church is and can be arranged decently and orderly with the spirit of God in the church. This is why we recommend that it is proper to finish with your family before coming to the church (if you so desire).

3. Marriage in the Registry

Here the laws of the country are applied to protect the parties involved especially ladies. Certificates and licenses are issued indicating government interest to check the alarming rate of marital problems in the country. They have created marriage registries in Local Government councils and have also requested

Churches to register and assist people access these marriage facilities. This they do to create awareness and check excesses on the rate of divorces, and other marital vices in the community, as well as problems generated by in-laws for a partner, especially women in the event of the husband's death.

With these facilities, couples who would, can process travelling documents easily. It can also help couples to access marital entitlements made available in work places and in schools as well as forestall the problems of victimization in the event of his or her partner's death. This facility is also available in Churches and congregations who see the need to go through the government process, thereby qualifying such as a registered place for religious marriage. This type of marriage ceremony provides and guarantee for protection for couples by the laws of the country and seems cheaper than the two earlier discussed.

Note that one is not bound by any or all of these ceremonies, couples are at liberty to choose one or all of these as desired because no particular marriage ceremony is divine, each must be seen and approached in the light of liberty depending on the agreement of those involved, including parents.



WHEN SHOULD A CHRISTIAN MARRY?

GENESIS 2:21-25

This question is very important because it will help one to make moves at the right time and toward the right person. Children of God are bound to face several problems which will emanate into issues if it is not their right time to marry. To ascertain when a Christian should marry, one must understand who a Christian is as well as what marriage constitutes.

Who is a Christian?

A Christian is someone who has accepted the principles of Christ completely as a way of life and is willing to abide by them. This person will prefer that 'the mind of Christ' be fulfilled in his or her marriage in order that the will of God may be done in the family and in the Church, Matt. 19:11.

What is Marriage?

See introduction for the meaning and definition of marriage.

But understand that marriage is for those who are mature, not children, the following are certain aspects of maturity that should be noticed before one moves into marriage:

MATURITY BEFORE MARRIAGE

1. Chronological Maturity (this is age)

A potential spouse must not be too young or extremely old before moving in for marriage, so that you may have the capacity, strength and time to fulfill your marital obligations. There is time for everything. Also, endeavour to see that the age difference between you and your partner is not too wide such as may affect your present and future dealings. There is no biblical specification to this, but wisdom will lead you through. Maturity in age will take care of secondary developments that are bound to set in as soon as couples come together.

2. Economic Maturity

The first thing God gave Adam was not a woman but real estate. Real estate contains everything man needs in life to care for a woman as well as his children. It is advisable

therefore, for one to become mature economically so that you may be ready to 'leave' and 'cleave'. Leave your family's wealth and "cleave" to your own wealth. The wealth of your family, friends, etc, is only of great advantage, hence, should not be relied upon in your marriage. Establish yours and be independent for your integrity and timely satisfaction of needs no matter how small it is.

3. **Mental or Educational Maturity**

Those who are involved in marriage must be right thinking people, mentally alert and sound. The state of your intelligence has much to do with the development and growth of your marriage. Marriage is not for fools, Eph. 5:15-17.

4. **Spiritual Maturity**

Marriage is divine, therefore, those involved in it must be spiritually responsible. They must come to know that God is everything we can think of and must learn to put him first in their plans. They must be ready to listen to God especially in times of trials, hardship and difficulties, Matt. 11:28.

5. Social Maturity

This is very necessary to keep your marriage

healthy. Learn to know that marriage should not take you away from other people. Be free with all manner of persons and be ready to fulfill your social responsibilities. Married persons cannot afford to fight on the street for whatsoever reasons; they are very responsible and should treat themselves as such.

6. Physiological Maturity

As you think of marriage, you must take the physique of your body into consideration. You must understand how the body functions or responds to certain things. Your body system and parts should be mature enough to accommodate the secondary development that marriage will bring into your life.

7. Moral Maturity

As you consider getting married, you must be ready to be morally sound, shun immorality and behave decently as it is becoming for children of God, Phil. 1:27. There are certain things a married person is not expected to be seen doing as well as certain words he or she should not be heard saying. Respect yourself and be self controlled and remain in your marriage for the glory of the Almighty. Heb. 13:4, Titus 1:5

WHEN IS A CHRISTIAN SAID TO BE MARRIED?

Since there is no assumption about being

married, one should know when he or she is married. You could be in a person's house or life without being married, therefore realize that you are said to have been married when;

1. **When Acceptance is declared**

The two must agree first and parents may agree as well, together with the family. There is no marriage without an agreement between those involved; this must be done in person, not in proxy. Declaration is very important because it marks the beginning of a marriage with pronouncement done after full satisfaction of the process and commitments.

2. **When your marriage Rites is performed and satisfaction achieved**

Something must be given in exchange so as to seal the covenant. The one giving and the one receiving must be satisfied without any pressure whatsoever.

3. **When parental Consent is given**

Parents must give their consent as the rightful owners of the son or daughter. This then make for some manner of parental blessings which is very important.

4. **When you are able to leave and cleave**

Partners must be able to detach from parents to

form a new union. Leave your parents irrespective of their wealth and start your life not on what they have. However, leaving does not portray neglect; a Christian couple should understand how to care for their parents as well as their spouses without abandoning responsibilities whatsoever.

5. When they become one flesh

For marriage to thrive, the two people involved must become one flesh as stated in the scripture, Gen. 2:18-25. These last two conditions are regarded as the foundation of marriage. It is obvious that whereas the first four conditions require the couple, parents and community, the last two involves the couple only, and must be given serious thought.

WHO IS QUALIFIED TO MARRY?

PROV.31:10-31

There are so many people in marriage who are neither qualified nor deserve to be married. Certain qualities must be seen in whoever wants to marry.

1. One who is presentable

Do not only look out for beauty, rather, go for someone that is presentable, this will last a long time, Prov.31:30. Someone who is presentable is a person who can take care of himself or

herself to meet up with current and agreeable standards of decency and modesty; a great mixer who can fit into any circumstance.

2. **One who is humble**

The character of humility without low self-esteem or timidity because humility leads to honour and this is very important in marriage. Marriage is neither for the proud nor is it a show of self-righteousness, Prov.29:23. Humility should be a seed sown in total subjection to the will of God with great hope for a better future. Jm. 4:10; Prov. 29:23.

3. **One who is committed**

Such a person must ready to settle with total commitment to the union, disregarding all distractions to concentrate on the goals of family success. They must be ready to carry the burden of marriage, for better or for worse, and pay true allegiance to satisfy each other with full understanding of the syndrome, I do, I do, I will always do.

4. **One who is not crafty**

A person who is getting into this honest union must be free of craftiness. He or she must be straight-forward without deceit and craftiness. In this divine relationship, yes, should be yes and no, should be no and should be ready to expunge pretense and display total openness and sincere submission to the flow of marital wave and responsibilities, however it may

please God. One must learn to trust each other and cultivate the capacity to have confidence in one another as a tool for understanding and total breakthrough in the system, Eph. 4:29.

