



KUFRE EKPO

This issue
of *Marriage*

A GREEN CARD FOR MARRIAGE AND FAMILY MAKING

PART TWO



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CONTENTS

Dedication	-	-	-	-	-	iv
Acknowledgments	-	-	-	-	-	v
Preface	-	-	-	-	-	vii

Introduction

• Importance of Family	-	-	-	1
• Family Settings and Need for Adjustment	-	-	-	2

SECTION ONE:

ISSUES IN MARRIAGE AMONGST

CHRISTIANS	-	-	-	-	5
------------	---	---	---	---	---

SECTION TWO

LAYING FOUNDATION FOR A

GODLY HOME	-	-	-	-	15
-------------------	---	---	---	---	----

SECTION THREE

SYMPTOMS OF AN UNHEALTHY FAMILY -

• What is a Healthy Family?	-	-	18
• Symptoms of Illness in a Family	-	-	21
• Sources of Family Illness	-	-	26
• Causes and Effects of Family Illness	-	-	27
• Prescriptions for Unhealthy Families	-	-	33
•			

SECTION FOUR

FAMILY CHALLENGES

• Challenges facing the man as Husband and father in the Home	-	34
---	---	----

• Challenges facing the woman as mother and wife in the Home	-	-	39
--	---	---	----

SECTION FIVE

PREPARING FOR A GOOD FAMILY LIFE

• The Need for a Good Family Life	-	46
-----------------------------------	---	----

SECTION SIX

BUILDING MY FAMILY

• Requirements for Building a Godly Family	51
--	----

SECTION SEVEN

Finding Joy in Our Marriage	-	-	55
Being a Blessing to my Family	-	-	57
Family Devotion: Impact and Role in Home Building	-	-	60

SECTION EIGHT

Living a Happy Life in a Happy Home

• What is a Happy Life and a Happy Home?	-	-	67
• Importance of Happy Life and a Happy Home	-	-	68
• Causes of Unhappiness in the Home			
• Summary and Conclusion	-	-	70

SECTION NINE

ISSUE	-	-	-	-	77
-------	---	---	---	---	----

MATTERS ARISING

Open Forum	-	-	-	101
Family Life Questionnaire	-	-	-	105

DEDICATION

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

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It was not easy to get through if not for the help of many who contributed immensely to the success of this project.

My greatest appreciation goes to God, the almighty, my source of inspiration and provider of grace. Sincerely, the focus for this publication was almost lost, but God reignited the passion and provide the way through. He picked me up as a no body and made me who I am. GLORY TO HIM!

I wish to thank the Church of Christ Ikot Mbonde Itam where I minister; leaders, men, women, youths and children altogether, for the experiences I have had to learn from in my responsibility toward Church marriage affairs.

My late father has been my tutor, my mother played the part of a counselor, while my brothers, sisters and in-laws served as watchmen, grooming and nurturing me for this wonderful outreach.

My wife, Cherie, has been the link for strength and shock absorber in the process while my three kids; DONE SPLENDID and DESIRE have

been in the theatre, providing the fun with drama and movies.

Min. Victor Etim has been key, in driving the dreams, Mercy Essien has showed tolerance in the process, together with other in-house personnel; Patience Ibok Patience Uyoe and Nyakno who gathered the materials. A wonderful mother, Eno Ekong gave the boost. May I extend my appreciation also to all those who directly or indirectly have assisted and impacted on me in the course of this book.

Thank you!

PREFACE

The book THIS ISSUE OF MARRIAGE is a GREEN CARD for finding your marriage and having a sustainable home. 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 vices 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:

Someone who has ever been bothered over the alarming rate of marital crises including rejection, fights, divorce, separation, disappointments, etc.

A person who has ever been challenged, deceived or heart broken in the process of choosing a spouse.

An individual who has been humiliated or neglected by someone or family due to the effect of a wrong marriage.

One who may have become afraid of marriage due to the negative treatment experienced by his or her parents, relations, colleagues, neighbors, etc.

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.

FAMILY AFFAIRS

***FOR CHRISTIANS IN THEIR PURSUIT OF A
REWARDING FAMILY LIFE***

1 TIM. 5:8

INTRODUCTION

A family is a domestic group of people, or a number of domestic groups, typically affiliated by birth or marriage, or by comparable legal relationship like adoption. Although many people have understood families in terms of blood, many practical circumstances have shown that family relationship may go beyond blood into adoption.

It comprises of the father or husband, mother or wife, children, maids and in some cases step brothers, sisters, extended relations, etc. All members of the church belong to families and have the tendency of affecting the church depending on the life style of their families. The relationship between members of the family and their roles towards each other generates the concept of family affairs which is the main focus of this section. We shall seek God's wisdom throughout this study and recommend same to Christians in order to help children of God lead a beautiful life in their homes.

IMPORTANCE OF THE FAMILY

The family is the most important unit of the society and it plays significant roles in the life of

an individual whether Christian or not. These roles also include, training, molding character, total making of members through consistent nurturing, discipline and correction for better life, maintaining the core values and norms of life, supporting members as they grow and develop in character and in their respective pursuits, providing security and comfort for all members as well as maintaining the moral standard as virtues of life generally. It also provides for basic needs capable of influencing the productive life of an individual. The family is the last place an individual can run to and confide in during times of stress, disappointments, difficulties and heart break. Importance of a family generates an endless list of significance in human race and in order to restore the integrity of our families, it will be necessary to explore the mind of God on family affairs. God has shown us that a good family is a good place to be, a comfort zone for all and a reliable atmosphere designed for people to interact and live peaceably.

FAMILY SETTINGS AND NEED FOR ADJUSTMENT

There are different kinds of family settings, some of which do not conform to the plan of God

and should be adjusted to standard if and only if couples will like to live godly and comfortably. Consider settings such as;

1. A family where parents fight and children also fight among themselves generating tension and pressure for the members and for the society.
2. There is a family where respect and obedience is lacking due to lack of discipline and moral standard.
3. In some families, couples are managing relationships due to unhappy pattern of life projected by such members.
4. There is also a family where one partner carries the family burden and in some, partners lack the ability to care for and bear their burdens, thereby exerting so much pressure on the people.
5. Some families are living under division due to communication break down and lack of peace among members.
6. In most families, children pose attack, curses and disrespect to their parents, thereby inviting the wrath of God into their lives.
7. Extended family sometimes, exerts unnecessary pressure on couples, thereby affecting the lives and plans of such family.

8. There are also families where couples keep secrets, raise children outside the matrimonial home and divide their interest by keeping relationships outside.

There is therefore, the need for adjustment which must be impactful enough for a change in the life of members and in the entire family. Couples should imbibe godly virtues capable of protecting the integrity of God in their homes and should carry along the symbol of good relationship in their family. Children should be trained to love one another, respect parents, accept discipline and unite for positive growth in the home.

"But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever"

1Tim.5:8.

1

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.

16. **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?

17. **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.

18. **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.

19. **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.

20. **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.

26. **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.



LAYING FOUNDATION FOR A GODLY HOME

(Basic Rudiments for Home Building)

*"When the foundations are being
destroyed, what can the righteous
do?" Psa. 11:3*

In order to establish a godly home, where godly influence is felt, a godly foundation must be laid on time. This foundation must embrace all kinds of relationships in the home and the possible roles of individuals. A godly family is one that strives to live godly, accepting the will of God in their families and giving themselves to the leadership and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Members of such families exhibit godly virtues capable of promoting love, unity and peace for the benefit of members in general.