5. One who is loving

A person who deserves to be married must be loving and willing to love. Being loveable and ready to love also is so important because there are many who have decided not to give themselves for love and also commit themselves to loving another person, marriage is about love. Such a person should be always be willing and ready to sow the seed of love with any available opportunity, love is of God, Eph. 5:23-32.

6. One who is accommodating

Whoever needs others to be accommodate should also accommodate others. He or she should live a life that brings people closer to instead of such that drives them away. Adjust from a nagging attitude or such like, and follow after softness and gentle behaviors, Matt. 7:12; Prov. 15:1.

7. One who can tolerate

One of the most important traits needed in a relationship is the ability to tolerate one another with grace without disgrace and seeking to see the good of your partner in all circumstances. The most costly attribute of a partner is tolerance which is a tool that can build your

marriage and strengthen it for good health. Always have patience with one another, Eph. 4:2.

8. One who talks less but listens more

A potential spouse must not be seen to be a talkative, a gossip or busy body. Gossips or those who talk too much are not qualified to marry, learn to listen and hear more but talk less. Prov. 27:15. This character can open you up with others and can give you the ability to understand and carry others along.

9. One who is simple and transparent

Simplicity and transparency without doubts and cover-ups is hard to come by, especially, where people have assumed certain positions or class in life. But in a relationship, it is important to take the nature of God, simplicity. Those who want to be complex may find it difficult to contract a marriage. God is very simple, only humans try to complicate God and make Him look as if he is complex. But note that a great person always simplifies the complicated, II Cor. 11:3.

10. One who is ready to adjust

Such a person should always be ready to adjust, especially in cases where opinions prevail. If you are not ready to adjust, then do not marry. This is because marriage requires adjustment. Those who are ready to adjust could be better in marriage than those who claim to be right without adjustment. This must

be done with compassion and willingness without any strings attached, Col. 3:12.

11. **One who is not desperate**

No potential spouse should be seen to be desperate. Refuse to be desperate while making the choice because desperation opens doors for too many mistakes in marriage. Take your time to realize what is good for you because your desperation can backfire.

The right time for marriage is different for each person and unique to each situation.



COMMON MISTAKES IN RELATIONSHIP

In the process of choosing a spouse, there are common mistakes that are too expensive to be overlooked and which may have the tendency of creating disappointment and disaffection. Such mistakes are also common in marriage and may cause a breakdown in the family. These may be things that occur often, habitually or coincidentally, but they are acts that are misguiding or wrong. Some are common to singles while some are peculiar to the married.

Common Mistakes Singles Make

These can be looked at in three categories; mistakes peculiar to both male and female, mistakes peculiar to females and mistakes peculiar to males. A careful examination of these mistakes can open one's eye to wisdom on

how to approach and overcome them.

Mistakes peculiar to both Male and Female

1. Misinterpret the attentions

As an outgrowth of the frustration and desperation sometimes experienced when people want to get married, many singles overreact to any attention from person of the opposite sex, especially if that someone is attractive to them. If a man should look at a lady twice, she could read all kinds of meanings into it. If a woman happens to sit by a man at a social function, he may think she is sending him some signals or come-on.

This misinterpretation of attention is one of the major reasons, that makes it difficult for a single man and woman to have a platonic relationship. Both are on their guard, worried about signals. Instead of understanding that two people can actually have a friendly conversation and enjoy each other's company without a romantic attraction.

2. Putting up with too much in a relationship and hang on for too long

Do yourself a favour by admitting that you have an emotional dependency which you call love, or even admit that you really love the person if you think you do, but when you acknowledge that it is a wrong relationship, get out without

delay.

How do you get out? By taking drastic steps. Jesus said, If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose a part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell (Mathew 5:29-30).

If you are in a relationship and you are being treated with disrespect, thoughtlessness, or unkindness, that is a good sign that you have hung on too long and put up with too much. If you are hoping he or she will change, you do not know so much about human nature.

If you are not happy with the treatment you are receiving from a person before you marry, you can be sure the treatment you would get after marriage would be much the same.

3. Inability to understand and read danger signals in a relationship

Oftentimes in a relationship, most singles have poor choice written all over them, but somehow they never seem to see the danger signals. The

truth is, most of the time they just do not want to see them. Remember that when emotions get involved in a situation, it is very easy to lose focus. Someone once said that emotions and feelings have zero IQ, somehow, this might be true. You cannot trust your emotions. Those juices get flowing, those romantic notions start whirling around in your head, and you can lose focus in an instant. These danger signals may include, Significant age difference, which might vary depending on individuals and the age difference. This is not to say that age difference is always a problem, but certainly, it is one thing singles should consider carefully.

Different family upbringing may also pose challenges. It is a fact that no two families are alike, but considers the basics; are both Christian families? What kind of relationship exists among the family members? Some families are very close and some are not.

Priority of spiritual life may be a serious factor to consider. If one person in the relationship puts a higher priority on spiritual life than the other, it's a real danger signal and should not be ignored. Usually when you are involved with someone whose spiritual temperature is below your own, you do not bring them up to your level, you go down to theirs. This has happened time and again.

4. Getting physically involved much too soon and going too far

Here again Christians have allowed the world system and philosophy to infiltrate their thinking about the physical aspects of a relationship. Romans 12:1-2 says that we are not to be conformed to this world, but transformed by a renewed mind. The Philips translation says, "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold" When people become casual about having sex before marriage, they become shoved into the world's mold.

If you truly want to remain pure in your sexual life and keep yourself for the person God kept for you, or keep yourself for Christ if you choose to remain single, you most certainly can do it. There is nothing impossible about it. However, in order to do this, you will need a discipline that is rare, a discipline to go the extra mile in keeping the physical contact down to a minimum. You simply cannot trust the chemistry of your body. It is very powerful, and once it gets going, finding the discipline to keep it under control is extremely difficult. So the secret is to keep the electricity down the low levels by controlling the physical contact.

5. Thinking that the only necessary requirement for a partner is being a Christian

In addition to being a Christian, there are many other requirements people should consider before making their choice (consider the process of marriage). It is very smart to put yourself through intensive soul-searching when you consider marrying someone. Keeping in mind that your emotions are involved and therefore your perspective may be off-centre, ask for advice from a trusted person. Get them to play devil's advocate and throw every question they can at you. Take every compatibility test you can find. Do all you do to know what you are getting into before you jump. However, you will never be totally prepared for marriage, but it is a good idea to try to find out before you walk down the aisle whether you match is likely to work well.

6. *Judging others too quick and selfishly*

Most singles go round with their list of requirements for a relationship and judge others too quickly and selfishly. Some ladies have a list of the things they want in a man and vice versa. The list may be divided into "Essentials" and Non-essentials." Now, that's not an altogether bad idea. It will be wise to think

properly before any judgment is made on any suitor, making sure to let the assessment guide you prayerfully, seeking the will of God. However, having certain important guidelines in mind will be helpful in keeping us from making total emotional decisions. But checking people out for selfish reasons is going too far.

6. Feeling that anything is better than being alone

While it's true that we have basic needs for companionship, it's not true that aloneness is the worst condition in the whole world. Note that I said aloneness, not loneliness. There's a big difference, you know. Most people fear aloneness because to them it represents loneliness. They have not learned to fill their time so that aloneness is useful and refreshing for them.