Parents and children allow the word of God to affect and fashion their lives, making use of bible instructions as rudiments for understanding how to model and lead a reasonable lifestyle,

Rom 12:2-3. These can be done as a process through the following principles as rudiments necessary for effective home building:

1. Training

Each family should train themselves in the way they ought to go so as to impart character capable of sustaining the home before God, Prov. 22:6. Training is the main tool that is capable of informing; educating and equipping family members with the necessary attributes needed to build and sustain a good home.

2. Discipline

Discipline should not be overlooked in the home because constant application of it shall ensure correction and guarantee good behavior. It may be unpleasant at first but shall bring forth fruits worth emulation, Heb. 12:11. It is required of parents to see about this as a tool for leadership in the home, failure of which the consequences shall not be enjoyable, Prov. 23:13-23.

3. Mentoring

Christians should consistently mentor their wards and the entire family according to the tutorship of God so as to ensure joy and good living in their homes, Prov. 29:15. Mentorship is the guidance provided by an experienced person,

such as parents in the process of training and nurturing their children.

4. **Good Example-ship**

There should be good example-ship among parents in the home as children mostly rely on what they see, in building their own character, Prov. 1:27.

5. **Guidance and Counseling**

Guidance and counseling properly can show a family the way and ensure good relationship in the home.

6. **Proper Exposure**

Absence of required exposure can initiate timidity, fear and incompetence in the life of family members. It is therefore necessary to get members exposed to the needs of life where necessary.

Those who spend time to lay good foundation for their homes will surely reap and enjoy in the course of life.

“...Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit...” Matt. 7:16-20

3

SYMPTOMS OF AN UNHEALTHY FAMILY

This lesson is a research into certain diseases that have invaded Christian homes; to understand their negative effects and to foster solutions toward a peaceful household.

Although every family is different, there are certain characteristics that healthy families share. The quality of the relationship is more important than family configuration. A healthy family relationship provides members with support, encouragement and empathy. The health of a family does not depend on its size, wealth or fame, rather, on the basic ingredients needed to sustain the values it portrays. Given the important role a family plays on everyone, it is necessary to see about its health status in order to guarantee a better life for members

thereof. A family is not just a group of people but a system of relationship with each individual affecting the other constantly, it functions just as the human body where all the parts are linked to relate and interact together. It could be sick through one part, many or entire system, hence its complexity must be carefully managed, 1 Cor. 12:12-28.

Healthy implies a level of functional efficiency of an organization or system, for example, a healthy child or a functional vehicle. Therefore, a healthy family can be seen to be a functional household, where its members are physically, spiritually, emotionally, psychologically and economically stable in health to face their responsibilities properly.

Symptoms refers to any subjective evidence of disease. A sign indicating change in a system or mind which suggests that disease is present. A state which shows that something is wrong.

This lesson is an attempt to check for the functional efficiency and status of our families as Christians in order to help us update and bring our families into a status comfortable for Christians to be. We shall have this done under certain headings.

What is a Healthy Family?

A healthy family is a household defined by the principles of God which is ready to follow the instructions of God in its existence. It strives hard to maintain the values, cultures and traditions meant to guarantee the success of each member. It exist, as a *comfort zone* for its members and fosters the interest of its citizens.

Members of such household are committed to one another, dedicated to living their lives in support for each other with unquestionable loyalty and understanding. Any healthy family spends time together, they believe that time together cannot have *quality* without *sufficient quantity.* This implies that, they enjoy open, frequent communication, and respect one another as priority. They give attention to the needs of members with guaranteed protection; hence, members turn inward during times of crises. They nurture and bring up members according to the values of *"the faith"*. Such family appreciates, affirms and encourages any good effort of its members. A healthy family shares their spiritual commitments about God and always appraise their things, considering their status and progress, Exo. 20:12.

Symptoms of Illness in a Family

When a family is ill, certain signs prevail to show that something is wrong. If Christians can study these symptoms carefully and endeavor to eradicate them in their homes, it is possible to remedy several sicknesses facing their families which has endangered their children and has exerted negative influences on them. Some of these signs can be seen in the following ways:

1. When couples begin to hide things from themselves in order to satisfy personal ambition, thereby trying to protect self interest and disjointed loyalty, Lev. 19:11. They have secrets such as buying land, building a house, getting a loan, being into contributions with colleagues at their offices without the knowledge of their partners.
2. When a parent develops soft spot for a particular child than others, example, showing special interest on one child over others.
3. When couples are too stiff or rigid on each other, lacking appreciation, encouragement and support.

4. When couples lack time together, giving more time to their work, devoting too much time for outside things, thereby, becoming tired at home.
5. When a family member rejects food at home and chooses to eat outside maybe due to certain misunderstanding, while the other forms the habit of denying one food, maybe because feeding money given was not enough.
6. When a family member has the habit of disclosing their family affairs and secrets to a third party and finds comfort in discussing their family problems with such, maybe in the office, with colleagues, especially, if money is lacking or register other displeasures concerning their home.
7. When they begin to spend their salaries or income outside before getting home or without a fair knowledge of their partner. Let your partner know your financial status, this does not mean that he or she must spend it for you, although some partners are too demanding and will stop at nothing in finishing any money they see,

hence making the other become difficult.

8. When you notice that the entire family burden is carried on the shoulder of one person. It is important for couples to have something doing no matter how small so as to assist and sustain their home. Men should not leave burdens on their wives as a responsibility just because they are helping out.
9. When partners begin to take each other for granted, failing to do what they ought to, or use to do. Example, refusing to accept apologies knowing that she will always come to say I am sorry, even when she is not at fault, or women having the feeling that whatever they do, they cannot be divorced because she is secure being in the church, after all, no church will accept a divorce, hence, pushing the other to unnecessary pressure.

You must know that there is pay-back time for what you do because even your children will come to know that you have not been a good wife and will not respect you. This also happens when a partner tends to give quick attention to the needs of others outside, taking responsibility while that of his or her house is pending.

10. When partners tend to claim rights without accommodating the other or seeing anything wrong in their own life even when they are wrong.
11. When you see disregard and oversight displayed on one another, preferring visitors to family members.
12. When discipline is overlooked or made weak for the sake of pity or to pamper.
13. When couples are in the habit of condemning their family members, not seeing anything good in them at any point despite any honest effort.
14. When parents fail to do their best in providing economic needs for the family welfare and for the future of their children, thereby exposing their children to untimely risk in feigning for themselves, and taking over parental responsibilities, II Cor. 12:14. Gen. 18:19.
15. When family members grudgingly choose to do things alone instead of together, such as eating, worship, attending occasions, etc.

16. When a partner or family member refuses instruction or understanding in what should be done to move that family ahead or promote happiness in the home.
17. When a partner takes to another relationship outside openly or secretly in order to make for his/her satisfaction. Interest will be divided and tolerance may be lacking because a second option is available, Matt. 6:24.
18. When a partner cannot face the other properly, especially in discharging domestic responsibilities, instead, chooses to go through a maid or table, especially where there are minor challenges or misunderstandings.
19. When a partner feels insecure due to certain needs like children, thereby taking personal actions detrimental to their future. For instance, solving problems alone, attending to medicals alone, choosing prayer houses for advice and action that may be seen to be ungodly.
20. When children begin to answer back on their parents, they disobey and resist

discipline, Prov. 22:15; 29:15.

21. When members exist in violence with fights, curses, destructive tendencies and the attitude of chasing one another out of the home, thereby exposing themselves to danger and untold hardships, Prov. 30:17; James 4:1, Prov. 28:25.

Sources of Family Illness

Family illness may be categorized into four basic parts depending on how a particular sickness was contacted.

We have diseases related to parental influence or Background which refers to dis-functioning of a partner due to influence from parents. Here the affected person or persons must have copied certain lifestyles from the parent which has turned out to affect their family negatively. This may include bad attitudes, curses, unfaithfulness, etc.

There are some sicknesses that are related to societal influence or bad company. Here bad habits are copied from neighbors, peers, advisers, etc, especially where the family partner admires the status of such person.

The third may be Self-made which implies that an individual may as well develop a habit that can affect the family negatively depending on choices borne out of lust and pleasures.

There are also illnesses caused by Conditional Pressures, like hardship, rejection or lack of care which may compel an individual to behave otherwise.

Causes and Effects of Family Illness

These family problems are caused by a number of different factors. Ability to identify these causes is the first step towards its solution. It will be necessary to take a careful look at yourself here and then your family, in order to identify any of these things:

1. Nagging

This means to annoy by constant scolding, complaining, urging continuously, to torment persistently, or, as with anxiety or pain, Prov.21:9; Prov.25:24; Prov.19:13,27:15. This is common to women but most men can do it better. Nagging can cause a fight, quarrel or face off in the family.

2. Money

Either too much or a lack of money is bound to

generate issues in the home, especially, where couples are not mature to manage themselves with resources available. Poverty can cause a change in one's attitude thereby affecting the behavior of people in the home. It can cause anger and sleeplessness if not properly managed. This can generate stress and unnecessary tension in the home. A wife who is more highly placed than the husband may be tempted to disrespect or overlook her responsibility on the husband or family, thereby causing problem, 1 Tim 6:10, 11.

3. **Not being Open**

This is bound to place the other in the dark, thereby, giving him or her opportunity to suspect one's behavior. Couples should open-up to each other in all things and allow transparency to fill their lives, including finances; this will promote trust and confidence.

4. **Suspicion and doubt**

Most people seem to be too suspicious and doubtful of their spouses, this can generate unreasonable action which may be seen as monitoring. No human being loves to be monitored; hence, such action may bring forth undue "self-fortification" Titus 1:15.

5. Alcohol and other intoxicants

It is good for couples if they abstain from all forms of intoxicants including alcohol, cigarettes, snuffing, etc. Being drunk or intoxicated can generate unexpected immoral behavior or embarrassment which is not good for a family. If you must drink, then you must drink responsibly for the sake of your life and your children, Prov. 20:1.

6. Stress

When an individual is under duress, intense pressure and fatigue, whether mentally or psychologically, such must be assisted and given time to regain sound consciousness as it may subject him or her to serious pressure. Stress can cause anger, misunderstanding and unexpected sickness, therefore, it is necessary to check from time to time.

7. Interference of extended family

When you invite your brothers and sisters into your family issues unnecessarily, you are indirectly exposing your family to their tutorship. This may show your inability to handle things maturely and can go a long way to constitute offences to your partner. The offending partner may repent while they still take him or her the same way. This is likely to cause inward

embarrassment to your partner which may in turn affect your relationship negatively.

8. **Bad company**

Most married people and children keep bad companies with people who help them on how their families should be run, especially; when things are not going the way they should. Some end up getting advice that do not go down well with their own family, thus, practicing such, can endanger the smooth running of such family, I Cor. 15:33. Carefulness is really needed here, otherwise, your companionship is capable of turning you into an unruly person, a gossip, etc, Titus 1:10.

9. **Disobedience**

Disobedience is a destructive weapon in any family life, especially, when family members fail to respect the position and place of others in their home. The father must be seen as head, the mother must be given due honor as the next in command while the children follow suit. Family members must be taught to respect others who are elderly, this will promote respect and continuously decorum in the household, Eph. 5:23, 24, I Pet. 3:1-7, Eph. 6:1-6.

10. **Moral decadence**

In a family where morality is not upheld, members are bound to behave uncomely, especially in the type of generation we have found ourselves, Matt. 3:7-8, Moral decadence that has deeply affected our societies is a product of family neglect in her responsibility to train and nurture members properly.

11. **Laziness**

A lazy man is an unproductive person who lacks food and care for the needs of his family. He may unnecessarily depend on his wife, relations, government etc. Such person will always wish that things will be better, putting the hope of his family in the future. When this is too much, it will affect the members and none of them will take you by your words anymore, Prov. 6:6-11.

12. **Undue demand with specification**

Some family members are highly demanding to the extent of making undue specifications without considering the ability of the family economically. This may generate displeasure and tension in the home.

13. **Lack of discipline and training**

Some families lack discipline and this is very poor for the members. Lack of discipline will

produce generations of people who are corrupt and wayward. This can soil the name of the family and drag people to mud, example, Eli and his children, I Samuel 1 & 2.

14. **Wrong influence of western civilization and technology**

Certain home videos and films such as pornography, etc, often send wrong signals to children and other family member. This in turn, influences their way of life and reaction to situations in the home. Parents should and if possible regulate the degree of exposure of their children in this regard with respect to their age.

Where the above factors are allowed to prevail in the home, there will surely be disadvantageous effects on the lives of such family members to include, family disorder, Mk 3:25; Mat. 12:25, dwindling progress and development of members, threat for separation and divorce as well as broken homes. Useless and wayward children are bound to emerge, I Sam 2:25; Prov. 10:1, shame and disgrace are bound to overshadow virtues, Prov. 30:11, 19:26 and a poor spiritual life may be established.

PRESCRIPTIONS FOR UNHEALTHY FAMILIES

Despite the troubled state of your family given the sicknesses that has affected it, it is good to note that there is no trouble God cannot cure. God can restore peace, love and understanding if you are willing to use his pills as given in the word.

"Be kindly affectionate, one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another; be of the same mind one towards another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate,"

Rom. 12:10-16.

"Owe no man anything but to love one another: for he that loves another hath fulfilled the law, Rom. 13:8. Let us not therefore judge one another anymore; but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way,"

Rom. 14:13.

"Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received you to the glory of God,"

Rom. 15:7.

4

FAMILY CHALLENGES

There are so many challenges facing members of the family, beginning from the head to the subordinates. In most cases, these challenges are meant to unveil the capabilities available in the people who live there in, thereby shaping each and every one of them for greater task ahead. Family members should not run away from challenges, rather, should learn to face them with the strength of God in them.

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me"
Phil. 3:17

CHALLENGES FACING THE MAN AS HUSBAND AND FATHER IN THE HOME

Most people think that marriage is such a bed of roses without any challenge, hence, a solution

to all their problems that has existed, only to enter into it and realize that it is an introduction to a new set of challenges with responsibilities in life, and they must live up to the expectation. The family is one unit that introduces people to diverse set of challenges. As a man, you have challenges in the family, either as husband or father. Women and children tend to pose so many challenges on men in the home to the extent that if they try to resist, unnecessary pressure shall be exerted on the home. A good knowledge of these challenges shall help the man to live up to expectations in the house. How can one face the challenge of being a man at home, with the wife and children in a fast changing and demanding world? How can one live beyond the expectations of his wife and children which has culminated into challenges? 1 Cor. 7:29-35. It is not easy to be a man; a husband and a father.

Analyzing the Challenges

Whatever challenges a man is facing as either a husband or father in the home can be seen in four categories including:

1. Leadership

The first responsibility that rest upon the man's shoulder as husband and father in the family is

the challenge of leadership. The burden to lead the wife and children into the right way and cause them to follow instructions is a great challenge that must be addressed by the man. As head of the family, he has the duty to command his family to follow righteousness, moral values and all other commandments necessary at all times. Where he fails in this responsibility, the family may register some weaknesses that are bound to affect them in the future, Gen.18:19; Eph 5:22-24.