Loneliness is a feeling, an attitude, nobody gets through this life without experiencing it to some degree. But to settle for anything as a substitute for loneliness is a big mistake. There are worse things than loneliness, and by God's grace we do not have to be overcome and defeated by loneliness. He can take our aloneness and turn it into beautiful, fruitful productive time with Him. Recognize that being alone does not mean you are a social misfit. Do not buy into the lies of the enemy, who wants you to feel desperate. The

feeling of desperation can make one behave irrationally, forgetting unprincipled ways. When one feels an overpowering need to have someone near, he or she may settle for anything.

Mistakes Peculiar to Females

1. Being alarmed at the shortage of Christian men

When some ladies notice a new guy in the church or meet a new friend in the ministry, the first possible evaluation they check is appearance not his faith. Undoubtedly, you will then be curious if he is single. The scarcity of Christian men makes every single woman panic for the existence of one.

Keep in mind, Christianity is a vast religion which covers different congregations of the body of Christ. Do not be alarmed if you don't see single Christian men in your local area. Involve yourself in conferences and different conventions where you can get to meet more acquaintances.

2. Exaggerating a man's plain approach or misinterpretation of intentions

Sometimes, when a man approaches a lady and talks to her, she may immediately assume that he is showing interest in her. Never gossip about a plain conversation between you and a Christian guy especially if you are not aware whether he is single or not. Becoming too

presumptuous can lead to misinterpretation and argument; I love you may be interpreted, as I marry you.

3. **Becoming emotionally irrational**

More often than not, Christian women are attacked emotionally, especially with men at lonely places. Most of such people who are emotionally weak may fail to conquer their feelings and recover from the attack. They may fall into something regrettable, thereby, leaving them with the feeling of guilt. If this applies to you, then you need a strong support group that will encourage you to express your feelings and give you pieces of advice.

4. **Pretence**

A lot of Christian ladies try to please the opposite gender by creating an impression. Often times they mask their repulsive behaviour by being too modest or too churchy thinking that the guys will be interested in them. If this is your way of initiating a relationship, it will probably not last long. Pretending to be someone you are not will rather cause you to become a turn-off.

5. **Becoming too transparent and vulnerable:**

Whilst it is healthy for a Christian lady to share her ideas with a Christian guy, disclosing too much information which has something to do with her weaknesses will certainly put her into

vulnerability. Christian women should be careful with what you relay, do not expose your weak points nor use them as fillers to extend a conversation.

6. They believe time has run out:

This is also where so many single women are wrong. While it may be true that once upon a time love, marriage, and babies have a predictable timeline, our lives are less predictable, and that is a good thing; God's time is always the best.

For Christian ladies who find themselves guilty of committing any of the above-mentioned mistakes, now is the time to modify your moves, Psalms 37:4 says, "Delight yourself in the Lord and He shall give you the desire of your heart." This passage inspires us not to put in so much effort in finding or pleasing our would-be partners but to trust in God's way of creating your Christ-like love story.

Mistakes Peculiar to Males

1. Being appearance-oriented

It is true that even Christian males observe the opposite gender's physical appearance before assessing her faith. Somehow, this is inevitable

because it is the outward look that is easily examined. However, some men tend to be biased by giving more attention to a pretty Christian girl than other females in the same group. Closing your doors from other potential life partners because of being attracted to a Christian girl's physical feature can mislead you from meeting "Miss God's will"!

2. **Feeling cowardly to show emotions**

This is one of the characters that are hated by most Christian girls. Although it is not ideal to go straight forward about your intention, Christian girls go crazy over an honest confession. So if you think hiding your feelings is helpful, think again.

3. **Fearing of rejection or failure**

Most Christian men want to settle in a relationship that will last. Because of this principle, they tend to be nervous in trying to meet a lady. However, failure or rejection should not be a hindrance towards meeting your "Miss Right". After all, how will you face intricate troubles that may arise in a relationship when you can't even face a simple failure?

4. **Fear of being Committed**

There are so many teachings heard by most Christian men which pertain to commitment. Surprisingly, still there are some who opt to have temporary or short-term relationships rather than a lasting one. This is because of their perceived anxiety over marriage and other responsibilities. Fear of a commitment is as foul as disloyalty.



COMPLICATIONS AND COUNSELING

The process of choosing who to marry comes with a lot of complications and challenges, and exposes Christians to unforeseen danger and undisclosed heartbreaks. It can drive people into deep pains in silence as well as subject many to untimely sorrows that render the future darker than the present. Even your soul mates may cause relationship problems, there by generating dysfunction that can militate against the progress of any relationship. It is important to note that accepting whoever you have chosen in marriage implies that you have also chosen to love a set of problems.

Marriage itself posses several challenges that are burdensome to people who ones fell in love and expected a harmonious flow in their families. Problems are a part of any relationship no matter who you are because no

one is perfect.

In order to accomplish mental wellness, emotional stability and sustain a steady economic balance in the process of your choice and in existing relationships, proper Counseling; formal and informal, can empower diverse individuals, families and groups.

MARRIAGE AND COHABITATION

Cohabitation means to live together as husband and wife when not married (the new Webster's dictionary of the English Language). This implies an illegal relationship because you are not yet married but live as husband and wife. You are bound to do whatever husbands and wives do; cook together, wash clothes, attend church or functions together, sleep together, may even pray together, raise children in some cases and acquire wealth together, though in some cases, they may not bear names together. These may give room for the cohabitation law; illegal aspect of property accumulated during a period of cohabitation without marriage.

It is necessary to address the issue of cohabitation among Christians since it is one of the issues that has brought despoise to the house of God in the name of marriage. Many

Christians choose to live with their expected partners before marital procedure is done. They seem not to bother about the ugly result of this because the world does the same. This issue is one that had no ground during bible times, no body spoke about it because it was not common among Christians.

EFFECT OF COHABITATION

1. Cheapens the woman's attribute in ladies

In the eyes of friends, neighbors, colleagues etc, the lady in question becomes very cheap and easy to be deceived. They see her as one who lacks the pride and value of a woman. It can as well reduce your "cost" because what is in you is already known if not used by those concerned. It renders most ladies voiceless in such houses because she is not seen to have any authority there. Such a lady will always be begging to be included and treated like a wife.

2. Encourages breaking of relationships and disappointments

When a man knows your privacy before due time, you will loss respect. You may become distasteful without knowing, hence, negative attitudes from the man may begin to set in as a preparation for future problems and confusion.

Here accusations, counter accusations, doubts, abuses, etc, may come into play. This may jeopardizes your chances of remaining in such relationship.

3. **Puts shame on the family of those involved**

For a godly family, this situation may cause shame and disregard as well as dishonor, especially, for a family whose integrity has been built for years. imagine the son or daughter of a minister, elder or a strong leader of the Church being involved in this.

4. **Generates strife among those concerned**

When misunderstanding sets in, those involved are liable to embark on strife and separation, thereby generating some sort of displeasure, face-off and cool war among them. This might affect their spiritual life and commitment in their services to God

5. **Promotes immorality**

Cohabitation gives room for sexual immorality hence reducing marriage before such people to something immoral and sinful, and if not checked, such perception may be transferred to other generations, I Thess. 5:22.

6. Disrespect to God and parents

Cohabitation gives you all the opportunity to violate God's word and disrespect parents. This is so because the consent of parents and the approval of God are not considered in such relationship as against the process of marriage where parents give their consent and bless their children as they start their homes.

7. Shows desperation and frustration

How on earth should you move in with a man before marital rites? You will look desperate and helpless before men. They can do whatever they like and treat you with low esteem because you have cheapened yourself. People who are involved in this seem to show people how frustrated they have been in life, thereby having to disrespect the process of marriage irrespective of the consequences that may occur in the long run.

8. Promotes undue labeling and closes the door for other suitors to appear

People in the neighborhood are bound to close up on you on the assumption that you are married. This might hurt seriously if the expected marital desire or plans does not work out.

9. Unwanted pregnancy

Having exposed yourself to such situation, you

may be forced to protect yourself immorally from an unwanted pregnancy. The occurrence of pregnancy here may become shameful, thereby forcing one into abortion or shotgun. This can destroy ones future and life expectations.

This immoral practice should be discouraged among Christians in order to reduce problems and check excesses. Women of God should check their male counterparts by refusing to be made such objects of low regard and dishonor. Keep your pride and treasure it, it is better not to be married at all than to cohabit and be thrown out into the cold hands of shame and emotional breakdown.

SEX AND PREGNANCY BEFORE MARRIAGE

This is an issue that has eaten up the people and is about to render them useless. Most ladies prefer to be pregnant so that the guys concerned will be forced to marry them while some guys hide under the pretence of testing to see if she will be fertile. This subjects couples to unplanned marriages in order to save their embarrassment.

I wish to point out that sex was meant for married people only, I Cor. 7:2, Sex before marriage takes away your pride and glory,

especially ladies, It endangers those involved to problems such as abortion, cohabitation, etc. It affects your relationship with God negatively, thereby reducing your moral value. Medical test can help you understand certain things that bother you without necessarily getting involved under the disguise of testing to confirm ones fertility, therefore, churches and counselors should discourage this completely since it reduces sanity and exerts pressure on the body of Christ.

MEDICAL EXAMINATION AND ATTENTION

Getting married is a special, exciting and busy time that most people dream of. There is more to getting married than flowers, dresses, and saying "I do". Therefore, before you marry the love of your life, you should have a few health checks to make sure that you are in tiptop shape, health wise. These should be done together with your partner and it should not be overlooked. The following are some medical tests necessary during the process:

1. Genotype

This can help you check and manage future disease incompatibilities like sickle cell, with medical awareness and perfect understanding of your status, basically classified as AA, AS, and SS.

2. **Blood group**

The importance of your blood group in relation to that of your partner cannot be over emphasized since the society has come to its fundamental need and awareness.

3. **HIV and AIDS**

Getting to know your health status and that of your proposed partner is of great advantage in your plans. This can help you manage certain challenges that may become complex in the course of time. No two sane persons should be encouraged to be engaged in marriage without the full knowledge of their HIV status.

CHRISTIAN AND MARRIAGE OUTSIDE THE FAITH

This is an issue with great concern as far as the body of Christ is concerned, and it will not do justice to give an answer hastily, as to if a Christian can marry an unbeliever, a preliminary foundation must be laid. I will offer careful thoughts for a useful decision.

First of all, we must observe that marriage is a sacred relationship initiated by God for the benefit of humanity as a whole, Gen 2:18, people enter into this divine relationship with

the assurance that the union is recognized by God. Marriage has been for ages before the advent of people with certain faith. There has been issues amongst people of God whether or not believers can marry outside the faith. It is therefore wise to reason along the lines of the scripture in order to ascertain what the will of God might be.

Who is a Christian?

A Christian is a follower of Christ; one who professes beliefs in Jesus as the Christ and follows his teachings. That you believe in God does not necessarily make you a Christian, Satan also believes and trembles, Jam. 2:19, 20. Our belief must be backed up with works.....a way of life. Of course, "birds of the same feathers always flock together". If we have respect for our religious beliefs then we will allow such beliefs to affect our marriages deeply; Pentecostals are bound to understand themselves more in their houses because they have the same faith, likewise the orthodox, etc. A lack of understanding is a serious threat to the well being of a relationship

Christians are the called out from the world, separated from the pattern of life of this world and sanctified to make a difference by their

ways of life, Rom 12:2. If the world system was okay for children of God, then there would have been no need for the calling. So, it will be dangerous for such people to mingle with the nature of this world because of marriage, I Jn. 2:15-17.

They are a Chosen generations, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, called out of darkness into his holy light, I Pet. 2:9.

Above all, they are a holy priesthood. Priests are always made to do things their own way, different from others because they have a holy calling. They are not expected to mingle unnecessarily with others because their ways of life contrast with that of others. I Pet 2:5.

Christians are born Again; having been born of the physical body which has been corrupted, God decided that people be born again in order to do away with the old person that is made corrupt, consider Jn. 3:5, Eph 2:10.

With these qualities in mind, God says,

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship has righteousness

with unrighteousness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what concord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has he that believes with an infidel? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God: as God has said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God; and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" II Cor. 6: 14-18.

A MORE SERIOUS PROBLEM

Marrying people of different faith or religious believes is referred to as mixed marriage and has generated so many positions especially in the Lord's Church. The issue here is that, those who call themselves Christians have not really proven to people how different they are, especially in their ways of life. They only profess to be different but the difference is not really felt, hence no impact is created. More so, everybody claims to be Christian under the illusion of being a believer. It becomes more serious when we try to compromise based on the world standard, subjecting our values, integrity and morality to the standard of the world.

Consider some issues as follows;

1. Some Christian men and women undergo the "diyere ke Jordan". A condition where people from outside the faith are being persuaded and subjected to baptism so as to justify their motives for marriage in the faith before men. They receive human acknowledgement while the so called converts are only but marriage candidates in the church instead of Christians.

2. Some opine that they should marry those who need them outside provided they are allowed to still keep their faith. They also risk their faith to the assumption that such a partner may be converted later. This one becomes even more dangerous because if they are not converted, they become a thorn in their flesh and end up with the societal allusion 'nyin itiat asenaa nte eka itiat anaa', meaning that a child should be where the mother is. They sometimes fall from faith to please their partners, thereby compromising eternal life with marriage.

3. Churches also feel that these practices should be pampered or tolerated not until the affected person departs from the faith before discipline. This reduces the church to a state of

giving an opportunity to the devil, Eph 4: 27 and postponing their evil days.

4. Also, Christian ladies feel cheated when they sit down to see those who dated them bring in new faces for baptism and later or suddenly get married while they begin another search for a new relationship. This is dangerous because some guys are unlucky to marry prostitutes they have not known instead of close people they would have amended..."the devil you know is better than an angel you don't know". Therefore, the possibility of recurrent quarrels in their homes is almost certain and such problems may manifest as cases come to the Church.*

5. Most Christians prefer relationships outside the church in order not to be embarrassed by this ungodly behaviour, thereby making matters worse by being very far from Christians who would have been interested in them. Of course, it is obvious that running away from a problem, does it proffer solution, rather, it increases the chances of making it more complex.*

*Brethren, things ought not so to be, James 3:10. How can people of God keep remaining in such confusion whereas our God is not an author of

confusion? Why not we sit down, study and ask for the will of God on this matter. We really need to pray and seek God so that our desires may not outlive the intentions of God. I know that if we know who we are, God will reveal himself to us and will direct us a right.