Let your good influence be felt by your family both in your presence and absence. Endeavour to do the best you can in this aspect with total dependency on the word of God. Lead your family to meet up God's expectation, otherwise, environmental influences will take over and lead them wrongly.

2. Provision

The greatest challenge of a man in the home is that of providing for his family,

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

A man is supposed to be the bread winner of his family, hence, a provider. You are not man enough in the home until you can provide your family with the basic needs demanded for a smooth life. Providing for family goes beyond a day job, and cuts across the total plan on the general well being of family members. This introduces the man to the challenge of finance because money answers everything,

*"A feast is made for laughter, wine makes
life merry, and money is the answer for everything".
Eccl. 10:19.*

It leads the man to the stage of having to work for their livelihood,

*"Better to be a nobody and ye have a servant
than pretend to be somebody and have no
food". Prov. 12:9.*

Provision goes beyond the food, and extends as far as shelter, clothing, educational training, as well as moral and spiritual leadership. Gen. 3:16; Eph. 5:23-25; 6:1-6. Therefore, in order to be a good Christian husband and father, you must give careful consideration and attention to the several needs of your family. Manage every one and command the influence required of you

with happiness and good sense of responsibility.

3. **Protection**

The man is the CSO of the family, therefore, you have to keep safe, that which God has entrusted into your care, Gen. 18:19. You have to see far beyond them in order to protect them. Your family can rely or depend on you at any time. Protect them from attack, sickness, frustration, emotional breakdown, disappointment and torture from people. Guide your children and your wife from undue influences of your relations and neighbors, and be sure that your family is free from tension and anxiety that may affect their smooth progress and endanger them to threats in any aspect of their lives. Proper security of members shall ensure trust and confidence of the family on you, it is a guarantee for safety which opens the way to strong confidence on you as their physical and spiritual leader. This is an aspect that men should not take for granted because the total wellbeing of the family security-wise has been committed to their charge. Please be the man.

4. **Projection**

Position your family for progress and

development, train the children, encourage your wife to see possibility, keep the family as one. Bring up your family according to the way of God; plan and change the bad fortune of your family members and still make yourself relevant as both husband and father. Enforce training and discipline that will influence your family even in your absence. Your projection should cover the entire family without preferring one member against the other as well as consider the destiny and future image of all members. A man should see beyond the present, focusing into the expected future of his family members. With this, you can plan to see the possible success of your children, thereby making sure to pursue reality instead of fantasies that may expose them to poor family upbringing. Be an eye for your children and help them see the future with you.

CHALLENGES FACING THE WOMAN AS MOTHER AND WIFE IN THE FAMILY

Most people think that marriage is such a bed of roses without any challenge, hence, a solution to all their problems that has existed, only to enter into it and realize that it is an introduction

to a new set of challenges with responsibilities in life, and they must live up to expectation. The family is one unit that introduces people to diverse set of challenges. As a woman, you have challenges in the family, either as wife or mother. Men and children tend to pose so many challenges on women in the home to the extent that if women try to resist, unnecessary pressure shall be exerted on the home. A good knowledge of these challenges shall help the woman live up to expectation in the house. How can one face the challenge of being a woman at home, with the husband and children in a fast changing and demanding world? How can one live beyond the expectations of his husband and children which has culminated into challenges? 1 Cor. 7:29-35. It is not easy to be a woman; a wife and a mother.

Analyzing the Challenges

A man was created because God wanted to, but a woman was created because she was needed, Gen. 2:18-24. So a woman was created with needs waiting her arrival. The need for a woman in the home is very important to the extent that her role has become so paramount. The influence of a woman is such that whenever she is not available; her absence

will be highly felt because her price is worth more than rubies, Prov. 3:15. The bible concludes it with the question, "who can find a virtuous woman" Prov. 31:10. Her challenges therefore as mother and wife can be categorized into four aspects to include:

1. **Support**

It is clear that the first charge a woman has in the home is that of support to the husband who happens to be the head. God created her to be a help meet, thereby providing all the supports a man could need to run the household. Just like every leader needs a supporter, the woman as the vice president of the family is expected to stand in fully in the absence of the husband. She is expected to learn the leadership roles and prepare to discharge same when the need arises. Where the family leadership enjoys the full support of the woman, discipline becomes a useful tool for unity and chastisement will be meant to correct and present all members aright, Gen. 2:18. A help in need is a help indeed.

2. **Management**

As manager of the home, she is a great mixer; she manages the entire home and makes

everyone satisfied. She will provide delicious food on time, enforce discipline, enhances training and sees about all the necessary things needed in the home. She must manage domestic activities that will satisfy both the husband and children at the right time. She has to be available to achieve this.

She must understand how to manage her work and the interest of her family without complain. Coordinate activities in the home, linking them to each appropriately without contradiction, paying attention to the tiny details that are necessary. A wife should understand and be ready to adjust to the changes and progress or maybe retrogressive economic reality of her household even better than the husband. She is a symbol of divine embodiment of numerous virtues capable of sustaining a home, Prov. 31:10-31.

3. **Maintenance**

As a custodian, she maintains the norms, values and standard of the home. She prepares the children, goes after cleanliness and makes the home habitable,

"The wise woman builds a house, but with her

own hands the foolish one tears hers down".

Prov. 14:1.

Se preserves the dignity of the household and carries it along in her image. She can sustain discipline and training by making sure the children learn and study. She investigates into the problem of the house and presents them to the husband. She carries the moral value of the home. A woman is a gate keeper; protecting the house, keeping people on the right path and keeping watch for the master's return. Sincerely, a woman is fearfully and wonderfully made, Psa. 139:14.

4. Motivation

Being an instrument for motivation, a good woman will become a source of inspiration to her home with good sense of humor, initiating moves for joy and togetherness despite the pressure. Children will always hover around her, trusting and relying in her wisdom and strength. The husband confides in her and believes in the integrity of her virtues. She gives hope to the husband and children. She knows how to cover the weakness and nakedness of the family providing support and comfort there with. She knows, sees and understands the tiny

ingredients that can affect the smooth running of the family, thereby, making sure that they are in place at the right time.

These challenges specify the role each person plays in the home and gingers each one to be committed towards good delivery. Let each person face their challenges squarely, and be steadfast in doing them, then such family will be blessed beyond expectation.

5

PREPARING FOR A GOOD FAMILY LIFE

*For singles in preparation for a
Good family life.*

This section is very special and is specifically designed for single Christians who are interested in making a good family life. Moving from singlehood to family life is very interesting yet highly demanding and must be given a careful thought so that one may not move from "fry pan to fire". And the best time to project on a good family life is when one is still single because "ndunongo item afere asefon nanga edisine ikpang" meaning that to "be fore armed is to be fore warned."

Singlehood is a period that helps you transit into a family, and is very necessary to make good use of it and enjoy it accordingly. Be happy, celebrate and praise God about it because you will never be single twice or forever unless you

choose to.