ISSUES ON MARRIAGE AMONG GOD'S PEOPLE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

"the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives of themselves, whomever they chose." Gen. 6:2

Genesis Chapters six to nine gives the account of sons of God who saw the daughters of men in their beauty. They married them as they desired and that made evil to multiply in the land. These mixed marriages resulted in God's anger which lasted till the flood in the days of Noah which destroyed the whole earth except, the seven who were protected in the ark. The sons of God were those who believed in God and accepted the godly way of life of which they were instructed to follow. The daughters of men were the descendants of those whose lives were opposed to godly attribute. This may be likened to the corrupt fashion of life that may have

conformed to in this era; clubbing, mini-skirts, bomb shorts, eye lashes, artificial buttocks, color blocks of our time and many more vices that are very attractive and inviting while they parade our streets, schools, Churches, etc.

The ark that saved only seven signifies the Church, the way of salvation and body Christ for the saved. God is still interested in His children being satisfied with marriage amongst them as opposed to the current trend of mixed marriages amongst the people of God. Please be warned.

Genesis Chapters 24 and 28 gives another account where Abraham and Isaac were opposed to such marriage for their sons.

He told his servant that the Lord shall send His angel to accompany him in the process of choosing a wife for his son. This implies that where the process is done according to God's will, an angel or the spirit of God accompanies the party in order to check for mistakes and administer correction and also look out for any pretense or hidden plans that may be detrimental to the child of God in future. Notice that he commenced with prayer saying,

"Lord God of my master Abraham, make me successful today and show kindness to my master

Abraham."

He allowed God to be in total control of the process, making sure that he always checked to see, notice, and experience what the will of God was. He made sure there was a sign to show clearly that his decision was approved by God. When the woman appeared, fulfilling all that was expected, in silence,

he man watched her closely to learn whether or not the Lord had made his journey successful.

He immediately traced her to her root for confirmation, introduction and formal marital rites by the parents. A complete process for marriage can be seen here, very interesting and worthy of acceptance. She was blessed by her parents with full consent after the process had been successful.

Studies from Deut. Chapters 10 and 22 reveals that God through the given through forbade the yoking together of the clean ox and the unclean ass, an illustration that represents the believers and unbelievers.

The account of king Solomon is a clear lesson where strange women who did have the culture

of God tuned the heart of a long standing king, a custodian of the norms and culture of God's people and a leader of no mean standing toward deviating from God to the worship of gods, I Kings 11:1-11. What a dangerous thing to toil with.

Ezra 9:10-14 and Neh. 13:23-29 tells us of the evil of such alliance which is seriously grievous before God while Josh. 23:12,13 warns that they shall become a snare and traps unto you. Please be careful.

CONSIDERATIONS FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT

We need also to consider how the Bible presents it in the New Testament before we can reach any conclusion concerning the faith.

First Argument

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what concord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has he that believes with an infidel? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God: as God has said, I will dwell in them, and

shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" II Cor. 6:14-18.

Second Argument

Widows were given special instructions to marry only in the Lord. This limitation has made their case very clear and non arguable. They are commanded to marry only in the Lord if they wish to remarry. ICor.7:39. If widows who are considered more pitiful on this matter are commanded thus, how much more the fresh, vibrant and beautiful damsels in the Church.

Third Argument

Example from other Apostles who married sisters as an example for us to follow.

'Don't we have the right to take a believing wife along with us as the other Apostles and the Lord's brothers do, and as peter does? I Cor. 9:5.

Paul instructed that we should imitate him as he did of Christ.

Fourth Argument

"A wife or husband that believeth not" ICor. 7:12-16. In this portion, Paul was referring to those who have been married before one of them became converted. He instructed that such marriage be accepted except the unbelieving departs. This suggests that those who were converted wanted to put away their wives and marry in the Lord because of the tradition they have come to see. "Except" here implies that you can only be married in the Lord if the unbelieving departs. This still points to the fact that for believers to marry among themselves has been the will of God.

If we do not try to compromise eternal life with marriage, then we would rather explain our faith in God with whoever approaches us in marriage rather than hope in chance which may never come. Religious life is a very strong factor in marriage and no one can change that. It was God's wish that his children should marry within the faith because diverse faith has always been a problem to God's people in all ages.

MY RECOMMENDATIONS ON THIS MATTER

1. It is necessary for a Christian to marry in the Lord in order to remain in the Lord

without the chances of being challenged in their homes concerning their marriages and the faith.

2. Christian men should prayerfully consider this issue and establish their faith on it so as help them gain strong grounds in the things of God and to have the boldness of commanding their families for the will of God, Gen. 18:19.
3. Christian ladies should hold onto their excellent pride in the faith, not compromising with unbelieving men who may appear more inviting in the physical, knowing well that for their pride and glory in Jesus, they need to hold onto the faith and recall the challenge... 'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?' Rom. 8:35.
4. The Church should look deep into the problems associated with this so as to admonish, chastise and correct the ills in order to make for a better church, II Tim. 4:1-3.
5. However, if an unbeliever approaches, declare your faith on time and stick to it, Deut. 21:1-14
6. All Christians should realize that the Church is the way of salvation not denominations, hence never compromise

eternal life with marriage.

MARRIAGE COUNSELLING

Marriage counseling is a therapy for couples as well as intended couples who see the need to live a happy and comfortable family life. It can help all types of people recognize and resolve conflicts and improve their relationships. There is also the possibility to foresee an impending danger and implore wisdom in one's actions. Through marriage counseling, you can make thoughtful decisions about rebuilding your relationships for joy and peaceful coexistence.

There are tested and trusted personnel such as ministers of the gospel, elders, deacons with experienced leaders and teachers in the churches who may be useful and favourably disposed for this task. We also have licensed marriage and family therapists as well as parents who have dedicated their lives to serve humanity in leading people to and through relationships.

It is therefore recommended that you make something good out of these resources among the people of God's heritage in order to better your life.



CHOOSING A LIFE PARTNER

INTRODUCTION

Apart from the decision to accept Christ, choosing a life partner seems to be the greatest decision one will have to make. This is so because it comes with challenges, struggles, expectations, emotions, suspense and complications. A careful consideration has shown that every expecting spouse should use the word of God wisely for a careful analysis of what it will take to make the right choice. In order to avoid future regrets and reduce the chances for problems in marriages, it is necessary to expose the future life of Christians that can be influenced by the actions of today.

This book serves as a guide to those who desire to be in marriage by making them reason between expectation and reality. Parents, counsellors and church leaders may be assisted to further strengthen marriage counseling. I present it with strong desire in my heart to have

more people overcome the challenges of marriage and settle peacefully in this life-long relationship, marriage. Follow this lessons with faith and prayer from your heart that God may attend to you this other time.

Who is a life Partner?