THE NEED FOR A GOOD FAMILY LIFE

The need for a good family life cannot be compared to anything; it is the foundation of everything in life. Almost all things begin from and end with the family. Lack of good family life is not a life worth living; therefore, it is necessary to get prepared because everyone gets involved in it. In preparing for a family life, you must therefore know the type of family setting you intend to have. This will influence the kind of partner you choose, which will as well depend on the kind of person you are. A good family benefits people in a variety of ways including; support, understanding, training, assistance, protection, care etc. But a bad home exposes people to several risks and danger which may in turn endanger their lives. It is necessary therefore to think and plan for a good family. A good family begins in marriage, goes through home making and impacts up to old age. Singles must prepare as follows:

1. **See beyond beauty,**
Prov. 31:29-31

This is because beauty lies in the eye of the beholder and the beautiful ones are not yet

born. Favour or grace may be deceitful, fair appearance of any kind may tempt someone to assume how charming it will always be with the opposite sex. So, you may spend time beholding on your beauty as a thing that will favour you before people. Beauty refers to elegance of shape, symmetry of feature and attractive countenance. A woman that fears the Lord is worth more than these.

2. **See beyond make-ups, I Pet. 3:3-5**

Dresses, perfumes, hair do, body spray, manicure, pedicure, fixing of nails, eye lashes, etc. All these will fade and get you tired along the line, but the inner man of the heart will last to sustain your family.

3. **Package yourself and look good**

This may reflect on your cleanliness, choice of dresses, conversation, temperament, self control, maturity and reaction on issues. Pride and arrogance may seem desirable but will certainly hurt in the long run.

4. **Acquire Handwork**

Give yourself the hope of a lasting prospect by doing something that will give you food so that one may not assume that you are too

dependent, especially on material things. This will help you contribute and support yourselves for life. Go to school or learn a vocation.

5. Be hard working with value

If you work hard at home you will have experience that will sustain your family even in tough times. Every family member should be industrious in order to affect his or her family economically.

6. Cultivate virtues

Cultivate humility against pride, liberality as opposed to covetousness, chastity instead of burning in lust, gentleness that rejects jealousy or envy, temperate against gluttony, patience that calms anger and diligence as opposed to laziness. Nothing lasting is won by force. Prov. 15:1, Jm. 3:17.

7. Avoid pregnancy out of wedlock

Pregnancy out of wedlock will hunt you for life and you will never be happy. Never assume that someone loves you until action is generated enough. Do not be hasty to move in with someone, take your time because a life time relationship comes with a decision made only ones in a life time.

8. **Do not choose a partner out of frustration**

Choosing a partner out of frustration or sympathy comes with anxiety that conceals deceit. Be sure to identify with someone because of love and God's approval rather than the influence of such things bound to bounce back with disappointment and heartbreak. Only the Lord can be your strength.

6

BUILDING MY FAMILY

Any good home or family was built by someone; it is a task that lies ahead of any person both young and old. There are also raw materials for building a home, Prov. 14:1, and there's a foundation to which a good family stands. This section is for an individual who wish to build what belongs to him or her.

Your family is your property, a place you will always fall back on, and a platform meant to give you joy. It is therefore wise to think about building a long lasting and rewarding family where everyone benefits and feels comfortable to identify with. If you care to build a good family devoid of heart break and tears, then you must pass through certain procedures that will pay you, but if the reverse is the case, then you will have yourself to blame at old age, Prov. 12:9. It should not be by the standard of this world, but of God's wisdom, I Cor. 3:18, of course, it will take a wise man to build his house

on the rock, Matt. 7:24-27.

REQUIREMENTS FOR BUILDING A GODLY FAMILY

Some materials shall be like cement, wire, nails, etc, meant to bind or hold two or more things together. Some shall be like iron, wood, etc, that are meant to stand while others are built on them. There shall be materials like the roof used for a covering while the stones or rocks will serve as a foundation that gives strength for others to stand on. There are also things like paint, furniture, glasses, etc, which provides the home with the colors and beauty it deserves. We have therefore categorized these materials into four parts as follows:

1. Foundation Laying or Establishment

Every family must first have its foundation laid before anything is put on top. The type of foundation determines the type of family one has in mind, I Cor. 3:10-13. There are materials that cannot be ignored at the foundation stage; hence, one must identify the stages. Foundation stage includes the time that marriage is contracted to the time that they begin to stay together, study and get adjusted to one another

and develops into a time when children are gotten for which training is done to transfer the family values on them. Materials needed here basically, include understanding, wisdom, knowledge, adjustment, Prov. 24:3, 4. Love and peace are like cement that is used to hold everyone all through the process; therefore, love and peace must be maintained although. This stage really has much to do with the husband and wife; they have the duty to lay the foundation and fashion out how their home should look like.

2. Formation Stage

At this stage, children have started growing, house helps may come as well as relations who may be interested to live with the family. External influences will begin to come thereby influencing the foundation already laid. Here, the society begins to see fruits of the marriage and may appear to impact their own philosophy on the family. Children have started going to school and can copy whatever they see outside to practice inside. Some of those things copied will be opposed to the norms already laid down by parents. Financial burdens may be noticed greatly at this stage and couples are bound to change in attitude. Here the family

really need cooperation, unity and faith. Godly values must be enforced vigorously in order to strengthen the already laid foundation.

3. **Roofing Stage**

At this stage the home begins to see and receive crowns. Prov. 10:1; Prov. 17:6, Prov. 17: 21-25; Prov. 19:13. Children are grown up and shall begin to show for the training and discipline received, Prov. 22:6; Psa. 128:3-6. Crown here may include educational certificates, honours, appointments, and all such recognitions that may show for the knowledge acquired as well as contributions to human development. The family at this point really need to re-strategize and still carry every one along in order to sustain the pillars and structures raised. We really need tolerance, patience and self control to go through all of this.

4. **Finishing**

This is a colorful stage in family life where children have been well packaged, spiritually, socially, educationally, materially, etc. Parents can now see what will happen to their children and where they will be. Finishing well is very important in any family life. It is the last of packaging where you put the doors and

windows (profession), paint the house (with character) and put the chairs (with virtues) for people to come in and sit down. We really need support and vision at this stage because many people may want to come in to perch and share in the glorious sight of the family. These persons who may be extended family members should be made to understand and imbibe the family values. At this point, the family is strong and well established, hence, members are committed to so many things in life and can be useful to themselves and other people who may come their way.

Christians should spend time to build their families and stand out from the world, Matt. 5:13-16. Let the world see the light of Christ in our families and glorify God thereby looking up to the standard.

7

FINDING JOY IN MY MARRIAGE

Matt. 19:5-6

Marriage is a legal relationship between a husband and wife meant to be enjoyed. Although the world has made marriage short of enjoyment, Eccl. 7:29, it is the place of Christians to show that people can enjoy marriage and live their lives to reflect such. They need to invest such characters that can make marriage worthwhile and give people interest about God.

1. God has Ordained and Blessed Marriage

In Genesis 2:18, God said it is not good that the man should be alone, thus, He made a help meet meant for his good. The intention was that they two should enjoy each other through the union, Prov. 5:18 further states that you should be

blessed and should find joy with the wife of your youth. Also, whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing and obtains favor from God, Prov. 18:22. So marriage was meant to be enjoyed from the beginning.

2. Husbands should love and treasure their wives

There are several important responsibilities that must be met by family members if the family must find joy. These responsibilities will go a long way to make the members have a sense of belonging and love. The husband is to tenderly love his wife, Eph. 5:25-33, he should honor, praise and adore her, I Peter 3:7; Prov. 31:28; I Cor. 7:33. He should listen to and heed his wife's wise counsel, where necessary, Judges 13:14-23, II Samuel 25:9-33.

3. Wives should obey and respect their husbands

Wives must also discharge their duties toward their husbands and children. They must look inward and display their God given duties for the benefit of the home. The bible teaches wives to render support, be in obedience, treasure their own, manage the home and render care accordingly. Prov. 11:16; Prov. 12:4; Prov.

19:14; Prov. 31:26; I Tim. 3:11; Prov. 14:1; Prov. 31:27. She is needed as a companion, manager and as a source of inspiration to the family, Prov. 31:1; Prov. 31:12; I Cor. 7:34;

4. Children are to obey their parents in the Lord

This is the major duty of children, to obey, respect and honor instructions from their parents and assist them in all aspects of their endeavours. All children no matter their status should not look down on their parents, but with regard and humility, uphold them as their leaders, guardian and counselors. Eph. 6:1-7.

Truly, the bible contains a wealth of valuable counsel and instruction regarding family life. Even now we can enjoy a happy family life by applying God's instruction found in his word, the Bible. Your family is your pride.

BEING A BLESSING TO MY FAMILY

The greatest blessing in life is the blessing of the family, where all members stay together, share joy and support as well as comfort, peace and happiness. Each member of the family becomes a blessing to the other, making them to live in peaceful harmony. The relationship between

members of the family should give each individual a great sense of belonging. Developing the habit of being a blessing to one another in moments of joy and difficulties is a great gift from all family members, so how can each person become a blessing?

The husband and father as head of the family should be of profound blessing to the wife, his children and relations. The wife and mother should become an embodiment of profound blessing to her husband and children at all times while children in their turn should bless their parents by their presence as members of the family. This can be done in many ways including;

1. Showing love unreservedly to your wife and children as a mark of care. The bible commands that husbands should love their wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her, Eph. 5:25-32.
2. A husband should know that above all, his wife needs three things; love, care and attention. He should also provide basic needs that will secure the family and guarantee safety of existence.
3. He should see the wife and children as co-heirs of the grace, and not as strangers, dwelling with her in understanding and

honor as a weaker vessel, and should not provoke their children to wrath. This will generate abundant trust and confidence. I Pet. 3:7, Eph. 6:4.

4. A husband should also guide his family spiritually, leading the way and showing the path thereof, Gen. 18:19.

5. In the same vein, wives should submit to their husbands as to the Lord in everything, Eph. 5:22-24.

6. Wives should understand above all, that husbands deserve their respect, loyalty and submission.

7. They should support their husbands always, avoiding any embarrassment and equality.

8. They should always surprise their husbands with gifts in addition to godly attributes spoken of in the bible, I Pet. 3:1-6.

9. Wives should always listen to their husbands, seeking their consent in their desire as stated in Gen. 3:1-6c.

10. Above all, wives must know that finding them should be of good and favor to their husbands, Prov. 18:22.

11. Children must obey their parents in the

Lord, submitting to their leadership in all things,
Eph. 6:1-8.

12. They should honor their parents with humility and respect, keeping commandments and giving regard, Prov. 3:1-12.
13. Children should accept discipline and take instructions for their own good, Col. 3:20.
14. Generally, couples should avoid quarrels, nagging, fighting or numbness in the home, rather should seek for peace always, Prov. 27:15, 21:15, 21:9, 25:24.
15. Couples should identify and avoid things that are capable of generating strife and confusion in their homes.
16. They should endeavour to establish their family altar and pray for one another, seeking for their good always.
17. Let each member know his or her responsibility and discharge same accordingly.

FAMILY DEVOTION: IMPACT AND ROLE IN HOME BUILDING

"You shall therefore lay up these words of mind

in your heart and in your soul, and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall teach them to your children, talking of them when you are sitting in your house, and when you are walking by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise"

Deut. 11:18-19

In the run of family necessities and daily needs, we skip or overlook the very important things behind. We always fail to recognize and institute the family altar where all members can devote themselves to God in the pursuit of their daily goals. This section should expose members to the importance of family devotion and the role it plays in building our homes.

Regular bible study and devotion are essential to any family's spiritual life and moral impression. Family devotion is the act of spending time together as a family through praises, prayers and reading the word. It establishes a feeling of God's presence in the home and pours out confidence to the members, thereby giving the assurance of daily protection to all, Psa. 121:1; Psa. 127:1.

Family devotion will leave a lasting impact on

family members and sustain their faith on the living God. It plays the role of uniting family members in their spiritual focus, thereby establishing a spiritual foundation that may not be easily destroyed. The fellowship of family members together to reflect, confess, examine, pray and worship God is a strong tool that strengthens the home. The devotion must be Christ centered and seek to move into a more intimate and personal relationship with our Lord, Acts 1:14, Job 1:15, Psa. 78:6-7 and Dan. 6:10. Family devotion can help the family directly and indirectly in the following ways:

1. Family devotion creates or enhances family unity and strengthens relationship in the home.
2. It provides a good ground for training of our children in the ways of God while enforcing godly values in the home.
3. Family devotion helps the family to stay connected to the Lord as a family and allow time for family members to express their joy, thanksgiving, fears, challenges and struggle before the Lord in the family, Prov. 16:3.
4. It allows family members to hear what the Lord has to say in the home as they read from His word and learn from His wisdom

on daily basis.

5. Family devotion enables the family to draw strength from God to carry on their affairs with trust and faith in God, Neh. 4:9
6. It may help to admonish and find deliverance for family members in times of trouble through prayers and counseling as they worship together, Dan. 6:10,14,18.
7. Family devotion enables the family or home to be healthy physically and spiritually, constantly assessing the grace that is made available for the home.
8. It provides time for them to celebrate God's blessing to them as a family and to individual members of the home.
9. It encourages constant reading and learning of the word of God together as a family, thereby enabling the members to share thoughts and excitements and depressions and also helps to chart a way forward through God's word and prayer.

It is hereby recommended that every family should see the need for a moment of devotion in the home. Parents should make very good use of this special but long neglected platform in the home to further strengthen their homes and

allow God constant access into their homes. Couples should learn to submit and keep to the arrangement as well as become useful instruments for the master's use in their homes. Let the holy spirit use you and operate into the inner part of your homes as well as endow our families with strength from above.

"He that dwells in the secret place of the most high shall abide under the shadow of the almighty..." Psa. 91:1-16



LIVING A HAPPY LIFE IN A HAPPY HOME

"Happiness is a tree of life that sustains"

"It is better to dwell in the corner of the house top than
with a brawling woman in a wide house"

Prov. 21:9; 25:24

Find wisdom and gain understanding for they are better
than silver and gold, lay hold on happiness, a tree of life
that sustains, Prov.3:13-18.

This section of the book is concerned with the desire to
inspire members into a good living condition where God
dwells and life is worth living.

Everyone wants a happy home and as parents

we have the capacity and responsibility to create a home where everyone feels safe and loved. We want to foster a home environment where everyone feels respected and each person's individuality is celebrated. We want our kids and spouses to come home happy at the end of a long and weary day. This does not have to be difficult. There are some simple changes we can implement to help create the feeling of warmth and homeliness. The truth is that some people are already tired of their marriages and homes and relationships, and if they are given a second chance, they will never have to marry those they are married to.

So many parents who win elections in houses of assembly, etc, may lose elections in their homes because, their homes have become very uncomfortable to dwell in. This is why people desert their homes looking out for a better land somewhere which does not necessarily exist. Happiness cannot be compromised with anything else; it is the deep secret of strength and greatness. A happy person is a great and successful being devoid of fear, intimidation and doubts.

*The wise woman builds her house,
but with her own hands the foolish one tears*

hers down, Prov. 14:1

Please note that every good and happy home was built by someone like you, thus you have the mandate to build yours now because "as you make your bed, so you lie on it." No two homes can be the same, your happiness depends on you, and you are also responsible for the life you live. More so, every happy life was designed by the person who lived it, only you can create yours.