A life Partner is someone you choose to spend or live with for the rest of your life. You will keep reasoning, interacting and beholding this person no matter what life holds for the both of you. This happens to be the only person you influence or get influenced completely throughout your life time. It is not just a business partner, colleague, neighbour, church member or reading partner, therefore, you must guide your decisions in choosing this bone of your bones and flesh of your flesh.

COMPLICATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH SELECTING A PARTNER

Whenever an individual wishes to choose a partner who will be for life, complications are bound to set in. some of these complications are so dangerous that they can ruin the progress of such decision and frustrate the wish of such person. Some could be physical, spiritual, self made, family bound, etc. These things may occur as challenges to confuse a Christian, thereby

influencing him or her to make the wrong choice. These may include;

1. **Desire and love**

Someone may be confused between desire and love, especially when it is time to choose a partner. Desire may be illustrated by a young person who tells you that he cannot stay without you, that he is miserable, and that life seems colorless and empty when you are not around. That may be a form of love, but certainly, may not be the type that will hold marriage for years. While they may feel they need you today, it is possible that some time later, such may change and such feelings may cease. Therefore, in order to be on the safe side, it is good to put all indicators into use for the assurance that what is going on is powered by love instead of mere feelings of desire that may not stand the test of time. Love never fails, I Cor. 13:8.

2. **Looks and virtue**

A good number of people go for physical looks such as beauty, complexion, height, body contours, makeovers, hair style, and fashion. They completely neglect and become blind about virtues and characters that represent the hidden man of the heart, built with humility, II Pet. 3:1-5. Be careful about what attracts you in a person, for looks will vanish, but virtue will last a life time.

3. **Brand and quality**

So many people expect a wife or husband brand that is totally customized and would not be like any other. They foresee a very straight person that has never had a fault. Some even go looking for a virgin, even when they themselves are totally corrupt. This itself, is a confusion, because there may be no perfect person in the community. Where caution is not applied, one is bound to go for a prostitute or devilish character from a far location who may be worse than friends with common short comings that could have been amended. Prov. 27:17.

4. **Perfection and All-Right mentality**

It is possible to look for Mr. or Miss right who will be perfect in the relationship, not minding that even our righteousness are like rags before God. I Jn. 1:8-10; 2:1. Where a potential spouse goes with the mentality that his or her partner must be the best in the area, such a person may be deceived by pretense. This is because in marriage, there may not be a perfect or all-right personality; rather, those who go into marriage do so with the prospect for adjustment and improvement.

5. **Status and Fame**

There is also the tendency to look out for popularity, personality and power instead of humility and the fear of God which gives wisdom and understanding. People may consider the kind of car, type of work, class of parents, etc. not minding that all which glitters may not be gold. Status confusion is a common

ideology that has affected the packaging and lifestyle of people during marriage.

There are many other forms of confusion, especially in a world such as this where people tend to live by pretence, preferring make-up for originality, quick response as against patience and modeling instead of the real person. It will be wise, therefore, if Christians can take precaution and learn from mistakes and experiences in order to shine and show forth the glory of their creator.

"so that you may become blameless and pure,
"children of God without fault in
a warped and crooked generation." then you will shine
among them like stars in the sky."

WHO SHOULD I MARRY?

This very section of the book is specially and specifically dedicated to bachelors and spinsters who are wishing themselves a great future in marriage. Sincerely speaking, as a single, the state where you are now is very delicate, but you are still in control of your choice. Being a Preacher, who always stand between singles and married people for counseling, I see and hear from singles, who cannot wait to go in for marriage while the married wish they waited. So I pray you do not

make a mistake, rather, you should have the marriage of your dreams.

This part is like a catalyst, something that aids or quickens change. Marriage is actually like a catalyst because it can actually create change inside of you.

There are three things that can change people's life absolutely; they can change their lives beyond recognition.

First is when you meet Jesus Christ, so many people were actually lost before they became born again; cultist, drug addicts, kidnappers, etc, but when they surrendered their lives to Jesus, they became new creatures, for old things were pass away, 2Cor.5:17. **Second** happens when such person discovers his or her purpose for being here on earth. His Life will surely experience a total turn-around for good. The prodigal son wasted all he had without a thought, the bible records that when he came to himself, he said, "I will arise and go..." Purpose can make you rise and give your life a new dimension that can change you completely. But the **third** is about who you marry, because marriage can influence your performance and build you up to greatness. It can make a bold,

responsible, loveable, wise, and progressive man out of a timid, irresponsible, wicked, foolish and stagnated boy who could not make sense out of life.

There are basic things to look out for in any person who should assume the state of a life partner in your life and I shall endeavor to give them out here. Maybe you will have to ask God for wisdom to understand and the grace to follow them, for it is not by power, neither is it by might.

Gen. 2:18-25

This was the first marriage, and a lot of people think it is just government that will change the world, some think of wars for a change while some think that the church is the only platform for change in the world. But here, we can see that for the world to change, God made *FAMILY*; He first made a husband and then a father, and proceeded to make a wife and mother. If God thought of government to change the world, then HE could have made Adam a governor, if HE thought of wars, then he could have been a general, if education were to be the first factor for change, then the first man could have been a professor. all of these have their parts, but He, God, first made him a husband and father,

therefore, who you marry, will affect the rest of your life completely. The most interesting part of it is that we have no power to choose parents, children and siblings but we have the power to choose who we marry, and the time to look and reason is just NOW.

*"But blessed are the eyes that see
and the ears that hear." Matt. 13:16.*

So may you look and listen to God as we study the basic things necessary to look out for while choosing a partner for life.

1. **Christ**

The best person to marry is one who is in Christ, a child of God, not just a "church goer". A Christian is a born again whose nature has been changed from the course of this world, redeemed from the nature of wrath and made alive according to the Spirit which now works in him, Eph. 2:1-3. He or she is instructed, not to conform to the worldly pattern of things, rather, should be transformed by the renewing of their minds, Rom. 12:1-3. Hence, they have been given power to become, sons of God, Jn. 1:12. Therefore, he says,

"Be not unequally yoked together

with unbelievers..." II Cor. 6:14-18.

2. Character

In the choice of a life time partner, most people go for the physical and outward looks only, instead of inward virtue which is character. You will hear things, like I need someone fair and tall with some good looks. A handsome man or beautiful lady; this seems to be confusing because we have lots of fair, tall, handsome and wealthy people who are cultist, drug addicts, kidnappers, thieves, etc.

In Prov. 31:30, the bible says that favor is deceitful, beauty is vain, but a woman that fears the Lord shall be praised. And then it says, a virtuous woman who can find, because there are so many beautiful ladies and handsome men in the country, but a faithful man is difficult to find, so looks are not enough. Note that not everyone in church is eligible to marry because the church is a hospital and there are all kinds of people. Not all who come to Church are Christians; that you sleep in the garage does not make you a car. So check out for a Christ like character.

The person that is lying to you now will surely lie to you tomorrow, if he threatens to beat you today, he will surely beat you tomorrow. The guy pressuring you for sex is already an adulterer in the making, so check out for character. If he cannot control himself when he sees you, then he will not control himself when he sees the house help, your sister and your friend. Be careful with people who lack patience for counseling during

marriage, they always want to move immediately. Those who cannot wait to be counseled before they marry, may not also wait when they eventually get married; they will come out again and find reasons to run away even to another church.