WHAT IS A HAPPY LIFE AND A HAPPY HOME?

A happy home is a living condition or environment where everyone gets to be themselves, a safe and comfortable refuge for the people living within. People really feel comfortable when they are safe to be themselves.

It's a functional but not necessarily a perfect home, organized, working and responsible for the common interest of all, thereby making everything effortlessly fall into place. It may not necessarily be in a new house but a functional system where needs are supplied together, care is distributed together and burdens are shared. A happy home is a household that feels good to be; members understand themselves, know

when the other cries and how to wipe the tears as well as having the inner fun to laugh together where necessary. It is a family endowed with respect and love; people listen and follow instructions, keep to rules and contribute to each other's wellbeing. A home that supports the whole family's needs; the wife is supported alongside the husband as well as their children.

A home therefore is a living condition with an embodiment of all or basic requirements of life both physical and spiritual. It gives everyone the sense of belonging. It is not my house, but our house, not where I raised the pillars, but where we joined hands together and raised to standard. A happy home is what we all deserve.

IMPORTANCE OF A HAPPY LIFE AND A HAPPY HOME

*"Happiness is not something you postpone for
future, it is something
you design for the present." **Jim Rohn***

Sometimes people spend a greater part of their lives chasing happiness and it always seemed like happiness stayed just a few distances away, somewhere in future that they can always expect. For instance, most people think they will be happy when they have work,

admission, marriage, money, promotion, good health etc. They put their happiness on hold not knowing that unhappiness can actually chase these desires away. Sincerely speaking, it should interest you to know that the only reason to be happy is because Jesus came and is alive.

*"The thief cometh only to steal and kill and
destroy; I have come that they may have life,
and have it to the full"*

Jn. 10:10

Happiness therefore, is not something you go after, it is something already within you and you must need to clear some clutter to find it. There are things you may have to let go so as to resume true happiness in your life and in your home.

Happiness, people think is attached to money, wealth, etc, such people have failed to understand that not all wealthy people have happiness; politicians, business men, pastors, the married, graduates, etc. True happiness is borne out of the knowledge of whom God has made you to be and the extent to which you are convinced about Him as the true source of joy, Phil. 1:21; Phil. 3:7-8.

Happiness and a happy home guarantees for safety and progress. Members of a happy home do not live in fear or intimidation but exist in harmony and peaceful co-existence. A happy home is a canopy that covers with love and provides with care.

CAUSES OF UNHAPPINESS IN THE HOME

"In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold"

Eph 4:26-27.

If you live in a home where you are not happy, you are most likely to see your life more miserable than a cold weather. Unhappiness is a sickness that dries up the flesh of marriage and subjects family members to confusion and regrets. There are no justifiable reasons for an unhappy marriage or home, God demands that every household remains happy both physically and spiritually. So many people leave their homes afflicted, angered, tormented, desperate, wounded and dejected without any hope for a change due to activities going on therein. The worse is that they have tolerated and managed under painful and deplorable family conditions without any good hope of improvement, hence they tend to be fed-up with

any hope for a happy life in their homes. Psa. 37:3, 4: Prov. 14: 13,16,20. It is imperative therefore, to give careful thoughts about the things that are responsible for this menace that has crept into homes to still the joy of families and abandon God's children in emotional struggles.

1. **Lack of Trust**

This has to do with unfaithfulness, jealousy, suspicion and doubt, sometimes borne out of assumption that may live in the hearts of couples, presenting their partners in bad lights. A partner sometimes assumes the other is unfaithful just because he or she has been unfaithful. Some partners actually have a cunning or non-straight forward way of life, thereby giving room to jealousy and doubt. Whereas, love binds people together, TRUST is the foundation or bed rock upon which every relationship stands but pretense is the defensive weapon against distrust, especially for those who are unfaithful but pretend to live up to expectation before one another, Prov. 31:10-12, Prov. 12:25.

2. **Financial Constrain**

No money or a lack of financial ability to provide basic needs due to loss of job, lack of

work, business disaster or health challenge may become a serious factor responsible for family joy. Recall that economic maturity is a necessary condition for a marriage. Money and family challenges have been an age long problem because of the importance it plays in the family circle, most women complain that husbands refuse giving money or give less or maybe spend the money without their knowledge, while men complain that women ask for too much. Some women have no work, hence, rely on their husbands for everything, while some men struggle with divided attention, or distraction. Most couples are not transparent, they create an atmosphere for high expectation even when there's no money. Some wives divert family resources for extended family problems without notice and reduce the list of estimates to buy clothes or other irrelevant items. Financial constrain has been of serious concern to most families and for happiness to exist in the home, this factor must be addressed properly without hesitation.

3. Lack of Commitment

Neglecting responsibilities in the home can become a serious setback for the joy of a family. Most partners do not want to be responsible or take charge of their responsibilities, thereby,

exerting pressure on the other. The husband provides while the wife manages but where the reverse is the case, issues are bound to set in. Some wives are too busy to cook and clean or wash, rather, neglect such on house maids. Every family member must show commitment in the family by playing their parts with prior attention and supervise where necessary. Elsewhere, some husbands indicate so much interest on their wife's purses and exert pressure on them with financial calculations, can pose serious setback for the family.

4. **Selfishness**

This implies a lack of consideration for others, self centeredness or being self-minded. In a relationship, some partners tend to only look for personal benefits without considering the other person. This is a factor that can generate issues in the home.

5. **Lack of Understanding**

Couples must understand themselves for their family to be in peace. Consider a partner who goes out to drink always while the other complains without any adjustment toward such act. Lack of understanding especially, when a partner has a problem may degenerate into ugly experiences that may cause faction and

dissatisfaction in the home.

6. Bullying and Counter Discipline

When discipline is not well handled or applied properly, it generates undue tension on family members, thereby giving way for disobedience and hatred. Also, a case where couples challenge themselves over how to discipline their children may create certain feelings of unhappiness in the home between them.

7. Divided Love for Children

Preference and too much attention on a particular child or sex of child could cause parental weakness on measures of discipline which may in turn hinder or affect a smooth running of the family.

8. Fraud

This refers to a situation where one's sexual desire is put on hold due to certain ill feelings or issues in the home. Sometimes women attach love on children at the expense of their husbands, some even exchange husband's bed position for their children, I Cor. 7:5.

9. Interferences by Relations

Some couples rely on their relations for decisions instead of their partners. This often time causes

disaffection that drives the other partner's emotions to the extreme. It brings to bare, a feeling of insecurity and disjointed loyalty.

10. **Lack of Respect and Regard**

Taking things for granted or disregarding one another is an act that must be properly addressed in a relationship. This may include, the inability serve food on time, cleaning, comparing spouses with other people and other areas that may be repugnant to the growth of the home.

I Pet 3:1-5. It also implies acting without consent or approval in cases where such are required or a show and display of equality in the home, especially when couples try to emphasize on unnecessary greatness which may affect the home,
Eph 5:22-23.

11. **Nagging**

Most people display this act by over bothering one another and over reacting on issues or talking too much. It creates a feeling of pressure and tension borne out of anxiety in the home.

15. **Retentive Trait**

To store up offences in mind or diary, building up

an unforgiving spirit or heaping blames on one another. This may also involve bushing issues forward instead of treating them and trashing them off, col. 3:13.

16. **Derogatory Remarks**

To reduce or lessen the value of someone through abuse, gossips, dirty words, blame, curses, and the attitude of discussing family affairs with outsiders. Eph. 4:29.