Kindly find time to check for character because that lady that is always fighting her boss, her father, her elderly brother, etc, does not respect authority, so she will surely fight you at home, be careful.

3. **Compatibility Amos 3:3**

If one is able to settle the issue of compatibility in a relationship, many other things will flow easily. Compatibility does not mean similarity, it means the ability for two things to get along. It does not mean that two of the people in the relationship must love talking; one can talk while the other listens. This shows that we have certain strengths that are bound to complement each other.

If you examine a biro and the cover, you will see that they are good complements. The cover stays on top while the biro writes, and will move to protect the ball point while the pen is not in use. They are not similar but compatible. So before you marry, check to see if you can go along.

It begins with your *values* in life; do you believe the same things? In some families, God is first and everyone knows that, so people should check to see if they have similar values, because it is not every Christian that you should marry. Compatibility also has to do with *purpose* because it is better to discover your purpose for life before choosing your life time partner. Where you are going in life determines who is going with you, so there must be compatibility in purpose.

For instance, it is obvious that not everyone should marry a preacher, or business man, because they have different ideologies about profit; a business man thinks about the balance sheet for profit while a preacher thinks about how many souls were touched, blessed, saved or encouraged by the word. Many have gotten married and their dreams and vision were destroyed. So marry someone who will accommodate your dreams and appreciate what you are called to do.

4. **Companionship**

It will be good to marry from amongst your friends. So many people make the mistake of rejecting people they are very close, and end up marrying an enemy instead of a friend. Prov. 17:17 says that a friend loveth at all times. So many people wonder what married people do; they talk. Some people do marriage as if it is government work or a duty, they get very serious

without relationship.

The main thing to miss while your spouse is away, can only be friendship or companionship. Therefore, do not only strife to make your spouse a friend, rather, out of your friends, choose a wife

One of the things in marriage that will last beyond romance no matter how old you both have grown is companionship because you will keep being friends.

5. **Capacity**

Before looking for a spouse, do you have the capacity? Marriage is not for boys, but for men, it is not a joke. Many people crash out in marriage because they were not ready. Capacity refers to maturity; "Therefore shall a *man* leave his father and mother" Gen. 2:24.

One of the ways you know capacity is when you can be on your own; you can leave your mother and father. It means you can stand as a person on your own. One of the things that break homes most is the influence of in-laws, so let your perspective about marriage be right, it must be rooted in the word. The bible says marriage is a good thing, Gen 2:18, that two are better one, Eccl. 4:9-12, that he that finds a wife findeth a good thing and obtains favour from God, Prov.

18:22 and concludes that marriage is honorable in all,
Heb. 13:14

CONCLUSION

Do not leave the success of your marriage to fate, rather, work hard, study God's word and pray fervently in order to get the balance correct. However excited you may be while making your choice, know that there is something you need to do or avoid in order to get it right. Therefore, be you a male or female, endeavor to keep yourself and follow the process for the best you can and leave the rest to God. As you study these lessons, pray for God's guidance and favour and get prepared before it finally comes.

Let parents and families avoid pressure on their children, rather, they should get them to know what they should know. Churches should do their work; teaching, chastising and correcting the erring ones and should not be afraid of challenges and threats, good people will always come and stay.

Let the honor of marriage be restored beginning with the Church that God be glorified in our

marriages and in the Church.

MARRIAGE IS HONORABLE
HEBREW 13:4
MAY GOD HELP US, AMEN

MATTERS ARISING

When a marriage has challenges, someone will be blamed; the man, woman or the institution itself. It is important that we address certain issues that contribute to marital failures and reinforce the principles that ensure success in matrimony. Matters arising tends to address specific issues that arise in relationships including life experiences of singles and would be couples. It deals directly with specific challenges common to most couples as well as technical questions mostly asked by couples and singles. It shall also address global issues raised concerning marriage and relationship with careful thoughts to how the bible addresses them.

There will also be family and single life questionnaire prepared to address personal needs affecting individuals and the family. In all of these, it is expected that giving careful thoughts to them and making efforts to prayerfully seek God's wisdom in addressing these issues shall open ways to solving several problems and addressing challenges.

TECHNICAL QUESTIONS

1. If a man decides to marry a lady whom the family consented to but could not fulfill the rites. Both of them lived together and have children, are they husband and wife?

NO, they are only living like husband and wife, putting the cart before the horse. This must be checked. Refer to cohabitation for more explanation.

2. How can young people who stay in the cities far from parents access their families before marriage?

They should be advised to come home where they can get access to the family or involve some who know the family and are willing to guide them, marriage is a serious thing. Where the reverse happens, the couples in question shall have themselves to blame in future in the case of any eventuality.

3. What should be done if people have made mistakes in their marriage arrangements and have married wrongly in ignorance? They should repent, confess their mistakes, pray for forgiveness, correct themselves and teach others to abstain from

such mistakes, Acts 20:28.

4. If you promised to marry a person but along the way you realized that he or she is not what you saw at first hence you withdraw, is it a crime?

My answer is, maybe; depending on what you did before such withdrawal. You can make the person become what you expect just as he or she is adjusting towards you. Marriage requires adjustment, the two persons involved will need to study and understand themselves and work together.

5. Since veil is for virgins, is it not proper to stop people in the Church from celebrating with veils, instead of deceiving ourselves?

I do not think so, rather, I think it depends those concerned. Let the Church teach people to understand the need for purity in marriage, and allow individuals to examine themselves. Any such decision by the Church may imply faulty generalization; there could be an honest person who will be denied the act due to many bad ones. Read more on shotgun wedding and sex before marriage.

6. Can somebody withdraw from a marriage process if the list is too exorbitant for him

given that he has made a promise to the partner?

YES, provided all intentions are honorable. You cannot buy what you cannot afford, so cut your cloth according to your size. See the process of marriage under cross examination to see how to approach your marriage list properly.

7. How can one who is not yet married go through marriage procedure?

The only way to do so is by doing it as taught, refer to THE PROCESS OF MARRIAGE in the book. Handle it step-by-step with careful attention to God through prayers.

8. Can one marry a cripple who is pronounced on him as God's will?

Maybe, but you must confirm such God's will with due process. Test the spirits and be sure that they are of God, I Jn. 4:1,

9. If you notice that the parent of your would be partner have divorced, is it okay to still marry from there or withdraw?

Yes, that parents divorced is not a guarantee that their children shall do same.

It may also depend on the cause of such divorce and the position of the person involved. Your partner may have been converted from such immorality; no one can be punished on the sin of his or her parents unless such is a party to it.

10. Since some families give out exorbitant lists for marriage, can the Church take over the giving of lists in order to check these excesses?

NO. Although some religious leaders try to interfere, but this is not right. Only the owner can negotiate his price, if the church has daughters then they should give the list, if not, let them do their work; teaching for correction, II Tim. 4:1-3.

11. Can one marry a woman who is richer than him with intimidating credentials, certificates or degree given that he is not educated?

YES, but not for the certificates, rather, love, so go through the marriage process to see if she is yours.