19. **Deafening Silence**

This has to do with the act of silence or lack of response that reveals something significant, such as disapproval or a lack of enthusiasm in the home. Some partners tend to use this act while avoiding one another in the home

20. **Lack of Communication**

Breakdown in communication can be a serious challenge to the wellbeing of the home. It may degenerate into disastrous tendencies that could be highly destructive.

9

ISSUE

COMPLICATIONS AND COUNSELLING

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 jeopardize 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.

6. 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.

5. 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.

6. 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

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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

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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 hiar asenaa nte eka itiat anaá', 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

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 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.

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 usefully 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.

FAMILY HEALTH CLINIC

*"He heals the brokenhearted and
binds up their wounds," Psa. 147:3*

When family members are challenged by reason of an illness that has evaded the home, the need for a health center arises from within. The need for a health center arises from within. Illness in the family may come emotionally, spiritually, psychologically, etc. All these may generate tension, and that will affect the functional ability of the members. It is necessary, therefore, to keep the health unit of the family alert in times such as this.

*"Reproach hath broken my heart,
and I am full of heaviness: and I
looked for some to take pity, but
there was none; and for
comforters, but I found none."
Psa. 69:20.*

A family health clinic is a place where the problems of members are addressed in the family, to ensure relief and comfort. It is a family diagnostic center to x-ray, test and examine the hurts, tears and emotional flaws that trail family members from time to time. It exists

to administer service and ascertain the health status and breakthrough of each family member.

In order to properly address and treat the problem of members constantly, family health clinic may be seen from three different aspects: Family Devotion, Family Meetings and Family Counseling.

Family devotion handles the spiritual needs of members while counseling and meetings addresses the physical needs and gives members the opportunity to open up in confidence regarding their weaknesses and downfalls with the assurance that their grieves and groaning shall with handled with absolute confidentiality and sincerity.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

No family can begin with just one person. The moment you are sure that your family has begun, wives please know your responsibilities, likewise ye husbands. With love, understanding and mutual respect let each other, work for the common good of the home.

The coming of children marks another phase of development in the home, and with the solid foundation laid on the grown up children, godly values and virtues shall be maintained. The strength is not of man, rather be of God: each one should try to imbibe these teaching, of course, no time is late, and nothing is impossible with God.

In all of these, we are more than conquerors. The grace to build and nurture a Christian family for a blissful marriage is of the Lord. It is the place of all Christians to recognize the omnipotence of God in our lives and give him his due position in our homes (choosing a partner, raising children and living in all mutual respect); thus, we shall be able to safely sail through the hurdles of our family affairs successfully and make heaven which is our ultimate goal.

OPEN FORUM

Consideration of Questionnaire and Recommendations

An investigation was made on certain family issues, opinions were considered through questionnaire and recommendations were done. Most of the issues bothered on things that always generate problems in the home including questions such as:

1. What is the thing that generate problem the most in the family and how should Christians handle such?

Reactions show that family problems, especially between a husband and wife could be generated due to lack of trust, suspicion, cheating, keeping secrets, dishonesty, not being transparent, lack of money, etc.

It was seen and agreed that everything arises due to a lack of understanding. Couples were therefore advised to foster understanding in their relationships such as will address many areas of their needs.

2. Between a man and a woman, a husband

and a wife, who creates problem the most in the family?

Some people reacted that men cause problems more than women while some proposed that it is the women who actually take the lead.

It was generally seen that it could be either the man or woman depending on the family setting and those involved. Couples were therefore advised to identify what brings problem and therefore try to avoid them.

3. Who should first seek for peace when problem arises in the home; is it the husband or wife, the offender or the offended?

Some people said it should be the woman, some stressed on the man while some said it should be the person who caused the problem. The last position was seen to be ideal because whoever causes problem should move for reconciliation.

In probing, it was seen that sometimes the woman or man may not be humble enough to say I am sorry and that the actual person who caused it may not even realize his or her mistakes. Therefore, it was seen that the ideal person to advance for peace is the one who is

the closest to God at that moment, man or woman, whether he or she caused it or not. This is seen in the fact that God is peace and he was the first to move for peace when man fell away from the garden of Eden, Isa. 1:18,19, blessed are the peace makers... Matt. 5:9.

4. Nagging (over heating) or Numbness (being excessively silent) in the home, which is better?*

Although some people preferred nagging for numbness and vice versa, the two were seen to be extreme attitudes. The church advised that moderation should be employed with the understanding that the two are negative behaviors which can cost the happiness of the family.

5. Should a husband beat his wife and should a wife be driven away from home for any reason?

Some people affirmed that beating a partner may be necessary, sometimes, while others condemned it totally. It was even suggested that a woman may be disciplined by denying her certain rights instead of beating and being driven away. In conclusion, the church

admonished members to abstain from any manner of fighting or driving away a partner as this does not speak well of us as Christians and will not reveal the nature of God... Abstain from all appearances of evil, I Thess. 5:22.

6. Why is family devotion necessary, can't couples pray individually?*

All members agreed and saw the need for the families alter where all members pray together. The idea of praying alone as against family devotion was condemned, it was added that praying alone should only be employed when necessary. Family devotion is necessary to build a good Christian home, couples who try it shall see the overwhelming results in their homes.

Other sensitive areas in the home included children resisting discipline and disobeying parents. It was advised that couples should train and discipline their children on time and that a collective effort should be employed. Christian children were instructed to honor their parents and support their efforts as such will reward them in future.

Also, singles were advised to prepare themselves for a good family life by taking

good advantage of the lesson and advancing steps that will lead them right. They are to avoid all manner of things that will deprive them of a happy and prosperous homes. Christians are to do their best as lights of the world, beginning well will actually lead well and guarantee safe landing.

FAMILY LIFE QUESTIONNAIRE (COUPLES ONLY)

A. Introduction

This questionnaire is meant to assess the challenges and situations of Christian couples in their families in certain areas of their lives. It is a survey in the Church of Christ at Mbonde Itam. It is hoped that you the respondent will be sincere with the information you provide here which will help you reassess yourself in the family.

B. Personal Data

Please provide the following information:

1. How old in range are you both:
Husband.....
Wife.....
2. Is this your first marital relationship?.....

3. How old are you in your present marriage?.....
4. How many children do you have in your present marriage?.....
5. Are you living together?.....
6. Which church does your spouse attend?.....
7. What is your occupation & that of your spouse.....

C. **Questionnaire**

1. What major pressure do you have in your marriage?.....
2. How often do you have family devotion?.....
3. What is your greatest burden concerning child bearing and home making?.....
.....
.....

4. How would you describe your relationship in terms of showing remorse in offences?
.....
5. How would you describe your relationship in terms of love and caring?.....
.....
5. How would you describe your relationship concerning arguments and tolerance?
.....
7. Describe your relationship in terms of appreciation and cooperation?
.....
8. Describe yourselves in terms of assistance in domestic work and nagging?
.....
9. How would you describe your family income in respect to being sufficient for family needs?
.....

10. How would you describe yourselves in terms of support for each other's aspirations and future plans?.....
.....
11. Do your children challenge you or resist in matters of discipline?
.....
12. Does your extended family affect you negatively in any way? How?
.....
.....
13. Which of you bears a greater percentage of family burden in your marriage, how?
.....
14. Have you been formally married?
.....
.....
- D. What suggestion do you have that can sustain your marriage and revive your union?
.....
.....

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 to what it takes to go through marriage successfully, beginning with the choice of a partner and getting to how to live 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 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 relationships displayed by people to frustrate down with someone 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 **software** for singles and couples.

[illegible]



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.