12. Can I marry a beautiful girl for my boy who is not fully mature because I do not want to miss such beauty?

NO, the beautiful ones are not yet born and beauty they say, lies in the eyes of the beholder, let your boy make the choice for himself. He should be mature enough to discern and decide for himself.

13. Does Church of Christ support courtship? if yes, what happens to a partner who gets disappointed in the course of it due to what has been discovered? Such should blame his or herself for not allowing for due process. Refer to our lesson on When should a Christian marry?

14. If I come from a tribe where "ebot-usongo-enyin" is compulsory as marriage requirement even if I have not committed any crime, should I accept it and go ahead with the marriage?

Go ahead if you like to be punished for doing nothing, otherwise find out why, correct them and go ahead or withdraw if necessary. If you

17. Can a marriage relationship be seen to be too long but still meaningful?

NO, when something is too long or too much it becomes a disease, hence, no more meaningful. Prolonged engagement is

tempting. Marital engagement should not be too long to avoid complications and displeasures, see engagement under the process of marriage.

18. If I don't have money but rush into marriage in order to meet up with my age, avoid fornication etc. by going for learner's permit could I be justified? NO, look for someone whom you can marry without paying money (if such exist)

19. Why do couples swear in marriage ceremonies?

It is called exchange of vows not oath, marriage require exchange of vow which may be done privately or publicly to confirm one's love for the other. It is a promise made which strengthens the declaration after marital rites and is very important.

20. Is it right if a father collects marriage requirements without telling the church, etc, eventually the lady gets pregnant and the church disciplines her? Your child does not belong to you alone, involve the church, your family, etc. they can assist you as well.

However, this is not a law, if you do not wish to involve others in your business, then be ready to carry on alone in life.

21. Should a Christian marry only in the Lord?

YES, that is where they belong, they should not mingle. Refer to marriage amongst God's people in the old and new testament.

23. If a Christian family rejects what is given for a marriage, and the couple goes ahead, is it sinful?

YES, there should be agreement before giving of items, so go and negotiate. Marriage is about agreement involving the two people and their parents.

24. If I give money in place of sacrifice needed as marriage rite, will I be justified?

NO, you are the same with those who sacrificed. It is an act of idolatry to sacrifice before one is married; Christians who are the lights of the world should rise above and against this devilish act and teach the world the will of God.

25. Marrying a lady having loved her dressing but eventually discovered that the attitude fades off her, hence I distaste going out with her, who is right?

None of you is right; you have a serious problem that needs urgent counseling. Assist your wife to maintain herself in all aspects of life and do not neglect her. Keep yourselves for one another.

27. Since I have not married in the right way, should I divorce and remarry?

NO, confess, correct and live right, see I Jn. 1:8; 2:1.

28. When does marriage begin?

Married begins whenever you are married (see lesson on when is a Christian said to be married?).

30. If I pray for a tall person but God keeps sending short people my way, what should I do?

Marry one of them; if they are God sent, then God knows what is best for you.

31. How long should I wait for someone that wants to marry me?

It depends on you and the prevailing circumstance. But note that there is time for everything, therefore, follow the process dully and allow God to lead you.

32. Should a Christian house a lady after introduction?

No, such Christian should marry her first. Do not put the cart before the horse.

33. How can one present you're his or her partner to God without knowing him or her?

If you need God to be involve in the choice of your partner, then you need to present your proposals first before the partner comes. Do not choose for God before asking for blessings.

34. What is your opinion concerning a lady having equal opportunity to express her feelings in marriage?

It could be okay depending on how the

expressing is done.

35. Should engagement ring come before parents come to the know of one's intentions?

Not likely but it depends. Please respect your parents in each step of your marriage procedure.

SINGLE'S LIFE QUESTIONNAIRE

A. Introduction

This questionnaire is meant to assess challenges and situations of Christian singles on certain areas before marriage. It is a recommendation for your personal approach toward the assessment of your readiness and genuine intentions for marriage. The expectation is that you, the respondent will be sincere with the information you provide here and that you will use them for your own good. You may need to check how the information you have provided about yourself has affected your life.

B. Personal Data

Please provide the following information truthfully;

- Age Range:.....
- Gender:
- Occupation:.....
- Are you living with your parents or with who?.....
- What is your major source of income?....
- How long would you like to stay before getting married?.....

C. Questionnaire

1. What are the major difficulties that you have in making choice of a partner?
.....
.....
.....
2. How would you describe your income in respect to being okay for you to start your family?.....
3. What are your major challenges or what immorality do you find difficult to overcome?
.....
.....
4. How would you sincerely describe your level of faithfulness to God in morality?
.....
.....

5. What are the major challenges you have as peer group influence?

.....
.....

5. In what major ways does your paternal family influence your situation negatively?

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.....

7. How are you disturbed emotionally when you get in contact with any opposite sex that you would love to have as a marital partner?

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.....
.....

8. What are your health challenges including HIV, STD, etc?

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.....

9. What are the major things that are keeping you from getting married by now?

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.....
.....

10. Any other information about your Singlehood which may likely affect your marriage life?

.....
.....

God bless you.

ABOUT THE BOOK

The book **THIS ISSUE OF MARRIAGE** is a **GREEN CARD** for finding your marriage and having a sustainable home. It is published in two parts, one and two. Part one deals on getting a Life Partner while part two centers on the Family. It gives a step-by-step approach on what it takes to go through marriage successfully, beginning with the choice of a partner and proceeding into life at home. It is made for singles and couples who desire to choose a life partner and nurture a comfortable living condition for themselves.

Often times, people offer **Red Cards** to show their emotional rejection, but here comes a **GREEN CARD** that portrays calm and acceptance. Red Card implies the negative tendencies, bad signs and signals embodied in attitudes displayed by people to frustrate relationships or while in the process to settle down with someone in marriage. This **GREEN CARD** however, denotes the positive tendencies and attitudes meant to assist an individual in the process of making the choice as well as help a marriage thrive successfully.

It serves as a **Gate Guide** or pass on how to enter a marriage and settle therein, reducing

the risk of being denied basic understanding and approach to the union.

A good beneficiary and user of this **GREEN CARD** shall require less effort to handle the common challenges that may arise before and after marriage, given his or her pre-informed position on the marital issues that may attack to frustrate genuine or honourable intentions concerning the selection of a life time companion.

Like a **Phyto-Defence**, it arms the reader with body guards and personal assistants on how to approach marriage as a lifelong project and serves as security at the post while entering into this constant relationship, and provides caution to check on the signs and signals of positive and negative attitudes toward the choice of a partner.

It also serves as an **Immune Booster** against threats and undue influences from the environment during and after the process of marriage.

What a **tool, an instrument and soft ware** for singles and couples.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

KUFRE EKPO is a Lover of the Gospel and Preacher in the Ministry; the Church. Statistician and Motivational Speaker, Radio and TV Presenter, Music Artiste and Composer, Business Advocate and CEO, Writer and Visionary Leader, Family Therapist and Marriage Counselor and above all, a STUDENT OF LIFE.

Married to Emediong and father of their three wonderful kids, he has been a source of motivation to many within and outside the body of Christ. He is a great leader with resourcefulness and innovation; A great gift to the body of Christ and to the world at large.

THIS ISSUE OF MARRIAGE, is his second published book.